

INSPECTION REPORT

URSULINE COLLEGE

Westgate-on-Sea

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 131583

Headteacher: Sister Alice Montgomery

Reporting inspector: Sandra Tweddell
1709

Dates of inspection: 29 January – 2 February 2001

Inspection number: 230021

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	225 Canterbury Road Westgate-on-Sea Kent
Postcode:	CT8 8LX
Telephone number:	01843 834431
Fax number:	01843 835365
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Sister Anne Benyon OSU
Date of previous inspection:	This is the first inspection

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1709	Sandra Tweddell	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils or students taught? Assessment How well is the school led and managed?
8992	Julian Vischer	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Resources and accommodation
2734	Paul Cosway	Team inspector	English	Efficiency
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Latin	
20729	James Berry	Team inspector	Science	
17530	Mary Cureton	Team inspector	Special educational needs	Equal opportunities
23880	Olivia Hall	Team inspector	Physical education	
30699	Arthur Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics	
17868	Eileen Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
12276	Terence Payne	Team inspector	Music	
4703	Clive Potter	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
27407	Bill Stoneham	Team inspector	Business education History	Sixth form
10666	Patricia Wheeler	Team inspector	Geography	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7 - 10
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11 - 13
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	13 - 15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	15 - 18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	18 - 19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	19 - 20
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	20 - 22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	23
KEY STAGE 4	23
THE SIXTH FORM	24 - 25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26 - 30
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	31 - 49

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Ursuline College opened two years ago as a voluntary aided Catholic comprehensive school. Before this, it was a mixed independent school that took in boarders and before this a girls' independent school with boarders. The college has therefore seen radical changes, including the opening of a new building in January 2001 and the refurbishment of older buildings. When the college opened, it took in large numbers of students from a school that had closed. The school is smaller than average, it has 609 students on roll, 102 of these are in the sixth form. Numbers are forecast to rise to about 800. It is now heavily oversubscribed; this year there were 189 applications for 120 places. The school takes in a small number of boarders but boarding provision was not part of the inspection. The attainment of the students on entry since September 1998 is broadly average, but in the upper part of the school attainment is well below average. Students come mainly from Thanet which is not an advantaged area. Government statistics show that parts of the area are extremely deprived; however, relatively few parents apply for free school meals for their children so the figures indicate that the number entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. A few students come from places further afield such as Canterbury and there are a number of students from abroad, mainly from Europe. The number of students who speak English as an additional language is higher than in most schools, the most frequent languages spoken at home are Chinese, German, Spanish and French. The number of students with special educational needs, 139, is higher than in most schools and twelve students have a statement of special educational need. Thirty-seven students are on stages 3 and 4 and a high proportion has emotional and behavioural difficulties. Others have moderate learning difficulties including difficulties with literacy. Four have specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Ursuline College is an effective school and is increasingly effective due to very good leadership and management by the senior management team and governors, and an excellent direction for growth set by the headteacher. The school is very successful in meeting the aims of its mission statement. These reflect the teaching of St Angela, founder of the Ursuline tradition, who believed that the principles of determination, faith and hope will unlock the potential of every person. The special ethos that is in the college as a result, develops very good relationships between staff and students and tolerance and respect for one another. Students have most positive attitudes towards their work and behaviour is good. There is a very good partnership with parents most of whom hold the school in high regard. In the two years since the school became a comprehensive, very good management systems have been established with the aim of ensuring that all students achieve as highly as possible. These systems are becoming embedded in the daily life of the school. Students achieve highly in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The teaching is good overall, although there are some inconsistencies within and between departments. The school gives satisfactory value for money as, although the value for money in the main school is good, the sixth form is currently inefficient in terms of cost because of its small size.

What the school does well

- The leadership and management of the school are very good and are clearly focused on improvement.
- There is much good teaching and students achieve highly.
- The attainment of fourteen year old students is above average.
- The behaviour of almost all students is good and they have very positive attitudes towards their work.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is very good and contributes to the special ethos of the school and the sense of community.
- The care and guidance offered to students is very good.

What could be improved

- Although teaching is good overall, there are inconsistencies between and within departments.
- The school has collected much data about its performance which is not yet being used effectively by all departments.
- ICT is not yet used effectively by departments as the equipment and base is recently established.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the first inspection of the school.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	n/a	B	B	D
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	C	D	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The table above shows that in 2000, pupils taking GCSE examinations attained above the national average. The comparison with similar schools is not a fair reflection of the school as the students taking the examinations did not reflect a comprehensive intake and many students joined the year group from other schools with different characteristics. Of the students who joined the school in Year 7, 71 per cent attained five A* to C grades at GCSE, which is well above the national average. The others who joined the school later, often with attainment well below average on entry, achieved highly. As the school has only been open for two years, it was not possible to see a trend in how well pupils do. Students in the sixth form achieved highly in relation to their attainment on entry. They attained below average results, but in the previous year, they reached average levels. The school exceeded the targets it had set for GCSE in 2000. In 1999 and 2000, fourteen year old pupils attained results that were above the national average. Boys did particularly well in 1999 but this was reversed in 2000.

The inspection found that attainment is similar to that of last year, but there are improvements in science and, in the sixth form, in history. Attainment in English and mathematics is above average at both key stages and in science is average. In other subjects, attainment is average except in music where although students achieve appropriately, standards are below average. Generally, students achieve highly in relation to their attainment on entry. Attainment in the sixth form is broadly average and students achieve appropriately in relation to their prior attainment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The vast majority of students are very positive about school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good although a small number of boys with poor skills of concentration can slow down lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Very good, most students leave as assured and confident citizens. They show a high level of trust in staff which contributes to the excellent sense of community.
Attendance	Satisfactory despite the fact that the school has more students with serious illnesses than most schools.

The great majority of students behave well and enjoy coming to school. They are polite and courteous and many are proud of their school. Most students are sensitive to the needs of others and respect one another's views. There is a calm and orderly environment which is engendered by the special ethos of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	satisfactory	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 quality of teaching is good overall, although teaching is better at Key Stage 4. The learning of students is good as a result. Ninety-five per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better and 68 per cent is good or better. Twenty-one per cent of lessons are very good or excellent. At Key Stage 3, nearly two thirds of teaching is good or better but there is more inconsistency than at Key Stage 4 or the sixth form, particularly in geography and modern foreign languages. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. Most teachers have very good skills of managing the behaviour of students so that students can listen and learn. Generally, their understanding of their subjects is good so that students' learning is taken forward. Relationships are very good so students feel confident to make mistakes and to learn from them. There is some inconsistency in teaching within and across departments. Where teaching is weaker, lessons move at a slow pace and sometimes students are not encouraged to explore ideas on their own. The teaching of literacy and numeracy across the school is sound although there are some inconsistencies. Staff are about to put into place an approach for teaching literacy across the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall and the range of subjects is good at Key Stage 3.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. The leadership is very good and the provision is developing well as a result. There is inconsistency in how support staff are used in class. Higher attaining students at Key Stage 4 are provided for well by being given the opportunity to study extra subjects after school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Students are cared for well and make good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for moral development is excellent and for spiritual, social and cultural development it is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Students are secure in a caring and safe environment which provides a strong sense of community.

The partnership with parents is very good and parents hold the school in high regard. There is a good range of opportunities for learning in the sixth form and at Key Stage 3. The range of extra-curricular activities is good and students and parents speak highly of the personal development that comes from the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The school cares exceptionally well for its students, particularly in assessing them and using the information to set targets. Staff are aware that the information is not used consistently by all departments to track progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has a most clear vision of how to move the school forward. The senior management team fulfils its role very effectively and together, give a clear direction for the new school to develop.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well, governors are successful in ensuring that they meet legal requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good and at senior management level this is very good. However, there is inconsistency across departments.
The strategic use of resources	Governors ensure that money is spent wisely and monitor the budget carefully.

The overall leadership of the school is very good and the leadership of the headteacher is excellent. Staff on the senior management team fulfil their roles well. There is a very clear direction for the school to develop and systems for managing the school have been established, involving staff and governors. Governors use their expertise well to support the school. Heads of department manage their subjects effectively. The school has collected much useful data about its performance and some departments are using it well but there is inconsistency in its use. The school seeks the best value for money in all its transactions. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall and in many subjects the resources are good. The new building offers excellent facilities although the accommodation for physical education is having a negative effect on the quality of education that is provided.

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 standards that pupils achieve and the progress they make in academic work and personal development. The ethos of the school and the provision for spiritual and moral development. The hard work and commitment of the staff and the rapport between pupils and adults. The links between school and home. The care shown to pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. The international focus of the college. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A small number of parents feel they are not kept well informed about how their child is getting on. A smaller number thinks their child does not receive the right amount of work to do at home.

The majority of parents hold the school in high regard and the inspection team found that parents are justified in their view about what pleases them. The information that parents receive about their child's progress is good and comes in the form of monthly reports about the effort that their child is making to achieve their targets. Homework is well planned and set regularly to a timetable.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The school has been open for two years, so the results achieved by students in 2000 do not reflect the school as it is now, a state comprehensive. This year will see the first results of students who have been in the comprehensive school for three years when they take national tests at the end of Year 9. The comparison with similar schools is therefore not a fair reflection.
2. In 1998 when the school opened, it took in a large number of students from other schools. Many of these had special educational needs and their attainment was well below average according to standardised tests. These students achieved highly. Those taking GCSE in 2000 attained above average standards overall when compared with national figures, and in comparison with similar schools, their performance was average. The average number of points that each student achieved was above the national average but below average in comparison with similar schools. This was an improvement from the previous year when the average points score was well below average in comparison with similar schools. Of the students who had been in the school since Year 7, 71 per cent attained five or more A* to C grades which was well above the national average. Comparison with other schools in Kent indicate that students perform relatively well, although the numbers taking examinations in 2000 were generally lower for most subjects.
3. In 2000, fourteen year old students achieved results in English, mathematics and science that were above the national average. In comparison with similar schools, in English and mathematics students attained average results, and in science they attained below average results. It is not yet possible to discern a trend in how well the school does as there is insufficient data. In 1999, boys did better than girls, but this was reversed in 2000.
4. Students in the sixth form achieved an average points score that was below the national average in 2000, but in 1999 the average points score was in line with the national average.
5. The inspection found that attainment is similar to that of last year, but that standards are rising, particularly in science across the school and in history in the sixth form. Fourteen and sixteen year old students achieve highly in relation to their attainment on entry and by the end of Year 9 their attainment is generally above average. The attainment of students at the end of Year 11 is average, but is likely to rise the following year as more students will have been at the school for a longer period of time. Many students in the sixth form have special educational needs and they achieve appropriately although, generally, their attainment is below average.
6. In many subjects, girls achieve more highly than boys. Some departments, such as English, have recognised this and begun to tackle it. Most departments have analysed the reasons for the difference and are putting methods into place to deal with it.
7. Higher attaining students achieve appropriately as they are usually given work that challenges them, particularly those who are placed in the higher attaining groups. In a few cases, the work is unchallenging so they do not achieve as highly as they should. Students with special educational needs also achieve appropriately. Where learning support assistants are well briefed to help SEN pupils, they make a positive difference to their learning and they do well. Those for whom English is an additional language achieve highly as they receive good and thoughtful provision. They are well integrated into the life of the school and contribute well to lessons.
8. Students in the main school achieve highly in English and their attainment is above average. In the sixth form attainment is improving and is slightly below average but students achieve appropriately. Most students develop good skills of listening and many are highly articulate and express an opinion clearly and with conviction. Most read fluently and with good understanding. Higher attaining students write coherently and with good expression, but lower attaining students are often inaccurate in their writing. Most students apply their skills of literacy effectively in other subjects, for example, reading for information in history and using skills of research in geography. There is however some inconsistency across departments in promoting the effective use of literacy skills. The school is aware of this and is about to introduce an approach to literacy that

will be used by all departments.

9. Students throughout the school achieve highly in mathematics and attainment is above average in the main school and average in the sixth form. Higher attaining students are suitably challenged by studying both mathematics and statistics at GCSE. Strengths in mathematics are in trigonometry and algebra. Students understand the principles of a calculator and use them skilfully. A weaker area is their use of notes to help them to understand ideas of mathematics. Most students have good skills of numeracy which they apply well in other subjects, such as measurement in design and technology.
10. Attainment in science is improving and is above average by the end of Year 9 where students achieve highly. Older students achieve appropriately and attain average standards. Similarly in the sixth form, attainment is average and students achieve highly in relation to their attainment on entry. There are no significant strengths or weaknesses in their knowledge, skills and understanding as all areas of science are taught equally well.
11. Information and communication technology is taught within a strong developing department. The suite was opened three weeks before the inspection, so is not yet being used by all departments. Attainment is average and students achieve highly by the end of Year 9. Fourteen year old students are competent in using word processing skills, data and they use software competently. Older students have used computers to support their learning but as the computer facilities have only been available since the beginning of the spring term, they are not as proficient as younger students.
12. Similarly in design and technology, students achieve highly across the school and their attainment is average. Particular strengths are in making objects which are often finished to a high quality. There are no major weaknesses in the knowledge, understanding or skills of students as all areas are taught equally.
13. Fourteen year olds students achieve appropriately in French and attainment is average. In German, they do not achieve as well as they should and attainment is below average because they have too little time for the subject. Sixteen year olds achieve well in both languages and attainment is above average in French and average in German. In classes where teachers use French or German for their teaching, attainment in listening is high. Pupils achieve highly in classics and Latin as they are motivated by the teaching which is good.
14. Attainment throughout the school in geography is average and students achieve appropriately. Higher attaining students have good skills of presenting information from their research and have a good understanding of geographical terms which they use confidently. Field work in the department is good so that students develop good skills of enquiry. In history, students achieve highly and by the end of Year 9 their attainment is average. Attainment of sixteen year olds is average as it is in the sixth form. There is evidence however of significant improvements in attainment in the sixth form. A strength in history is the way in which students use materials from the past to draw conclusions about how people lived. Skills in research are relatively weak.
15. Attainment in art is above average and for sixteen year olds, is well above average. Students achieve highly. They have a good understanding of theories about colour and tone and produce models in clay that are of a high quality. Many are skilled in design and their use of pattern. A relative weakness is their use of information and communication technology and their ability to evaluate their work and that of others. In music, attainment is below average but students achieve appropriately as the attainment of many on entry is well below average. Their strength is in composition but many lack confidence in singing and performing. Attainment in physical education is average and students achieve highly. Many have good skills when playing competitive sports and they understand the rules of games. Many understand how to improve their work through their understanding of how their bodies move. Sixth formers achieve appropriately in business studies even though their attainment is below average.
16. The school population is now becoming more stable. Methods have been, and are being established to ensure that students attain as highly as possible. These two factors are resulting in an improvement in attainment across the school and good progress for the majority of students.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. Students' attitudes to school are very good. They take pride in being members of a caring school community that reflects the value of the whole person and not simply their academic capabilities. All the students interviewed said they love coming to school and are very enthusiastic. Students in Year 7 said they feel at home. Efficient but relaxed registration periods lead on to form or school assemblies every day and students are keen to start work after these. In many lessons pupils work steadily with good levels of concentration; in a Year 11 art lesson students were highly motivated and worked diligently. There is a very small group of boys in Year 9 who break this rule. Boys and girls organise themselves well, are confident, and are comfortable with school routines. Students know about the range of activities which are provided by the school such as extra sport and look forward to school excursions. They talk with interest about their work, visitors and visits that they have made. Many talk with enthusiasm about the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Above all they praise the provision of extra after-school tuition which gives them an opportunity to ask staff about work that they do not fully understand.
18. Students' behaviour in and around the school and in lessons is good. It is clear that they have faith in the school's system of justice and that they feel they are treated fairly. As they go to and from assemblies, or queue up to await their turn in the dining hall, they show very good standards of self-control. The tuckshop at morning break is very busy and the space is tight but students are patient, and are confident that they will be served in good time. The involvement of prefects is efficient and polite. Behaviour in both school assemblies and form assemblies was found to be very good. Students obey teachers' instructions. At breaktime and lunchtime behaviour is good. Students anticipate the end of these periods and get themselves over to the relevant classroom in advance and await their teacher. In lessons generally both boys and girls are patient and behave well. There were no incidents of bullying or oppressive behaviour noted during the inspection. Although there were thirteen boys and three girls involved in temporary exclusions last year, there was only one permanent exclusion. These reflect the strictness of the implementation of the behaviour policy rather than an undercurrent of poor behaviour.
19. Students are offered good role models by teaching staff in developing relationships and showing respect for one another's work. In a Year 10 computer lesson, for example, students worked safely and without the need for close supervision. Students interviewed repeatedly said how approachable the staff are. Because of these relationships, students are self-confident, show a high level of trust towards staff and mix very well together. Sixth form prefects appear relaxed in their roles and considerate in their actions. As a result of these very positive relationships students can show initiative and are keen to take on any responsibilities that the school can offer them. They are proud to have been elected on the School Council and take their responsibilities seriously as class representatives. Students show respect for all the different faiths represented in the school population and show particular consideration to those with some disability. For example, a student in Year 9 in a wheelchair was never short of friends to push him about and made to feel fully part of activities both in class and at breaktimes.
20. Levels of attendance are broadly in line with the national average. However, unauthorised absences are higher than the national average. This is because a minority of students from other schools have brought patterns of poor attendance with them. In the previous year unauthorised absences were in line with the national average. Most pupils come to school on time and registers are taken quickly and efficiently in all classes in both morning and afternoon. There are few latecomers, and those who are late often have genuine transport problems for an excuse as many come by bus or train.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching is good across the school and 95 per cent of lessons are satisfactory or better. As a result, students' learning is effective. Teaching that is good or better is 63 per cent, and 20 per cent is very good or excellent. Teaching is better at Key Stage 4 where 81 per cent of lessons are good or better. At Key Stage 3, although nearly two-thirds of teaching is good or better, teaching is satisfactory overall as there is some inconsistency. The school is tackling this through monitoring by the senior management team and heads of department.

22. Teaching of English, mathematics and science is good overall as is the teaching of physical education, classics, Latin, music, design and technology and art. The teaching of history and vocational education is satisfactory. The teaching of information and communication technology is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 where the provision is more patchy. There is much good teaching in geography and modern foreign languages but there are also elements of unsatisfactory teaching which both departments and senior management are tackling through monitoring.
23. The teaching of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Teachers have access to good individual learning plans for all students, which gives them detailed information of high quality. This enables them to plan teaching which extends their learning. Phonics teaching is effective and well structured but the lack of resources does not allow students to learn in a range of ways which would consolidate their learning. Lack of teaching time does not enable students who are withdrawn from lessons to make the greatest progress of which they are capable in reading or in spelling. However, they make an effort to learn, and show both interest and understanding. Learning support assistants, when well briefed in advance, are able to make a positive difference to the attainment of students with special educational needs in lessons across the curriculum. When liaison with learning support assistants does not take place, chances to help students are missed because the additional materials which would give them a better understanding of what is taught cannot be produced in advance. Opportunities are also missed when homework is not known in advance. When it is, it can be written clearly and duplicated by the support assistants, so aiding those who find a writing and organisation difficult. In a geography lesson very good progress was observed when the teacher and the support assistant had co-operated in re-writing material to give access to the curriculum. In a social education lesson, expectation of the support assistant was unclear. She did not have the answers to a questionnaire used in the lesson, and as a result the help she was able to give was limited. Despite lack of formal identification, two talented pupils were challenged and inspired in an art lesson where they made an excellent and imaginative response.
24. The teaching of students for whom English is an additional language is good. They meet in small groups with specialist teachers who have a good understanding of their learning needs so they achieve highly in their understanding of English. A teacher of art gave individual help to a student and went on to give him an extract written in his home language about the subject. As a result, the student deepened his understanding of the topic. In a social education lesson, a student received individual help from the tutor which enabled her to participate fully and so learn effectively.
25. Teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach which they use well to move forward the learning of their students. Many examples were seen of teachers using their knowledge effectively to respond to the questions put by students and extend their learning; for example, in a classics lesson with a low attaining Year 7 group. One exception is teachers' understanding of how best to use computers to further develop learning in the subjects. The school is aware of this and now that the computer suite is in operation, plans are underway to tackle this.
26. Lessons are usually well planned and take account of the different learning needs of students which ensures that they are appropriately challenged and acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding. The good planning of a Year 9 English lesson introduced students effectively to the subject of advertising so that they were immediately interested and worked hard. The discussion that ensued because of this helped them to gain deeper understanding of messages given by the media.
27. Resources are used effectively to motivate students and maintain their interest. In a geography lesson with a Year 7 class, students were entranced by the use of an overhead projector to demonstrate the different responses of a range of professions to flood prevention schemes. In another geography lesson, the overhead projector was used effectively to focus students' attention on the learning objectives. Many teachers share the objectives with the class which focuses their attention on what they are expected to learn. In another example, a science teacher of a Year 9 class teaching about how changes in liquids occur, wrote the aims on the board and then checked them at the end. The learning in this lesson was good because students were clear about the purpose of the lesson.

28. The majority of teachers have good methods of ensuring that students behave well so that all can listen and learn. There are many examples of this. In a Year 9 lesson, students were able to concentrate on the production of a questionnaire using computers because the teacher managed them in a fair, friendly but firm manner. Relationships between students and staff are very good and are based upon mutual respect. As a result, students are confident to respond in class, even when they are hesitant, because they know their contribution will be valued by the teacher and the class. In a Year 7 science lesson on floating and sinking, the very good relationships that had been established led to students having the confidence and motivation to ask questions. This led to an increase in their understanding.
29. Many teachers have high expectations of their students so that all know that only their best work will be accepted. Students are challenged to think deeply. In a French lesson with Year 9 students, the teacher used French for most of the lesson and expected the students to do likewise. As a result, students responded in French which helped their knowledge of key phrases. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson, the teacher's high expectations of the students and the insistence on taking notes, led to high achievement. Many teachers also use questions skilfully to challenge the thinking of students. In another mathematics lesson, a Year 7 class was challenged to think about why they needed to measure in a hundredth of a centimetre. Their responses showed that they had thought deeply about the reason.
30. Assessment is often used well to gauge at what stage the students are at and to reshape the lesson if they do not understand or find it too easy. A teacher of a Year 8 art class evaluated the work of the students as they progressed. The teacher pointed out how mistakes in printing are magnified as their work progresses which helped the students to understand ideas about space. In a drama lesson with Year 10 students, the teacher encouraged them to improve their performances by frequent assessment. Students were also encouraged to evaluate the work of each other which increased their understanding of methods they could use to improve their work. Achievement in this lesson was high. Homework is set regularly in all subjects and is assiduously marked. It is usually relevant and extends or consolidates the learning that has taken place in the lesson.
31. The few unsatisfactory lessons were not caused by one factor. Inconsistencies in teaching included poor timing and a lack of challenge for students so that the lesson dragged. In some lessons, the teacher took full control and did not allow students to explore ideas for themselves or to invite questions. In these lessons, learning was not extended. Occasionally, teachers do not motivate boys so that they become bored and sometimes distract the class. In a few lessons, higher attaining students were not sufficiently challenged by their work. One problem currently faced by the school is movement between the buildings which causes many lessons to start late. This may well be because the new building had only been in use for three weeks at the time of the inspection.
32. Teaching is good overall and is one reason for the high achievement of students. The inconsistencies are being tackled and the school is well placed to move forward by using the expertise that is amongst the staff.

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

33. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced for students in the 11 to 16 age range. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. The curriculum provides an appropriate range of opportunities for all students including those with special educational needs. Students in Years 10 and 11 who can cope with extra subjects follow courses after school and it is planned to extend this opportunity to younger students in September. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects although the time for music in Years 7, 8 and 9 is low. There is insufficient time given to enable aspects of music to be taught in depth.
34. The curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 builds well on links with the main primary schools from which the college draws its students. Planning is generally effective in all subjects. Students are taught in two broad bands with a top and a second set and two mixed parallel groups. In some subjects, heads of department group students according to their attainment. Students are assessed before entry to the school by national tests. These test results, combined with the national test results

at age 11 are used to allocate students to these groups. The foreign languages department teaches a spread of languages in the first three years, but there is some lack of rationale in the planning. Spanish is introduced to one mixed group in Year 7 but students do not have a choice. German and Latin are taught to the upper groups for one lesson each week from year 7 to year 9. However, students do not make good progress in German because of the lack of time and there is a low take up of these subjects at GCSE.

35. Classics is taught to the students who do not take Latin. It is well planned and assessed and makes a good contribution to literacy, history and students' cultural development. There are plans to offer German as an alternative to French in GCSE. Year 10 students are offered the separate sciences of physics, chemistry and biology in lessons after school.
36. There is a broad curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and statutory requirements are met. However, with regard to information and communication technology, Year 11 students suffer from the lack of a discrete lesson. There is a good range of subjects offered but as yet there are no vocational courses.
37. The PSHE programme, which covers sex education and drugs education, provides students with good opportunities to prepare for adult life. This is done in line with the Roman Catholic nature of the college. PSHE has priority in the curriculum and is taught at the same time for all students. This enables students to benefit from the expertise of visiting speakers from a range of organisations. It also enables teams of teachers with particular expertise to deliver specific aspects of the programme as is the case with sex education.
38. Careers education is good. Work experience is linked to students' interests and career aspirations. Seventy five percent of students obtain their first choice. There is a well resourced careers library. Careers education begins in Year 7 when students are introduced to the careers library. They do research on a job they know. In Years 8 and 9, students are introduced to appropriate information systems for careers and likewise in Years 10 and 11. This is done within the PSHE programme. All students from Years 9 to 13 have individual interviews with the local education authority careers adviser. This adviser attends open evenings for parents before students make their choices for GCSE and also gives good support throughout the year.
39. A good range of extra-curricular activities is offered. Most subjects have clubs after school to support GCSE studies. There are fieldwork trips and lectures for science study and an amateur radio club. There is a good range of competitive sports and many other sporting activities are taken up by students, including canoeing. The College has been awarded the Sportsmark status for three years. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is particularly successful with a hundred students on the programme. In the past two years nine students have reached gold award standard which represents excellent achievement. There is an active outdoor pursuits club that takes students on a range of activities on Sundays. This provides good education on the local environment and on environmental issues in general. Students have an impressive record of planting trees. Staff and students come from a sister Ursuline College in Japan and there are exchanges with France and Germany. There are trips to Austria and Greece.
40. The school ensures that all students have equal opportunities. Literacy and numeracy schools were held in August last year to support those whose achievement was low before they came into the school and the College has been recommended to host one next year. Most departments are looking at ways to increase the achievement of boys and all have analysed examination results with a view to identifying where they can improve the attainment of all students next year. The new building has a lift to enable those with mobility problems to access all floors. Students for whom English is an additional language are supported appropriately. However, in some areas, the planning of the curriculum does not fully support equality of opportunity. Pupils are not able to choose, in this year, whether they will study French or Spanish. The school is aware that there is no opportunity for pupils in Year 11 to attend a structured programme in ICT, although this is being tackled with the opening of the new suite.
41. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory and is developing well with the recent appointment of more learning support assistants. The school is in the process of applying for the Basic Skills Kitemark which recognises that a school has successful methods for teaching skills of literacy and numeracy. There has been a useful summer school for the

teaching of basic skills. Numeracy is successfully addressed in the "catch up" programme in the mathematics department in Year 7. The school has not yet adapted its withdrawal lessons to accord with the National Literacy Strategy. Gifted and talented pupils are beginning to be identified and an enrichment programme was established in September 2000 for Key Stage 4. They have the opportunity to take extra subjects after school.

42. The school has good links with the community that contribute well to students' learning. For example, The Duke of Edinburgh Award is a most valuable character-building programme. The school has growing links with partner institutions due to its change of status. For example, the introduction of work experience in Year 10 has allowed the school to forge new relations with potential business partnerships. There are links with East Kent Business Partnership which hold a day at Manston Airport for workshops and careers advice. The Barnardo's Environmental Group and the Wildlife Trust have spoken to students about their work. The school became involved through the Trees for Thanet programme in replanting hedgerows. Sixth-formers have participated in a 'Mini United Nations General Assembly' debating forum held in Margate and have attended the Thanet Democracy Day. In PSHE lessons, students were invited to put questions to their Member of Parliament and students in the sixth form presented the questions to their local MP. The science department has very good links with the local firm Pfizer who assist with the funding of various science projects and the promotion of science days in school. The police have a positive relationship with the school and visit regularly offering advice on subjects like drugs awareness.
43. The school has as many as 26 feeder schools but the largest cohort of pupils comes from the four local primary schools. Here the school holds prospective parents' evenings and ensures that pupils have a taste of secondary school life before beginning in September. A group of pupils come from the adjoining St. Angela's which used to be part of the College until the recent change of status. Here of course links are excellent as the two schools share certain facilities, such as the music practice cubicles in the junior school. Pupils come over to the College and share joint assemblies in the chapel. There are post-education links such as the Geography Information Systems link with Christchurch College on Thanet Campus.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

44. The spiritual ethos of the college is extremely strong and permeates the whole school affecting pupils' sense of meaning in life, the degree of their self-esteem and the quality of relationships in a deeply positive way. The vibrant way that all staff are committed to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the school also reflects this. The physical presence of the convent on site, the joint use of the large chapel that this relationship affords, and the calm grandeur of the central quadrangle underpin the spiritual life of the school. Assemblies every day are rotated between the chapel, main hall and form rooms. These are brief, pertinent and kept very much up-to-date with the world outside. During the inspection, acts of prayer for the victims and survivors in the Indian earthquake were offered and an immediate appeal fund started. Acts of prayer form a daily part of school life. In a school assembly the headteacher, herself a nun, actively reaffirmed the value of prayer, "Prayer makes a difference!" The school arranged a memorial service for a Year 11 student who died of leukaemia last year, the second student to die of a serious illness at the school. Students were encouraged to mourn and see death as a part of life. The promotion of spiritual development is inconsistent in class. In several lessons there was clear evidence of spiritual development. For example in an English lesson when pupils were moved by the poem 'The Wild Swans at Coole' by Yeats, "...*they drift on the still water; mysterious, beautiful.*"
45. The provision for moral development in the school is excellent. The school has created a comprehensive framework of values that balances the need for discipline and the need for support. This regulates personal behaviour and forms a cornerstone of the ethos of the school. It is appreciated by pupils and parents alike. Its strength is derived from the understanding that both discipline and support need early and quick intervention, which in turn require both honesty and approachability. At assemblies students are given worthy examples of people who have devoted their lives to charitable work. Around the school there are displays on the Ursuline tradition, its good works, and quotations from the Order's founder, St Angela of Merici.
46. The spiritual and moral ethos creates a very high level of social integration between students and between students and staff. This generates a high degree of understanding amongst students of

social awareness and responsibilities, which is revealed, for example, in the integration of pupils with a different mother tongue and pupils with special educational needs. This in turn fosters a strong sense of community. For example, a Year 10 girl thought to explain to her tutor that the reason a fellow student was absent was as a result of his having to be responsible for his younger brothers and take them to another school.

47. The School Council, led by prefects, offers students effective and tangible ways to develop a sense of responsibility. The boarding provision also adds to the sense of community, it creates an element of continuity in students' minds; "the school never closes, there's always someone here" – Year 8 student. Tutorials or form assemblies operate in a genuine atmosphere of friendliness and offer opportunities for students to take initiative and be thoughtful towards others. For example, sixth-formers were hotly debating which charitable cause they were going to support and just what ways they might conceive of to fulfil this commitment. These periods end with the ecumenical Lord's Prayer. Outdoor pursuits and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme engender confidence, motivation and teamwork.
48. Opportunities for cultural development are good. Again the boarding community is central to these as many students come from countries overseas, such as Korea, and provide a ready source of material to demonstrate cultural diversity. The Ursuline tradition itself has several foundations across the world that instinctively communicate with one another and send and receive visitors. For example, the recent visit of an Ursuline Sister from the Philippines in connection with the fund established to help children living on the rubbish tips of Manila to gain some basic education. There is a wide range of other Christian denominations represented on the staff and there are other world faiths amongst students, only about two-thirds of which are Roman Catholics. The school is therefore very aware of cultural variety. The school explores local avenues of cultural opportunities such as the Thanet Festival and the East Kent Business Partnership scheme for subject links and careers advice. The school's own annual Celebration of Achievement event, held locally, is an occasion when the whole school can come together, past and present. It is highly prized by students, parents and staff alike. It reinforces the sense of community that permeates the school and offers students encouragement to both achieve and take on social responsibilities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. Educational and personal support and guidance for pupils is very good. The school embodies a very effective marriage of Christian principles and the pursuit of knowledge in its approach to the care of its students. Procedures for child protection are fully in place and staff training is up-to-date. There are good links with outside agencies. All pupils are encouraged to behave well by a detailed and thoughtful policy that makes a firm commitment to discipline at the same time as offering support to any and all pupils when they need it. This creates an atmosphere of fairness that reflects the moral ethos of the school. This policy is consistently applied and thoroughly understood by all members of staff. The provision of the after-school homework clubs is a good example of this commitment. The head of pastoral care is a diligent and conscientious member of staff who carries out her role very effectively. School rules are refined every year in all year groups through the social education programme, helping to foster a sense of fairness amongst students. The introduction of an effort grade system being pioneered by the school reflects the school's Christian foundation and its desire to support pupils in their learning as much as possible. It provides an effective indicator of a student's attitude to a given subject and allows for early intervention, as well as having the potential to mirror any subject areas that may be failing. Because the pro-active behaviour policy forms the bedrock of school life, procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are excellent. "Everyone knows about bullying – you can talk to any member of staff – [the headteacher] will soon hear about it!" (Year 11 students). Sixth form prefects also share this ethos and are sensible, discreet and effective.
50. Procedures for moving around the school are well thought through and safe, and, especially with the new building and refurbishment of the old, are constantly under review by an experienced and effective health and safety supervisor. Useful routines at the beginning and end of lessons when students have to await the arrival of their teacher before entering the classroom and when they have to tidy-up and line-up tables at the end adds to good discipline and sets an example of thoughtful behaviour. A high standard of health and safety was observed in the classrooms.

51. There are good procedures for monitoring attendance which are straightforward. All individual attendance below 85 per cent is carefully monitored. There are good links with the local Education Welfare Officer. An award is given for 100 per cent attendance achievement over a term; 'bronze' in the autumn term, which can accumulate to a 'silver' in the next term and a 'gold' for the year. This promotes attendance effectively. First aid procedures are up-to-date and all incidents are recorded. The school benefits from the excellent medical provision for boarders. An experienced, committed and fully trained member of staff runs the facilities. A second member of the team has recently qualified as a first aid trainer and ensures that teaching staff's skills are updated. The school takes in a significant number of students who have serious medical problems. These students are looked after extremely well. The fabric of the school is regularly monitored and repaired by a vigilant and helpful housekeeper and site supervisor and their teams and the school is kept very clean.
52. Very good methods have been used to set a target for every student in every subject. These targets are based on a wealth of data about the performance of students that the school has successfully drawn together from a range of national tests and assessment by teachers. Each head of department has a copy of the information and is effective in working with staff in the department to set individual targets. This is a major strength of the school that is greatly appreciated by students, many of whom said they found it useful. The targets are reviewed three times a year to ensure that they are appropriate. In conjunction with this, each student receives a report each half term on the effort that he or she is making. These are sent to parents who are thus kept well informed about how well their child is doing. Tutors and heads of year monitor the effort reports and take suitable action if students begin to experience difficulties in keeping to their work schedule. Equally, students who do well are recognised. The school is aware that the next step is to work with staff to use the information to monitor the progress that students make and to set work so that they all are successful in reaching their targets. Some departments, such as geography and English, are beginning to be skilled in doing this. In-service training has been undertaken for this next step.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

53. Parents expressed very positive views about the school when responding to the questionnaire and at the parents' meeting. In the questionnaire the highest percentage of agreement concerned 'the school expects my child to do his or her best'. This reflects the effort the school makes to balance academic achievement with personal development, to balance discipline with care. The next two most positive replies were that the school is well led and managed, followed by, 'feeling comfortable about approaching the school with a problem'. The latter suggests that the school is very effective in achieving its motto: 'Serviam' – 'I serve'. Parents responding to the questionnaire feel that the school could most improve by working more closely with parents and keeping them better informed. These views are at odds with the parents' meeting when parents felt overwhelmingly that the school had excellent links with parents. Inspectors judge that the school does have very good links with parents. The school provides a comprehensive range of information on the progress of students. This consists of target and effort grade sheets issued every term. At the end of the year, the annual school report is issued with a third set of target reviews and effort grade sheets. These documents together give a very clear view of the progress of students and what they should do to improve. The school newsletters offer much valuable practical information. Parents agree that staff respond quickly to letters sent in by them. Parents' evenings are well attended and the school makes considerable efforts to contact those parents who can not attend. Parents feel that the headteacher is always available for them. The school has a very positive attitude to parents' views. For example, the school is working hard in conjunction with parents, the local authority and a neighbouring school to have a traffic control system installed on the busy dual carriageway outside the school gates in the interests of pupil safety.
54. The impact of parents' involvement on the life of the school is very good. Some parents come into school to assist with mock interviews for students who are leaving. Many parents help with school trips and with sports fixtures. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are closely involved in their child's individual education plans. Year 7 parents attend the first Harvest Festival of their child's school career and are offered information on their child's settling in. The Parents Friends Association is very active and supportive of the school. It is entirely run by self-motivated volunteers comprising ex-parents and current parents. Large sums of money have been raised and the Association chooses which of the several projects the school has listed they are going to

support. The Association has helped sixth-formers in their fund-raising activities and has given talks to students in assemblies. It provides a sense of continuity which adds to the school community.

55. Partnership with parents of students with special educational needs is strong and productive. A high proportion of parents attend the annual reviews of students with statements of special educational need, and the subsequent transitional reviews. The special educational needs co-ordinator operates an open door policy, which parents appreciate. Parents are asked to contribute to their child's individual education plans, and many do so, thereby increasing their level of involvement in their child's education and making it more effective.
56. The contribution of parents to their children's learning at school and at home is very good. Many are willing to come into school and discuss a potential issue concerning their child if the school telephones them with a query. Parents appreciate the well designed student planners and find them a useful tool to be involved with their child's learning. Following much consultation with parents, the home school agreement about homework is printed in the student planners. It is clear that much homework involves research carried out at home often with the assistance of parents. Parents had mixed reactions to whether the school was setting the right amount of homework. Inspectors judge that the amount of homework for the different year groups is about right. Parents enjoy various events in school such as the Sports Day and Family Barbecue and may attend Mass with the school community. They were very appreciative of a memorial service for two Year 11 students who died of leukaemia last year arranged by the school. Parents also attend and look forward to the annual Celebration of Achievement held in a local hall to incorporate the large numbers of people involved.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The overall leadership of the school is very good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. She has a clear vision of how to take the school forward and she gives a very good direction to staff and students. The leadership is characterised by a clear focus on ensuring that each student achieves as highly as possible and a thoughtful and analytical approach to putting systems into place to support this aim. The mission statement of the school is based upon the Ursuline traditions and the leadership and management of the school have successfully embedded this philosophy into its everyday life. Very good methods have been established to manage the school and these are continuing to be reviewed and to develop.
58. The senior management team has clear roles and responsibilities and supports the headteacher most successfully. Each member of the team has set out plans for the development of their area of responsibility. These plans are thoughtful and based on good information from sources, such as research and in-service training. As a result, staff are motivated, work hard and the team work in the school is very good.
59. Governors are highly involved in the school and ensure that the school complies with all legal requirements. The governing body is relatively new but has already established very good methods of finding out about the work of the school and using this to steer it. An example of this is that each governor is attached to a department and is expected to visit it at least once a year. Using the school development as a focus, they write a brief report on their visits which are then fed back at governing body meetings. Not all have yet made a visit as the process is new.
60. Heads of department have worked hard to set up systems for managing their departments and they give effective leadership. All have monitored the work of their department. Monitoring of the school's work and using the information to move the school forward is good and is developing well. Staff use information from assessment very effectively. The information is compared with national data to check on whether or not the school is achieving as well as it should. All departments analyse performance in examinations and use the results to improve their teaching and curriculum in the following year. Plans to observe all teachers in their classrooms by senior management and by colleagues have been implemented and all should have been observed by Easter. The results are shared with individuals and it is planned to share the information when it is complete with the whole staff so that all can learn from best practice.
61. The school development plan is most useful in helping staff to meet the priorities that have been

decided to continue to improve the school. It is a thoughtful and detailed document. The priorities are highly appropriate and all staff are involved in setting these. Each department writes a development plan based on the school one so there is good cohesion between school and departmental priorities.

62. The philosophy of the school puts a high priority on every student having equal opportunities to succeed. The school has a well-founded policy, which is regularly monitored by the senior management team. Refugees of all cultures and religions are welcomed, and the College makes considerable efforts to keep them, to the extent of making contact with the local MPs. The school has an unusually large number of seriously ill students who are supported very well physically and spiritually. A fully qualified matron is available. Racial harmony is an intrinsic part of the ethos of the school and is helped by the number of pupils whose home is in other parts of the world. The management of the support for students for whom English is an additional language is good. Statutory requirements for students with special educational needs are fully met. Arrangements for assessment and review are very good. Students' individual education plans are of good quality. Specific grants are well used for the purpose for which they are intended and the school doubles this funding. Provision for special educational needs across the school is well managed and co-ordinated but not all departments use the learning support assistants effectively. There are effective links with external support and the school makes good use of the services provided by them.
63. A named governor chairs a governors' committee that has an overview of special educational needs provision. The governing body plan strategically for the education of students with special educational needs as well as it is able, but is hampered by delays and uncertainties of funding. Staffing is satisfactory but the co-ordinator has no other teaching support and no clerical help with administration. There is no easy access to a photocopying machine.
64. The school budgets very systematically and well for all expenditure. The senior management team and the governing body base their funding decisions on the priorities outlined in the school development plan and always seek best value in the allocation of contracts. For example, some of the surplus boarding accommodation was converted to classroom accommodation. The architects' estimate for the conversion was beyond the school's budget, but, by cleverly using some of their own resources, the building work and refurbishment was completed to a good standard for a tenth of the estimated cost. The senior managers' experience as an independent school serves them well in their application of the principles of best value. They are accustomed to putting their resource requirements out to tender and to exploiting the tendering process for the benefit of their students. Significant savings were made in this way when the new information technology suites were being equipped.
65. Heads of department have responsibility for their own budgets and similarly seek to maximise the value they can get from funding in terms of the effectiveness of the resources they purchase. When a bid is put in for additional resources, the senior management team is prepared to make budget holders accountable for the effectiveness of the financial decision they have made. When additional funding was made available to the science department, for example, to enable them to move to a modular examination course, it was made clear that the outcomes of this would be monitored to ensure that it gave good value for money. Significant improvements in examination performance have resulted. Overall, the quality of educational provision has benefited from the wise and careful management of the budget. The small amount of funding that can be spared from essential salaries and maintenance has been allocated successfully to areas of educational priority. Although the school is running a deficit budget, the quality and rigour of financial management are good. The last auditors' report raised a number of minor issues, all of which have been tackled satisfactorily. The deficit is planned, with the agreement of the local authority, and is the result of the school's growing numbers. Annual funding, based always on numbers on roll in the previous year, has not kept pace with the rapid growth of the school.
66. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology. It is used well for administration and in many subject areas, following the very recent completion of the new ICT suites, there are signs of increased use and awareness. Special grants, such as those for educating students with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, are used appropriately. There is regular review of the effectiveness of spending decisions by the senior management team and, informally, by governors. Overall, taking account of the progress made by students, the quality of

teaching, and the very good personal development of students, off-set against the relatively high costs of the school, value for money is satisfactory.

Staffing, resources and accommodation

67. Governors have agreed an approach to performance management and are up-to-date with requirements. The school makes effective use of in-service training to improve the expertise of its staff. Staff who attend courses are given time at staff meetings to share the information and the school appropriately uses the expertise of staff to run in-service training sessions, an example being recent training on key skills in the sixth form. Staff new to the school are welcomed and receive effective support through a programme of induction. Those who wish to take further qualifications are encouraged and supported to do so.
68. There is a sufficient number of teaching staff and learning support assistants who are deployed well. Learning support assistants are carefully inducted into their duties and have good opportunities to attend a variety of courses. There are currently too few learning support assistants to give consistent support in some lessons, and much needed additional support to teachers and students in some lessons in practical subjects. The co-ordinator has rightly expanded her role to give good advice to some teachers on how to make lessons more appropriate for low achievers and has trained learning support assistants to do the same.
69. Overall the quality of the accommodation is sound for teaching the curriculum. However this judgement disguises a broad range of strengths and weaknesses. The school is justly proud of the well-designed and spacious new block. Classrooms are large and well-equipped. At the time of the inspection the building had only just been opened and there were still some problems to be resolved. A new sixth form centre opened in October and a large conference room seats 120 students. Disabled access throughout the school is very good. Shared use of the large convent chapel is an asset to the school. The medical facilities, which stem from the original boarding provision, are also an excellent asset. The mature trees and particularly the central quadrangle provide a calm and protective atmosphere.
70. The shortcomings in sports facilities – the sports hall can only accommodate up to 20 students at a time and there is only one small on-site playing field - form part of the school development plan. Students are taken by bus to good local facilities. There is no single school hall large enough to accommodate the entire student population. The drama room does not yet have any lighting or sound equipment as it has just opened so students can not experiment with the technical aspect of the subject. The music facilities have no practice cubicles so they currently share the use of the cubicles in the junior school.
71. The library is light and spacious in the top of the old building. A second new access is planned from the sixth-form centre. It contains a wide range of books and materials to support students' learning and encourage research skills. The provision of learning resources in the school is good. Science, ICT, design and technology and geography are extremely well resourced. Resources for students with special educational needs are limited. There are too few reading books for students in the special educational needs' base, although those there are, are suitable and attractive. Books that are easy to read are specially colour-coded in the school library and this supplementary resource aids pupils' progress in reading. A computer and some educational software for pupils' use has been ordered, but these have not yet arrived.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

72. In order to continue to raise attainment and the quality of provision, the senior management team, governors and staff should implement their plans to:
- (1) Complete the monitoring of teaching by Easter 2001 and use the information to ensure that teaching is consistent within and across departments, especially in modern foreign languages and geography. Focus particularly on an appropriate challenge for higher attaining students, how time is used in lessons and widening the range of approaches used; (paragraphs 7, 21, 22, 31, 60, 81, 89, 93, 127, 136, 138, 139, 143, 157, 181)
 - (2) Encourage all departments to use the information that has been gained about students to set appropriate work so that all attain as highly as possible; (paragraphs 52, 76, 108, 150, 158, 182)
 - (3) Ensure that all departments build into their teaching the use of information and communication technology. (paragraphs 25, 36, 40, 101, 108, 120, 124, 144, 146, 147, 168)

Governors should also consider the following areas for development in their action plan:

- A very small number of older boys in Key Stage 3 have poor skills of concentration and sometimes slow down lessons; (paragraphs 17, 80, 169)
- Monitor the time it takes students to move across the site and if necessary, review the timing of the school day; (paragraph 31)
- Implement the plans to teach literacy consistently across the school; (paragraphs 8, 9, 14, 86, 87, 176, 175, 181)
- Ensure that learning support assistants are used consistently well by all teachers; (paragraphs 23, 143)
- Review the time given to German, drama and music in order to raise standards in the subjects; (paragraphs 13, 33, 34, 129, 153, 160, 165, 167, 171)
- As funding permits, improve the facilities for physical education; (paragraphs 70, 176, 179)
- Develop methods to close the gap in performance in subjects between boys and girls. (paragraphs 80, 104, 141, 152)

KEY STAGE 4

73. The majority of students at Key Stage 4 achieve highly in relation to their attainment on entry. In 2000, the majority of students taking examinations had been in the school for two years and many entered with attainment well below average. Their attainment overall was average, although there were fewer higher grades than in most schools. The inspection found that attainment this year is similar to last year but is rising as the number of students who have been in the school throughout their school life increases. In 2000, of the students who had been in the school since Year 7, 71 per cent attained above average standards. The teaching at Key Stage 4 is good, 81 per cent being good or better and 100 per cent satisfactory or better. Twenty-eight per cent of teaching is very good or excellent. Students are highly motivated and behaviour is very good.
74. The curriculum offers students a satisfactory range of courses but there are no vocational courses and students in Year 11 do not have lessons in information and communication technology. The programme for personal, social and health education prepares students well for life beyond school and careers guidance is good. A wide choice of extra-curricular activities is taken up by many students and effectively broadens their experiences.

THE SIXTH FORM

75. The attainment of students studying A-levels and their equivalents was average in 1999, but fell below this level in 2000 although boys performed better than in the previous year. In many subjects entries are small and national comparisons are therefore invalid. The small numbers also make gender comparisons ineffectual. For subjects, which entered six or more candidates, only mathematics was above national averages for grades A and B. Art, business studies, English literature and general studies were all well below national average expectations. For grades A-E, only art was above national averages; business studies, English literature, general studies and mathematics were all well below. A number of subjects with small entries, such as Chinese, classical civilisation, French, music and physics, all gained 100 percent pass rates. A small cohort of students was entered for intermediate vocational examinations in leisure and tourism. Their course completion rates were excellent. All students following this course also gained junior sports leader certificates. An analysis of results gained by students at the end of Year 13 in 2000 shows that at A-level (and its equivalent) students were achieving well, though few attained the highest grades available, mainly due to their low attainment on entry.
76. Entry to the College's sixth form was flexible until September 2000 when stringent entry requirements were reinstated. Many students commenced higher levels courses with moderate levels of prior achievement and many are either new to the College, or have only been there a short time. Of the 70 students who followed various courses in Year 12, of whom 42 progressed to Year 13, 7 have been in the college since Year 7. Value-added data suggests that many are making progress during their courses and are proceeding to gain additional qualifications. Such outcomes are enhancing the students' career options. The development of vocational options, especially the intermediate GNVQ course, is offering opportunities for progression to a wider cohort of students. The progress of present post-16 students is good. Their learning is aided by good teaching and staff are committed to the success of the sixth form despite its small size. All students are further helped by the strong and sensitive pastoral care offered by the head of sixth form. Reference has previously been made to the availability of value-added data. Though this is used for some monitoring of progress and target setting, its use is not sufficiently embedded into the workings of the sixth form and more use could be made of such data to secure further improvements in examination grades.
77. This is a new sixth form but despite its comparative small size, the College offers a varied post-16 curriculum. Twenty-two advanced level courses are available, including a vocational option in leisure and recreation. Additionally, many students also follow a General Studies Course to AS or A-level. The College's curriculum also reflects its intake. For a significant number of students, English is an additional language. Where students are proficient speakers and writers of their mother tongue language, they are entered for appropriate examinations. This policy is successful in helping students to gain improved academic success and enhances their career opportunities. A recent development in the curriculum has been the introduction of a key skills course in Year 12. Though not universally appreciated by the students, this course is making an important and valid contribution to attainment. The academic curriculum is suitably enhanced by various enrichment opportunities. Students have scope to develop responsibility by acting as role models for younger members of the College. Musical and drama events are arranged, as are theatre visits. The College also fields sports teams at sixth form level. Students are very loyal; they appreciate the opportunities offered and are keen to succeed. There are links with Pfizer who supply mentors for students studying science. They also supply speakers, work experience, prizes, public speaking opportunities and summer school workshops. Other departments such as geography and business studies also have links with industry. However, the programme for sixth form work experience is optional, except for GNVQ students. Leavers' destinations for academic year 1999/2000 with 83 per cent progressing to higher and further education, demonstrates a sixth form that works on broadening horizons. A well planned work shadowing initiative would allow students to gain a valuable insight of business life and would succeed in stimulating expectations, further widening horizons.
78. A financial analysis of the sixth form shows that currently a significant subsidy is being paid to the post-16 sector from the rest of the College. The small size of the sixth form presents problems. Many teaching groups are small, and this year, as a temporary arrangement, both Year 12 and Year 13 students populate some courses. Given the changes in post-sixteen arrangements that were introduced in September 2000, the merging of sixth form teaching groups is undesirable. It places an additional burden on teaching staff and can constrain learning. Small

groups also present problems. The resources available for post-16 teaching have recently significantly improved with the opening of a new building with its enhanced access to ICT facilities and the sixth form conference centre and teaching rooms.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	145
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
3	18	47	27	5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	507	102
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	26	0

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	132	7

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	66

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.4
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	36	48	84

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	19	27	20
	Girls	42	40	35
	Total	61	67	55
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (81)	80 (81)	65 (60)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (24)	40 (44)	33 (18)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	23	26	22
	Girls	44	40	35
	Total	67	66	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (90)	79 (72)	68 (79)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (42)	42 (40)	35 (24)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	289 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	20	37	57

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	6	18	18
	Girls	25	37	40
	Total	31	55	58
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	54 (46)	96 (91)	100 (95)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	40.2 (40)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	17	18	35

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	13.0	14.0	13.6	3.0	2.0	2.8 (10.0)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7(2.8)

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		76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	5
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	15
White	555
Any other minority ethnic group	20

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	3	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	1	0
White	22	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	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)	35.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	404

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.6
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	22.4
Key Stage 4	20.6

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	1,654,440
Total expenditure	1,697,284
Expenditure per pupil	2773
Balance brought forward from previous year	-323
Balance carried forward to next year	-43167

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

612

Number of questionnaires returned

141

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	32	8	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	51	39	6	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	41	49	5	3	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	50	8	3	5
The teaching is good.	44	45	4	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	45	37	12	1	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	34	6	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	30	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	38	45	11	0	5
The school is well led and managed.	65	28	2	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	43	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	40	6	2	6

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

79. Standards of attainment in English are currently above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and average in the sixth form. This has been sustained over the last two years, except that A-level attainment was below average in 2000. The attainment of boys at GCSE has been lower than that of girls for the last two years and it was lower in 2000 in the Year 9 national tests. Although the boys generally attain standards slightly higher than the average nationally for boys, the girls have far exceeded national averages for girls. The good overall examination results in English are largely a measure of how well girls achieve in the subject. However, there are clear signs that boys' attainment is rising. In comparison with similar schools, standards are below average. This is not an entirely fair comparison for this school, because it does not have a fully comprehensive intake.
80. The results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9) have been above average for the last two years. Attainment was well above average in 1999 and above in 2000, when the standards of boys' writing dropped. Attainment is in line with that in similar schools. The average points score for boys is lower than that of girls, though above the national average. Inspection evidence confirms that there is a difference in the performance of girls and boys. More students reach the higher levels, levels 6 and 7, than is the case in the country as a whole.
81. Results at GCSE were above the national average in English in 2000. The proportion of students who gained an A* to C grade was 4.5 per cent above average and all students gained at least an A* to G pass. In English literature, attainment was well above average. A much higher proportion than the average nationally gained an A* to C pass, 84.4 per cent compared with 60.7. There was a very significant difference between boys and girls, however. The boys' pass rate at A* to C was 22 per cent. The girls' pass rate at these grades was 88.6 per cent. No A* grades were awarded in either examination. The proportion of A grades was below the national average in English, but well above average in English literature. Students' performance in English and English literature is better than it is in mathematics and science. Students with a special educational need and for whom English is an additional language make good progress and achieve well. At A-Level, results were below average in 2000, with no grades higher than a C and only seven of the eleven students gaining a pass grade.
82. The finding of the inspection is that current attainment in English reflects the standards shown in last year's test and external examination results, with some improvement at A-level and in the attainment of boys at GCSE. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average overall, although there is a group of low attaining boys in the present Year 9 whose attainment in English, and especially writing, is below average. Attainment at GCSE is above average and the problem of high attainers not attaining the highest grades in English has been tackled. There is evidence of work of a high standard from a small but significant group of high attaining students. A higher proportion of boys than last year is producing work at grades A and B at GCSE and the gender difference in performance in the external examinations has narrowed to close to the national difference. At both key stages, speaking and listening, reading and writing skills are above average overall. At A-level, although there are students who are attaining at a level that should secure a good pass grade, attainment is slightly below average overall, an improvement on the 2000 results. The students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve well in English. They make good progress in acquiring the skills they need or in transferring them from their mother tongue. Teachers are aware of their needs and give them appropriate individual help. Their attitudes to the work are always good.
83. In both key stages and in the sixth form, students have generally good oral skills and speak clearly and fluently. A class of Year 11 students was heard giving talks, for their GCSE oral assessment, on their work experience placements. They were confident and articulate speakers. Their fellow students listened well and asked appropriate and interesting questions. Both speaking and listening skills are above average. Students draw on a wide vocabulary and, from the start of Year 7, the highest attaining students have a very good command of spoken Standard English. They speak well and understand how to extend discussion, giving respectful consideration to the views of others. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average. At the

end of Year 11, attainment is well above average. Students listen intently and speak articulately and clearly. The highest attaining students in Year 11 converse perceptively and sensitively with their peers and with adults. Students of all abilities manage collaborative tasks in a constructive way in small group work and their learning benefits from this. Sixth form students have all the communication skills necessary to analyse their work and give presentations.

84. Students achieve well overall in English, but especially in reading, the very good teaching of which reflects the priority given to it in the department. Reading skills are well above average by Year 11. At the start of Year 7, only the highest attaining students read critically. Others struggle at times, especially with difficult texts such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By the end of Year 9, the lower attaining students show a sound grasp of literary texts and read closely to identify the main points. The higher attaining students read challenging texts critically and their analysis of texts is thorough.
85. At the end of Year 11, attainment in reading is well above average. Students read widely and have a good understanding for their age of the context in which a literary text was written. Some of the high attaining students make very good use of a bibliography to demonstrate the high level of research undertaken. The higher attainers have a very good understanding of how to make comparisons across texts and comment in detail on the use of language. Excellent work was seen comparing *1984*, *Brave New World* and *Animal Farm*. Only one of these texts was shared in class, the rest being set as holiday reading. The lower attaining students write perceptively about literature and most produce work of an at least average standard, show reasonable understanding of literary devices such as simile and alliteration and comment on their effectiveness. In the sixth form, students display a wide range of reading skills and confidently study and analyse a wide range of literary texts.
86. Almost all students write competently. The higher attainers in all years show a good understanding for their ages of the techniques for planning and structuring their written work. At the end of Year 9, these students write with precision and fluency. They are assured and talented writers, who choose words carefully to create effect. Good examples were seen in the work of the highest attaining Year 9 students on Shakespeare. The lower attaining students achieve a satisfactory standard in their writing, but technical inaccuracies, spelling mistakes and colloquialisms lower the standard their work. At the end of Year 11, students' writing is above average overall, with the higher attainers producing essays that are sometimes of A-level quality. The higher and average attaining students write succinctly, expressively and fluently. Sixth form students write competently and structure their essays well. Standards of presentation are generally good, as is the use of information and communication technology for research and for presenting work. When they are reminded of the importance of grammar, spelling and punctuation, all students respond well and write with reasonable accuracy. This is not done consistently, however. Students, at all levels of ability, do not re-draft, edit and proof read their work carefully or frequently enough in order to improve their writing skills. Further attention needs to be paid to the teaching of drafting skills.
87. The teaching of literacy skills is satisfactory in the English department, but it is inconsistent across the school. Some teachers ensure that the key vocabulary of their subject is taught, as in science for example, where there are also good examples of writing at length, but few correct students' writing to improve the quality of it. Even words that are essential to the subject are not always corrected when mis-spelt. There are very few examples of teachers insisting that a piece of written work is edited to improve the quality of the writing. As a result, basic errors, including inaccurate spelling and punctuation, as well as not applying the principles of sentence grammar accurately, are evident in written work. This is less evident in word-processed work, where grammar and spelling checkers help to identify errors for the students to correct. A more consistent approach is needed to the correction of work and the teaching of vocabulary across all departments. A potentially useful literacy policy has been prepared by a working party, and is due to be implemented in February. There is a lack of rigour and attention to the finer details of writing across the curriculum.
88. Students work conscientiously and enjoy their learning. They show initiative, taking responsibility for their work, and show determination to do well irrespective of their attainment. They recognise the challenges set in lessons and believe that they have the capacity to achieve high levels of attainment. As a result, students work productively and are habitually industrious and well disciplined. Behaviour is generally good, with very good behaviour in over a third of lessons.

89. The quality of teaching English is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in 92 per cent of lessons; good or better in almost 60 per cent and unsatisfactory in eight per cent of lessons. Teachers are well qualified, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about the subject. As a result, they use their expertise to broaden students' understanding of the use of language and literary tradition by giving good, informed instruction. They provide meaningful contexts and background information for, as well as appropriate extracts from works of literary criticism, to support the learning of both literary and non-literary texts. Very good planning contributes to effective teaching and learning in the better lessons. This leads to students understanding the objectives and being highly motivated. In the good and very good lessons, teachers use time constructively to pace and challenge their students to complete the set work and expectations of what students can achieve are always high. The less successful lessons have a slower pace and less rigour. The aims of the lessons are not made clear. Students always know what they have to do, but not always why, or what the expectations are.
90. All teachers, however, have good relationships with their students, create an atmosphere of trust and mutual confidence and use questioning well to extend students' thinking skills, their knowledge and understanding. All teachers use a range of teaching strategies to interest and motivate their students. Marking and target setting are generally good and homework is an integral part of teaching and learning.
91. In the very good lessons, teachers inspire students and present intellectually challenging work. As a result, students achieve well, because they want to meet the teachers' demands of them. They work hard, concentrate and persevere, even if the work is difficult. For example, a class of middle attaining Year 10 students reassembled Donne's poem *Good Morrow*, after it had been disassembled by the teacher, without reference to the original text. This was a demanding task, requiring good understanding of the language as well as knowledge of rhyme and rhythm.
92. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and is rich in the study of literature of quality. Some schemes of work are in place and others are being developed to provide a consistent and unified course for all students. Assessment procedures, including target setting, are well planned and are beginning to be effective in helping to raise the expectations of students and teachers. The resources and use of information and communication technology are good and the new accommodation is very good. Display is good and contributes to learning. All students have full access to the curriculum.
93. The leadership and management of the department are good and provide clear direction for future development. There is good teamwork. The procedures for monitoring teaching and learning are established, but there is scope for further sharing of good practice in order to improve the consistency of teaching. The department uses examination and baseline data well to develop and plan the curriculum and the successful emphasis in the last year on methods to improve boys' attainment is a good example of this. Care is taken to celebrate and share literature from other heritages and the subject makes a good contribution to students' personal development. The development plan is set out well and has clear and challenging targets.

MATHEMATICS

94. In the year 2000, students' results in the National Curriculum tests for fourteen year olds overall, were above the national average. At the higher grades, level 5 and above, the students' performance was well above the national average. When the results are compared to similar schools the overall performance is close to the average. Both boys and girls results taken separately, over the two years 1999-2000, exceed the national average for their age group, in particular the boys' results, which contradict national trends.
95. GCSE results A*-C in 2000 slightly exceeded the national average whereas those at grade A*-G are above the figures for the national average. Students achieved highly when their progress was measured against their attainment in national tests when they were fourteen. They achieved highly both in comparison with schools nationally and in schools in the local authority of Kent.
96. The A-level results show an overall improvement in 2000, particularly at the higher grades. This is an improvement on previous years' attainment but the numbers are relatively low and national

comparisons are therefore inappropriate. GCSEs taken by students in Year 12 in November 2000 were good in that over 60 per cent obtained C grades at GCSE; the significant majority of these students came from other schools in September 2000.

97. In work seen during the inspection, attainment is above average at age fourteen, particularly in the higher ability ranges. Work previously covered on trigonometry and Pythagoras, was both accurate and well presented. In Years 10 and 11 the work is of a higher standard, the ability of both top groups is impressive and students will be entered for two GCSEs, mathematics and statistics. Work in Year 10 included elements of statistics such as moving averages, regression and a full coverage of trigonometry. In a Year 10 lesson, students confidently discussed and accurately solved complex problems involving fractional index notation. The Year 11 high ability group will all be entered for GCSE at the higher level and the grades predicted, based on results from Year 9 national tests and further assessment are very high. Interestingly, the students were all aware of these grades and the progress they were continuing to make, a testimony to the monitoring system of the departments. In Years 12 and 13, students represent a fairly wide range of attainment. Many have joined from other schools, some of whom had only studied GCSE mathematics at the intermediate level. This evidenced itself in that some students are currently stronger in understanding mathematical techniques than they are in placing this into context and fully recognising applications. In Year 13, the students taking A-level modules, which contribute towards their final results, are mainly achieving C grades.
98. Achievement in lessons observed is very good in Year 7, slightly less well pronounced in Year 8 and 9 but good overall in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory and in certain cases very good progress. In one low attaining Year 7 class, the work related to the correct order of adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing numbers. Pupils worked hard, they answered questions accurately and when recognising any errors, offered explanations and generally were able to arrive at an accurate conclusion. The classroom assistants worked well with the lesson and pupils enjoyed and anticipated their support. Higher attaining students make very good progress because they work tirelessly and are well motivated and grasp mathematical techniques easily. This is a result of a teaching style, which, in the main, is open, values and encourages students' opinions, encourages questions, displays good grasp of subject knowledge, predicts the next consequence and is therefore effective.
99. The quality of teaching is good or very good in about three-quarters of the lessons. In the best lessons students are involved in open discussion, good use is made of resources such as the whiteboard or the overhead projector together with transparent calculator. Time is well managed with appropriate changes in lesson development and corresponding targets for each stage. In one particular low attaining Year 11 lesson focusing on GCSE coursework, students were given sensitive individual assistance. This enabled them to understand and discuss the work. The task was designed to investigate volumes of tubes constructed from card of a fixed area. They knowingly used mathematical language, such as 'prism' and 'cross sectional area' and fully appreciated the technique of calculating the area of a circle and triangle. They all recognised that the volume varies with different prisms and were unsurprised that this emerged from a card of a fixed area. Four-fifths of the class had special education needs and the classroom assistant displayed effective rapport with the group. Where teaching is weak, it is mainly characterised by a textbook driven and teacher dominated lesson. This led to a reduction in spontaneity and restricted the opportunities for students to be involvement and to ask questions. In one lesson, poor anticipation of the students' grasp of the topic and a weak introduction led to unsatisfactory outcomes, however the teacher became aware of the issue and adjusted the course of the lesson with an acknowledgement that the topic would be revised. Teaching at A-level is good because it involves the students in an effective question and answer teaching style resulting in testing their grasp of techniques. Further thought may need to be given on stimulating a higher level of independent learning when the appropriate time is judged to have arrived.
100. Marking is often good because it identifies what students have done well, indicates the progress they have made, and generally provides good guidance as to what they have to do to improve. Greater insistence on detailed notetaking would ensure that the exercise books became more useful for revision purposes. This is an issue in most classes.
101. The department is enthusiastically led and under this leadership is committed to reacting to change and attempting to make full use of new ideas. It enlists the support of the local education

authority. The development plan identifies an appropriate range of priorities and is clear as to how progress can be checked. Monitoring is precise and a database has been prepared to record all department information relating to both students and administration. The department is poised to meet future demands; this will need to include the National Numeracy Strategy and the development of information and communication technology, which currently is not used effectively. Increased use of detailed information about students who have special education needs is required to be in place in all lessons. The analysis of data from the national tests at age fourteen may be useful, this could identify weaknesses and provide information about the most effective order for the teaching of particular topics.

102. There is no centrally co-ordinated policy as regards numeracy, which corresponds specifically to the needs of individual subjects. The department has however provided a programme designed to raise the overall profile of numeracy, which simultaneously will form a basis for the forthcoming national initiative. It needs to be stated that the level of competency in numeracy throughout the student body is generally good. Any additional work will further enhance the attainment of students, particularly when this is applied to other subject disciplines. An example of current practice in science and geography is in the collection and analysis of data which is used confidently by students. The use of formulae is also confidently used in scientific calculations together with manipulation of the initial equation. Efficient use is made of measures, in particular volumes of liquids. In art there is evidence of accuracy in measurement in design which including complex patterns. These are commonly found amongst some high attaining students, more so when their work is judged to be experimental. Shape and space analysis also is evident together with an appreciation of proportion, which naturally is restricted to a visual perception and therefore is not defined by measurement. In conclusion, Year 7 students in a social education lesson enthusiastically calculated scores from a self-evaluation sheet where differing scores were awarded for specific questions; this was performed quickly and accurately.

SCIENCE

103. Students' attainment in the 2000 National Curriculum tests, taken at age 14, was above average in comparison with all schools. The inspection found that this remains the case. The performance of girls is slightly stronger than that of boys. The schools' attainment in science is lower than in English and mathematics.
104. At GCSE attainment is average. Standards have risen from last year when they were below average. In 2000, putting all the sciences together, the proportion of the students gaining grades A*-C grades was 41 percent. The Double Award candidates, who comprised 70 percent of the entry, achieved 38 per cent A*-C, which is below the national average. The Single Award candidates obtained no A*-C grades. Those who took the three sciences separately attained well in chemistry and creditably in biology and physics, but the small number of students does not allow a valid national comparison. Girls did very much better than boys and at 50 per cent A*-C grades, equalled the national average. As with fourteen year olds, the schools' performance in science is weaker than that found in English and mathematics.
105. Numbers taking science in the sixth form were too small to make valid comparison with national data. However, standards in the sixth form were unsatisfactory for biology and chemistry, but good in physics. Numbers of students remain quite small, although they are rising. Standards in physics are satisfactory, but they are weaker in chemistry and biology.
106. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. Students enter the school with National Curriculum test scores that are about average, but with widely different depths of understanding. By the end of Year 9 they achieve results that are above the national average. Progress is most rapid in experimental science, where students acquire many useful skills for the carrying out and recording of experiments. A Year 7 class demonstrated that they had mastered some basic skills when they were able to investigate upthrust on objects in terms of mass and density. In Year 9, students can competently utilise Bunsens, thermometers and stopclocks to examine the effect of salt added to water on changes of state. As the course progresses, greater volumes of written work are produced and topics are covered in more detail, resulting in increasing skill levels and a greater range of knowledge such as that exhibited by a Year 9 class discussing sports related injuries. This group had a good understanding of how muscles, tendons and bones act together normally and how this could be disrupted by injury.

107. Achievement for Years 10 and 11 is good overall particularly for the lower attainers. The depression of the 2000 GCSE results for boys was in part due to the arrival at the school of a number of boys from another school. These students had a relatively poor performance in the tests for 14 year olds and many of them improved considerably from this lower baseline. Observation of lessons and examination of the students' work shows that standards are rising, especially in Year 10. Teaching and written work demonstrate a steady expansion of topic breadth, this together with a further deepening of understanding strengthens their scientific skill levels and promotes a fuller understanding. This was well exemplified by the Year 11 programme during the inspection. In physics, students were studying kinetic energy and its relationships with mass, force, work and velocity, in chemistry they were considering the electron distribution of elements related to the periodic table and in biology they were discussing the implications of the uses of the latest discoveries in genetics. In all these areas they showed a promising understanding of what was involved and in biology they could not only appreciate the science, but also ponder the moral issues involved.
108. In all years, students with special educational needs are well known to their teachers and so teachers grade their approach and sometimes produce work tailored to their needs. Science works with the special educational needs department to review how well they are progressing towards the targets on their individual education plans. These students make satisfactory progress, which often becomes good when they can be supported. Students for whom English is an additional language generally make good progress. They are encouraged to write a glossary and to use electronic translators if needed. Those just starting English are withdrawn to specialist teachers who work through material produced by the science department. When they are able to rejoin they are, if possible, matched up with students who speak their own language. The higher attaining students are presented with more demanding work due to the setting system, but are often not stimulated within their sets to go further. Whilst achievement in the use of information technology was developing well it is currently recovering from the move to a new building and the conversion from Acorns to personal computers. Nevertheless use is being made of the school computer rooms where a Year 8 class showed that it could use an Excel spreadsheet to generate graphs of astronomical information. There is little doubt that when all is up and running and the new data logging equipment arrives it will surge forward.
109. Achievement in the sixth form is variable but often good, considering the low attainment of some on entry. Nevertheless many students are not achieving high grades.
110. Most students clearly enjoy their science work, especially the practical. They generally behave well and work hard. They usually work well in groups with most members taking part. Apparatus is handled with respect and increasing precision. They are keen to answer questions but, with some significant exceptions in certain groups, they pose few of their own.
111. The quality of teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Half of the lessons are very good or good. Lessons are well planned with crisp objectives that are made plain to the students so they are clear about what they are to learn. Classes are usually well managed and disciplined; they show a good variety of teaching methods and a good balance between theory and practical. Most lessons start with a check on what was covered last time and many conclude with testing what has been learned. Much of the teaching provides good factual knowledge for students and questions them to see if they understand it. Sometimes, there is too little time for reflection about what students have learnt. In the best lessons students are really encouraged to produce and to develop ideas themselves, similarly they are frequently involved in the design of experiments. In some practicals, students have an insufficient knowledge of the theory and whilst many understand how to do it most do not understand what they are doing and why. More use could be made of titles as questions and predictions to focus their thinking about practical work effectively. Almost all work is marked and the occurrence of teachers' comments designed to improve the work next time is frequent, but is inconsistent. Good homework is usually set and well marked; it provides a useful extension to students' learning.
112. The management of the department is good. The head of department is efficient and the members of his team work well together to develop courses and activities. There are good and clear systems of assessment, these are well used to inform and benefit the individual and to modify the curriculum. The courses fulfil all the requirements of the National Curriculum, GCSE and A-level; they are presented within a setted system to allow access to high levels and grades. The

curriculum is enhanced by a good programme of visits to and from the school, such as those to physics and chemistry lectures and fieldwork at Fawley. There are also good links with industry such as that with Pfizer, who provide mentoring for sixth form students, prizes, work experience and visits to the school by scientists. Two effective technicians work very hard to deploy and to maintain the resources. The department has just moved into good purpose built accommodation in a new building and has a good range of high quality equipment. The main library offers a well-used selection of books, also CD-ROMs, scanning and printing facilities.

113. The department is keen to be up-to-date and determined to do the very best for its students. The many enthusiastic teachers, coupled with the recent move from poor accommodation and the improved resources are leading to a steady and sustained rise in standards.

ART AND DESIGN

114. Standards in art are high for the majority of students by the end of Year 9. Pattern making, printing and pottery, especially clay modelling, are particularly strong. Students work in a wide range of media and are taught the skills of drawing and painting formally from Year 7 onwards. They have a good understanding of composition and the use and power of line in drawings and painting. Colour theory is also taught formally. The acquisition of these skills enables students to achieve well in later work. They are taught how to research a theme in Years 8 and 9 and gain an early awareness of the process of design. A significant feature is that there is no poor achievement evident for any student. Students evaluate their own work and are aware of the elements and criteria by which their work will be marked. This gives them a knowledge and insight into the subject. They study the works of major artists in connection with their themes. This gives them some knowledge of the history of art.
115. There has been 100 per cent pass rate in GCSE art over the past three years. However, standards in the higher grades A* to C were well below average in 1998 and 1999 but exceptionally high in 2000 with over 90 per cent of students gaining these higher grades and no one achieving below a grade D. The poor results in the higher grades in 1998 and 1999 can be explained in part by changes to the criteria for marking and grading. These were not fully appreciated at the time. The department has now received training from the examining board enabling them to understand the marking criteria more clearly. This, combined with extra teaching time given to students after school, and changes in administering the tests, has contributed to the exceptionally high standards in 2000.
116. Standards in the present Years 10 and 11 are well above average. Students concentrate on three broad themes based on African Art, Self-Portraits and Looking at Life. They visit the local museum to see a wide range of African art and also visit the National Portrait Gallery to gain inspiration for their work. They are encouraged and helped to be creative and imaginative. They produce some very good design work in lino printing and screen printing on the African theme. They can adapt imaginative designs from research drawings and display a good sense of colour. They receive good guidance on what aspects of their work will be marked.
117. Standards in A-level have been above average for the past three years with 100 per cent pass rate in the last two years. Results in 2000 have been the best with regards to the higher grades with four out of the seven candidates achieving A to C grades. Students' work is very good with regard to tone and the majority show a strong and dramatic use of line. Work from observation is close and detailed. At all stages there is provision for students to look at the work of major artists with appropriate links to the themes being studied.
118. Students throughout the college have good attitudes to this subject. There is evident enjoyment and satisfaction in all lessons. The vast majority of students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are diligent and work hard. Even in the few lessons where there is lively chatter they are always on task, working at a good pace for the most part. They are able to explain what their aims are and show an understanding of the work of other artists. At GCSE and A-level, students are mature and show initiative as they present their ideas and ask for guidance. They are composed and confident and work with a sense of purpose. They are aware of the demands of the subject.
119. The good standards and good attitudes of the students are directly related to good and often very good teaching. All the teachers have very good class management skills and achieve appropriate

discipline with apparent ease. Work is made interesting and there is ample scope for students to experiment and develop ideas in their own individual ways. There is good provision for higher attaining students. All students, including those with special educational needs, are given individual attention. This enables them to work with confidence and at a good pace. All students make good progress. Students with English as an additional language are well supported. At A-level, a student did the study of Picasso in his own Oriental language thus gaining a greater depth of understanding. The initiative here is impressive.

120. There is little use of information and communication technology at present because the department is not linked to the new personal computer system. The teachers have experience of a different system and need additional training in the near future. There is scope for some more demonstrations of techniques by teachers to ensure that all students have confidence in the skills needed. Although there is evaluation of work at the end of some lessons this good practice could be used beneficially in all lessons and would help to raise standards further.
121. The department is well managed. Teachers work in a joint and co-operative manner. This is a strength of the department. Schemes of work are written clearly and present imaginative and interesting ideas. There are three art rooms, all smaller than average. Years 7, 8 and 9 are taught in two adjoining rooms that are barely adequate for groups of 20 to 22 students. However there is enough storage space and the teachers value the proximity of the rooms. The third room is adequate for the smaller A and A/S level groups. The teachers are well supported by a technician. When this support was given in class it enabled students doing printing to work at a very good pace undisturbed by the needs of others.
122. The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through its use of resources, the discussion that takes place and the time given to reflect about works of art both by well known artists and by the students.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

123. Attainment of fourteen year olds in 2000 was slightly above average. The percentage of students who gained design and technology GCSE grades A*-C in 2000, was above the national average. For instance, in textiles, 85 per cent of those entered secured A*-C grades. In food, the results were average. In resistant materials, the three students entered achieved A*-C grades. However, nine pupils were not entered for the examination in resistant materials. The predictions for this year is that for food and resistant materials, the results will be lower than 2000. There are no Year 11 students following a GCSE textiles course this academic year. Numbers at A-level are too small to make valid comparisons with national data, however, the students who entered for A-level home economics, fashion and fabrics, failed the course in 2000.
124. Attainment throughout the school is average overall. Students have a good understanding of the process of design. In some areas, such as the making aspects of the work, many students develop good practical skills which lead to well made products and an appreciation of quality in their manufacture and finish. The making skills are overall stronger than the designing skills. Students are paying increasing attention to the designing stage and some good portfolios being produced by GCSE students showing the development and recording of ideas are available in food, resistant materials and textiles. However, the use of technical graphics requires attention and there is some lack of attention to designing detail and appropriate construction and joining methods and techniques. Students' research and evaluation skills are stronger and many are able to analyse and suggest ways of improving the collected material. Some students are not sufficiently linking the specification stage to the evaluation. Many students demonstrate effective project management skills in all material areas. They are able to work independently, and a number conduct detailed research, and use data constructively when developing their projects. A few students make very good use of ICT in their work which contains relevant material presented to high standards. This includes word processing, the analysis of data and representing the results using pie and bar charts, and computer graphics. Presentation of students' workbooks, which includes writing skills, use of colour and graphics, is often good. Some good use of looking at the composition of products is carried out, for example, when analysing products in food to determine such matters as nutritional value, shelf life, taste and cost. Reviewing the work of other designers is underdeveloped in all material areas. Currently, control systems, structures, pneumatics, electronics and use of the Internet web sites, are areas for attention. The department

recognises these requirements, and now that they have moved into the new building and secured the appropriate resources which includes computer aided design and manufacture equipment, staff are to revise their schemes of work and to teach the appropriate skills and knowledge to students. Students give satisfactory consideration to the efficiency and fitness-for-purpose of their designs for A-level projects.

125. Overall, the quality of learning and achievement is good. Good working habits and a capacity to think in a practical problem-solving way are established in Key Stage 3. Where students are required to use these skills, they contribute to good progress. Lower attaining students and those for whom English is an additional language cope well with the making aspects of the work and make good progress as a result of skilled teaching and constructive help, supported by very good student-teacher relationships. Students demonstrate that they are able to use tools, materials and equipment with increasing confidence in all material areas. They are prepared to persevere in the organising, planning and making of their products and their productivity is good. In-depth knowledge of materials, tools and products, evaluation of their own capabilities and reasoning skills are weaker areas.
126. Students have very positive attitudes towards design and technology. They enjoy and take pride in their work, and demonstrate tenacity when making artefacts and products. The working atmosphere is often good and students co-operate very well with one another and with the teacher. They understand the need to operate in a correct and safe manner and their sense of commitment is a pleasure to observe. Behaviour in lessons is very good.
127. The quality of teaching is invariably good. Lessons are often well planned and organised and appropriately linked to the scheme of work. Resource provision and organisation are often very good. Practical skills are being correctly and safely taught in all areas. In most lessons, learning is driven strongly, at a good pace by the teacher. Teachers are specialists in their material areas. Some teachers set effective time targets and conclude lessons effectively with reviews of the learning points. Occasionally, students are not sufficiently challenged by their work. Marking of work does not always give students sufficient feedback on what they have to do in order to improve the quality of their work. The subject leader sets a good example as in the textiles GCSE results which were well above average.

DRAMA

128. Students in Years 9, 10 and 11 are following a curriculum in drama that adds an additional dimension to their learning. It brings good, expressive and creative opportunities, as well as allowing them to explore and address contemporary issues and their own developing sense of individual identity, relationships with others and feelings.
129. Drama is taught as a discrete subject in Years 10 and 11 to those who have opted to take it as an examination course. It is taught to all in Year 9 for one lesson of 45 minutes every fortnight. There is too long a gap between these lessons for continuity in learning and this means that skills are not developing as rapidly as they should. Consideration should be given to a minor restructuring of the timetable that would provide blocks of time for drama and art, so that in both subjects students would have lessons in consecutive weeks for blocks of time. Elsewhere, drama is included in the English curriculum, but the extent to which it is taught varies with the interests of the teachers involved. Consequently, students opting to do the GCSE course begin with few drama skills. Attainment is below average in Year 11. There is evidence of rising standards, however, and good work was seen in the Year 10 classes.
130. Students learn about and use drama skills and terminologies during role-play and discussion with the teacher. They listen very carefully to instructions, are skilled in working collaboratively in small groups and show an understanding of the importance of gestures and delivery of words when devising drama. By Year 11, most students have satisfactory skills in improvisation and experiment effectively with the use of space in order to understand a situation and the dynamics in a relationship. However, lower attainers are self-conscious when acting and are not proficient in using a wide range of dramatic techniques to present a dramatic performance. High attainers will remember and use all they have been taught about techniques such as mime, for example, in order to convey emotions and messages to their audience. They are aware of an audience and of the impact of their actions and the conventions they use. Lower attaining students tend to lapse unthinkingly into the unchallenging, naturalistic style of television soap operas.

131. Teaching is satisfactory overall, never less than satisfactory, with good teaching in a third of lessons. Drama is taught by a specialist teacher with sound subject knowledge. She has appropriate expectations and plans lessons well in order to lead students methodically through the skills and knowledge they will need to succeed in the subject. As a result, students are learning at a steady pace and achieving satisfactorily for their abilities. The best progress is made with the Year 10 students, because the teacher, who is new to the school, has taught them from the beginning of their GCSE course and her thorough planning is having a positive impact. In all lessons, the teacher is aware of students' shortcomings and works very closely with them to provide clear support and guidance. Time is used well in drama lessons and the teacher uses questioning well to enable students to strengthen aspects of their work.
132. Drama is led by a committed teacher, whose work is beginning to be supported by good schemes of work and systems for monitoring and evaluating the progress of students. However, much of this is still at an early stage of development. The department now has a specialist drama studio, though the lessons taught in the inspection week were amongst the first ever to be taught in a specialist room and no equipment has yet been installed. The equipping of the drama studio is a priority in the development plan and it is essential that this is completed in order to give the subject the status it deserves with the students and allow the technical aspects of drama to be taught.

GEOGRAPHY

133. The number of students taking geography has been too small to make valid comparison with national data. However, GCSE results were well above average over the past two years when compared with all maintained secondary schools. There were no A-level candidates last year, but in the previous year, A-level results were above average and all students who entered obtained a pass grade: in 1999, three-quarters were awarded one of the top two grades.
134. The inspection found that attainment at the age of 14 is average. Students have satisfactory oral and listening skills and the majority can describe geographical patterns or processes in simply constructed sentences using appropriate geographical vocabulary. Higher attaining students write more extensively using appropriate diagrams with explanations as was seen for example in Year 9 work on earthquakes. Presentation skills are generally satisfactory. Most students have attained appropriate geographical skills, they locate places on maps, draw sketch maps and diagrams and use simple graphs to present data. Fieldwork and enquiry skills are being developed well by using the local area as a resource. The majority have a basic knowledge and understanding of the patterns and processes they have studied, for example Year 7 students can explain the rain cycle and Year 8 students understand the concept of the environment and how conservation groups help to preserve it.
135. At the age of 16 attainment is average. Students acquire a greater depth of knowledge and understanding of the topics they are studying during the two years of their GCSE course. Higher attaining students use reasoned arguments both orally and in writing to support their own judgements. They improve upon their research and investigational skills, for example in Year 10 there were some good surveys of the current flooding problems experienced in the country using a variety of sources including the Internet. However in Year 11, some students find difficulty with evaluating their findings. The small A-level group includes students from both Years 12 and 13 and these students are attaining standards that are close to average. They have well developed skills of data analysis and presentation and can write detailed geographical essays.
136. The majority of students achieve appropriately and make satisfactory progress over time. However, a substantial minority could do better. These students underachieve because unsatisfactory teaching does not sufficiently challenge them or extend them by building on skills already developed. Students with special educational needs and most lower attaining students achieve satisfactorily because teachers work with learning support assistants to offer suitable work. Students who continue the study of geography to GCSE level mostly achieve well. They have positive attitudes towards their learning and teachers set a challenging pace in lessons, as was seen in a Year 10 lesson on glaciation. In the sixth form, students are achieving appropriately as a result of good teaching.

137. Response in lessons is usually good, often very good and rarely less than satisfactory. Behaviour is good and based upon good relationships in the classroom. Students are well motivated, keen to learn and interested in geography. They get on with their work willingly and most concentrate fully during lessons. They enjoy being involved in discussions and most are able to take some responsibility for their own learning.
138. The quality of teaching and learning in the geography department is good overall. It is good in the sixth form and at Key Stage 4. However it is unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3 as, despite two-thirds of teaching being good or better and one-third very good or excellent, there is some unsatisfactory teaching. In the high proportion of good or better teaching, lessons are challenging and are planned to ensure that students learn effectively. Skilful questioning is used to make students think for themselves and to build on their previous knowledge to promote effective learning. An example of this was seen in a Year 9 introductory lesson on Japan where lower attaining pupils were encouraged to use their own views about Japan to build a picture of the country from which further investigation could proceed. Teachers reinforce and build on work covered in previous lessons and good relationships underpin good discipline which produces a pleasant learning environment in the classroom. Some very good examples of detailed marking and assessment designed to improve student learning was seen in students' exercise books.
139. In the weaker teaching, the pace of lessons is too slow, and expectations are low, too often set at the level of the lowest attainers. There is too much reliance upon undemanding worksheets or textbooks, requiring matching words or sentences, filling in gaps and colouring in. Learning opportunities are limited and pupils have little encouragement to think critically for themselves or to take an active part in their own learning.
140. The department is well managed by a hard working head of department and the quality of leadership is excellent. There is a commitment to raise standards which is reflected in the department ethos. Resources are efficiently deployed so that both staff and students are able to have access. Assessment procedures are designed to raise standards and pupils' progress throughout the school is tracked to ensure students remain on target with those falling behind being supported. Regular department meetings are held and teaching is monitored by the head of department. However, in spite of this, there is unsatisfactory teaching within the department. There is abundant good practice within the department which can be drawn on.

HISTORY

141. Attainment of students at the end of Year 9 in 2000 was average, though girls, who were performing better than boys, recorded attainment that was well above average. Just over 87 percent of girls reached at least average levels with 40 percent exceeding this standard. For boys, 56 percent achieved average standards, with 33 percent exceeding this level. For 16 year old students who took their GCSE examinations, attainment was above average. Sixty-four percent of students gained at least grade C, though no A* or A grades were awarded. All students gained at least a G grade. However, the size of the cohort taking GCSE history was small with only 14 entered for the examination. This makes any gender analysis ineffectual. For students at the end of Year 13 who sat their A-level examinations, attainment was excellent. All gained either grades A or B. Unfortunately, only three candidates were involved and this inhibits any national comparative analysis.
142. For present students in Years 7, 8 and 9, attainment is average. All students are developing a factual knowledge and understanding of history and they can identify what happened in various key events, such as the death of Becket, or how trench warfare was conducted in World War One. Students of higher ability are beginning to develop their analytical skills and can highlight outcomes as well as presenting factually correct accounts. Students in Years 10 and 11, who are studying for their GCSE examinations, are producing work that is average, but a significant minority are working well above this level. Many are very keen students of history and they work with much keenness and enthusiasm. Their skills at analysing source material are developing well and higher attaining students can identify features such as bias. The attainment of students in the sixth form is average but shows great variability. Some Year 13 students are achieving very high standards in their work. Their oral skills are very good and they are able to write fluently and critically. Other students are less strong and they are hesitant in their oral work and their written answers display less depth of analysis. Most of these students are in Year 12 and their progress is not helped as they are taught in classes with Year 13 students. Some Year 12 students are

inhibited in their learning as they are in awe of the standards being achieved by some of their peers in Year 13.

143. Teaching in history is satisfactory. The department comprises one history specialist but teaching is shared with two non-specialist colleagues. Nearly 60 percent of lessons were good. In the better lessons, teachers display very good understanding of their subject and have much enthusiasm for what they are teaching. Expectations are high and the students are presented with a range of challenging tasks to complete. For example, in a lesson on the political development of Germany in the nineteenth century, the range of source material they were asked to analyse enhanced students' learning. Very good planning and good questioning enabled the students to identify strengths and weaknesses in the sources presented. Learning was enhanced as the students' level of critical awareness was developed. In a Year 10 lesson on the outcomes of the World War One, a very good video was used to highlight the political negotiations that took place. Though some of the ideas were difficult to follow, the teacher frequently stopped the video to highlight key points. A combination of the information in the video, allied to the skills employed by the teacher, enabled the students to develop their knowledge and understanding. Where teaching is less successful, learning occurs at a slower pace. In such cases, lessons do not encourage students to question and they have to listen to verbose explanations and then attempt written tasks that lack challenge and that have not been sufficiently planned. In a minority of classes the learning of pupils with special education needs is not satisfactory as insufficient thought is given to how the work set can be tailored to their needs and there is a lack of reference to their individual education plans.
144. History is an increasing popular examination subject in the school. The department is managed well and assessment techniques are being developed so that target setting and the monitoring of progress can be made more effective. The level of resources available to the department is good and the quality of teaching accommodation has been improved recently, though one teacher is often timetabled in a room that is some way from other history rooms and this presents problems with accessing resources. None of the staff who teach history are competent users of ICT within the context of the curriculum. This point is acknowledged and is being tackled. However, thought should be given to developing a range of resources such as CD-ROMs and Internet sites that students might investigate for themselves outside lessons as part of research based homeworks.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

145. The 2000 Key Stage 3 results for ICT were well above national averages. The College has not entered any students for GCSE or A-level in ICT over the years. However, Year 10 students are following a GCSE ICT course and an A-level group of students will sit their ICT examination this academic year.
146. Inspection evidence indicates that the standards of attainment of students at Key Stage 3 and in the sixth form, are generally average. By the end of Key Stage 3, students are confident and competent in the manipulation of text and graphics, techniques of data storage and retrieval and the use of software. By the end of Key Stage 4 many students have some experiences of using computers but, without regular access in Year 11, there is insufficient work completed. Many students have good touch typing skills and their ICT language is developing strongly. The new ICT facilities and new computer aided design and manufacture equipment, which was established at the start of this spring term, will allow students to use the Internet and electronic mail and to experience computer control technology throughout the years.
147. Students' understanding of the impact of new technologies in social, economic, ethical and moral matters is relatively weak, as is the use of computers for measurement. This is well recognised by the new head of department and specialist teachers and there are plans in place to teach the appropriate skills and knowledge required. Many students are becoming confident with word processing and the use of spreadsheets and database work is growing stronger. For instance, in an ICT key skills lesson, sixth form students were learning to use spreadsheets in an effective way, using formula to undertake calculations, duplicating cells and verifying outcomes. Effective use of CD-Roms for research purposes, is evident in the geography department. Some very good ICT work was seen in, for example, design and technology, where students are using ICT to generate their design folios using word processing, data collection techniques and computer graphics. However, there is little or no evidence of ICT being used systematically in some

subjects. It is recognised that some staff lack confidence in the use of ICT which is restricting development of students' ICT skills and knowledge. In the sixth form, several students make effective use of computers in the development of their assignments. On business and vocational courses, they are using computers to help them analyse graphs and to present their work. Some students are making good use of a digital camera and scanners to enhance their presentation of work. The students following the A-level ICT course, have good opportunities to practise their information and communication skills lesson. Some students are making good use of the internet to aid their subject learning, much of which is through home computers.

148. The taught, well planned provision ensures that the quality of learning is good in Key Stage 3 and in the Year 10 GCSE and A-level ICT classes. However, as Year 11 students do not follow a discrete ICT programme and there is not a structured approach to the teaching of ICT across the curriculum, their learning is patchy and inconsistent. Very many students have regular access to computers at home and this is allowing them to generate some ICT work for other subjects. Many students display confidence when using the keyboard and when using the software programs. While students' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is overall satisfactory, the reasoning skills of many students are weak, and they are unsure about evaluating their own work and identifying targets for improvement. Many students, particularly at Key Stage 3, demonstrate an impressive pace of working and produce much work. Lower attaining students often enjoy working at computers and overall demonstrate good progress. Students are growing in confidence as a result of the new head of department appointment and new facilities.
149. Students demonstrate very positive attitudes to ICT and very many are enthusiastic. They are able to sustain concentration and work hard to complete the tasks that are set. Behaviour is always of a very high standard. Relationships between students and teachers are very positive and supportive. Students enjoy the opportunities to use ICT and very many attend lunchtime and after school extra tuition and computer clubs.
150. The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and manage students very effectively. The schemes of work are well structured and taught well, taking into account the needs of students of different attainment. Given the previous lack of resources, there has been considerable effort to plan the provision and produce materials that help students to retrieve lost ground. Teachers make effective use of time and resources. They encourage students to become independent and to support one another. Special educational needs students receive very good support from the teachers. Formal ICT ongoing assessment arrangements have been developed by the new head of department, and the weekly testing of students' ICT language and spellings is working very well and helping to enhance their achievement. The teachers recognise that they need to challenge students to think more deeply about their work and improve self-knowledge of their learning. Setting and use of homework is being well linked to lesson content to aid learning.
151. This is a strong and developing department which is being well managed by a newly appointed, assertive and hard working head of department who gives very good educational direction. Numerous hours are given up during the lunch periods and after college time in order to improve students' GCSE and A-level ICT skills and knowledge. The thrust towards improving ICT in the college is refreshing. The head of department, teachers and the network manager work very well together to meet student needs and to ensure that they make suitable progress. This includes the network manager working effectively alongside the teachers in the classroom. The head of department recognises the weaknesses relating to ICT in the college, and the action plan clearly identifies what needs to be done. Very good schemes of work have been prepared for all year groups, and assessment is well organised and includes the use of National Curriculum levels. The head of department is not only attending in-service to update ICT skills, but has a clear plan in mind about running courses in school to support other subject departments. An audit is being carried out to determine how ICT should be taught across the College. Further planning of ICT within other subjects, setting of tasks to stretch students further, particularly the higher attaining students, assessment of ICT attainment and learning experiences in other departments and monitoring of the subject across the College, are recognised areas for attention. It is the school's intention starting in September, to ensure that all Key Stage 4 pupils follow a GCSE, ICT course. The department recently moved into excellent new accommodation which houses the latest ICT equipment and is available to departments through a booking system. Departments are acquiring other relevant resources such as science data logging equipment and video conferencing. Overall, there is a very strong commitment to establish a strong ICT ethos in the College and to

improve standards.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES, LATIN AND CLASSICAL STUDIES

152. For fourteen-year-old students, results in 2000 were well above average. Eighty-five per cent of students achieved average standards compared with the national average of 64 per cent. Girls performed better than boys. For sixteen-year-old students, results in French in 2000 were above average. Girls performed significantly better than boys in 2000. There were no candidates for GCSE in German in 2000. Previous results have been good although numbers of candidates have been very small. For eighteen-year-old students results in French and German are good but are based on very small numbers.
153. Overall, students in French achieve appropriately by the age of fourteen. Progress is good in those lessons in which teacher expectations are high. In some lessons, however, progress is unsatisfactory. Progress is uneven in the four skills of language, speaking, listening, reading and writing. There was little evidence that reading skills were being developed. In some classes pronunciation was poor and listening skills were not being practised. Progress in German is unsatisfactory because students have only one lesson a week at Key Stage 3. In Latin and in classical studies pupils make good progress. By the age of sixteen, students in French and German achieve highly and make good progress.
154. In the sixth form, students make good progress in French and German. Progress in Spanish is satisfactory. The fact that the group contains both A-level and GCSE candidates hinders progress for all.
155. Overall teaching is satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form teaching is good overall. At Key Stage 3, although 50 per cent of lessons were good, the other half were unsatisfactory,
156. All teachers have good subject knowledge. There are two native speakers in the department and all other teachers are orally confident in the languages they teach. Homework is set regularly and always builds on work done in the lessons. Students make good progress in those lessons where expectations are high as in the Year 9 lesson with low attaining students where the teacher used the target language throughout and expected the students to use it for communication in the classroom. These lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and students are actively involved. In one Year 7 lesson, for example, a number of students took over the teacher's role to practice new vocabulary. In lessons where students make little progress, low expectations are compounded by poor planning. Often these lessons do not have a particular focus and lessons become a series of unrelated exercises.
157. In general, lessons at Key Stage 3 and, to some extent, at Key Stage 4 do not contain an equal balance between the four skills. Students develop good listening skills in those lessons where they are constantly exposed to the target language but the use of authentic material on tape is rare. In lessons with high expectations, pronunciation is practised thoroughly but students are rarely given the opportunity to develop speaking skills through pair and group work. There is no evidence that teachers devote time specifically to the development of reading skills.
158. Students are not clearly aware of the progress they are making. They know what their targets are but need more help to achieve them. At present the department does not do enough assessment specifically related to National Curriculum levels in the four skills. Finally teachers do not give regular feedback to students so that they are rarely aware of what they have to do to reach a higher level.
159. In Latin and classical studies teaching is good. The teacher has high expectations and lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Very good relationships encourage students to ask questions and so deepen their understanding. Both subjects make a considerable contribution to the development of literacy and cultural education.
160. The department offers a good range of extra-curricular activities including exchanges with both France and Germany and extra help at lunchtimes for students who have difficulty with their work. Setting targets for students is now an integral part of departmental practice. Marking of books is

thorough and offers regular encouragement to students. The time allocation for German and Latin at Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Although students are enthusiastic in Year 7, by the time they reach Year 9 they are not well-motivated and this is reflected in the small number who continue with these subjects at Key Stage 4. The time allocation for Latin at Key Stage 4 is also unsatisfactory. The rationale for the choice of main language at the start of Year 7 needs to be reviewed.

161. Leadership in the modern languages department is good. The head of department and senior management team understand where the weaknesses lie and the action plan has prioritised the appropriate points for development. Departmental targets show a clear purpose and relate directly to whole-school priorities. Monitoring of teaching is carried out conscientiously and is beginning to pay dividends. Documentation is clear and helpful and departmental meetings are clearly focused.
162. Leadership in Latin and classical studies is good. In classical studies there is well-conceived subject guidance for which the head of department has devised her own levels in order to assess progress. The next step is to do the same for Latin.
163. Staffing in modern languages is good. In addition to well-qualified teachers the department benefits from the services of a full-time French assistants and part-time ones for German and Spanish. Resources in both departments are good. The modern languages department has new accommodation. The school is aware that the fact that tables cannot be moved is a limiting factor and is working with the contractors to tackle this teething problem.

MUSIC

164. When students enter the school there is a wide span of attainment determined by the quality of previous experience. Although some students have above average skills, most students enter Ursuline College with limited musical understanding and teachers' own assessments confirms this.
165. By the end of Year 9, standards are well below average. Class singing does not develop enough after Year 7 as time for music is shorter than in many schools so students sing irregularly. Singing is satisfactory in Year 7 but in Years 8 and 9 there is insufficient volume, attention to diction, posture and being in tune. Most students play pure percussion instruments or keyboards in instrumental work but their performing skills are poor.
166. Students who play instruments can name note or recognise common signs, but most show very little understanding of notation. When composing, most students do not understand structure or the techniques to develop pieces, and lack the performing skills or confidence to realise them. Students listen respectfully and sympathetically to each other's performances but when they appraise music they use limited vocabulary because it is not developed from their experience of making music. General musical knowledge, for example of artists, instruments, forms, styles and especially well-known pieces and composers is poor.
167. In Years 7 to 9, students who play instruments and read music make the best progress, building on their previous knowledge, wider experiences and their personal interests. Students usually achieve appropriately in lessons but the time allocation for music is so low that most students underachieve over time. However, many of these students do not opt for music at GCSE. Pupils with special educational needs achieve appropriately even though few receive additional support in music.
168. GCSE is studied by a very small number of pupils, usually two or three in each year group, mainly girls. In the last two years results have been good but the small group size limits the musical experience available. In the present Year 10 and 11, students achieve appropriately but their attainment is below average. In composing, they show understanding of musical language but they are disadvantaged, as the department does not have enough computers for developing and notating compositions. They show limited technical vocabulary in discussion and their general music knowledge is patchy. Students' attitudes are good and almost all take advantage of instrumental tuition and activities to support their learning. The small numbers make it very difficult to sing and play through a wide repertoire to experience music practically. In the past two years, very small numbers, often one student, have taken music in the sixth form. Results have been good. Currently, four students are taking either A-level or AS-level music and standards are

broadly average in performing and composing. Students show a satisfactory general knowledge of music.

169. Teaching is good overall and teaching in the sixth form is sound. Teachers show sound knowledge of their subject and prepare their lessons well. They give clear instructions and present information confidently so students know what they have to do. Relationships are very good at all levels and the atmosphere is purposeful. Lessons are usually briskly taught to make good use of time. School resources are used well. Assessment is constructive and questioning skilfully draws out responses from shy students. Whilst teaching is energetic and encouraging and often charismatic, expectations are sometimes pitched too low so that work does not fully interest, challenge or engage students. Also, sometimes the teaching is too academic at the expense of practical activities. This affects the attitudes of some higher attaining and older students, especially boys. Discipline is firm but friendly; students behave well as a result. Students use equipment sensibly and enjoy taking responsibility for their learning, for example when composing African pieces in their groups.
170. Homework is set regularly but the work is nearly always written; this is a lost opportunity to extend and develop practical work.
171. Teachers are enthusiastic, very hardworking and committed. The department has faced many difficulties in the past two years, including several moves and staff changes; these have been unsettling. The management and support of music is sound. Music is now housed in good quality accommodation that provides a very pleasant learning environment to support learning; one area is yet to be divided into practice cells. Schemes of work and other documentation are currently being developed and need to be completed. Assessment schemes, related to musical goals, are not yet in place so that teachers do not have a real grasp of what pupils can do, know and understand, and consequently, what needs to be done to improve standards. Although resources are adequate, shortages include stands, audio, keyboards, recording equipment, computers and overhead projectors. Technical support is absent, imposing pressures on teachers. Curricular links with primary schools are not in place. Most importantly, the very low time allocation given to music needs to be increased in order for attainment to rise.
172. Seven visiting teachers provide a good range of instrumental and vocal lessons involving 12 boys and 36 girls. Standards are good. Teaching is of good quality and some very good teaching was observed in string and voice tuition. However, only occasionally do students use their instruments in class music. There is an appropriate range of extra-curricular musical activities including choirs, the band and recorder groups but no visits to concerts or other musical activities out of school. The music department is an open one that is invaded by students eager to make music during breaks and lunchtimes. Annual events include the Carol Service and spring term concert. The school is proud of its successes in the Thanet Music Festival; these activities reflect the dedication of staff and the enthusiasm of the musicians whose performances and successes bring credit to the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

173. Standards of attainment are well above average in physical education and in sports studies. Examination results in 2000 shows the proportion of pupils attaining GCSE grades A*-C, at 70 percent compared to a national average of 51 percent. Ten pupils were entered for the examination in 2000 and these results show significant improvement on 1999 performance where, out of nineteen pupils entered, 21 percent attained A*-C grades. Girls' performance was marginally better than boys in 1999, though this was reversed in 2000, with six out of seven boys attaining A*-C grades. Attainment at A* and A grades is below average overall, however 100 percent of pupils attained A*-G grades in both years. A-level students attained 100 percent A-E results in 1999 and 75 percent in 2000. The number of students attaining A and B grades in the same period was below the national average for all maintained schools.
174. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is average with some above average attainment in gymnastics and basketball for higher attaining groups. Year 7 pupils discuss tactical play and know their positions in a 'chicken scratch scrum' in rugby while the teacher regularly reinforces learning with clear explanations allowing pupils to reflect on how to form the 'hook' and release the ball. Both boys and girls show good levels of fitness and competence in keeping the ball in play and using the space effectively. In Year 8 gymnastics, girls are attaining good levels of control and make good progress in developing skills especially where teachers' expectations in terms of work rate are high. They demonstrate confidence in combining a sequence of floor activities showing increasing awareness in improving the quality of control in movements as they learn how to accelerate and decelerate. Higher attaining pupils are extended effectively as they introduce a twist into their sequences and as a result, show a variety of increasingly refined techniques. They make good gains overall. Year 9 pupils show developing confidence in swimming and the majority can suggest ways of improving the front crawl, for example, by keeping the head down and breathing to the side. Pupils with special needs receive good support and feel secure in the pool and in basketball lessons. They receive clear explanation and teachers demonstrate skills effectively. All show some success and confidence which boosts their self-esteem. In a higher attaining Year 9 mixed basketball lesson, a majority of the class was inspired by the most talented pupils and as a result, mid-attaining girls increased their speed and awareness of the game overall. Pupils learn about safe support in gymnastics and the majority understands the benefits of engaging in health-promoting activities. Standards in pupils' personal hygiene are low because limited showering facilities prevents use after vigorous activity. Achievement overall is good because skills are systematically developed, however, the restriction on indoor space with reduced court facilities is having a detrimental effect on the quality of provision for larger classes, particularly in games.
175. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is average. No lessons were observed in Year 11, as they were not on timetable during the inspection days. In a girls' Year 10 football lesson, the majority understood the techniques of passing and how to use the space effectively when attacking and defending. Most contributed effectively in evaluating their performance to help them improve their speed and change of direction. Most pupils demonstrate good levels of control in keeping possession of the ball and all adhere to the rules, working co-operatively in competitive play. Pupils undertake the role of referee or lines-person and learn commands for foul and rules of non-contact in the game. They are familiar with football terms and use these in evaluation sessions with increasing confidence. Pupils designed a programme to promote safe health and checked their own fitness levels to help them understand the approximate length of time a variety of exercises need to be sustained. They know how to check their heart rate using equipment and make decisions in their subsequent planning. In theory lessons, pupils develop knowledge about respiration and the action of the intercostal muscle. They test their breathing capacity and separate carbon dioxide in scientific experiments and record their data appropriately. Folders of work show good application in planning and analysing results. The standard of literacy development in short essay writing is good for higher-attaining girls who are making very good progress, however, extended writing skills are inconsistent for lower attaining boys where the quality of presentation and planning is low and overall achievement is less than expected. The standard for girls in sports studies is higher than that for boys, overall.
176. At sixth form level, students are attaining average standards. Numbers have substantially increased in Year 12 in the last two years and students are taking AS-level in the current year. Students discuss how to enhance performance through arousal and motivation and demonstrate good levels of sophisticated response through knowledge of their own personal involvement in

sport. Folders of work show good levels of presentation and planning and the higher attaining students are effectively extended through critical essay writing where they explore social and moral issues in sport, such as, gender, politics, race and education. There are some inconsistencies in literacy skills and students' first hand research is not always evident in their planning. Students completing the GNVQ leisure and tourism unit on organisation and running a sports session, show above average standards for boys. Achievement overall in the sixth form is good despite the restricted facilities in the school because students refine skills and techniques in after-school clubs and fixtures to complement their theoretical studies.

177. Standards in pupils' attitudes, values and personal development in physical education are very good overall. Most work with sustained effort and concentration in all activities. Pupils are co-operative and pleasant and their commitment to learning through individual, pairs and group work in gymnastic, swimming and games activities is positive. Behaviour is very good overall, however, a few boys in Year 10 show inattentiveness in lessons. Many pupils develop initiative and enthusiasm in the good range of competitive sporting activities provided outside lessons by the enthusiastic and committed physical education staff. Pupils enjoy physical education and their interest is reflected in the good standards of dress, participation and respect for their teachers.
178. The quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good at Key Stage 3 and in sixth form. Almost half the lessons observed were very good or excellent. Teachers' subject expertise and enthusiasm is commendable and is communicated effectively to pupils at all levels. Very good use is made of questioning in all lessons observed to establish what pupils know and understand, for example, when reinforcing and extending learning about calf muscles, ham-strings and biceps. The *command* method of teaching is used effectively in many lessons to help pupils increase their pace of physical effort. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' involvement and challenge individuals and groups to improve their performance through demonstration and constructive feedback which ensure that pupils know how they are achieving. Planning for all levels of attainment is very good with considerable attention given to the grouping and organisation of pupils within a lesson so that all pupils are moved on and build on previous learning. Opportunities are very good for assessment through the use of a video camera which effectively motivates pupils and improves their performance skills. Where there are inconsistencies in teaching, the work done by students who have not taken part is insufficiently used in group evaluation at the end of lessons.
179. The department is led with considerable skill, expertise and sensitivity despite the limited accommodation and quality of on-site facilities. The quality and range of learning opportunities is reduced for the larger groups at Key Stage 3 because the gymnasium is small with gymnastics restricted to floor activities. Hard-court facilities are shared with break and lunch recreation and maintenance of netting is poor. Pupils using the nearby leisure centre for swimming and basketball lose curriculum time in travelling to and from the amenity, reducing provision overall. Changing facilities are insufficient for the number of pupils time-tabled for games and physical education on four out of five afternoons weekly. The present arrangement for supervising changing and the use of classrooms is unsatisfactory. Students do not always shower after swimming and other vigorous activities which has an unfavourable impact on pupils' health and hygiene overall. Information technology has not yet been developed in guidance for the subject.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

180. Attainment of students at the end of Year 13 in their A-level business studies examination in 2000 was well below average for both grades A and B and A to E, with only just over 57 percent of the group gaining at least a grade E. For the small number of vocational students following options in leisure and tourism, completion rates were excellent. Modular results available for students of A-level business studies show that results are improving. Those attaining A and B grades are still well below average, but A to E grades have risen to nearly 78 percent which, though still below national figures, is much closer to the average. Such figures should also be placed in context. A significant number of students following vocational courses have modest levels of prior attainment. This is especially true of those following the intermediate course in leisure and recreation. For many, their final results indicate good progress during their courses of study. The majority of students are developing an understanding of business and the working environment. Most can identify key features and can describe various aspects of business behaviour, but comparatively few are able to offer detailed analysis. For example, business students can identify the main

causes of inflation, but are less certain in identifying the impact of inflationary pressures on businesses. No student was able to explain how inflationary pressures might actually benefit some sectors of business.

181. Teaching of vocational subjects is satisfactory therefore, despite the results, many students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory and some were good. In the better lessons, staff use their own knowledge and understanding to enliven the material presented and the examples offered help reinforce the students' learning. Learning is also fostered when staff set students good and relevant exercises to complete. For example in an A-level business studies lesson, students studied various theories of motivation. They were then required to examine Taylor's theory in more depth and apply his ideas to a modern day commercial enterprise. Though the students worked at differing speeds, all were able to identify theoretical features that could be applied to the working environment. Higher attaining students were able to develop the analysis a stage further and offer criticisms and highlight some problems that might arise such as boredom and disenchantment with the work. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, the pace is slower and lessons are dominated by the teacher so that the students are prevented from asking questions. In such instances, students are more passive and learning is much slower and more superficial as the students are not encouraged to think for themselves. Nor are they encouraged to apply analytical skills when such teaching is encountered. For some students, their learning is constrained because their own literacy skills are weak. In some observed lessons, quite serious mistakes in spellings and the grammar used by students went uncorrected. In another lesson, a useful overhead transparency contained an obvious grammatical error. To improve all aspects of learning, it is essential that staff working on vocational courses have a consistent approach to the teaching of literacy.
182. Vocational education is a growing part of the College's post-16 curriculum and the recent introduction of a key skills course in Year 12 has enhanced this provision. A recent improvement to the College's teaching facilities has meant that the business studies department has been able to move onto the main campus. Most teaching rooms are good, though some intermediate lessons and key skills classes are timetabled in poorly designed rooms. The provision of textbooks and other learning aids, including ICT equipment, is good. Staff teaching vocational courses are beginning to use assessment data to improve their monitoring of students, but such initiatives are in their early stages of development and need to become more sophisticated. Much thought is also being given to how the provision of vocational education might be improved. Planning for the future is good and the developments anticipated include elements of vocational education being offered to students in Years 10 and 11.