

INSPECTION REPORT

TANBRIDGE HOUSE SCHOOL

Horsham, West Sussex

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126064

Headteacher: Mrs M Johnson

Reporting inspector: Mrs S D Morgan
1355

Dates of inspection: 19th – 23rd May 2003

Inspection number: 249255

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Farthings Hill Guildford Road Horsham West Sussex
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Ryley OBE
Date of previous inspection:	February 1997

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19653	Mrs E Dickson	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
27719	Mr P Metcalf	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well are students taught?
15208	Mr A Briggs	Team inspector	Music	What should the school do to improve further? The school's results and students' achievements
10817	Mr G Rayner	Team inspector	Geography History	
7926	Mr J Bowden	Team inspector	Physical Education	
30433	Dr C Corp	Team inspector	Science	
2496	Dr T O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
24142	Mrs S Argyle	Team inspector	English	
2495	Mr B Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
11746	Mr R Coulthard	Team inspector	Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?
23487	Mrs P Kitley	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	
18178	Mr I Matthews	Team inspector	Citizenship	How well does the school care for its students?
32367	Mrs J Pike	Team inspector	Art and design	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
3525	Mr P McGregor	Team inspector		

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Tanbridge House is a large comprehensive school with 1451 students in Years 7 to 11. It is the only co-educational school in Horsham. The catchment area for the school is extensive and an increasing number of students travel to school by bus. There are more boys than girls in each year group, with almost twice as many boys as girls on the school roll. Student numbers have been increasing and the school roll is expected to rise to 1500. Overall, students' attainment on entry is average. The percentage of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, at just under three per cent, is well below average. Just over seven per cent of students have been identified as having special educational needs, a below average proportion. These students have a range of needs, with most having learning and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is broadly average. Almost all students are white British, with small numbers from a range of other ethnic groups. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is low, and no students are at an early stage of learning English. Staffing has increased to meet the demands of the expanding roll. This, coupled with staff turnover, has resulted in just over a third of the teaching staff having been appointed in the last two years. The school has experienced problems recruiting teachers in some subject areas. Currently one part-time and three full-time members of staff are taking part in the graduate teacher scheme to gain qualified teacher status. The school is currently seeking Investors in People status. The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of the quality of provision in modern foreign languages.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Tanbridge House is an effective school which is providing a good education for its students. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is well supported by governors and good management at subject level. Teaching is good, overall, and during the inspection many very good and excellent lessons were seen. GCSE results are above average, overall, and standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- GCSE results which are consistently above average.
- Good teaching leading to good achievement by students.
- Excellent monitoring of students' absence resulting in well above average attendance.
- The very good leadership and clear vision of the headteacher.

What could be improved

- The attitudes and behaviour of a small number of students who are not well motivated and can be challenging in their behaviour.
- The work of senior managers who are inconsistent in implementing new initiatives and monitoring the work of departments.
- The range of courses to meet the needs of all students in Years 10 and 11 and provision for citizenship and information and communication technology (ICT).

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress overall since it was last inspected in February 1997 with evidence of good improvement over the last two years. Standards have been maintained, English has improved and boys now do much better in many subjects. Teaching and learning have also improved with over one quarter of all lessons now very good or excellent. The headteacher and governors have dealt with all the main weaknesses from the previous report with the exception of the daily act of collective worship. Significant improvement has taken place in the management of subject areas but some senior managers do not carry out all of their roles and responsibilities effectively. Recent improvement has taken place in the school's partnership with parents. Statutory requirements for citizenship and ICT are not met. Staff share a commitment to succeed and the school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	E

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

Overall in 2002, results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. The results were below average compared with those of schools with a similar proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals. Results have gone up at a similar rate to that seen nationally. Students did particularly well at the higher levels (Levels 6 and 7). Compared with students' prior performance in the national tests in Year 6, they achieved well. Boys' results have improved significantly.

Current standards at the end of Year 9 are above average. Standards are well above average in English and science and above average in mathematics. They are average or above in almost all other subjects. In citizenship, students are not achieving as well as they could due to insufficient curriculum time.

GCSE results in 2002 were above average overall. Results were well below average for schools taking their students from similar backgrounds. Results have improved at a similar rate to that seen nationally. Overall girls do better than boys relative to the national results. Results were above or well above average in almost all subjects. In geography, results were average. Relative to their performance in other subjects, students did significantly better in design and technology and religious education. Results were relatively lower in drama, English language and literature, geography, Spanish and mathematics. The school met the target agreed with the local education authority for the average point score but not for five or more A*-C grades or one or more A*-G grades at GCSE. On the basis of students' prior performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9, their achievement overall is good.

Current Year 11 standards are very similar to the most recent GCSE results with students achieving well in nearly all subjects. However, statutory requirements in ICT are not met because very few students in Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE course and all aspects of the curriculum are not fully covered in other subjects, limiting students' achievement. Students with special educational needs make good progress overall throughout the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Overall, students concentrate hard and want to do well. Many students take an active part in school life. However, in a small number of lessons a few students lack interest and commitment. A minority of students have problems sustaining concentration.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. The vast majority of students behave in an appropriate way both in class and around the school. A minority cause problems for teachers and their behaviour restricts their own learning and that of other students. The rate of temporary exclusions is much higher than average, although the level of permanent exclusions is falling.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Most students enjoy positive and constructive relationships with adults and each other. However, not all students respond positively to teachers and show them respect. Many students respond well to all opportunities for responsibility.
Attendance	Very good. Most students attend regularly. The high levels of attendance make a positive contribution to the standards attained.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching and learning are good overall. This is an improvement on the last inspection, as the proportion of very good and excellent teaching has increased significantly. Teaching is most effective in Year 9 and slightly weaker in Year 8. Students' learning reflects the overall quality of teaching. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, and satisfactory in geography and specialist ICT lessons. It is very good in English in Years 7 to 9 and in religious education in Years 10 and 11. Teaching has many strengths across all year groups. This has a positive impact on students' learning and progress and enables them to achieve well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and carefully prepare students for GCSE examinations. In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations and encourage students to think for themselves. Time is used well ensuring that students are engaged in their work and concentrate well. The teaching of basic literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. However, in Years 10 and 11 the contribution made by departments to the development of students' ICT skills is not co-ordinated. In almost all lessons, teachers provide work that meets students' needs. However, in a few lessons the work is either too easy or too hard and students' interest is not maintained. In some lessons, teachers have too few strategies for dealing with the students' inattention or in some cases challenging behaviour and this limits the learning of all. Most marking of students' work is of satisfactory quality. Homework is regularly set although its quality is variable across the school. Teachers generally mark written work conscientiously and provide guidance on how the work might be improved.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The quality and range of learning opportunities are sound. The statutory curriculum is in place except for citizenship in Years 7 to 9 and ICT across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. The range of extra-curricular activities and the programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) are good. However, the current curriculum does not meet the needs of a small number of students, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Students' learning needs are identified carefully. They receive good support. Work is generally well matched to individuals' needs and students make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Suitable support is provided for the few students who speak English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Provision for spiritual, moral and social development is satisfactory and cultural development is well promoted. Students are given good opportunities to extend their appreciation and awareness of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactorily. Tutors and year heads know the students well. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are excellent. Good procedures and practices are in place to ensure the academic development of students. However, procedures for promoting good behaviour have yet to have a significant impact.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Satisfactorily. The school tries hard to involve parents in its work and in their children's education and meets with some success. Most parents attend consultation and information evenings, and ensure that their children attend regularly.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher leads the school very well. Senior managers carry out day-to- day tasks satisfactorily. However, aspects of their leadership and management are unsatisfactory. For example, the line management of departments is inconsistent in both process and effectiveness. Leadership is good or better in almost all departments. However, the leadership of citizenship is unsatisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Effectively. Governors are well informed and committees efficiently led. Governors are now playing a more active role in strategic planning. However, governors are not meeting all of their statutory responsibilities, for example in ensuring that students in Years 10 and 11 cover all aspects of the ICT National Curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has reviewed its provision thoroughly and is planning appropriate developments. Suitable training has been provided to enable the school to be managed well as it grows in size. Some effective monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place which has helped to raise standards.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and management are good. Staffing is satisfactory. Learning resources are good and accommodation very good. The school applies best value principles satisfactorily.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel that their children make good progress. • They feel that the school has high expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of some students. • The amount of homework. • The closeness with which the school works with parents.

Parents expressed positive views about the high expectations of teaching staff and their children's progress. Inspection evidence supports these views. Some parents felt the school did not work closely with them, but the inspectors consider that it does work hard to involve parents and keep them well informed. However, inspectors agree that the behaviour of some students is unsatisfactory and found the quality of homework to be too variable.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. In this report, the term “standards” refers to students’ attainment relative to some clear benchmark, such as National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 or Year 11. “Above average standards”, for example, means that a higher proportion of students of a particular age are succeeding at or beyond the level set than is the case in the majority of schools. “Achievement” means how well students are doing now in relation to their prior attainment, which is what they could do when they started Year 7 or Year 10.
2. The school has been successful in maintaining high standards in GCSE results over the last five years. In particular, it has been successful in improving the achievement of boys and recent changes in teaching methods have been successful in improving their attainment.
3. In 2002, the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A*-C passes (62 per cent) was well above the national average but below those of similar schools. The proportion of students gaining five or more A*-G passes and one or more A*-G grades showed some decline. This was partly due to a number of students being offered an alternative curriculum. However, this resulted in students missing lessons in GCSE examination subjects and had a negative impact on their results. There are no significant differences in the results gained by different ethnic groups. Results over the past five years have been increasing in line with the national trend. On the basis of students' prior performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9, their achievement overall is good. Relative to their performance in other subjects, students did significantly better in design and technology and religious education. Results were relatively lower in drama, English language and literature, geography, Spanish and mathematics.
4. The students who took their GCSE examinations last year entered the school with levels of attainment that were generally average and left the school with above average levels of attainment. Overall, they achieved well in their time at the school. Parents feel that their children do well at the school and that students with special educational needs make good progress.
5. In 2002, the school met the target agreed with the local education authority for the average point score but not for five or more A*-C grades or one or more A*- G grades at GCSE.
6. As Year 11 was on study leave during the inspection week, no lessons were observed. A very close scrutiny of their written work and extended discussions with some of the students provided the basis of evaluations. Year 10 lessons were inspected very thoroughly.
7. In a number of subjects including English, mathematics and science, current standards are well above average and students achieve well or very well. In most other subjects standards are average or above and students’ achievements are satisfactory or better. Statutory requirements in ICT are not met because very few students in Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE course and all aspects of the curriculum are not fully covered in other subjects limiting students’ achievement.
8. In 2002, results in the national assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average but below those of similar schools. The 2002 results in English were well above the national average and above in mathematics and science. Compared with similar schools, results in English were above average and results in mathematics and science were well below average. Results over the past

five years have remained well above the national average and increasing at a similar rate to national trends. On the basis of students' prior performance in the national tests in Year 6, they achieve well. When students enter the school their levels of attainment in most subjects are average; their results show they achieve well overall.

9. The standards of work of students currently in Year 9 are generally above those expected for their age. They are achieving well in relation to their broadly average standards on entering the school. In English and science, standards are well above average. Standards in almost all other subjects at the end of Year 9 are average or above. Standards in citizenship are below those expected because too little curriculum time is allocated to the subject and this results in some topics not being covered.

10. Students with special educational needs make good progress overall against their clearly recorded starting points. Provision is well organised and work is generally well matched to students' needs in lessons. Good support results in a high participation in work for students with statements of educational need. Students make good progress in subjects such as English, science, modern languages, history and physical education where planning and teaching methods are well matched to their needs.

11. Gifted and talented students make the same good progress as others, the former mainly being taught in top sets, the latter being identified by teachers, particularly in music and physical education. Their needs are supported well through out-of-school activities in sport and music but not consistently across all subjects. Students in art and modern languages have extra sessions and in English they enter external poetry competitions as part of their extension work.

12. The school has very few students for whom English is an additional language and none are at an early stage of English language acquisition. The school provides suitable support and they are making good progress and have full access to the curriculum under the careful supervision of the progress and welfare co-ordinator.

13. Provision for literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory and students achieve satisfactory standards. Many subjects contribute well to students' literacy skills. Teachers promote key vocabulary in most subjects though often fail to correct inaccurate spelling of basic words. Students are encouraged to read widely and sometimes aloud in history, geography and modern foreign languages. However, the lack of a school policy is a constraint on a consistent approach by all teachers.

14. The standard attained in numeracy is satisfactory across the school. Students are able to meet the mathematical demands of other subjects. A strength is the use of data handling skills in many subjects for drawing and interpreting bar charts, line graphs and pie charts. For example, students use statistics well to collect data for soap opera surveys in English, establish heart rate patterns in physical education and to identify trends in population statistics in geography.

15. Students' ICT skills are at expected levels in Year 9. In Year 11, standards are at lower than expected levels for those students not following the GCSE course. Students have not had discrete ICT lessons and, while the use of computers in subjects is contributing to achievement in ICT, students do not have enough opportunities to use computers, so they do not achieve as well as they should. In Year 10, the small number of students following the GCSE ICT course are making satisfactory progress, but most students are not achieving well enough because they do not cover all aspects of the requirements of the subject. The use of computers outside lesson time is good with substantial numbers attending lunchtime and after school sessions.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Attitudes to learning are satisfactory, overall. Although Year 11 was on study leave and no overall judgement can be made about their attitudes, most students present at the time of the inspection take a positive approach to school and to their work. Those interviewed said they appreciated the sports facilities, and the opportunities they were given to develop their academic and creative interests.

17. In lessons, most students show interest in their studies and are keen to learn. They pay attention and try hard, welcoming support from teachers and teaching assistants. They are able to discuss their work with enthusiasm, as for example in a Year 10 food technology lesson, where students talked about food preparation in a pleasant and informed manner. However, a few students in all year groups are not well motivated and show little interest in learning. Often, even when the teaching is satisfactory or better, they do not bother to listen, and are reluctant to undertake written tasks. An example of this was when several students arrived late to a Year 9 music lesson, chatted while the teacher was addressing the class and consequently did not produce as much work as they should have.

18. The standard of behaviour is satisfactory overall. The school has clear expectations of good behaviour and most students conform to these. In almost a third of the lessons seen, students' behaviour was very good or excellent. This has a positive effect on their learning and the standards they achieve. Impeccable behaviour was seen in a Year 10 English lesson, where students politely listened to the teacher and to one another and showed interest and commitment in their work. However, a number of students, both boys and girls, do not always behave well, particularly in mixed or lower-attaining teaching groups. In about one in ten of all the lessons seen, students' learning was hampered by the immature behaviour and poor social skills of a minority. Some parents expressed concerns about bad behaviour in lessons, a view endorsed by the students who were interviewed. They felt their learning was adversely affected by the behaviour of others. The school does have a sanctions system. Behaviour, effort and achievement are rewarded through a system of merits and certificates. However, these are not universally valued and some older students in particular do not see the value of them. Several felt the school was quick to punish when behaviour was bad, and slow to reward when it was good. Around the buildings and grounds student behaviour is generally good. In assemblies, behaviour is very good. Students enter the hall quietly and, when they leave, stack their chairs to the side without fuss.

19. During the academic year 2001/02 there were seven permanent exclusions and 101 fixed term exclusions. The fixed term exclusions involved 54 students. Most were for persistent rudeness or aggression. This rate is high, and represents a considerable increase since the last inspection when there were no permanent and only 39 fixed-term exclusions.

20. So far this academic year there have been no permanent exclusions although the number of fixed term exclusions remains high. This reflects the reality that a small minority of students pose a significant challenge to authority. At the last inspection, attitudes, behaviour and personal development were found to be very good. Since then standards have been adversely affected as the school has absorbed students without school places, among them those who have been excluded permanently from other institutions.

21. The school continues to look at ways of reducing the number of exclusions. Students at risk of permanent exclusion are effectively supported through a pastoral programme where they are mentored by senior members of staff.

22. Teachers and parents recognise that there is some bullying, but there is no evidence that it takes place in any systematic way. Senior members of staff are always to be seen around the school at the start and end of the day and during break and lunchtimes. The PSHE programme contains units on identifying types of bullying and what students themselves can do to combat it. Informal discussions with students indicated that they are generally satisfied with the action the school is taking to discourage and eliminate bullying.

23. Relationships between students and teachers and among students themselves are satisfactory. Where teachers know the students well and relationships are secure, praise and humour are used to good effect, with students responding positively. In physical education lessons, students relate particularly well to each other and work effectively together in pairs and small groups. Most support each other and respect the capabilities of their fellow students. When asked to coach one another they do it sensibly and sensitively. At times, both in lessons and around the school, some students can be confrontational and use bad language.

24. Students' personal development is satisfactory, overall. They strongly value the opportunities they are given to take part in sporting competitions and, over the past year, thirty per cent have represented the school in competitive fixtures. Most students mix and mingle together well. At lunchtime there is a pleasant atmosphere, with students taking part in team games or socialising with their friends. In general, students display respect for their own property and the school building. The school is free of graffiti and vandalism but there is a considerable amount of litter around the grounds.

25. Students are given some opportunities to display personal responsibility and to show initiative. They assist in the running of the school in a number of ways, for example by helping in the library and representing their tutor group on the school council. A group in Years 10 and 11 train in peer-group counselling to support younger students, and a number of older ones act as senior prefects. Where they are given responsibility, they behave in a mature and sensible way. Students also show respect and concern for others by fundraising for charity. This year almost £6,000 has been raised by three year groups for various local, national and international charities which were selected by the students themselves.

26. Attendance is very good. In the last academic year the levels compared favourably with the national average. Unauthorised absence was also around average. Most authorised absences occur as a result of illness and medical visits, with some accounted for by holidays. The vast majority of students arrive at school on time and lessons throughout the day begin punctually. The high levels of attendance have a positive effect on learning and attainment.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

27. Teaching and learning are good overall and show improvement since the last inspection. The percentage of satisfactory or better teaching and good or better teaching have remained steady at 95 and 66 per cent respectively. However, the percentage of very good or excellent teaching has increased from 16 per cent to 27 per cent, representing good improvement since the last inspection. Teaching was most effective in Year 9 and slightly weaker in Year 8 although there were no Year 11 students in school during the inspection week and fewer higher-attaining Year 8 students because of a school trip abroad. Teaching was good, overall, in most subjects. It was very good in English in Years 7 to 9 and religious education in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory in geography and specialist ICT lessons.

28. Teaching has improved despite a significant staff turnover and difficulties in recruiting qualified staff in some subject areas. The considerable efforts to recruit appropriate staff are having beneficial effects on teaching and learning across the school. The school expects to be fully staffed in September. New staff, including supply teachers, are given good guidance and support.

29. Lessons where teaching was very good or excellent were exemplified by an effective and well-organised start so that students were engaged quickly. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson, students were welcomed at the door on arrival ensuring a controlled start to the lesson. The lesson began with an initial discussion focusing students on the objectives of the lesson and explaining how the lesson fitted into the wider scheme of work so that students understood what they should be learning and what they would be doing next.

30. Teachers also make effective use of time and the good pace of lessons ensures that students are engaged and focused. Lessons are well planned and make good use of a variety of materials and prepared resources. For example, in an excellent Year 8 French lesson, the teacher made very good use of overhead transparencies, video programmes, flash cards and textbooks to provide a variety of short activities which ensured that students maintained their concentration and interest. Similarly, in a Year 8 English lesson, the teacher's carefully prepared worksheet enabled students to identify different language styles in the publicity leaflets which they had collected.

31. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic in their approach. For example in a Year 9 design and technology lesson, the teacher's very good technical knowledge enabled effective individual support to take place and ensured that all students were fully engaged and learned new practical techniques. Similarly, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the teacher's very good subject knowledge and awareness of examination requirements allowed her to identify and deal with common errors and misconceptions about manipulating equations. Teachers' understanding of National Curriculum criteria, GCSE examination requirements and the National Strategy were particular strengths of teaching in many subjects and enable students to develop their knowledge and understanding systematically.

32. Successful lessons were exemplified by teachers' high expectations of students. For example, in a Year 10 history lesson looking at the 1920s, the teacher's high expectations of what students would achieve encouraged them to think for themselves and contribute well to group discussions, thus developing their own thoughts and understanding of the situation. Similarly, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the teacher's high expectations of students' abilities motivated them to concentrate and succeed with some challenging work on trigonometry. High expectations of behaviour were a feature of the most successful lessons.

33. Praise is also used to good effect so that in a Year 7 science lesson, the teacher supported students in their planning of an investigation on forces through the good use of encouragement. This developed their confidence in what they were doing and ensured their interest and involvement. Similarly in a Year 7 PSHE lesson, the genuine use of praise and the positive relationships between the teacher and the students allowed students to talk openly about their own experiences of bullying and being bullied, thus supporting their understanding of other people's point of view.

34. In other lessons, teachers made good use of questioning to support students in developing views, explaining ideas and checking understanding. An excellent example of this was seen in a Year 9 mathematics lesson where the teacher invited students to explain how to solve a simultaneous equation to the rest of the class. The student's explanation was sensitively supported by the teacher's careful

questioning such as “Why are you substituting in the original equation?” and concluded with a recap which developed and extended students’ knowledge and understanding of the work.

35. Homework is set regularly although not always recorded in the student planners. The quality of the homework set is variable across the school. For example in English and science, it is used well to consolidate class work and develop the work of the lesson. However, in other subject areas, for example design and technology and ICT, there is too much “finishing off” work and insufficient work set to stretch and challenge the most able. Some students and parents feel that too much homework is set and the work is not always worthwhile. Teachers generally mark written work conscientiously and provide guidance on how the work might be improved although, in geography, this guidance is too focused on presentation and spelling rather than subject specific targets.

36. Literacy skills are well taught in English lessons with a strong focus on ensuring students know what they are going to learn and a discussion of their learning at the end of the lesson. Teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for students to apply their literacy skills across the curriculum. Many subjects contribute well to students’ literacy skills and there are pockets of good practice. However, the lack of a school policy is a constraint on a consistent approach by all teachers.

37. Numeracy skills are taught well in mathematics lessons with an appropriate focus on lesson starters and plenary sessions in line with the National Strategy recommendations. Teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for students to apply their numeracy skills in other subjects across the curriculum although, to date, there is no whole-school policy on numeracy. Opportunities to use numeracy are found in science for calculating compound measures such as speed, given distance and time. Data handling skills are used extensively across the curriculum for collecting, representing and interpreting data, such as collecting data for soap opera surveys in English, establishing heart rate patterns in physical education and identifying trends in population statistics in geography.

38. ICT skills are taught satisfactorily in specialist lessons. Recently appointed teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. Teachers provide some good opportunities for students to use computers to support their learning in other subjects. However, the contribution made by each department has not been sufficiently co-ordinated for students in Years 10 and 11. This means that not all of the skills, knowledge and understanding required by the National Curriculum are covered.

39. Teaching had weaknesses or was unsatisfactory where it lacked rigour or the absence of classroom procedures and rules stopped the lesson from operating effectively. In these lessons, expectations of students were unclear and teaching did not demand student engagement so that, for example in a Year 10 science lesson, students completed little work because expectations were not clearly expressed from the start. Similarly, in a Year 10 geography lesson, students chatted among themselves and were not sure what to do because they had not listened to the teacher’s instructions. In these lessons, teachers had too few strategies for dealing with the students’ inattention or in some cases challenging behaviour and this limited the learning of all.

40. Other reasons for weaknesses in teaching include unsatisfactory planning, lack of pace and lessons where the work was too challenging or too easy. For example, in a Year 9 religious education lesson, the work was too abstract and challenging for the students who did not know how to proceed whereas in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the work on dividing decimals was too easy so that students lost concentration and became bored. In a number of lessons ineffective management and control of students resulted in unsatisfactory and poor teaching and learning. For example, in a Year 8 Spanish lesson, the very poor behaviour of a significant number of students was not appropriately dealt with by

the teacher so that the learning of all students was adversely affected and very little progress was made.

41. Many teachers provide additional support in lessons that helps students with special educational needs, and the few students for whom English is an additional language, to make good progress. Teachers from each department meet with the special needs co-ordinator every term to discuss special educational needs issues. Teaching staff receive detailed and good quality information, including targets, for students with an individual educational programme. Departments such as English, mathematics, science, modern languages, and physical education make good use of this information to prepare well targeted resources that support students' learning. The history department has produced high quality, laminated revision cards to help lower-attaining students learn key facts for their GCSE examination. Students with special educational needs are able to record homework accurately when teachers set it early in lessons. When teaching methods and learning materials are not adapted, in subjects such as religious education and some geography lessons, students' work is of a lower standard and often left incomplete. Trained learning support assistants now work closely with departments and this has done much to improve provision for students since the last inspection. Assistants seen working with students with a statement of educational need provide the right balance of help and challenge, so that students work effectively in both practical and theory lessons and make good gains towards their targets.

42. Teaching staff receive general information about learning styles and provision for gifted and talented students through department handbooks. A small number of students have been identified in this group and a register contains details of assessment criteria used to identify them. Teachers are aware of the students and many set tasks that can be carried out in different ways to meet their abilities and needs. In a Year 7 English lesson, the teacher's style of questioning allowed the highest-attaining students to develop their ideas and explain their views of Wordsworth's poem 'Lucy'. Although there is no specific support, provision is also good in science and extension work is offered in ICT, art and modern languages. The school plans to develop a more coherent approach to its provision for this group of students as part of its teaching and learning review.

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

43. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory throughout the school with a particular strength in English. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of most students. Adequate opportunities to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills are offered in other subjects such as art and design, geography and history. Provision for low-attaining students and those who lack motivation, is not consistently appropriate across the school, especially for a small minority of students in Years 10 and 11. Access to the curriculum and attention to equality of opportunity are satisfactory overall. The school has dealt with most of the issues identified in the last inspection. For example, no students miss their lessons in order to have extra tuition in basic skills and option choices at the end of Year 9 have been made clearer for parents. However, students in Years 7 and 8 still have limited time for PSHE. Statutory requirements are being met, except for citizenship in Years 7 to 9 and ICT in Years 10 and 11.

44. The school bases its curriculum on the county curriculum policy which the governors adopted just before the last inspection. Reviews of the curriculum have resulted in several recent developments, such as changes to the courses on offer in Years 10 and 11. However, the pace of curriculum review and implementation of change have been slow. The leadership and management of this aspect of the

school's work have not been effective in responding quickly enough to meet the needs of all its students and changes have not been well planned or structured.

45. All classes have four sessions of tutor time a week. Currently a variety of activities are programmed to take place, from "Thought for the week" to checking students' planners. The use of this time is inconsistent and not providing all students with a worthwhile experience.

46. In Years 7 to 9, all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are studied, with students being offered a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9. Lower-attaining students and those students disapplying from studying French at the request of their parents, complete a key skills course to improve their literacy and numeracy. The quality of the course is inconsistent, and does not always match the broad range of the educational needs of the students. Provision in science is a particular strength, especially the quantity and quality of practical work offered to students.

47. In Years 10 and 11, students follow an appropriate core curriculum of English, mathematics, science, a technology subject, a modern foreign language, religious education and citizenship. They have a satisfactory range of other subjects that they may choose to study. The provision of a sport and fitness option for students not wishing to take an examination but wanting to maintain their fitness is a positive feature. Students are given the opportunity to study Latin and astronomy outside the school day. Additionally where students show interest or aptitude in other languages, such as Chinese and Russian, the school has arranged provision. No vocational courses are offered besides an applied course in ICT. The option choices that the current Year 10 and 11 students could make were not always fully appropriate to their needs, particularly for low-attaining students and those who are not well motivated. This has resulted in some students following unsuitable courses, such as the applied ICT course. The learning support course has not fully met students' needs. The programme relies on students having sufficiently developed independent learning skills to bring their coursework to lessons and often students forget their work and time is not used effectively. The Youth Award scheme for students with special educational needs and low-attaining students is an appropriately flexible course leading to accreditation. This is being replaced by new courses designed to develop key skills in literacy, numeracy and computers.

48. The school has offered some current Year 10 students the opportunity to follow courses of a more practical nature, through links with local colleges. Some students have also been offered the chance to extend their work experience by regularly spending time with a local employer. These developments have had a positive impact on the students, several of whom have been offered future employment or apprenticeships. The provision of alternative opportunities for students is not well planned or structured as yet. The school has recognised that its current provision has led to a poor balance of options for the lowest-attaining groups of students and is in the process of redesigning these courses for 2004.

49. Careers education is good and is taught as part of the school's PSHE programme. The careers section of the library has a good selection of books and publications. Students also use computer programs to help them explore career options. All students take part in a week's work experience. Students are well prepared and the resulting follow-up work helps them to reflect and build on what they have learnt. Students have good access to careers advice both from the school and through the Connexions service.

50. Provision for PSHE is good and has improved since the last inspection. All students have one period of PSHE per week, now linked to citizenship, in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7, 8 and 9 it is taught less frequently, roughly once per fortnight. The total time allowance is not adequate to cover the required content for citizenship in Years 7, 8 and 9. The work is very well planned and includes a

detailed scheme of work linked to appropriate teaching materials. Drugs and sex education are well covered, using the services of external speakers as well as the dedicated team of staff.

51. Good provision is made for extra-curricular activities, with a wide range offered to students. Most activities take place after school, as the length of lunchtime is too short. Popular activities are music, sport, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and revision clubs in many subjects. Some subjects make good use of trips and visitors, such as geography and history where students go on field trips. There are also opportunities for students to visit other countries. Some subjects have good community links, such as physical education, music and art and design. However, overall links with the local community are underused, though a good community policy seeks to increase this. Links with primary schools are not consistent. The school has a close relationship with one local school and has piloted link activities to improve the transition of students from Year 6 to Year 7. Links with local further education colleges are developing steadily as the school seeks to provide vocational courses.

52. The school has made good progress in improving provision for students with special educational needs since the last inspection and provision is good, overall. A database of students covered by the new Code of Practice has been set up and good quality individual education plans are circulated to all relevant teaching and support staff. Students with statements of educational need are well supported in the classroom, and in some small withdrawal groups, by effective learning support assistants. Constructive use is made of the registration period for extra support in literacy. The lowest-attaining students in Years 7, 8 and 9 benefit from being taught in small groups with the support of two learning support assistants. However, provision for younger students who do not study a second modern language has weaknesses. Not all the students in this group have special educational needs. The work is planned to provide additional support for their literacy and numeracy skills, but is not suitable for every student's needs. In lessons where teachers do not change the lesson plans so that all students make progress in their learning, behaviour is poor and progress is slow. Individual education plans for older students contain valuable information concerning career options and possible training courses that teachers can use to help students meet their targets.

53. The school has made satisfactory provision for students whose home language is not English, and for students with particular talents and gifts, as part of its aim for a fully inclusive school. A recently appointed member of the senior management team has the appropriate experience to develop a coherent and more consistent approach to provision for gifted and talented students. Additional provision for this group of students is mainly through the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered in sport, music and art and design. The modern languages department uses a wide range of strategies for matching students' work to their needs and has created express sets for this group. A group has been set up for the highest-attaining students in ICT in Year 10; however, the work planned does not extend their learning sufficiently. The school has developed good links with local schools where students attend lessons in astronomy and Latin. Students also take part in enrichment activities organised for local schools.

54. The school is committed to providing equal opportunities for all and has a good policy meeting all relevant aspects. It includes the aim of finding ways to cater for the needs of all students; this aim is not being realised fully yet. A policy for racial equality is in place and the school does monitor racial incidents and takes effective action where appropriate. Additionally the equal opportunity policy includes how the school prepares its students for living in a multicultural world.

55. The support given to students' spiritual development is satisfactory overall, although the school fails to meet statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.

56. Assemblies for each year group are held once a week. These are orderly occasions. The themes,

such as respect for the environment, are chosen by the senior members of staff who lead them. They contribute to moral, social and, to some extent, spiritual development and are relevant to students' lives. A "Thought for the week" was introduced this year with the intention that form tutors would use it as a topic for discussion and reflection.

57. A number of subjects contribute to spiritual development. In geography and history, awe-inspiring topics such as the First World War, the Holocaust and the effects of natural disaster are dealt with sensitively. The visit to the First World War battlefield sites gives students the chance to consider the impact and human cost of war. Emotions and beliefs are explored in religious education as well as PSHE. In a Year 10 English lesson, students showed considerable empathy when asked to explore the feelings of the characters in "Of Mice and Men". Opportunities for self-expression in music, art and design and dance also support creative development. Overall provision for spiritual development has improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be unsatisfactory.

58. The school provides a satisfactory level of moral education. The code of conduct is clearly displayed around the buildings. Most teachers provide effective role models and treat students with respect, but not all are consistent in their expectations of how students should behave. Moral and ethical matters emerge in several areas of the curriculum. The PSHE programme teaches students their rights and responsibilities in relation to others and to the wider environment. In religious education lessons, students explore a range of issues such as abortion, sexism, euthanasia and the death penalty, while in English they tackle topics such as vandalism, respect for the old and racism. In a travel and tourism lesson during the inspection, students showed sensitivity and concern when they considered the downside of tourism in the Gambia.

59. Social development is satisfactorily promoted. Working practices in subjects such as English, modern foreign languages, science and music encourage students to co-operate with one another. In physical education the promotion of fair play and teamwork is developing social skills.

60. Extra-curricular activities linked to subject areas such as music, dance and physical education enable students to learn to work together in teams and groups. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme provides challenges and opportunity for initiative as well as social development. Recently, over 50 students received bronze and silver awards. The school encourages students to demonstrate their concern for others by initiating collections for a range of charities. Each year group chooses a charity and is responsible for raising funds for it. Within the curriculum their awareness of social issues is raised through the studies of various faiths and societies in subjects such as religious education and history.

61. The provision of cultural education is good. In English, students explore the poetry and literature of other cultures. In art and design lessons, they can develop ideas from their studies of African and Aboriginal art and Mexican sculptures, and in food technology work they learn about food from different cultures. In modern foreign languages, they gain a knowledge of French, German and Spanish cultures, and visits and exchanges are organised. Last year the school also held a Japanese day. There is a good range of extra-curricular dance, music and art programmes open to students, and the school stages numerous concerts and performances. Educational visits are also organised to museums, art galleries and places of cultural interest such as Battle Abbey, Bodiam Castle and the London Planetarium.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

62. Overall, the care and welfare of students is satisfactory. Tutors have a good knowledge of the progress of students and receive regular reports from subject staff about their current performance. They use this information to establish targets for progress. They also check on the student's welfare and personal development and are an integral part of the school 'discipline for learning' systems. Tutors receive reports about behaviour, and manage the system of merits designed to encourage and reward good behaviour. Inconsistencies in the staff application of the reward and sanction systems results in the process being less effective than it could be. Tutors check the students' homework planners and use part of the regular tutor time to set targets for academic development. However, this is not consistently carried out across all groups. More serious social or welfare problems are referred to an effective team of heads of year. Additional support may then be provided through a pastoral support plan for the student. The use of tutor time is variable. Part of it is intended to be used to follow up the assembly topics and the "Thought for the week". This is not always as effective as it should be. It is often used well, but on occasions the tutor time was seen as a 'dead time' in the day when many students simply chatted and were not engaged in purposeful activity. The procedures for child protection are satisfactory. Staff are aware of these procedures and the rapid and efficient response of the school is supported by appropriate action from the relevant external agencies.

63. The procedures for the promotion of good behaviour and monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are satisfactory. The 'discipline for learning' system is intended to promote positive conduct firstly by defining what constitutes good behaviour and then by describing the consequences of poor behaviour. The rules and the system are on prominent display in all the rooms. The school has expanded considerably over the past few years and has also received a number of students who have either been excluded or were on the point of exclusion from other schools. The system works effectively for the majority of students who are well behaved, attentive and keen to learn. However, the behaviour of a small minority both in classes and around the site, remains poor. The discipline for learning system is much less effective for many of these students. It is regarded as highly punitive and the data for short-term exclusions indicates an increase on the previous year. There were also 250 occasions in the school year where students have been removed from normal classes and placed in the "discipline for learning" room. Whilst this may be an appropriate response to ensure that the vast majority of students are able to learn effectively in well-ordered classrooms, its effect is short term for many of the most difficult students. The inconsistent application of the system by staff, the emphasis on punishment and the absence of more specialist support staff able to create appropriate systems designed to modify the behaviour of difficult students, make the overall system less effective than it should be. As a result, for some students there is a culture of indifference and poor behaviour. However, the vast majority of students want to learn, respond well and appreciate the systems that the school provides for their development and learning. The PSHE programme makes a positive contribution in the discouragement and elimination of bullying and informs students about types of bullying and action that can be taken if it occurs.

64. The procedures for monitoring and encouraging attendance are excellent. Support staff check attendance rigorously following registration, ensuring few students are able to miss school without rapid contact between school and parents. As a result, the attendance rate at the school is well above the national average.

65. Health and safety procedures in the school are satisfactory. Departments make regular risk assessments and the very good work of the site manager in monitoring the condition of the building and dealing quickly with health and safety issues, makes the school a very safe environment. The manager does an annual audit, the most recent of which involved one of the governors. As a result of this close involvement, the governors increased the maintenance budget for the school. Arrangements for school trips are good. Careful planning takes place and the school uses the local education authority's system for ensuring that the correct checks are being made prior to a trip taking place. The local education

authority has carried out a full disability audit as the school has been selected to be part of an Accessibility Pilot Scheme. The findings of this study are soon to be presented to the school. The site manager has produced some good procedures for 'lone working', cleaning safety and general site maintenance procedures.

66. The procedures in place for assessing students' attainment are good. An effective school policy exists for marking of books that is based on the use of effort and attainment grades and this is applied consistently across subject departments in Years 7 to 11. The procedures used in ICT are unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9 as no assessments take place. Each department has detailed and up-to-date information of previous attainment for each student based on a range of tests. This data is used to set targets for their attainment at the end of Year 9 and for GCSE. Major pieces of work or tests are marked in detail and are often linked to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9, or GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11. Parents, students and tutors are informed on a regular basis of the attainment of each student. Most departments make some use of performance data on students to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching and learning as well as reviewing the setting of students. As a result of this type of review, subjects like modern foreign languages and science are considering the introduction of more relevant and motivating courses.

67. Procedures for assessing and monitoring students' academic progress are good, overall. The school's extensive records of previous attainment for each student are used to set targets. The progress of every student is closely monitored against these targets after each major piece of work. Teachers and tutors meet with any student who is failing to make sufficient progress. The impact of this supportive approach is good for students who want to do well and they appreciate the support they are given. However, the impact is less effective on lower-attaining students who are not motivated after being set low target grades at GCSE. The school has recognised this problem and has a draft policy outlining changes to the assessment system. The senior managers of the school discuss and analyse with the departments the results of examinations and explore ways in which the attainment can be raised further. This is done by reviewing results on a limited basis of comparisons of gender, teaching group and other departments and is an area requiring further development.

68. The learning support co-ordinator has comprehensive records for students identified as having special educational needs. Well-organised, up-to-date and relevant information on these students is made available to all teachers. Meetings are held termly with heads of year to review the progress of students identified as having special educational needs. Clear systems for identifying new areas of concern are in place, and confidential information is handled sensitively. Students with a statement of educational need have a named teacher to keep track of their progress each term. Statutory reviews are carried out regularly and include the views of students and parents or carers. Links with outside agencies are well documented in students' records. The suite of rooms is used sometimes as a classroom teaching base rather than for supported learning where students can bring work and gain confidence and independence. Learning support assistants create a welcoming environment for shared activity sessions during morning and lunch breaks for small groups of students who find it difficult to socialise. The department also provides supported study for individual students whose parents prefer them to prepare for GCSE examinations in school.

69. The policy for the diagnosis of and provision for gifted and talented students was written some time ago and has recently been reviewed. Information on the test scores for the forty-two students identified so far is made available to teachers. Their progress is monitored by performance reviews held twice a year.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

70. Overall, parents are positive about the quality and effectiveness of the school. Generally they feel their children are making good progress and are expected to work hard and do their best. A number of parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting (and thirty per cent of those who responded to the questionnaire) expressed concern about the behaviour of some students and the arrangements for homework.

71. Inspection evidence generally supports these views. Poor behaviour by some students in lessons has a detrimental effect on the progress they and others are able to make. Although the overall amount of homework is generally appropriate, the quality is variable. Too often students are merely asked to finish off work that has been set during lessons. Some parents felt the school did not work closely with them, but the inspectors consider that it does work hard to involve parents and keep them well informed.

72. The school provides a range of good quality information for parents. The prospectus and governors' annual report are well presented and include all the statutory information. When students join the school in Year 7, they receive a useful and comprehensive booklet summarising key information about school life.

73. Parents and carers of students with special educational needs are kept informed at all stages of their child's education and many attend meetings and reviews. Parents of students with statements who will be joining the school have an opportunity to meet the learning support co-ordinator at annual review meetings held in Years 5 and 6.

74. In addition, the headteacher sends out a monthly Parent Bulletin which provides good information to parents about what is going on, together with news of the parent teacher association, the Tanbridge House Association. These newsletters keep parents informed about key dates in the school calendar, and explain initiatives such as the 'discipline for learning' strategy. Each term parents receive a copy of "Tanbridge News", which sets out interesting information about students' achievements.

75. Students' annual reports are satisfactory, overall. In the best examples teachers give clear information on the student's attainment and progress over the year, with specific guidance for improvement. Some, however, do not give enough detail of the progress the student is making, or the targets that explain to parents what their children should aim for. Reports have been improved recently to include reference to National Curriculum levels.

76. Parents are expected to look at and sign their children's homework diaries each week and these are checked by form tutors. Very little use, however, is made of these as a means of home-school communication.

77. The school regularly seeks the views of parents over relevant issues, such as the timing of the school day and school uniform. Procedures to deal with any concerns or complaints raised by parents have been revised recently, and are generally effective. An additional Year 7 parents' evening has been introduced and, as a response to parental requests, three information evenings are now held for parents of students in Years 9, 10 and 11. These sessions have been popular with parents and help to prepare them for the next stage of their child's education. Tutors or heads of year are quick to contact parents if a problem arises with an individual student.

78. Parents' support for student learning at school and at home is sound. Although few parents actively involve themselves in the life of the school, most ensure their children turn up regularly and

punctually, and attendance at parent consultation evenings is good. Many parents support sporting fixtures and come to the school's productions. The parent teacher association is open to all parents but few attend their regular meetings. The association organises regular social and fundraising activities, and is beginning to establish a higher profile in the life of the school.

79. The overall picture is similar to that given in the previous inspection report. The school continues to try to involve parents and has gone some way to achieving this.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

80. The headteacher leads the school very well, and is establishing suitable management structures to ensure the smooth and purposeful running of the school as it increases in size. She maintains a conspicuous presence and is well known to students. Her presence on duty before and after school, at break and at lunch time encourages the efficient movement of students around the school, and strongly promotes the school's values, for example, over discipline and uniform. The headteacher is easily accessible to students who wish to speak to her.

81. In the two years since the headteacher's arrival at the school, she has thoroughly and accurately analysed needs of the school and has drawn up a wide-ranging and appropriate agenda for its development. The school has adopted a new mission statement and aims which encapsulate its intended values and set out a clear vision for its future development. The school's aims and values are well reflected in current provision. Planning ensures that students' educational needs are being effectively met. The careful and thorough updating of all school policies will shortly be complete. The school development plan is of good quality. It contains suitable priorities, and departmental development plans are appropriately linked to whole-school issues, forming a coherent overall structure for development. The school development plan has at its heart the raising of standards through the development of teaching and learning. Other appropriate issues, such as students' attitudes, the development of the curriculum to meet the needs of all students more imaginatively, and the safety and welfare of students, are linked to the main aim. The planning is thorough, with suitable objectives and timescales, but the criteria for success are in some cases too general and not linked closely enough to raising students' attainment. Good links between departmental and whole-school planning mean that teachers have a beneficial and direct influence on the school development plan.

82. The senior management team, which has been strengthened this year by the appointment of a second deputy headteacher, has undergone a formal review. This has enabled the training needs of individual members to be identified and appropriately provided for. The performance of other staff with posts of responsibility has been assessed in relation to outside criteria, such as the local education authority's categorisation process and the requirements for Investors in People status, towards which the school is working. The development needs of all those who exercise responsibility remain an important priority in the school's agenda. All staff have up-to-date job descriptions.

83. The senior management team, who are mostly long-serving members of staff, have a thorough knowledge of the school and its students and make a positive contribution to the running of the school. Senior managers have good relationships with heads of department and fulfil a satisfactory pastoral role with them, but aspects of both their leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Line management is unsatisfactory, overall, because too much of it is informal. Some line managers meet infrequently with heads of department, agendas are unco-ordinated, meetings are not properly minuted, and decisions and intentions are not followed up rigorously. Where senior managers have leadership responsibilities, for example for implementing policies and establishing new procedures, such as the

introduction of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy and the new subject, citizenship, time scales are too extended. Senior managers' monitoring of heads of departments' teaching is inconsistent, which limits its value. Not all senior managers were able to provide records of the monitoring undertaken. Problems are not always dealt with efficiently. Overall, the staff have a good capacity for further development. However, the senior management team makes an inconsistent contribution to bringing about change in the school and implementing the intentions of the school's mission statement and aims.

84. Subject departments are well led. Leadership and management in English and religious education are very good. They are good in almost all subjects, and unsatisfactory only in citizenship. Overall, students' achievement is good, and the school came very close to reaching its challenging GCSE targets in 2002. The good standard of departmental leadership ensures that teachers are strongly committed to enabling their students to reach high standards. A suitable procedure for appraisal and performance management guides the professional development of individual teachers. Monitoring of teaching within departments is now well established, and the headteacher plays an important role in this. Staff with responsibility for the care and guidance of students work effectively and are well managed.

85. Since the appointment of the current learning support co-ordinator eighteen months ago, considerable improvements have been made in raising the profile of whole-school provision for students with special educational needs. A liaison group of subject representatives, learning support teachers and assistants has been working to provide support for teachers and students. In-service training makes provision for all staff, including the learning support assistants. As a result of whole school consultation, the department has developed a protocol for the effective use of assistants in the classroom. The governing body and school leadership team recognise the importance of the school action phase of the new Code of Practice. However, the practice of using learning support teachers to teach courses for students disapplied from National Curriculum subjects diverts resources from the department because these groups do not necessarily contain students with special educational needs.

86. Some members of the governing body have an excellent knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and work in close and purposeful liaison with the headteacher. Governors are now well informed. Their professional expertise is of great value to the school. Committees are effectively led. Individual governors do not have links with subject departments and do not make formal visits to lessons, although active monitoring of this sort is being planned. Governors are informed of developments through printed information and regular presentations by teachers. They make a positive contribution to the strategic development of the school. In their role as critical friends, they discuss the school's development plan and have a genuine impact on its priorities. They set suitable targets for senior staff and for the school as a whole. The governing body carries out its statutory duties satisfactorily, but does not ensure that daily collective worship is provided for all students. The introduction of citizenship is behind schedule and not all statutory requirements for ICT are in place for Year 10 and 11 students. Governors have become more actively involved in the running of the school since the arrival of the headteacher. The overall effectiveness of the governing body is good and is developing further, despite the continuing difficulty of recruiting parent governors.

87. Financial planning and management are good. Funds are carefully allocated. All money is spent for its intended purpose. Departments bid for money to fund new developments. Bids are carefully scrutinised to see that they reflect whole-school priorities. Assessment information is purposefully analysed and used to guide planning and set expectations for students. Funding per student is comparatively low. The school seeks very good value for the money it spends. Appropriate consultation takes place, including with parents, before important decisions are made. Students and parents were consulted before changes were made to the school uniform. Overall, the school gives good value for money.

88. The school has a satisfactory level of staffing. The overall match of teachers and support staff to the requirements of the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers have a good range of experience and expertise. The number of staff has increased in line with the increasing student role. However, since the previous inspection, recent turnover of staff has increased, there are more part-time teachers and, because of rising house prices in the area, recruitment and retention of staff is more difficult. Mathematics, science, ICT and design and technology, for example, have all experienced recent difficulties in recruiting staff. The school has had to rely on a small number of unqualified teachers and overseas trained teachers to fill gaps. Most problems have, though, been resolved for this coming September. Arrangements for performance management and staff development, criticised at the time of the previous inspection, are now sound. As a result of recent improved practices in this respect, the school is applying for Investor in People status. Arrangements for the induction of new and newly qualified staff are also sound. The administrative, technical and clerical staff provide efficient service to support students' learning and to assist in the day-to-day running of the school.

89. The quality and range of accommodation to meet the learning needs of students is very good overall. The school continues to provide a secure and effective learning environment. Issues of poor finish identified in the previous report, for what was then a relatively new building, have been successfully tackled. However, the school population has grown considerably over the recent years. This has meant the local education authority has had to invest in eight temporary buildings to provide sixteen extra classrooms. They have, though, been sited to ensure teaching rooms and specialist facilities for subject areas remain close together. Problems remain over the limited space for year groups and dining accommodation. The site is generally well looked after and there is a rolling programme for cleaning and refurbishment. The issue of inaccessibility for students with physical disabilities to the food technology area identified at the time of the previous report has been tackled by providing a kitchen on the ground floor. Otherwise, all areas are accessible.

90. The great majority of subjects benefit from very good quality accommodation, which helps promote good standards. English, mathematics and science all have suited accommodation, as do most other subjects. Physical education benefits from the excellent range and quality of both indoor and outdoor facilities. There is an excellent drama studio where the school can produce small-scale performances and the music department benefits from very spacious rooms, practice spaces and excellent storage facilities. Students are thus able to use and develop their practical and creative skills well. Some excellent examples of informative and celebratory display are evident within and around subject areas, including much display of students' work. This enhances the quality of the learning environment very well.

91. The amount and quality of learning resources in most subjects are good to meet the needs of the curriculum. Learning resources and allocation of funding is managed well to ensure effective curriculum delivery. On the whole, good specialist equipment and materials are available in subject departments. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, for example, resources have been updated in line with the requirements of the Key Stage 3 strategies. The design and technology department is well equipped with a range of good quality machines and a good range of materials. In art and design, the good range of resources allows for a good range of media and different techniques to be used by students. Very good ICT provision and a large collection of musical instruments in music supports and extends students' learning.

92. The learning resource centre offers a lively and welcoming environment with access to computers, books, magazines and tapes. It is used well by students especially for Internet research. Students in Year 7 have regular reading lessons and are taught basic library skills. The staff are helpful, efficient

and encouraging. However, the number of books on the shelves has not kept pace with the increase in the numbers of students in the school and there are areas that are seriously under-provisioned.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

93. Building on the good improvement made over the last two years, and to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) improve the attitudes and behaviour of a small number of students who are not well motivated and can be challenging in their behaviour by:
 - ensuring all staff fully implement the ‘discipline for learning’ policy;
 - improving the rewards and sanctions system, to ensure that students’ achievements and successes are quickly acknowledged and rewarded and that sanctions are perceived as fair and not punitive.

(17-23, 39-40, 58, 62-3, 71, 112, 121, 133, 141, 148, 156, 187, 197)

- (2) improve the quality of the work of senior managers, who are inconsistent in implementing new initiatives and monitoring the work of departments, by:
 - ensuring that reviews of current school practice are carried out efficiently and within a given time scale;
 - ensuring the implementation of new initiatives is brought about efficiently;
 - ensuring a formal programme is agreed by senior managers for monitoring the work of departments, that agendas are agreed, meetings minuted and decisions and intentions followed up rigorously by all members of the senior management team;
 - agreeing a programme for monitoring the teaching of heads of department and the results of monitoring recorded and followed up.

(44, 83, 104, 115, 124, 142, 149, 198)

- (3) improve the range of courses to meet the needs of all students in Years 10 and 11, and provision for citizenship and ICT, by:
- improving curriculum provision for lower-attaining and disaffected students, particularly in Years 10 and 11;
 - ensuring that the management of citizenship builds effectively on the very good development work in PSHE and the curriculum audit;
 - ensuring the amount of curriculum time for citizenship in Years 7 to 9 is adequate to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum;
 - improving assessment procedures for citizenship;
 - ensuring the full implementation of the Key Stage 3 national strategy for ICT;
 - improving the monitoring, support and delivery of ICT across the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11;
 - improving assessment procedures for ICT across the curriculum.
- (3, 7, 9, 15, 38, 43-4, 46-8, 50, 52, 86, 130, 135-7, 140, 142, 146, 149, 166, 170-179)

(The numbers in italics show the main paragraphs in which these issues are discussed in the report)

94. The report also identifies some other issues which governors may wish to include in the action plan to be developed following this inspection. They include:

- developing and implementing whole-school policies for literacy and numeracy; *13, 36-7, 104, 114*
- increasing the number and range of books available for students in the learning resource centre; *92, 122*
- ensuring that tutor group time is used consistently and effectively; *45, 62*
- making better use of home school diaries for communication with parents; *76*
- ensuring that action is taken to comply with legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship; *56, 86*
- increasing the planned opportunities for extending the learning of gifted and talented students; *11, 42, 53*
- improving the quality of homework. *35, 109, 147*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	137
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	52

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	32	53	39	6	1	0
Percentage	4	23	39	29	4	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1451
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	43

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	43
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	105

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	21

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	39
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	58

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6

National comparative data	7.8
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National comparative data	1.2
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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 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	185	110	295

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	146	141	145
	Girls	99	84	80
	Total	245	225	225
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (78)	76 (75)	76 (82)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	52 (39)	57 (57)	41 (52)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	130	144	171
	Girls	98	85	101
	Total	228	229	272
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (77)	77 (74)	92 (77)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	49 (41)	48 (53)	59 (40)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	152	90	242

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	85	140	144
	Girls	66	85	86
	Total	151	225	230
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	62 (63)	93 (96)	95 (97)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	44.7 (45.8)
	National	39.8 (39)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1341	96	6
5	0	0
41	5	1
4	0	0
8	0	0
5	0	0
12	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
7	0	0
2	0	0
16	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	80.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	32
Total aggregate hours worked per week	797

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	23.5

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	3,565,728
Total expenditure	3,405,362
Expenditure per pupil	2347
Balance brought forward from previous year	82,335
Balance carried forward to next year	242,701

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	25.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	31.1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.5
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1451
Number of questionnaires returned	296

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	53	5	5	1
My child is making good progress in school.	33	59	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	9	52	24	6	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	53	20	10	2
The teaching is good.	18	66	6	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	54	14	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	51	8	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	43	48	6	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	18	54	20	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	23	59	7	3	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	24	61	9	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	46	14	3	9

*Figures may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The standard of students' work is well above average.
- GCSE results are improving.
- Teaching is consistently good; teachers work as a team and know their subject well.
- The department is excellently led with vision, energy and enthusiasm.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient attention is given to students' learning at different rates within mixed ability classes.
- Introduce a whole-school literacy policy.

95. In 2002, results in GCSE English language were above the national average. All students passed with over two thirds gaining grades A* - C. Although there has been some annual variation as the school has increased in size, results have been consistently above the national average. In 2002, girls outperformed boys, with a difference greater than is found nationally. Boys' results have improved significantly since the last inspection but the gender gap remains wide. Results in GCSE English literature in 2002 were well above national average and the difference between boys' and girls' results was closer to the national difference. Results in both English examinations have improved since the last inspection but subject residuals show that students do not do as well in English as in their other subjects.

96. Results in the 2002 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. Students did better in English than in mathematics or science. Girls outperformed boys and the difference was less than that found nationally. Over the last three years, results have risen at a faster rate than the national trend, with a significant improvement in 2002.

97. The standard of work of current students is well above average. Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards that are above average in English. Overall, they achieve very well in Years 7 to 9 and well through Years 10 and 11.

98. By the end of Year 9, most students respond confidently to speaking tasks. While boys frequently make more contributions than girls, teachers ensure that both have opportunities not just to answer questions but to make planned presentations to the class. Teachers take younger students to the library for reading and research where they are also encouraged by the conscientious library staff. However, few students read widely for pleasure. Students produce very good standards of written work. In particular, boys' standards have improved as a result of the successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 to 9. Higher-attaining students use lively, imaginative vocabulary and can identify appropriate styles for different audiences. Students gifted in English do very well; they are occasionally given more complex tasks or have their work extended. Many students enhance their presentation by using word processing. Tourist leaflets produced by Year 8 have a professional quality with scanned images and persuasive text. Many boys experience difficulties with handwriting and their work is often untidy, but they respond well to the emphasis teachers give to good organisation of their

work. Lower and middle-attaining students make good progress in writing with the help of techniques adopted by the teachers, for example writing frames, sentence starters and key points to include in paragraphs. Students with statements of special educational need make good progress because they receive specialist help and work that is well adapted to meet their needs.

99. Although Year 11 classes had finished for examinations, talks with students were arranged and their work scrutinised. By the end of Year 11, students have become increasingly successful in their writing. With units of work that build progressively on earlier learning, students improve the structure of their essays and develop confidence in using the specialist vocabulary to analyse and evaluate their literature texts. As a result of good teaching, they take a detailed look at the language they and professional writers use and this encourages them to strive for accuracy in what they want to say. Planning and drafting are established routines which begin in Year 7, and all students expect to refine and edit their writing before it is finished. The standard reached by some higher-attaining students is exceptional. A number of lower and middle-attaining students find the extended writing and reading very demanding at GCSE level. For many, it is a real challenge to get through the texts and currently there is no extra classroom assistance for lower and middle-attaining students. It is to the credit of the teachers that the majority of students nevertheless remain on task and produce good work. In oral tasks, boys frequently dominate, but teachers set up speaking assignments so that all students have good opportunities to contribute and, with tasks regularly assessed, students know that speaking and listening are important aspects of English.

100. Most students have good attitudes to their work and behave well. They are generally attentive, productive and want to succeed. They work well together in pairs and groups, negotiating problems together. They say how much they appreciate the time and effort teachers put into marking their work. Students in Years 7 to 9 take some responsibility for their work by recording teachers' grades and comments alongside their own in their Record Progress Sheets. Students continue this in more detail in Years 10 and 11 using GSCE coursework cover sheets. However, some students lose motivation and are potentially disruptive. The sensitive, yet firm classroom management of the teachers usually prevents any disturbance growing to the point where it affects the rest of the class.

101. Teaching and learning are consistently good overall and very good in Years 7 to 9. Major strengths are the undoubted commitment to teach as well as possible and to help students reach the highest standards. Teachers adopt agreed routines and fully implement school policies. Students recognise this and know the expectations are the same whichever English class they are in. For example, teachers invariably welcome their students at the classroom door. They write the objectives on the board in every lesson, making clear what students are to learn. A discussion of their learning at the end of the lesson enables students to be aware of their progress. Teachers' plan in detail for each lesson and the whole topic. However, further planning for the different rates of learning within a class is an area the department is working on. Teachers maintain a brisk pace with a variety of methods and activities timed to retain students' interest. Day-to-day marking is a strength. All work is positively marked with detailed suggestions and achievable short term targets which offer good support for students' learning. Examination results are carefully analysed by each class teacher to identify areas of teaching and curriculum that they could improve.

102. Links with primary schools are good. One example is the collaboratively planned 'Journeys' project that starts in Year 6 and finishes in Year 7. From this, students see a continuation as well as a progression in their work as they move from primary to secondary school. The member of department with specific responsibility for ICT carefully plans its use. All students have good access to computers and produce some excellent word processed work and desk top publishing. The department produces a very good information booklet which they send home to parents of Year 7 students. It outlines the

work in English, the homework expectations and the students' required reading. It offers suggestions of how parents can best help their child's progress.

103. A large suite of rooms offers very good accommodation for English lessons. Rooms and corridors have excellent displays celebrating students' work and give background information to some of the literature studied. Although the department receives very good help with display, teachers also spend much of their own time making their working environment lively and exciting. Organised visits to the theatre enrich the curriculum as do visits into school from theatre groups and writers. Multi-cultural material is included in each year's topics which broadens students' understanding of other cultures.

104. This large department is excellently led and managed. It is forward looking with clear priorities. Administration is exemplary. Active support for new school initiatives and the National Literacy Strategy underpins the successful implementation and development of teaching and learning strategies. However, although a draft whole-school literacy policy has been written for some time, it has yet to be agreed and fully implemented by the school. In recognising and utilising their individual strengths, the teachers work as a supportive team with a determination to raise standards further. Since the last inspection improvement has been very good. Examination results have risen and standards are higher. Teaching has improved significantly. Within the school, the department is highly regarded for its hard work and professionalism. It is a strength of the school.

Drama

105. Drama is taught to all students in Year 7 and on a half-termly basis to Years 8 and 9. It is a popular subject and there are large groups in Years 10 and 11 taking the subject to examination level. GCSE results in 2002 were above the national average for both boys and girls. Girls outperformed boys, as they do nationally. The difference in their results was in line with the national difference. Students benefit from an exciting new drama studio, well equipped with lighting and sound. Opportunities are missed to engage in cross-curricular links to widen the performance possibilities of the subject.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Above average standards of attainment in all years.
- Some excellent and very good teaching in the department.
- Respectful and supportive relationships between staff and students.
- Good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching in the subject
- Use of data to identify strengths and highlight areas for improvement
- Introduce a whole-school numeracy policy.

106. In the 2002 Year 9 national tests in mathematics, results were above the national average but well below similar schools. Boys performed better than girls and standards in mathematics were below

English and in line with science. Teacher assessments were rather harsh for students achieving a level 6 or above. Results, over the last three years, have remained above national averages but falling in relation to the national trend. On the basis of students' prior performance in the national tests in Year 6, achievement is above expectations and better for those achieving level 6 or above.

107. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, results were well above national averages and in line with similar schools. The number of A* - C grades and the average point score have remained high over the past three years. The attainment of girls and boys is very similar, but the subject residuals show that students do not do so well in mathematics as they do in their other subjects. On the basis of students' prior performance in the national tests in Year 9, their achievement is above expectations and better for those achieving A* - C grades.

108. On the evidence of the students' work and the lessons observed, standards at the end of Year 9 remain above national averages and, at the end of Year 11, well above national averages. Achievement is good across all year groups, but less so in Year 7 which does not build sufficiently on the work covered in the primary school. By the end of Year 9, students can solve linear equations and identify angle properties between parallel lines while higher-attaining students can solve simultaneous equations and draw cumulative frequency graphs. By the end of Year 11, students can use Pythagoras' theorem to solve right-angled triangles while higher-attaining students can use the sine and cosine rules to calculate the lengths and sides of any triangle.

109. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall, but ranges from excellent to unsatisfactory. Lessons start promptly making use of a variety of starter activities which quickly engage students. Teachers enjoy respectful relationships with their students and indiscipline is dealt with effectively using a variety of strategies. In the more successful lessons, questions are well chosen to address common errors and misconceptions so that in a Year 9 lesson on simultaneous equations, the teacher highlighted the need to multiply both sides of the equation. However, the co-ordination of the work of split groups needs to be better managed and the setting of homework is inconsistent, with too much emphasis on "finishing off" work. In too many lessons, insufficient attention is given to the spread of ability.

110. Teachers have a good informal knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses. In lessons, they use questioning well to check understanding and decide when to move the lesson on. Marking is regular and all students undertake regular chapter tests which are used well to identify areas for further work and development. Information from these tests is kept centrally but is not used extensively. The use and analysis of available data is underdeveloped and there is insufficient rigorous monitoring of data to check standards and raise issues for further investigation.

111. Provision for students with special educational needs is good and classroom support is provided by competent and enthusiastic teacher assistants who ensure that students are engaged in the work. For example in a Year 7 lesson, the two teaching assistants in the class demonstrated enthusiasm and interest in their work which motivated and encouraged the students. The provision for gifted and talented students is satisfactory but these students are not always sufficiently challenged and opportunities to deepen their knowledge are sometimes missed.

112. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory, overall. In most lessons, students behave well and show commitment and enthusiasm in their work. They concentrate hard and want to do well. Students enjoy positive and productive relationships with the teacher and with one another. However, in a small number of lessons, students demonstrate challenging behaviour and lack engagement.

113. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The provision for literacy within the department is satisfactory although inconsistent. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher worked hard to develop students' understanding of vocabulary and stressed the use of the word "adjacent". However in other lessons, literacy skills were not sufficiently stressed and teachers did not always use the correct technical vocabulary themselves. The provision for ICT within the department is satisfactory and the department has its own suite of computers which are used well for spreadsheets, databases and graph plotting. The provision for citizenship within the department is satisfactory but opportunities to develop students' awareness further are missed.

114. The provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory, although there is no whole school policy. Number is used well in science for calculating compound measures, such as speed given distance and time. Algebra work is developed in ICT for creating formulae for spreadsheets. Spatial skills are used in physical education and design and technology for measurements, as well as drawing two dimensional shapes and three dimensional solids. Data handling skills are used extensively across the curriculum for drawing and interpreting bar charts, line graphs and pie charts. Star diagrams are used in food technology and good use is made of statistics to collect data for soap opera surveys in English, establish heart rate patterns in physical education and to identify trends in population statistics in geography.

115. The leadership and management of the subject are good and ensure a clear educational direction for mathematics. The acting head of department has a good awareness of the strengths of the department. However, meetings with the line manager are irregular and have focused too much on support procedures and not enough on identifying and acting upon inconsistencies in teaching or making better use of available data. The departmental development plan is well focused on priorities and much work has already been done in rewriting departmental documentation and aligning schemes of work to reflect the national strategy and take account of changes to GCSE. The department is suitably resourced in terms of equipment and textbooks although the provision in the library is not extensive. The department is housed in its own area and classrooms provide a welcoming atmosphere with informative displays of student work.

116. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards of achievement in Year 9 are similar to those reported in the last inspection but better in Year 11. Work covers all attainment targets with an appropriate balance of practical and investigative work. The quality of teaching is good overall and lessons make good use of the numeracy strategy by sharing lesson objectives and concluding with a review of the work. The leadership of the department ensures a clear educational direction for mathematics across the school and weaknesses in accessing and teaching ICT have been dealt with. The department has a shared commitment to improvement and the capacity to succeed.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are well above the national average.
- Lessons are well planned and based on a whole department approach.
- The identification and monitoring of individual students' progress is good.
- An efficient team of laboratory technicians give very good support to teaching staff.
- The accommodation is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The attainment of boys at GCSE which is too low.
- The attitude of a small number of students which is unsatisfactory and hinders teaching and learning in some lessons.
- The development of effective methods to combat the disaffection of some students.

117. In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were above the national average. The trend has been upwards over the past few years, but fell slightly last year. When compared to the other core subjects, students' performance in mathematics and science is similar, but not as good as in English. There is little difference in the attainment of girls and boys.

118. The achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is good. Overall, the standards seen show further improvement and were well above those expected nationally at the end of Year 9. This represents good progress as the school's data indicates that students join the school in Year 7 above the national expected level. Year 7 students are achieving standards above those expected and were able to explain the effects of friction and design an investigation on the factors involved. In Year 9, the higher-attaining students were producing work of a standard well above the expected level and were able to explain the effects of temperature and concentration on the rate of reaction using their scientific knowledge.

119. The proportion of students obtaining a GCSE grade of A*-C is well above the national level. At the end of Year 11 in 2002, most students took double certification GCSE. Overall the proportion of A*-C grades in science examinations was 66 per cent compared to the national figure of 50 per cent. The results in science have been maintained at this high level over the past few years. The attainment of girls remained significantly higher than boys.

120. The achievement of students in Years 10 and 11 is good and the standard of work seen was well above the expected national level. The lower-attaining students in Year 10 were able to explain the basic structures and functions of the organs of the human body. Higher-attaining students in Year 10 were able to recall and describe, in detail and with confidence, the various defence mechanisms of the human body against disease. Higher-attaining Year 11 students could explain the nature and uses of transition metals in detail to a standard well above the expected level.

121. The attitudes and behaviour of students are variable, but satisfactory overall. Almost all students behave well and work hard in science in lessons when there is strong classroom control linked to well planned and interesting lessons. There was, in these lessons, a pleasant co-operative atmosphere between teachers and students leading to a very constructive working atmosphere where the students made very good progress. However, the attitudes and behaviour of a few students, especially lower-attaining boys, were unsatisfactory in those lessons where classroom control was less effective and the lesson material was not well matched to their needs. Students work in an enthusiastic and safe manner when carrying out practical work and enjoy this aspect of science. A good example of this was in a Year 9 class, where the students were performing an investigation on the effect of temperature on the rate of reaction. They took great care in obtaining accurate results that they then used effectively to draw relevant conclusions. Most students have complete notes and overall a good standard of presentation. Some boys, however, produce work that is incomplete and of a poor quality. This results in these students having a poor revision source and contributes to their relatively low achievement. These students were insufficiently challenged by their teachers to produce a higher standard of work as part of the process of improving their attitude to the subject.

122. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. In over a third of the lessons the teaching was very good. There was one instance of unsatisfactory teaching in the lessons observed. A review of students' books indicates that teaching over time is of a similar standard. The best teaching was

seen when the lessons were well planned, had good pace, there was good classroom control and involved active participation of the students. One very effective lesson on SARS used well-prepared resources, was relevant and involved the students performing their own research using nominated websites on the Internet. Homework is structured and an integral part of the lesson plans and is used as a means of reinforcing learning. Teachers mark books and tests on a regular basis, but do not add sufficient narrative comments to demonstrate how students could improve. The monitoring of marking and assessment has been undertaken but does not yet ensure that an agreed standard is seen throughout the department. The stock of books in the library is limited. However, the books are modern and relevant and provide a satisfactory resource for independent learning.

123. The monitoring of students' attainment and progress is good. Students are aware of their progress from the assessments made on end-of-topic tests and most keep records of this on progress charts in their books. The department collates extensive data on students' attainment and uses this to monitor progress and achievement. Students are interviewed about identified underachievement in a positive manner. The data is not used sufficiently, at present, to identify progress of groups of students, such as those with special educational needs. It is also not used routinely to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching styles and resources used. Students that have special educational needs are well supported in science and make good progress overall. Staff are aware of their needs and make use of the individual education plans. Students with educational statements are effectively supported in lessons by learning support assistants. The department is able to organise the group sizes in Years 8 to 11 so that the lower-attaining students are in smaller classes. This allows the teachers to give greater support and helps with classroom control. Higher-attaining students also make good progress and are set challenging tasks. There is a wide range of opportunities for students to use their literacy and numeracy skills both in written work and class discussions. The department has introduced the literacy strategy using key words in a range of writing styles and other support materials well and this has been of benefit to students. Students have the opportunity of using their literacy skills in a wide range of activities ranging from report writing to poetry. A similar positive approach has been made with numeracy that has enabled students to make good progress. The use of computers is satisfactory and increasing due to the easier access to whole class facilities. The department has identified specific topics where ICT should be used and this is to be extended further. The use of data logging in science is again identified within the lesson plans and the department has the resources for whole-class use.

124. The leadership and management of the department are good, overall. The experienced head of department is very well supported by two other teachers who have specific management responsibilities for teaching strategies in Years 7 to 9, and the use of investigations in science. Both teachers have contributed to the areas of lesson planning and teaching approaches used by all members of the department. The impact of these strategies has helped ensure that the department has made good progress since the last inspection. Attainment, especially at the end of Year 9 is now higher and has been maintained at GCSE. However, boys' attainment at GCSE, an issue raised at the last inspection has not been tackled effectively. The departmental contribution to citizenship has been reviewed and topics identified. However, when the students are taught these aspects they are not, as yet, clearly identified as such. This makes it difficult for the students to link these lessons with similar topics in other subjects. The department has also reviewed the lessons to highlight aspects of social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues within the lessons in all years. This provision is satisfactory. The assessment of students' progress and attainment is being used to set targets for and monitor the progress of individuals. Although a formal departmental system of monitoring teaching and learning is in place, it is not effective, because it is not linked to the sharing of good practice or ensuring that agreed common practices are used. The department is aware of issues that need to be dealt with and appropriate development plans have been drawn up.

125. The accommodation for the science department is very good with each of the ten teachers having their own laboratory. The department has good resources including access to ICT facilities. The team of six support staff is very efficient and very well organised. They ensure the equipment and resources ordered are present at the start of lessons and have a positive effect on the teaching and learning by enabling a high number of practical based lessons to take place. Some staffing problems over the past year have been overcome and a full complement of suitably qualified teachers is anticipated for the coming September.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average in Year 9 and well above average in Year 11.
- Students achieve well due to good teaching.
- The effective use of display helps students to reach high standards.
- A wide range of learning opportunities is offered to students.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers to support students' learning.
- The behaviour of a small number of boys has a negative impact on teaching and learning in some lessons.

126. Students join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding, which are average. GCSE results have slowly risen over the last six years and in 2002 were well above average. Students did better in art and design than in many other subjects. More girls than boys attain higher grades in GCSE. This pattern has been consistent for several years. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments indicated students' attainment was well above average.

127. Standards seen during the inspection in Year 9 are above the national average overall. The difference between teacher assessments of 2002, and the standard of work seen during the inspection is because teachers overestimate students' abilities, particularly in developing and refining ideas. Students' skills in drawing and painting are well above average. This is an improvement since the last inspection when students' drawing skills were average. High-attaining students can research, develop and refine their ideas well. For example, in a Year 9 lesson students were making clay figures as part of a unit about sculpture. The high-attaining students had very good skills in handling clay which enabled them to exploit the medium to capture movement and expression. They could relate their designs back to their ideas in their sketchbook notes.

128. Current standards in Year 11 are broadly similar to the most recent GCSE results. High-attaining students reach standards which are well above the national average. Students can research the work of other artists, using very good drawing and painting skills to record examples. They can develop their ideas from this with some exploration. High-attaining students have very good skills in developing their ideas, linking their explorations to their research and evaluations of other artists' work. They refine their work, exploiting media to produce exciting and interesting results. For example, one student worked through on the theme of the comfort of sound. The finished piece showed extensive experimentation with different figure poses, colour, media and interpretations of ideas. Standards in Year 10 are not as high as in Year 11, in particular students' skills in researching and developing ideas.

Students have not yet developed the maturity to understand the breadth of research and exploration necessary.

129. Overall, students make good progress in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7, including those with special educational needs. During Years 7 to 9, students gain skills in a wide range of media and learn about the lives and work of many different artists and cultures. High-attaining students make very good progress. In Year 9, students studied the Mexican Day of the Dead. They made numerous sketches of figures and developed their own designs. The final sculptures showed very individual responses to the design brief. High-attaining students accentuated various aspects of their figures for effect, such as making their figures' legs long and thin, or exaggerating poses. They were carefully finished, often using rich patterns and bold colours.

130. In Years 10 and 11, students make good progress. Sketchbooks clearly show the development from Year 10 to 11 of good drawing skills. Initial work recording responses to twentieth century artists is simplistic, with little use of tone. Subsequent work recording observations of ancient cultures show good use of line quality and tone. Students' skills using a wide range of media are good. High-attaining students make very good progress. They understand how to work through from research to development and final realisation of their ideas. They critically evaluate their ideas and how these connect to artists. Not enough use of computers is made in Years 7 to 11 and students are given insufficient opportunities to extend and develop their ideas.

131. Good teaching results in good learning. Almost all lessons observed were good or better, with one lesson being unsatisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was satisfactory. Particular strengths of the teaching include the use of displays to stimulate and help students understand techniques, artistic qualities and the work of other artists. Teachers also make effective use of teaching strategies, in particular elements of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy. In the best lessons, teachers make effective use of praise and encouragement to build confidence and provide good guidance and support.

132. Lessons usually start with a clear introduction, linking the lesson to previous work and explaining what will follow. This helps students to see "the big picture" and understand what they will learn. Students are able to reflect on their learning at the end of most lessons, when teachers make effective use of time to evaluate work done, and link this to what students have learnt. Teachers prepare attractive and informative mini displays on flipcharts, to help students understand the key points of the lesson. This leads to students making good gains in their knowledge of techniques and the work of other artists. Students' literacy skills are well supported by displays of key words and explanations of artistic terms. This results in most students being able to explain artistic vocabulary. In a Year 8 lesson, the students gained very good skills in the technique of monoprinting. They could also explain the features of cubism; about a third of students could explain the difference between synthetic and analytic cubism. Students were able to incorporate their knowledge into their monoprints, creating interesting prints with a cubist style. Displays around the school and in the department are of high quality. They celebrate students' work. Students are encouraged to work hard and reach similar standards. Displays of GCSE coursework provide good exemplar material for students to understand the requirements needed. Teachers use praise and encouragement, which helps students to persevere, even when they find the work hard. For example, in a Year 10 lesson where students were responding to sculptures from ancient culture, using water crayons, they found it difficult to start drawing and exploring. The teacher provided good guidance and support, picking out successful points and how these could be used for their final designs. Because of this, students gained confidence and the resulting drawings showed good observation, making effective use of line, pattern and form. Additionally teachers encourage all students to make use of extra art time after school, when they give

students the opportunity to work in the art rooms with support. Year 11 students benefit from this extra time to complete their coursework.

133. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory, overall, and good in many lessons. Students like art and design, and concentrate for long periods of time. They have pride in their work and make good use of their sketchbooks. Students handle art equipment carefully and work well together. However in some lessons, the behaviour of a small group of boys was unsatisfactory. They are unable to concentrate, without teacher support. They often talk at inappropriate times, and call out. They cannot work independently. Most teachers use effective methods to manage the classes, but this often leads to limiting opportunities for all students to explore their own ideas more freely.

134. Assessment is good in art and design because it helps students know the level they are working at and how to improve. Teachers know their students well. They regularly set and mark homework. Teachers give students a grade for effort and for attainment. In Years 10 and 11, students know how they are progressing with their target GCSE grade. Teachers provide useful written feedback on how work could be improved. They make good use of praise and encouragement.

135. Leadership and management of art and design are good. The head of the department provides good support and guidance. A detailed handbook gives clear guidelines for staff. The head of department carries out a detailed analysis of GCSE results each year, and sets out action needing to be taken. The departmental system of monitoring teaching and learning is informal. It is not yet fully effective in helping raise the quality of teaching even further. Appropriate schemes of work provide good guidance for staff. The balance between critical studies and work from direct observation is better. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, students would benefit from further increasing the opportunities for independent exploration of their ideas. The use of computers is incorporated into the schemes of work, but as yet this aspect of art is underused. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- A strong teaching team with effective teaching strategies.
- A very good PSHE programme which is providing a good base for the development of citizenship.
- The detailed curriculum audit which identifies aspects of citizenship in other subjects and the assembly and tutor programme.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocation in Years 7, 8 and 9 is inadequate and results in students not achieving as well as they could.
- Management has not been effective in building on the very good development work in PSHE and the curriculum audit.
- There are no assessment procedures.

136. Citizenship is part of the existing very good programme for PSHE. The time allocation for PSHE is a single period each week for Years 10 and 11. In Years 7, 8 and 9 the time allocation is less, with an average throughout the year of one period per fortnight. The school has carried out a curriculum audit and several of the key departments in the school have effectively linked some of their work to

the citizenship curriculum. Other opportunities are provided for students to develop their awareness of citizenship. The 'Thought for the week' provides a basis for the assembly programme and the work done by tutors in the daily tutor period. A school student council and a peer education programme are also in place. All students are able to receive special merits for citizenship when they perform some form of service which contributes to the general wellbeing of the school. The PSHE programme provides a very good base for citizenship education, although the time allocation in Years 7, 8 and 9 is insufficient to meet fully the demands of the National Curriculum.

137. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory. Standards overall in Years 7, 8 and 9 are unsatisfactory as there are significant gaps in the citizenship programme. For example, studies of crime and its causes were limited in Years 7 and 8. In year groups with an increased amount of teaching time a more effective study of this topic was possible. The current programme is taught to all students and the setting arrangements allow for the use of different teaching strategies according to the students' level of prior attainment. Lower-attaining students achieve well in lessons because the work is well planned to meet their needs.

138. The work in PSHE is very good and students produce work in a wide range of topics relevant to the citizenship programme. For example, Year 11 students had studied aspects of the law relating to the carrying of offensive weapons. The local police liaison officer was involved in this work. Students in Year 7 had done some very thoughtful work on bullying and the possible responses to it. However, some citizenship topics are not yet included in any part of the programme whereas other topics are well covered. The law on drugs and on issues relating to the individuals' rights and responsibilities was covered well in Years 9 to 11. Other topics such as government, economics including finance, were not covered. Some subjects contribute positively to citizenship. In history for example, studies of the French revolution led to consideration of the formation and practice of government and democracy in the United Kingdom.

139. The quality of teaching and learning is good and teachers make good use of the time available. They are experienced and effective. In all lessons, the staff varied their teaching approaches so that a variety of teaching strategies were being used. For example in a Year 7 class, a role play exercise about bullying followed by some very skilful questioning by the teacher, produced some very good work from students. The teacher was careful to introduce new words such as 'extortion' and explain their meaning within the context of the topic. A similar variety of methods were seen in other older age groups. Some of the students in these groups found it difficult to cope with, for example, group work and needed increased training in developing their listening skills. A Year 10 class was doing a review of their very successful work experience. They were required to do some group work to identify common health and safety issues relating to their placements. Although most of the class was successful at completing the exercise, some of the boys in the group did not have the self-discipline to be able to cope with the demands of co-operative working.

140. Assessment strategies have not been developed and no assessment of citizenship is taking place. This also contributes to National Curriculum requirements not yet being met.

141. Attitudes and behaviour overall in both key stages were good. Students responded well to the good teaching. They worked with involvement and commitment and showed interest in the subject. Written work was well prepared and showed considerable care. There is small minority of students in the older age groups whose self-discipline and motivation are unsatisfactory and whose work and attitudes fall below the high standards of the majority.

142. A good start has been made by those staff managing the separate strands of citizenship, such as PSHE, careers education and the assembly programme. Schemes of work are well prepared and good

advice is given to teachers. Very good use of external visitors and speakers is made to enrich students' learning experiences. However, no progress has been made in building on this work to integrate the elements into one coherent curriculum for citizenship or to integrate the work being done in other curriculum areas. Similarly there has been no progress to create a formal system for assessment of citizenship as required in the National Curriculum. Consequently, the overall management of citizenship is unsatisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Well above average standards at GCSE.
- The good achievement of students.
- The good quality of teaching and learning.
- A strong and committed team of teachers.
- Good quality accommodation and resources.

Areas for improvement

- The structuring of lessons to include a clear introduction, suitable targets and effective end of lesson activities that reinforce learning.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the minority of students who are currently not learning effectively and are affecting the learning of others.
- Developing the use of computer related work, particularly computer aided manufacturing.

143. In 2002, the results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above those reported nationally. Current work indicates that standards are broadly similar.

144. Students are achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. They develop a good range of knowledge and skills in set tasks, for example in the electronic and computer control project. They have opportunities to follow the design and make process in producing their own cushions, with applied decoration. Students achieve well in all of the design and technology subjects because they have good access to designing and making activities in each of the material areas. Students have good opportunities to work to design briefs, carry out research and investigation and develop their own ideas. They use a range of recording skills when presenting ideas, make flow charts of their production methods and carry out evaluations of both existing products and their own work. Higher-attaining students produce very good, well-presented folder work, and the work of middle and lower-attaining students, including those with special educational needs, is also good because work is well structured and folders are well organised. Students have a good range of experiences when working with different materials, components and ingredients and, overall, practical work is good. Well-planned projects ensure that boys and girls of all ability levels, including those with special

educational needs, make good progress and higher-attaining students reach well above the national expectation. Students do use computers in the presentation of their work and for aspects of computer control, but the department recognise that this is still an area for development.

145. In 2002, overall GCSE results were well above the national average with continuing, high levels being attained in all of the different design and technology subjects. Girls' attainment is higher than boys' but both boys and girls continue to attain considerably higher than their respective national averages. Both boys and girls also attain a significantly high proportion of the highest (A* and A) grades. Overall, students' attainment in design and technology is better than in the other subjects they study.

146. Current work in Year 11 indicates that these high overall standards are set to continue, although the results may vary because of the way in which students of differing ability have chosen to take different design and technology subjects. Current standards in Year 10 are lower in resistant materials because a significant number of students do not have a sufficiently positive attitude to their teachers, or their own work. By the end of Year 11, standards of folder work are high in all subjects. Students benefit from well-planned courses that enable them to structure their work and meet examination requirements very effectively. Students are using a good range of recording techniques in research, analysis and development of design ideas. They also produce well-written evaluation of their work. Levels of knowledge and understanding are developing well, although a significant number of students have difficulty in retaining and recalling technical information in lessons. Students are good at using computers to present their work to a high standard and demonstrate good practical skills in a variety of materials but there is insufficient use of computers in the designing and making processes. Overall, students, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress by the end of Year 11 and are achieving very well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course.

147. Teaching is good, overall. All teachers have good subject knowledge. They teach the skills of the subject effectively and prepare students well for GCSE examinations. Overall, planning is effective and teachers have suitably high expectations of what students can do. However, some teachers do not structure their lesson plans sufficiently to include a clear introduction to the lesson, set suitably high expectations and targets for learning activities within the lesson, and then conclude with activities which reinforce learning. Whilst overall management of students is satisfactory, in some lessons, the lack of sufficient strategies to deal with the behaviour of difficult students and the uncooperative attitudes of some groups of students has a negative effect on the learning and progress of the class. The management of students in food and textiles lessons is a strength, and time and resources are used very well. As a result of good overall teaching, students' learning, overall, is also good. Students develop satisfactory knowledge about materials, their properties and use. Most are good at following instructions and carrying out guided activities, which enable them to acquire knowledge and practise skills and, as students practise their designing skills, many develop creative ideas which are used in their individual solutions. Most students work at a good pace and show interest and concentration when carrying out set tasks. For example, Year 9 students work in small groups on a range of design and making activities to produce display boards incorporating electronics and computer control. Year 10 students work well in small groups to investigate the effects of changing ingredients when preparing pastry. In Year 11, project work shows very high levels of commitment to complete folder work and this helps to ensure that both the quantity and quality of work are of a very high standard. Marking and assessment of students' work, as part of individual support in lessons, allows effective guidance to be given and provides good opportunities for older students to review and improve their coursework. However, written comments could be more comprehensive for some groups, in order to enable students to be more aware of their progress and improve their work. Teaching contributes to developing students' literacy, numeracy and computer skills but the planning for the inclusion of these

aspects is not sufficiently detailed. In some groups, homework could be used more effectively to support students' coursework.

148. Although the majority of students have satisfactory or good attitudes and behaviour, lessons can be affected by the uncooperative behaviour of a few individuals or the passive lack of response of some groups. In most lessons, this is overcome by the use of appropriate teaching strategies and therefore progress is made. However, in some cases, passive responses and negative attitudes affect the working relationships within lessons and both teaching and learning can be adversely affected. Most students respond very well to the design-based work and as they develop their learning skills, this has a positive effect on their overall personal development. However, some students lack respect for themselves and others, and this does affect both their own learning, and the learning of others.

149. Leadership and management of the department are good. Development priorities are appropriate and targets are reviewed within the faculty. However, this work is not sufficiently supported by regular meetings with the line manager, for example to discuss strengths and areas for improvement. A strong and committed team of teachers work well together and teachers new to the school are well supported. However, staffing is only satisfactory because continuing staff changes are affecting teaching and causing additional management difficulties. Accommodation and resources are good with a good range of machines and equipment for working in a wide range of materials, but provision for computer aided manufacturing equipment is limiting this area of work. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The performance at GCSE of boys, in comparison with that of girls.
- Good opportunities to practise and improve numeracy.
- Good assessment procedures.
- Good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The performance at GCSE of girls, in comparison with that of boys.
- Unsatisfactory attitudes to work of some students.
- Some teaching, which is ineffective in overcoming the reluctance to work of some students.
- Teaching in some lessons, that uses textbooks unimaginatively and limits students' independence by concentrating too much on factual knowledge.

150. Results of the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2002, were in line with national expectations. The standards of students currently in Year 9 are also generally in line with expectations. Knowledge and understanding of the places that they have studied is at expected levels for the great majority of students. This is shown, for example, in work on Brazil, that demonstrates knowledge of the country's location, size and regions and an understanding of the contrasts in standards of living that are to be found in its major cities. Understanding of geographical processes is demonstrated by work in which farming is studied as a system and the push-pull factors that govern migration towards major cities in India are considered. Presentation of work is generally at least satisfactory and appropriately varied, including writing, tables, sketches and diagrams. However, many students, while accurately recording general points, do not fully recognise the importance of including specific statistical details to

support and demonstrate their conclusions. This was evident, for example, in a lesson in which detailed reference to statistics would have improved students' responses to questions about the importance of tourism to the Spanish economy.

151. GCSE results were average in 2002. Relative to their performance in other subjects students were generally less successful in geography. The proportion securing grades A*-C has been quite consistent in recent years. A significantly higher proportion of students took the examination than in most schools. Although many more boys did so than girls, the proportions match those in the school population as a whole. The performance of boys was better than that of girls, in terms of grades gained and comparison with results in other subjects.

152. The evidence from GCSE coursework of current Year 11 students indicates that their standards are also in line with expectations. In coursework, in which they consider the impact of the opening of two large superstores upon their local town, all students are able to pursue an appropriate sequence of investigation. All set out clearly the focus of their investigation and provide background detail. Most investigations are well presented and enhanced with informative tables, maps and photographs. Although a few students do little more than describe events and issues, most reach appropriately logical conclusions. The coursework of the highest-attainers shows clearly that these students have undertaken substantial independent research and shown considerable initiative in seeking and analysing their evidence, before coming to thoughtful and well-substantiated conclusions.

153. Students enter Year 7 with generally average standards in geography. They achieve satisfactorily in maintaining these in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE course. The achievement of those with special needs is similar to that of other students. Teachers make appropriate reference to individual plans and often provide work specifically planned to meet their needs.

154. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Objectives are usually made clear to students and often referred to during lessons, so that they know what they need to achieve and are encouraged to consider how well they are succeeding. Time is often used well, for example when teachers clearly state time limits for tasks to ensure students work with pace. In many lessons, resources such as overhead projectors and video are used effectively to illustrate geographical themes. Questioning often provides helpful opportunities for students to recall and test their earlier learning, or to think for themselves. In the best lessons, a brisk style and high expectations are successful in generating enthusiastic responses from students. In the small number of lessons in which learning is less than satisfactory, this is because strategies for securing an adequate level of involvement and work from less motivated students are limited and ineffective. In some lessons, which are otherwise satisfactory, learning is limited by unimaginative use of material from textbooks. Sometimes, this leads to a situation where it is difficult for higher-attainers to respond to questions at higher levels, even though planning indicates that this is expected to take place.

155. Geography lessons provide good opportunities for students to practise and improve their skills in numeracy. For example, they regularly create and interpret charts and graphs. In one Year 10 lesson, an activity that required students to envisage a hydrograph that represented their case study of the disastrous flood in Lynmouth, provided very effective integration of geographical knowledge, understanding and skills. There is an appropriate focus on literacy, with the strongest aspect being the attention that teachers give to ensuring that appropriate key terms are learned and used. Although no ICT-based geography lessons were seen during the inspection, there is good planning for these in Years 7 to 9.

156. The attitudes and behaviour of students are usually satisfactory in geography lessons. In most lessons, interest and co-operation are appropriate. Students respond well when teaching is stimulating

and clear guidelines are set. In a minority of cases, students show little interest and effort, so that their work-rate and learning are unsatisfactory.

157. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The best improvement has been in assessment procedures, which are now good in all years. The department has succeeded in providing more opportunities for independent thought, although there is still some setting of undemanding tasks, based upon textbook exercises and the acquisition of factual information.

158. Although current arrangements for the subject have not yet been in place for long enough for their full impact to be felt, leadership and management are good. There is good awareness of the improvements that need to be made and commitment and energy in pursuing these. Although the subject is not yet required to take part in the Key Stage 3 Strategy, the department has effectively acted under its own initiative to make good use of it as a guide towards improvement.

159. In addition to its geography courses, the department also provides a successful and popular GCSE course in travel and tourism. GCSE results were well above average in 2002, with the performance of most students being significantly better than in their other subjects. Two Year 10 lessons were sampled during the inspection, in which students considered tourism in The Gambia. Both lessons provided effective opportunities for citizenship and moral development, as students considered how the methods employed by the tourism industry, based predominantly in the richer countries, often work against the interests of poorer countries. In one lesson, energetic teaching succeeded in providing good learning, even though student motivation was modest and in the other, very effective activities, questioning and management of students, coupled with good response, resulted in very good learning.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The above average standards and good achievement of students.
- Teaching that is well planned and focused upon historical understanding and skills.
- Good opportunities for the development of students' literacy skills.
- The good attitudes towards work of students.
- Good leadership and management that has secured good improvement.

Areas for improvement

- Lesson plans are not always fully implemented, resulting in insufficient time for written tasks.
- More planned opportunities to practise numeracy and use computers during lessons.

160. Teacher assessments of students' standards at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2002. The standards of students currently in Year 9 are also above average. Most students are able to interpret sources well, using them for example to identify the main changes that took place in weaponry and social structures during the First World War. The written work of most students is well structured and coherent. There is, for example, some clear description of a First World War trench system and explanation of the backgrounds, aims and actions of Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini.

161. GCSE results were a little above average in 2002. The A*-C rate was significantly lower than in the previous year. The 2001 results were significantly higher than the year-to-year average for the

subject however and the performance of the 2002 students matched what they achieved in their other subjects. Too few girls took history for statistical comparison between boys and girls to be possible. Work by lower-attaining students shows good progress.

162. The evidence from work samples of current Year 11 students indicates that their standards are also a little above average. The majority of students show a good grasp of skills in analysing sources. This is evident, for example, in work that interprets and explains different viewpoints about Roosevelt's New Deal, with strong discussion about the reliability of the sources and explanation of causes and effects. The work of the highest-attaining students is particularly thorough and detailed, showing considerable historical understanding.

163. Students enter Year 7 with generally average standards in history. They achieve well in improving upon these in Years 7 to 9 and in maintaining above average standards in the GCSE course. Achievement is consistent between students of all levels of attainment.

164. Students with special educational needs also achieve well. The department has improved its planning to meet their needs in lessons and often uses specialised resources that are well pitched to support this. Learning support assistants often provide additional help to individual students in history lessons. This usually results in the students successfully joining in with all activities in the lesson and often contributing well in discussions.

165. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Objectives are well planned for and made clear to students, so that they know what they have to achieve. Many lessons effectively help students to improve their historical understanding and skills by providing good opportunities to examine evidence, consider different interpretations and pose and test hypotheses. In a good Year 7 lesson for example, students examined a collection of sixteenth century sources to reach conclusions about how pleasant life was in Tudor times. Good questioning is helpful to students in adopting an open-ended approach and considering alternative interpretations. Resources such as overhead projectors and video tapes are often used to enhance learning. In a Year 10 lesson for example, students were able to practise presenting to the class, using an overhead projector, and a video strongly supported Year 9 students in considering moral issues when learning about the Holocaust. Although planning is generally good, it is not always fully implemented. Sometimes, class discussions go on for too long, so that written follow-up work has to be rushed. On these occasions, this work also sometimes suffers because instructions are rushed and unclear. Concern to provide good support to students occasionally leads teachers to do too much for them, for example in providing key terms, thus depriving students the opportunity to seek these for themselves, or test what they already know.

166. History lessons provide good opportunities for students to practise and improve their skills in literacy. Good guidance is given on writing well and teachers often ensure that students learn key terms. In Year 9, students analyse poems as evidence of conditions on the Western Front during the First World War. Some good activities take place that allow students to work with numbers and to use computers. For example in Year 8, students use a spreadsheet to consider statistics as evidence of the growth of Brighton as a holiday resort. However, the department is aware of the need to improve the planning of numeracy and ICT opportunities so that they are provided more regularly and systematically.

167. The attitudes and behaviour of students are good. In most lessons, they listen well, work with effort at individual tasks, willingly contribute answers and ideas in discussions and co-operate well in pairs and groups.

168. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. An improved focus on literacy has been effective in overcoming problems that many students, particularly boys, had in producing written work. In contrast to the situation during the last inspection, no instances of negative student attitudes were seen on this occasion. The department now provides work for students with lower prior attainment, that effectively supports them in achieving well.

169. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Improvement has been made with methodical, well-organised efficiency. In addition to the points raised by the last inspection, the subject has successfully kept abreast of recent developments and requirements. For example, there has been good planning to ensure that students benefit fully from the rich potential of history as a context for citizenship.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Improved accommodation and resources, which have provided increased access to computing facilities for many other subjects.
- The appointment of new ICT specialist teachers.
- The commitment of the senior management team to the development of ICT.
- Increased confidence and competence of teachers in the use of computers within their own subjects.

Areas for improvement

- The implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for ICT.
- Development of assessment procedures.
- Implementation of the school's action plan.
- Monitoring of and support for further development of the delivery of ICT across all subjects of the curriculum.

170. Development and improvements in the provision of ICT for students in Years 7 to 9, and for some students in Years 10 and 11 have taken place. However, not all students in Years 10 and 11 have sufficient access to all aspects of the ICT National Curriculum, and therefore statutory requirements are not met.

171. In 2002, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above those reported nationally, but in view of the limited opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills in the past, this appears to be an over estimate. Current work indicates that standards are broadly in line with national expectations.

172. Students join the school with varied experience in the use of computers. Current work in Year 7 lessons, together with experiences in other subjects, including the use of measurement and control in design and technology and science, indicate that students have access to a satisfactory range of activities that cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. Set tasks include processing text and images, graphics, desktop publishing, working with databases and spreadsheets, use of the Internet for research and some elements of computer control. All students have opportunities to work through set exercises to gain basic knowledge and skills in Year 7 lessons, and the computer work that takes place in other subjects provides opportunities for students to use these basic skills. Higher-attaining and more committed students use opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills well to produce good quality, more individualised project work, for example the desktop publishing exercise in English. Year 7 folders of work contain satisfactory records of students' work but work is not sufficiently well annotated or organised to support future learning. The use of computers provides good reinforcement of numeracy and literacy skills for all students. For example, the exercise on spreadsheets set suitable mathematical challenges for the highest-attainers but also reinforced basic numeracy for the lower-attaining students. As a result, all students, including those with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily.

173. This is the first year that a small proportion of students in Year 10 has taken the GCSE examination course for ICT and therefore no results are available for comparison. Current work, which follows a modular course, indicates that standards overall are slightly below the national average. Students use word processing, construct databases, use spreadsheets and consider relevant hardware and software for their tasks. Finished marked modules indicate that higher-attaining and committed students are completing modules to a good standard, but the work of lower-attainers and less committed students is often incomplete and lacking in depth. Overall, achievement is just satisfactory.

174. The use of computers in Years 10 and 11, in other subjects, is improving and for some subjects, such as business studies, the use of computers is a central part of the course. Many students use computers to enhance aspects of the presentation of their project work to a good standard. However, this work does not provide a sufficiently planned and progressive experience of computer-based work, which covers the requirements of the National Curriculum for all students, and therefore the standards attained and achievement of the majority of students in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory.

175. Most departments are including some elements of computer work in their programmes of work, and in some subjects, for example history, with the processing of data, and music, using computer technology for composing and performing, planned programmes for using computers to support coursework are good. Students are encouraged to use computers for presentation of work in English and there is positive impact of use of computers in science and design and technology. However, in design and technology the lack of equipment for computer aided design and manufacturing is preventing National Curriculum requirements being fully met. Overall, there has been significant progress in the development of the use of computers in other subjects. However, the contribution of computer related work in other subjects, is not sufficiently co-ordinated into a programme to fully cover National Curriculum requirements, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

176. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory, overall. In Year 7, most students like using computers and show both positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons. Students follow instructions well and most show good levels of concentration in most lessons. However, when not closely supervised some students can drift off task and waste time. In Year 10, a number of students are difficult to motivate, either because they are not interested in the subject or because of the interrupted experiences and teaching they have received in the past. As a result, behaviour can be affected and this in turn does cause difficulties in working relationships and the learning of these students and others in the group.

177. Teaching is satisfactory. Recently appointed teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to plan and deliver satisfactory or good lessons as well as providing good individual support for students in lessons. Teachers are good at planning aspects of numeracy and literacy into students' work. However, in some lessons planning does not take sufficient account of the difficulties posed by room layout and students not being able to see the board. Management of younger students is good but if older students are not managed well, this can affect the learning of individuals and groups of students. Students are acquiring knowledge and skills through set tasks and, as a result, learning is satisfactory, overall. The pace of work, and interest and concentration shown, is generally satisfactory or better in Year 7 but can be unsatisfactory in Year 10, because some students are not committed to their work. Some students are very keen and enthusiastic about using computers and they show insight into their own learning. However, the majority follow instructions to complete set exercises. When computers are used in other subjects learning can be good and this is demonstrated in the quality of presentation in the project work produced. Work is marked regularly but written comments on work are not always sufficiently clear or comprehensive to enable students to improve their work. The assessment process for Years 7 to 9 is not sufficiently based on the standards students attain in their coursework and is, therefore, unsatisfactory.

178. The recent audit of use of computers in other subjects has clearly identified substantial planned opportunities for computer use. However, this together with the school's action plan for ICT across the curriculum, have yet to be co-ordinated and implemented. The departmental development plan, recent improvements in staffing, ongoing in-service training, the appointment of specialist staff and substantial improvement in both accommodation and access to resources, demonstrates clear commitment to improve ICT provision within the school. Leadership at senior management level has been satisfactory, however at departmental level leadership and management have been unsatisfactory. Departmental documentation is very limited, new schemes of work are needed and, most importantly, the contribution of the use of computers in other subjects needs to be carefully co-ordinated, monitored and developed. The newly appointed head of department is well informed and has appropriate priorities for development. Accommodation and resources are good. The learning resource centre and other areas are used increasingly and effectively and overall access to computer resources is good.

179. Significant efforts have been made to improve both the provision for the ICT curriculum and the resources for computing within the school. However, although these are having a positive effect on students' learning, plans for the curriculum need to be more effectively co-ordinated and implemented and therefore improvement since the last inspection is only satisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- The enthusiasm and commitment of teachers, especially those with management roles.
- Students' generally positive attitude to language study.
- Effective learning and good progress in lessons.
- A broad and diverse languages curriculum which provides for students of all levels of attainment.
- Good use of ICT to support students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise standards of middle and lower-attaining students, especially at GCSE level.• Challenge students with specific objectives to improve their performance. |
|---|

180. All students study French as their National Curriculum foundation language in Years 7 to 9 and just over half opt to continue to GCSE level. About two thirds begin German or Spanish in Year 8 and two thirds of these are currently following GCSE courses. A small number study two languages. The overall entry in languages is well above the national average.

FRENCH

181. The results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 have improved in the last three years. In 2002, although below 2001 figures, they were above the average reported nationally for all students, boys and girls, though girls out-performed boys by a similar margin to that found nationally. In the current Year 9, standards are broadly similar. Students' listening and speaking skills develop well and, when given the opportunity, they are capable of good extended writing on personal topics, often making good use of ICT. Their reading supports and reinforces the other skills, but there was less evidence of their reading for personal information and pleasure.

182. GCSE results have fluctuated in the last three years from well above the national average to slightly below. In 2002, they were above the national average at the highest grades A* and A, at grades A* - C and at grades A* - G. Boys' results, although lower than girls', were well above the national average. An issue for the department is that standards are somewhat below the school average at grades A* - C, particularly for students of average attainment. Standards in the current Year 11 were judged through GCSE coursework: the quality and range of work seen covered the full spectrum of ability and was above average overall. Students showed the ability to write fluently and with interest on a range of personal topics.

GERMAN

183. German GCSE results have improved year on year. In 2002, they were exceptionally good, with four out of five students attaining grades A* - C and none lower than D. Boys have done particularly well in German and exceeded the performance of girls in 2001. Standards of students in the current Year 11 could only be judged through GCSE coursework, but were well above average: students wrote fluently and accurately on a good range of topics.

SPANISH

184. Spanish GCSE results have fluctuated significantly. In 2000, they were below the national average at grades A* - C; they were well above in 2001, but fell in 2002 to a level above the national average at grades A* - C and slightly below that at grades A* - G. Both boys and girls were above the national average at grades A* - C, but performed less well in Spanish than in their other subjects. Standards in Spanish have been adversely affected by staffing difficulties which have recently been resolved. Nevertheless, coursework of students in the current Year 11 included some outstanding work and was of good quality overall.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

185. Most students enter the school with some experience of language learning in primary school, though the lack of consistency of provision means that the benefit of this is mainly in their attitudes and motivation. In relation to this prior attainment, students attain good standards in French in Year 7. In lessons seen, students of all levels of ability listened attentively, spoke willingly and participated enthusiastically in learning games. Their written work included good descriptions of families, bar graph summaries of oral surveys and word-processed “identity cards”. Achievement in lessons seen in Years 8 and 9 was satisfactory overall, though the residual effects of staffing difficulty were evident in some classes, with some students lacking confidence and motivation. However, an excellent lesson was seen with a low-attaining group in which students made very good progress on the topic of sport and fitness, using their listening, speaking and writing skills very effectively in combination. Students’ work in Year 8 was satisfactory in lower sets and good in higher-attaining groups, where students show the ability to work in a range of verb tenses, consistent with achieving or exceeding the national benchmark for Years 7 to 9. Students who begin German and Spanish as their second foreign language in Year 8 make good progress. In a Year 8 German class, they discussed school and subjects fluently and enthusiastically and could write confidently at National Curriculum level 4. By Year 9, their standard of written German had caught up with their French. Similarly in Spanish, students in a Year 9 lesson developed and practised their ability to generate complex sentences on the theme of travel and transport and, in work seen, could write at level 5. Achievement in Year 10 was good in all three languages, with many students showing GCSE grade C capability. Able linguists make good progress, as do those with special educational needs. It is the students of just average attainment who are less confident as learners and need a more progressive experience with explicit and graded targets. The department has identified this as an area for development.

186. Teaching is good, overall. In over half the lessons seen it was good, very good or excellent. The key features of the best teaching are a lively and interactive approach based on teachers’ own very good language skills which provide students with high-quality models of French, German and Spanish. Teachers prepare their lessons well using a good range of media. The pace of lessons is good with variety and challenge, and sensitivity to the range of students’ needs and their abilities. For example, in a Year 8 French lesson with lower-attaining students, the teacher prepared a sequence of interesting and motivating tasks with copious support for students, enabling them to perform above expectation. In a Year 8 German lesson, after intensive listening and speaking practice, students applied their skills in combination with reading and writing in tasks on school and their subjects. Students developed their knowledge and understanding of advanced structure, to the point of applying it in meaningful oral work, in a Year 9 Spanish lesson. In a Year 10 French lesson, students were prepared and enabled to use the Internet to access information about a French school and compare findings with their own experience. The department has piloted the Key Stage 3 Strategy in foundation subjects and its success was evident through the consistently good structuring of lessons. There were very few weaknesses in the teaching. In the one instance where it was less than satisfactory, the poor behaviour of a small minority of students impeded the learning of others and the teacher was not quick enough to apply the department’s discipline procedures.

187. Students learn well in response to the good teaching. They show a good capacity to maintain interest, concentration and effort, use ICT confidently and respond particularly well to opportunities to use language independently for their own purposes. The successful introduction of GCSE written coursework exemplifies this well. A small number of students, mainly boys, still show immature attitudes to learning and some groups have had their motivation adversely affected by previous weak teaching. However, the current team of teachers has strengthened the climate for learning and, where change is needed, is bringing it about.

188. In general, students have positive attitudes to language study. They are eager to learn and take pride in the presentation of their work. Journeys to France, Germany and Spain are regularly over-subscribed and students respond enthusiastically to special events such as language festivals, taster courses in Japanese and the opportunity to use creative media such as video.

189. The languages curriculum is broad and diverse and offers above-average opportunities for language study. In response to the changing national picture, schemes of work have been updated and the department is actively considering alternative accreditation in languages to respond to the diversity of students' abilities and needs. The increasing use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades in assessment is providing students with clearer benchmarks and goals to which they can aspire. This, allied to clearer progression in schemes of work, is an important basis for raising standards across the board. Increased use of ICT, a recent priority, has enhanced learning for all students.

190. The department is well led and its management structure of separate heads for each language works well. The team is cohesive and highly committed to students' success. Teaching is regularly monitored with a good agenda for both subject and professional development. There is much mutual support within the team and good practice is regularly shared. This has brought about the improved consistency identified as an area for development in the last inspection. The new head of Spanish has made significant progress in a short time in establishing priorities and improving curriculum planning in the subject. Staffing has improved and the department is well accommodated and very well resourced, with a notably good stock of library books.

191. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained and have improved significantly in German. Teaching, leadership and management and the resourcing of the department are of a good standard and, although there is still challenging behaviour, the department has a co-ordinated approach to managing it. The department has come through a difficult period in good shape: it has made good improvement and has the capacity to maintain this.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Students learn well because of the good quality teaching and well-planned lessons.
- GCSE results for the last three years have been high.
- The good use of ICT to support learning.

Areas for improvement

- Students with special educational needs and those with above average musical talent do not always make enough progress because teachers do not modify work for them.
- A minority of unmotivated boys occasionally disrupt lessons through bad behaviour.
- Insufficient monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning throughout the department so some teachers do not receive enough support.

192. Teacher assessments in 2002 reported standards, at the end of Year 9, above those reported nationally. 2002 results in GCSE were above average. Boys did better than girls and achieved well above average results. GCSE results have been high for the last three years. Students' results in music were higher than those they attained in most of their other subjects.

193. By the end of Year 9, standards are generally above average. There are no significant variations between boys and girls or students from different ethnic groups. Students' achievement is good considering their wide variation in musical standards when they enter the school. Students get lots of opportunities to create, manipulate and refine sounds using electronic keyboards and a good range of music software and computers. Contributions to literacy skills are good with key words and technical vocabulary used frequently. Students have regular opportunities to link number skills to music as they perform and compose.

194. Higher-attaining students use their instrumental skills well and produce well-crafted pieces and performances. They co-operate well in small groups and perform their pieces with confidence. For example, in one Year 9 lesson six students worked at establishing an ensemble performance of the rock 'n' roll song 'Let's Dance' by Jim Lee. They integrated the instruments and voices by adding chords, 'walking' bass line and drum parts. They worked at developing their performance to include improvisation and drum fills before recording it for assessment. Lower-attaining students produce simple compositions but find it difficult to add suitable rhythmic accompaniments to their melodies. They struggle with reading musical notation, maintaining accurate rhythm and understanding some quite basic musical features such as tempo and texture. They are not confident performers and find many aspects of the subject difficult to understand because work is not modified enough for them.

195. It was not possible to observe any Year 11 lessons, but thorough analysis of GCSE coursework and recordings took place and indicates standards by the end of Years 10 and Year 11 are above average and students achieve well. Performance skills are greatly enhanced by the regular opportunities to take part in high quality ensembles and expert tuition from the nine visiting instrumental teachers. Many higher-attaining students are excellent instrumentalists and they perform to a very high standard. They use technical vocabulary well when writing or talking about music. However, these students are less confident with the more theoretical aspects of the course such as musical history and appraising music they hear. Using music software they compose pieces that demonstrate a clear understanding of structure and musical shape. In one Year 10 lesson, two students used the sequencing software to notate and manipulate a modal melody in compound time. One then added a melody line on the flute and they performed the two parts together. Lower-attaining students tend to have had less formal musical training and struggle to read traditional notation because they rely solely on using their aural skills to reproduce melodies. They are good performers on guitar and percussion.

196. Students learn well because the teaching is good overall. Through the teachers carefully structured planning, clear explanations and good demonstrations, students improve their skills and extend their understanding and appreciation of the music they study. Students enjoy the practical aspects of the subject and are generally keen to learn. The best teaching is characterised by very good knowledge and understanding and a sharing of what is to be learned at the outset and a clear summary at the end to reinforce learning. Teaching during the inspection week was not as good as it clearly has been over time because a minority of boys disrupted the flow of some lessons and teachers did not always cope with this. Marking of work is generally good and homework is set to enhance the learning in lessons although this sometimes requires students to have access to their own keyboard to complete.

197. Teachers build students' confidence with effective use of praise as they circulate the groups to ensure students are working hard during practical sessions. In the less successful lessons, the pace sometimes slowed to a crawl as students spent ages on one single activity, became bored, started to

chat and misbehaviour soon followed. Students with special educational needs and the more musically talented do not always make enough progress in lessons because teachers do not modify work for them. A few boys, particularly in Year 9, occasionally disrupt lessons through bad behaviour.

198. Leadership is good while management is satisfactory. The recently appointed head of department has a clear vision for the future of the subject and has already produced good schemes of work to ensure the subject is providing an exciting musical education for the students. Documentation is good and the new initiatives will move the department forward. However, it is too early to see the full effect of these new strategies. Some aspects of the management of music have yet to be dealt with. For example, teaching within the department is not monitored enough and as a result less experienced teachers are not receiving enough support. Management had suffered from significant disruption prior to the current head of department being appointed which has resulted in only satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Numbers opting for music are increasing and standards have been maintained.

199. Music is a flourishing subject that is growing in popularity. It has a positive impact on the ethos and atmosphere of the school by fostering students' self-esteem, awareness and respect for others. The extra-curricular contribution of music to the enjoyment and achievement of students is very good. There are regular performances involving large numbers of motivated students and over 250 students take advantage of the good quality instrumental tuition offered by the county music service.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good quality teaching results in effective learning by all groups of students.
- The proportion of students attaining A* - C grade passes at GCSE has continued to improve and in 2002 was significantly higher than the national average for similar schools.
- Very good extra-curricular provision throughout the year extends students' learning experiences and has enabled some students to achieve success beyond school level.
- The excellent quality and range of accommodation helps promote high standards.

Areas for improvement

- The analysis and use of assessment data to help teachers plan their work.
- Consistency in approach to the teaching of students' literacy skills.

200. By the end of Year 9, the attainment of the majority of students is average. This represents good achievement since their attainment on entry was below that expected for their age. In relay running, for example, the more physically capable boys have a secure changeover technique and their sprint technique is good. The starting technique and use of changeover boxes for the less physically capable is more variable. In a planned wet weather lesson, using the ICT suite, a group of boys were adept in their use of ICT and were using an appropriate web site to develop further their knowledge and understanding of sprinting and shot putt techniques. In discus, the swing technique and angle of release of the majority of girls is secure, but the lack of height for the less physically capable means the distances thrown are limited. No Year 11 lessons in the common course were seen. By the end of Year 10, standards in lessons seen are as expected for the great majority. The practical capabilities of GCSE students help raise standards in the common course. Achievement continues to be good. In shot putt, the majority of girls has a good grasp of the key points of techniques and in rounders, most throw

with accuracy. There is, however, a tendency for the less physically capable to remain static when throwing and catching.

201. Across all years, students have a secure knowledge and understanding of the principles and procedures of warm-up activity and, when asked, name the muscle groups being stretched. Students with special educational needs are well integrated and supported and make good progress. The very effective support of teaching assistants for some students with statements of special educational need ensures they also make good progress. Physically talented students make good progress in lessons and are provided with further opportunities through playing in school teams. As a result of this, some individuals have achieved representative honours at district and county level, with an example at southern counties level in hockey.

202. GCSE physical education is now a popular option for students. The proportion attaining A* - C grade passes has continued to improve since the course was first offered and, in 2002, was well above the national average. In relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9 this represented very good achievement. The small number of girls entered does not make it possible to compare the results in terms of gender. No practical lessons were observed in Year 11. A scrutiny of a small sample of students' course work shows high standards, with some good use of ICT to present their work and analyse their findings. Department data suggests that the proportion of students on course to attain A* - C grade passes will be similar to last year. Year 10 students have made a good start to the course and are developing well their knowledge and understanding of body systems, factors affecting fitness and the relationship between the media and sport. The department also offers a 'sport & fitness' option course in Years 10 and 11. This enables students who wish to follow a course less demanding than GCSE to gain certification from a number of national sporting bodies as well as department certification. Year 10 students have developed well their knowledge and understanding of orienteering and were able to put this into practice using a local course.

203. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and results in good progress by all groups of students. Lessons are well planned and provide for a variety of structured and progressive activities that help ensure students remain motivated. Consistent routines at the start of lessons set a positive tone and are indicative of teachers' high expectations in terms of discipline and behaviour. Students are made aware of what is expected of them because teachers tell them what the learning objectives are and, in the best practice, highlight key terminology being used, thus supporting further students' literacy development. In a Year 8 boys' javelin lesson, for example, the teacher used a laminated card to enable students to consolidate their understanding of the terminology. Effective breakdown and demonstration of skills by teachers and, when appropriate, involving students, ensures groups know what they have to do to make progress. This was, for example, effective in a Year 9 boys' relay lesson.

204. The great majority of students' attitudes and behaviour are good. This helps enhance further the quality of the learning atmosphere; consequently all groups of students are enabled to make good progress. They work well together and show clear respect for the capabilities of one another. In a Year 9 boys' discus lesson, for example, they worked well as small groups developing their techniques and were encouraged by the teacher to observe the good practice of one another. This helps them to adapt, refine and improve their own performance even further. Effective use of questioning during activities enabled teachers to gauge the extent of students' learning as well as enhancing their speaking and listening skills. This was, for example, particularly effective in a Year 9 girls' discus lesson where they had also been provided with laminated cards breaking down the required technique. Good quality teacher-student working relationships in all lessons were the outcome of very good class management skills; as a result the whole ability range is challenged and involved. Students are made aware of their capabilities because teachers circulate well offering constructive praise and criticism, thus making

them aware of what is needed to make further progress. On occasion, the few non-participants in lessons are not always as fully involved as they could be, for example, by being drawn into whole group introductions, to observe the breakdown and demonstration of skills by teachers or to be involved in coaching and evaluation of their peers. Though GCSE work is marked consistently, the quality is somewhat variable. Students are not, for example, always being informed as to what they need to do to make further progress. At the end of lessons, students are asked questions to help them consolidate their learning; students are thus involved in evaluating what they have learned. On the odd occasion, though, teacher evaluation tended to predominate.

205. The quality and range of the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is very good and broadens students' learning experience. Extra-curricular provision is very good throughout the year and extends students' learning opportunities. As a result of the enthusiasm of teachers, school teams have recently been successful at mid-Sussex level in association football, athletics, basketball and cross-country. The quality and range of accommodation are excellent and promote high standards, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching in physical education has improved since the previous inspection. Leadership and management are effective but the analysis and use of assessment data is not yet sufficiently well integrated into planning. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Dance

206. GCSE dance has continued to be a popular option for relatively small groups of girls since the previous inspection. The proportion attaining A* - C grade passes has consistently been higher than the national average for similar schools. In both 2001 and 2002, the proportion (90 per cent) was significantly higher. No lessons were seen in Year 11. Year 10 girls have made a good start to the course. In their group set piece, the more physically capable display flexibility and fluidity in their movement. Some less physically capable still find difficulty with the dynamics of the set piece but, on the whole, standards are above average. Their very good behaviour and positive attitudes makes for a very positive learning atmosphere in lessons. They respond positively to the very good pace and challenge offered by the teacher and, consequently, all have made very good progress thus far in the year.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Leadership of the department is very committed, based on a thorough and up-to-date knowledge of developments in teaching religious education, examination requirements and resources.
- The excellent schemes of work provide opportunities for students to investigate wide-ranging topics and produce work that is substantial, of high quality and very well presented.
- Students meet ideas that challenge their beliefs and attitudes and provide excellent opportunities for developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

- The very good resources and accommodation have a beneficial effect on students' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching methods occasionally need some adapting to meet the needs of some lower-attaining students, and to prevent boys from dominating discussions inappropriately.
- Not enough boys are attracted to study religious education at GCSE level.

207. GCSE results in both 2001 and 2002 were well above average and above the school average. Of the twenty-six candidates in each of those years, 86 and 83 per cent gained A* - C grades. All candidates passed. The subject is particularly popular with girls. Only four of the candidates in 2002 were boys. The current standards of work of those taking GCSE are well above course expectations.

208. The standards of those following general courses in religious education in Years 7 to 11 are above average. By Year 9, students have acquired a good volume of knowledge about Christianity and other faiths. They know about the origins and development of major faiths, and the rituals and symbolism associated with each. They develop a good understanding of the impact of each religion on the lives of their followers. Students achieve well in relation to their abilities and starting points. Written work is very thorough and very well presented. Students make very good use of ICT for research. They show a good understanding of the impact of religion in regular examples of personal writing, such as Mary's personal diary at the time of the Annunciation, and a letter to a pen friend from a Muslim child. The work of higher-attaining students is very substantial. An important aspect of students' learning in all years is the discussion of spiritual, moral and social issues. Students are candid and thoughtful, and express themselves well in general, but sometimes boys dominate thoughtlessly and girls make too little contribution. However, in a Year 10 class, students compared viewpoints rationally and sensitively when they considered the laws and attitudes concerning capital punishment and euthanasia in different countries. Thoroughness and attention to detail are important characteristics in the GCSE coursework. Students' written and oral work reflects an extensive and accurate knowledge, for example of the layout of a mosque and the roles of those who officiate there. Students show wide social and religious perspectives on the topics they study, such as Christian attitudes to divorce.

209. Teaching is good in the general religious education lessons and very good in the GCSE course. Lessons are very well planned and make very good use of the very wide range of resources available. Teachers' knowledge is very extensive, going far beyond the requirements of the schemes of work. This is a reflection of the high degree of commitment that the teachers bring to their work. Lessons are efficient because staff have high expectations of students, instructions are clear and time is appropriately allocated to tasks to secure a good pace of work. The open-ended nature of many assignments and the expert help available ensure that gifted and talented students are very strongly challenged. Good support is provided for students with special educational needs. As a result, all students learn well and often very well. They concentrate hard to achieve high standards, sustain their effort well through lessons, and are efficient when working collaboratively. The length and quality of some written work indicates that students often become deeply involved in their work and are prepared to go well beyond the teacher's minimum expectations. Occasionally, the teaching methods overestimate the capacities of lower-attaining groups, and some students require more specific guidance when beginning a topic.

210. The curriculum is excellent, encompassing very thoroughly the expectations of the local agreed syllabus and GCSE requirements. Excellent opportunities are provided for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The schemes of work make good links with other areas of the curriculum, and in particular with citizenship, history, art and music. Assessment and marking are

generally thorough, but recent staffing problems have resulted in inconsistency in the regularity and depth of the marking.

211. Leadership and management of religious education are very good. In particular, the head of department has a very thorough knowledge of local and national development in religious education, is aware of the range of resources available, and has a very thorough knowledge of examination requirements. The day-to-day organisation of the department is excellent. Accommodation is very good, and the concentration of the teaching rooms permits efficient collaboration amongst the teachers and aids the efficient deployment of resources, both of which benefit students' progress. Teaching is well monitored. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.