

ADDENDUM
TO REPORT ON GRAVESEND GRAMMAR SCHOOL PUBLISHED ON
3RD DECEMBER 2002

Amendment to paragraph 172 under the Modern Foreign Languages heading – line 6 should read ‘...with over 40 per cent A*/A grades in French and German’

INSPECTION REPORT

GRAVESEND GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Gravesend

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118936

Headteacher: Mr G Wybar

Reporting inspector: Mrs C Gillies

Dates of inspection: 14th to 18th October 2002

Inspection number: 249552

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18 years
Gender of students:	Male
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr E Hammond
Date of previous inspection:	October 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20597	Mrs C Gillies	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion, including race equality Citizenship General studies (Post-16)	What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11414	Ms A Bennett	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
4351	Ms J Strickland	Team inspector	English Drama	
2561	Mr A Byrne	Team inspector	English (Post-16)	
10905	Mr A Brewerton	Team inspector	Mathematics	
18178	Mr I Matthews	Team inspector	Mathematics (Post-16)	
5241	Dr C Millband	Team inspector	Science Biology (Post-16)	
19043	Mr D Lewis	Team inspector	Chemistry and physics (Post-16)	
10053	Ms J Simms	Team inspector	Art	
1759	Mr G Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology	
20247	Mr R Parry	Team inspector	Geography	
24127	Mr J Kidd	Team inspector	History Government and politics (Post-16)	
10060	Mr D Gutmann	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4373	Mr P McKenzie	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (Post-16)	
22501	Mrs S Jones	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
18888	Ms J Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education	
15678	Ms J Radford	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs English as an additional language	
15163	Mr E Deeson	Team inspector	Business (Post-16)	

Subjects also inspected Post-16 in depth, shown in bold)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Gravesend Grammar is a foundation, 11-18, selective boys school with close to 1000 students, 243 of whom are in the sixth form. Numbers have increased since the last inspection. Over 300 boys apply for the 143 places each year and come from over 30 primary schools. Gravesend has a large Sikh community. Approximately 86 per cent of students are white; nine per cent are Indian, with very small numbers from other ethnic backgrounds. A higher than average percentage of students speak English as an additional language – practically all fluently; their dominant home language is Punjabi. There are two refugees but overall movement in and out of school is very low. The percentage eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of students on the register of special educational needs is well below average, as is the percentage of students with statements of special educational needs. The majority of students come from the local borough of Gravesham, which has a mixed social and economic structure, including several wards which have relatively high levels of multiple deprivation within Kent. In 2000 the school achieved a Sportsmark Award and in 2001 a School Achievement Award. It is seeking specialist status as a mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) college. Standards on entry are well above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Gravesend Grammar is a very good school which inspires loyalty and excellent relationships. It gives students a high quality of education and they enjoy learning. Teaching is good, and very good in the sixth form. Management is good. The headteacher inspires confidence with his very good leadership. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are very high at the end of Years 9 and 11 and above average in the sixth form. Mathematics results in all years are outstanding.
- Students are extremely enthusiastic and hardworking. They enjoy debates and discussions and contribute keenly, articulately and perceptively.
- Teaching is good, and very good in the sixth form.
- Students have excellent relationships with each other and with teachers. Their behaviour is very good.
- Extra-curricular activities in physical education are excellent.
- Students are looked after very well and feel happy at school. Teachers treat them respectfully and particularly help Year 7 students to settle in quickly.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school and it is very well led. Careers advice and guidance is excellent.

What could be improved

- Standards are not high enough in design and technology in Years 7 to 9, GCSE science and art in all years.
- Statutory requirements for design and technology in Years 7 to 9 are not met.
- Contributing to the above is the past and present difficulty the school has appointing teachers in several subjects*, especially design and technology, English and drama.
- The poor accommodation and unsatisfactory resources. These depress standards in several subjects. Teaching is difficult in many classrooms because they are small and cramped.

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

** This is beyond the school's control. The headteacher could not do more to try and recruit staff.*

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION (October 1996)

Standards have gone up in recent years although there remains a noticeable gap between the percentage of GCSE A and B grades in a few subjects, particularly art and science, compared to all selective schools. The headteacher, appointed in January 2001, has made learning a key focus and, as a result, many teachers are using a better range of teaching methods than before. By monitoring

teaching systematically, the headteacher has identified those teachers who plan interesting and varied lessons and he is encouraging them to share their ideas and skills with others. Despite lacking a full complement of heads of departments, middle managers are generally more involved in planning and decision making and contributing their ideas to whole-school development plans. All students now study religious education in Year 10. The school has retained the very good atmosphere and respectful ethos noted in the last report and it continues to provide very good pastoral care and guidance for all students. Improvement since the last inspection has been reasonable and it is gathering momentum under the present headteacher.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	D
A-levels/AS-levels	n/a	n/a	B	

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

A shows the school's results are in the top five per cent nationally. Similar schools means all selective schools in the country. The intake for Gravesend Grammar is approximately the top 25 per cent of local students, whereas for many selective schools it is closer to the top 10 per cent.*

Years 7 to 9: test results in 2001 were very high, well over 90 per cent of boys reached Level 6 and above. The 2002 ones were similar, although the English ones dropped slightly. The upward trend in the average points score in recent years has been above that seen nationally. Mathematics results are the best. Present standards are very high in mathematics, well above average in science, geography, history and modern foreign languages, above average in English and ICT and average in all other subjects. Standards in religious education at least match the expectations of the Kent Agreed Syllabus. Progress is exceptional in mathematics, very good in science, history and citizenship but unsatisfactory in art and design and technology.

GCSE results: very high in 2001 with a trend in line with that seen nationally. The average total points score per student (60.3 points) was just below that for selective schools, but it went up in 2002. In 2002, 99 per cent of boys attained five or more (the average was nine) GCSE grades A*-C, with overall 40 per cent grades A*/A. In recent years English, mathematics, ICT and music results have been very strong; those for art, design and technology and science relatively weak. Standards are very high in mathematics and above average in art, design and technology, ICT and physical education. Progress is exceptional in mathematics, very good in history, ICT, music, religious education and citizenship but unsatisfactory in art.

A-levels: in 2001 students attained an average total points score of 18.4, above the national average and well above the average for male students nationally. The average total points score went up to 18.9 in 2002. The percentage of A/B grades was just over 38 per cent in 2001 (and in 2002), below that attained by selective schools, but above that attained by several boys grammar schools in Kent. A/B grades have been high in general studies, mathematics and theatre studies for four years, and in geography, government and politics, chemistry and music in 2002. Art and classical civilisation A-level results have been relatively disappointing since 1998. AS-level ICT results in 2001 were most impressive.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the	These are very positive. Students are proud to be members of the school

school	community and appreciate all that is offered. They concentrate well in practically all lessons and many take part in extra-curricular activities on a regular basis.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Despite cramped corridors and several small classrooms, boys move about sensibly and behave very well. They are enthusiastic and hardworking. They respond well to being treated as adults. Prefects support younger students most effectively and carry out their duties responsibly.
Personal development and relationships	Respect for all is firmly embedded in the ethos of the school, which is characterised by racial harmony and co-operation. Relationships are excellent. Several elements of the personal, social and health education, the tutorial and general education lessons contribute significantly to students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship and prepare them extremely well for life beyond school. They appreciate and respond well to this guidance.
Attendance	Well above average. Sixth-form students attend lessons regularly and have responded sensibly to the greater freedom they have this year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 - 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 - 13
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Very good

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

Years 7 to 11: almost a third of teaching was very good and it was excellent in six lessons. It was slightly more effective in Year 10 than in Years 7 to 9. Learning was at least good overall. In mathematics, teaching was very good in most of the lessons seen, and excellent in two. Excellent teaching was also seen in two geography, one citizenship and one French lesson. Students' learning was particularly strong in Years 7 and 10. This may well be because both these years are starting new phases of their education, and students are particularly receptive in lessons. Literacy is taught well, and numeracy exceptionally well.

Sixth form: teaching was at least good in almost four-fifths of lessons. It was very good in over half the lessons, including six when it was excellent, twice in mathematics and once each in chemistry, ICT, music and business. The standard of teaching was very similar in Year 12 and Year 13. Students' learning closely reflected the quality of teaching, but it was slightly better in Year 12. Teachers have extremely good knowledge of their subjects and create excellent relationships with students. Discussions in many lessons were of a very high standard.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall and very good in the sixth form. Apart from the lack of design and technology in Year 7 and too little time for it in Years 8 and 9, the curriculum is strengthened by two languages, drama, classical civilisation, Latin and business in various years. The sixth-form curriculum is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Sound. These pupils usually reach the standards their teachers expect of them. Occasionally teachers do not make enough use of the learning support assistants' expertise.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils' progress is similar to that of other pupils. Pupils at an early stage of English language acquisition make good progress because of their good attitudes to learning, and the very good specialist support offered by the local education authority.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral,	Good overall with excellent expectations for the best possible social behaviour and attitudes. The school actively promotes respect for the individual and a sense of responsibility for the welfare of others. Students also know that very

social and cultural development	high moral standards are the norm. Provision for students' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory but the content of assemblies, and emphasis on these elements in lessons, could be strengthened to highlight their significance.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Students are looked after very well and feel happy at school. Teachers treat them respectfully and particularly help Year 7 students to settle in quickly. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are sound overall and good in the sixth form.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher inspires confidence with his very good, clear style of leadership. He has already concentrated on key areas to raise standards further, for example consideration of how students learn and how teaching must respond. He is ably supported by the deputy and assistant headteachers and management is good. Several heads of department lead and manage their subjects very well. Heads of year look after students respectfully and with genuine interest, at the same time as providing firm guidance.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors now contribute well to long-term planning and they are supporting the specialist status bid enthusiastically. They have a very good appreciation of the strengths and qualities that must be nurtured and extended, and are realistic about areas that need development. They fulfil their responsibilities well, although statutory requirements for design and technology and a daily act of collective worship are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Data is analysed carefully and the headteacher is fully aware of those areas needing to improve and move forward faster. Teachers are observed regularly and books scrutinised carefully, with students' and parents' views incorporated as well. Thus the senior management team is continuously evaluating what is happening as well as considering the yearly examination results.
The strategic use of resources	All funds are used correctly and financial management is good. Plans to raise money by selling off a small amount of land have been evaluated most carefully and wisely.

Administration and support staff, and the technicians, all contribute much to the successful functioning of the school. The accommodation is poor, with many small classrooms. Although the number of computers has increased, too few departments have easy access to them.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 90 per cent of their sons are happy at school and making good progress. They feel behaviour is good and that the school expects their sons to work hard and achieve their best. They value the school's role in helping their sons to become mature and responsible. Ninety per cent think the teaching is good although Year 11 parents are less enthusiastic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A few Year 11 parents have concerns about how the school is led and managed. A small number of parents feel they are not kept well informed about how their son is getting on and that the school does not work closely with them. The lack of consultation about, and concerns with, the new sixth-form arrangement.

Less than 40 per cent of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and only 44 attended the parents' evening. The inspection confirmed all the parents' positive views. A factor contributing to the Year 11 parents' views about leadership and management is the insoluble staffing situation in design and technology. This meant that some boys, all by choice, did not continue with this subject for GCSE. There was much consultation with sixth-formers about the changes introduced this term and parents were fully informed. So far the new system is working well.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

GRAVESEND GRAMMAR SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Gravesend Grammar is a foundation, 11-18, selective boys school with 243 students in the sixth form. Overall, school numbers have increased since the last inspection but those in the sixth form dropped slightly until this year. Almost all students in Year 11 stay at the school as they attain the sixth-form entry requirements of five GCSE grades A*-C. In 2002 ten went to further education college and one into employment; seven new students entered the sixth form, including two from eastern Europe and one from India. Retention rates are high, very few students leave at the end of Year 12. Approximately 86 per cent of students are white; nine per cent are Indian, with very small numbers from other minority ethnic backgrounds. A higher than average percentage of students speak English as an additional language – practically all fluently; their dominant home language is Punjabi. Gravesend has a large Sikh community. There are two refugees in the sixth form. The majority of students come from the local borough of Gravesham, which has a mixed social and economic structure, including several wards which have relatively high levels of multiple deprivation within Kent. Eight students are on the register of special educational needs, one of whom has a statement. The school is seeking specialist status as a mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) college. Standards on entry are well above average. The academic curriculum focuses on AS- and A-levels including physical education, theatre studies, classical studies and business. ICT AVCE is offered off-site along with psychology. The sixth-form curriculum has been kitemarked by the local education authority (LEA).

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form of Gravesend Grammar is very good. It gives students a high quality of education and prepares them extremely well for university and life beyond school. Leadership and management are very good. Teaching is very good. The sixth form is cost effective.

Strengths

- Standards are above average overall and outstanding in mathematics and general studies.
- Students are mature, confident, thoughtful and responsible young adults. They have an excellent attitude to their studies and school life. They respect the freedom they are offered and so far have responded sensibly to this.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers are most knowledgeable about their subjects.
- Students' commitment to, and participation in, physical education are excellent.
- Leadership is very good. The careers advice and guidance, and pastoral support offered to all students are excellent.

What could be improved

- The percentage of A/B grades in AS- and A-levels.
- The poor accommodation and overall unsatisfactory resources, which depress standards in some subjects and limit the opportunities for students to learn in an interesting variety of ways.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Excellent. Outstanding results. Standards are very high because teaching and learning are very good. Students achieve exceptionally well. The school has been designated a 'Leading Mathematics Department' by the LEA.
Biology	Satisfactory. Average or better results. Above average standards. Satisfactory teaching. Students learn and achieve well. Teachers do not assess standards regularly enough to push students to the higher grades.
Chemistry	Very good. Average and improving results. Standards above average. Students are making very good progress now as staffing problems have been sorted. Some innovative and very good teaching, so students learn very well.
Physics	Good. Average results which have remained static in recent years. Students make good progress and teaching is also good. However, consistent monitoring of learning and progress is needed to raise the percentage of A/B grades, although students learn very well in lessons.
Design and technology	Good. Average results and standards. Satisfactory achievement. Good teaching from new head of department. Students learn well. High levels of individual support.
Business	Good. Fluctuating results but above average standards at present. Teaching and learning are both very good. Students achieve very well.
ICT	Very good. Well above average AS-level results in 2001. Similar standards at present. Students achieve well as teaching and learning are very good. Better facilities this year.
Physical education	Good. Above average results and standards. Students both learn and achieve well. Their involvement in the department's work with younger students is excellent.
Art	Unsatisfactory. Results usually below average. Teaching, learning and progress are unsatisfactory and standards are below average.
Geography	Very good. Well above average standards. Students learn very effectively because they have excellent attitudes and respond very positively to the teachers' high expectations for rigorous thinking.
History	Good. Average or above average results. Above average standards. Consistently good teaching and learning so students achieve well.
English	Good. Average results. Very good teaching which engages students through a variety of approaches, underpinned by close attention to subject

	skills. Students make very good progress.
French	Satisfactory. Above average results. Average standards at present. Teaching and learning are good. Students make satisfactory progress.

A few lessons were sampled in German, classical civilisation, economics, government and politics, general studies, music, music technology and theatre studies. Examples of very good teaching were seen in most subjects. Government and politics is a popular course; results are well above average. A-level general studies results are outstanding; the AS-level course is popular in Year 12.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The recently appointed head of sixth form, who is also the head of careers, has combined sensitive personal support with an excellent careers programme which prepares students for university and life beyond school. This is blended into the valuable general education programme in Year 12 and the tutorial sessions in all years.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The governors, headteacher, senior managers, and the head of sixth form, all work together to provide most effective leadership. Day-to-day management is efficient. The head of sixth form has organised contact between students and their tutors very well.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 90 per cent of students feel they are taught well and challenged to do their best. Over 90 per cent feel they are treated as responsible young adults and they enjoy being in the sixth form. All Year 12 students feel they are helped and encouraged to study and feel teachers are accessible if they have difficulties. Practically all Year 13 students confirmed the latter statement. Practically all Year 12 students felt they had been helped to settle well into the sixth form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost 20 per cent don't know whether they could rely on strong, sensitive support. Twenty-five per cent do not feel the school listens and responds to their views. Students are concerned about the lack of space for them to study in school. Over 30 per cent of Year 13 students feel they are not helped and encouraged to study. Nearly 40 per cent do not feel they are well advised by the school or careers service, neither do they feel they are kept well informed about their progress (although a significant number in Year 12 don't know).

In the majority of responses, Year 12 students were more positive than Year 13 students. This is probably because the latter was adjusting to the new sixth-form arrangements, which included them losing their common room. In discussion during the inspection, they accepted the reasons for this and acknowledged that the school had provided enough rooms for them to study in. Negative comments about careers advice were not directed at the school's efforts, which are admirable. A small number of students does not feel the school responds to their views, but they were consulted about the new arrangements, and so far these are working well.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement “outstanding” in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to “very weak”.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

- Standards of work seen were well above average in all years.
 - Students achieve well and make good progress overall. In Years 10 and 11 they make very good progress.
1. Test results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were very high, with well over 90 per cent of boys reaching Level 6 and above. The 2002 results were similar, although the English ones dropped slightly. The upward trend in the average point score in recent years has been above that seen nationally. Mathematics results are the best, with an average point score of 47 in 2002 and 88 per cent of boys reaching Level 7 and above; they have crept up since the last inspection. The average point scores have been consistently above 40 in science, and just below 40 in English. Compared to selective schools in 2001, the average point scores were well above in English, above in mathematics and in line in science; mathematics and science may well be relatively better in 2002.
 2. Standards in Year 9 are:
 - very high in mathematics;
 - well above average in science, geography, history and modern foreign languages;
 - above average in English and ICT. Standards in religious education at least match the expectations of the Kent Agreed Syllabus;
 - average in all other subjects.
 3. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is:
 - exceptional in mathematics;
 - very good in science, history and citizenship;
 - satisfactory in physical education;
 - unsatisfactory in art and design and technology;
 - good in all other subjects.
 4. In 2001 GCSE results were very high, with a trend in line with that seen nationally. The average total points score per student (60.3 points) was just below that for selective schools, but it went up in 2002. As several selective schools enter students for over ten or more GCSEs, and Gravesend Grammar does not, this is a commendable result. In 2002, 99 per cent of boys attained five or more (the average was nine) GCSE grades A*-C, with overall 40 per cent grades A*/A. In recent years English, mathematics, ICT and music results have been very strong, those for art, design and technology and science relatively weak. Normally strong, history results dropped considerably in 2002. In economics, taken for the last time in 2001, GCSE results were relatively weak but business GCSE results in 2002 were better.
 5. Standards in Year 11 are:
 - very high in mathematics;
 - above average in art, design and technology, ICT and physical education;
 - in line with expectations in citizenship and average in art;
 - well above average in all other subjects.
 6. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is:

- exceptional in mathematics;
 - good in English, science, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education;
 - unsatisfactory in art;
 - very good in all other subjects.
7. Students arrive at the school with above average **literacy** skills. The inspection identified subjects where attention to literacy is particularly successful, but also some areas of weakness or inconsistency. In most lessons students speak and listen well, and their debating skills in Years 10 and 11 are impressive. Students' spelling could be better. Their research skills are improving, through the introduction to the library lessons in Years 7 and 8 and through guided Internet work.
 8. Students' **numeracy** skills are outstanding; they do arithmetic in their heads fast and accurately. All students are very familiar with how to use calculators, but only do so for complicated calculations. In all subjects where they need to measure, calculate or analyse data, they cope confidently and possess all the necessary numeracy skills.
 9. **ICT** skills have improved considerably since the last inspection. Year 7 students master PowerPoint presentations and Year 9 reach high standards in control. Most students can generate spreadsheets and use the Internet intelligently, to research information, download text and pictures and edit their work. A significant gap is the lack of ICT in business.
 10. Students with **special educational needs** are few in number. They progress as well as other groups of students in most subjects because they are well motivated, and because they usually receive good support in the classroom from staff and fellow students. Where necessary, they use laptops in lessons and in examinations. They attain GCSE grades as good as other students. The number of students who speak **English as an additional language** is higher than average, but they practically all speak English fluently, and cope perfectly well with all lessons. Several of them, especially those from the Sikh community, acquire fluency in French or German quicker than others. They also attain GCSE grades as good as other students.
 11. The school has not analysed its results by **ethnic groups**, but there is no evidence that any of them attain different standards or GCSE results. Students who are particularly **talented** in physical education and music are certainly noticed and provided with the opportunities to excel. In subjects attaining a relatively low percentage of A*/A grades, such as art, Latin and science, a few **gifted** students are underachieving.
 12. Highlights of students' attainment and achievement are:
 - very good imaginative work on poetry reading and writing; strong analysis and evaluation of English texts in Years 10 and 11; in essays students express their findings in thoughtful and well-argued essays;
 - year 9 students use Pythagoras' theorem confidently; year 11 students have a very good understanding of circle theorems in mathematics;
 - accurate measurements in science and competent handling of calculations and formulae;
 - perceptive evaluation of citizenship topics such as global economics and how these impact on lives in the United Kingdom.;
 - a very good understanding of techniques and improvisation by Year 10 drama students;
 - very high standards of independent geographical enquiry work for GCSE;

- confident analysis of a variety of source material in history; year 10 students evaluate the usefulness of such material well;
- GCSE coursework for ICT contains well-argued evaluation of spreadsheets and comprehensive macros; some students have good programming skills in visual basic;
- good understanding of spoken and written French and German;
- good composition skills in Years 7 to 9; skilful use of sequencing software in music at GCSE level;
- excellent progress mastering rugby skills in Year 7; high standards in the theoretical areas of GCSE physical education; several individual students attain very high standards in national and county teams;
- good knowledge of Christianity and other world religions – the key words used and their spiritual significance.

13. Particular standards and progress requiring improvement are:

- the lack of regular sustained writing at length in Years 7 to 9 English;
- application of scientific knowledge and research when evaluating evidence;
- in art students acquire key skills, especially in drawing and painting, too slowly; they progress slowly in their understanding of other artists' work, and linking these studies to their own work; sketchbooks are not used effectively or imaginatively enough; weaknesses in these basic skills continue into the GCSE years;
- with so little experience of making items in design and technology, students' skills are significantly below average;
- students do not sing well enough and rarely in two parts; improvisation skills in Years 7 to 9 are relatively weak;
- lack of confidence speaking French and German, especially when students prepare what they are going to say in English;
- below average skills in gymnastics and dance.

Sixth form

- Standards of work seen were above average overall.
- Students make good progress and achieve well overall.

14. In 2001, students attained an average total points score of 18.4, above the national average and well above the average for male students. The average total points score went up to 18.9 in 2002, or 20.7 with the previous year's AS results added in (for those subjects that students dropped in Year 13). Almost 98 per cent of the grades attained were passes, an improvement on 2001. The percentage of A/B grades was just over 38 per cent in 2001 (and in 2002), below that attained by selective schools nationally, but in line with that attained by boys grammar schools in Kent. The school is determined to raise the average points scores and percentages of A/B grades. These have been high in general studies, mathematics and theatre studies for four years, and in geography, government and politics, chemistry and music in 2002. Art and classical civilisation A-level results have been relatively disappointing since 1998.

15. The very few students who entered the sixth form with English as an additional language achieve well because they work hard to become proficient in the language and succeed in their studies. Less than ten students have special educational needs and evidence confirms they are achieving just as well as other sixth-formers. It is rewarding when headteachers of junior schools observe how successful their past students, with autism or severe hearing loss, have been at Gravesend – attaining university places, and confidence: 'His inclusion has helped him to learn life skills to cope with his disability'.

16. Highlights of students' attainment and achievement in the sixth form are:
- the developing crispness of expression and depth of insight as students' English work matures; their essays are enhanced as they use formal terms of literary criticism correctly;
 - fluency with algebraic manipulation, including matrix algebra and the use of algebraic techniques in mechanics;
 - an impressive level of understanding, and outstanding discussions in biology, often combined with a very good level of practical competence;
 - good understanding of written and spoken French; good speaking in German;
 - confident and professional productions in theatre studies;
 - intelligent use of music technology software;
 - exciting technology work designing a CD on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, to be distributed to other schools;
 - thorough understanding of physical processes and patterns in human geography; very high standards in investigations of geographical hypotheses;
 - fluency with historical vocabulary, perceptive comments in discussions and well written, helpful notes;
 - students applying their ICT skills to school and local business needs;
 - depth of understanding and knowledge about sports studied for physical education;
 - very good understanding of the technical language of business studies;
 - good knowledge of current affairs and political terms in government and politics;
 - confident, articulate and lively contributions to general studies debates.
17. Particular standards and progress requiring improvement in the sixth form are:
- the identified need to strengthen students' analysis of unseen passages in English;
 - the lack of confidence art students have to link contextual studies and their studies of other artists with their own work;
 - a reluctance to speak French in lessons;
 - limited experience of construction and materials in design and technology.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- Students have very good attitudes to school.
 - Students' behaviour is very good overall. The number of exclusions is low.
 - Students' personal development and relationships are very good.
 - Attendance is well above average.
18. Students are enthusiastic about learning and playing a part in school life. Year 7 students arrive knowing that they have succeeded academically, and this gives them confidence. They proudly showed their families round the school on an open evening during the inspection. Somehow the school quickly inspires loyalty in its students. Indeed, students quickly identify with the school's special ethos and speak highly of their school.
19. Extremely large numbers of students participate in sporting activities outside school hours, and this helps to build loyalty and commitment to the school. Many of them support sponsored events, such as walks or cycle rides very well, raising substantial amounts for charities. Almost 400 were expected at a Saturday morning rugby competition at the end of the inspection week.
20. In nearly all lessons students concentrate very well, listen intently, and work hard. Their attitudes are remarkably good, even when they finish the work quickly or find the content of a lesson unstimulating. Students co-operate well with each other and

willingly share texts and engage in practical work. They delegate tasks in group work without fuss, present their findings with real confidence and justify their views. In gymnastics lessons, students show a high level of trust in each other as they perform balances together. They discuss aspects of belief and faith in religious education without embarrassment. They spontaneously ask interesting questions and relish lively debates. These are serious young people who welcome the opportunities they are given. Year 10 students already have clear ideas of their interests and used a careers lesson sensibly to research different career paths that interest them. These ranged from health service careers to joining the armed forces, or continuing with sport at a national level.

21. Students' behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. They need little supervision at lunch, on the field or queuing in the canteen or at the tuck shop. They can be trusted in their form rooms during lunchtime, and with a few exceptions amongst younger boys, treat each other and property respectfully. Students mix in friendship groups and there is no racial tension. The Sikh community is well respected in the local area and these students are totally integrated and respected by all members of the school. Students are confident that the school takes seriously any incidents of verbal bullying reported. Fixed-term exclusion is used appropriately, for only a small number, and only one student has been excluded on two occasions in the last year.
22. Students with special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of English language acquisition have a very positive approach to learning. They have good relationships with their teachers and fellow students and are keen to take an active part in lesson activities.
23. The excellent quality of relationships at all levels is a key strength. Students are respectful, eager to contribute and participate fully in lessons. At their best this means that they are unafraid to express their opinions or to disagree with teachers, and this pushes learning forward. Where relationships are not quite as secure students adopt a passive role. Relationships between students are similar; they work and play together, using their time well. At lunchtime a good number appear on the field wearing football boots and organise their own practice games.
24. Members of the school council take their roles seriously; they have responsibility for organising their meetings, deciding the agenda and whether to involve teaching staff. They minute their discussions very well and are pleased to be told in advance about plans, and to be able to report back to their forms. All this helps them to develop as responsible adults, and to understand the role of consultation and delegation in society. One old boy of the school commented 'I am particularly pleased to see the students are as proud of their school now as I was and the enthusiasm within the school continues today as it did in my time'.
25. Attendance is very good, well above that of schools nationally, although it has fallen by almost two per cent in the last three years. Unauthorised absence figures are better than those nationally. Most students arrive in good time for school in the mornings; any lateness is caused by transport difficulties. Students are punctual to lessons during the day, helped by the five-minute movement period that allows lessons to last the full hour.

Sixth form

- Students' have excellent attitudes to school.
- Students' personal development and relationships are excellent.

- Students' attendance in lessons is above average.
26. Students' attitudes to study, their behaviour and their relationships are excellent in the sixth form. Lessons frequently have an atmosphere of mutual respect in which students' ideas are nurtured. They respond enthusiastically to their teachers' efforts, by working out explanations and by collaborating and learning to push themselves. A local primary school welcomes visits from the students as they are 'high-achieving role models'.
 27. Sixth-form students know that they are expected to be responsible and to work hard, and most do so. From this term, sixth-form students only have to come into school when they have lessons and tutor time. The arrangements have been of concern to some parents, and a few students, but so far they appear to be working well. Students who choose to stay in school all day say they can always find somewhere to work, and that computers in the library are usually available. Their recreational area has been removed, and students wanting to socialise must now use the canteen. This change has had a greater impact on Year 13 than Year 12, but the former accept why it happened, and the latter seem quite happy to meet in the canteen. The majority of students finds the new arrangements encourage them to use their study periods wisely.
 28. The school produces kind and helpful young men. Prefects and the head boy team are very loyal and committed, and exercise their roles very well. Prefects support younger students well by attending registration sessions, and those supervising computer use at lunchtimes are particularly effective, with clear rules which they have devised. Those involved with chairing the school council have considerable freedom to adapt the model and to experiment with the way their meetings are organised.
 29. Although some final year students have been trained to act as mentors to younger students, this is not yet happening. Organisations in the local community refer to the students' exemplary behaviour: 'They are very professional, prepared to help others less able, communicate easily with all ages and have an excellent sense of humour' and visitors note 'The school produces lively, enthusiastic and motivated boys'.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- Teaching is good overall.
 - Learning is good overall.
30. During the inspection Year 11 were out of school on work experience, but many of them came into school to meet the inspectors and talk about their work and the school in general. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 94 per cent of lessons seen during the inspection, including 62 per cent when it was at least good. Within this, over 30 per cent was very good and it was excellent in six lessons. It was slightly more effective in Year 10 than in Years 7 to 9. In mathematics, teaching was very good in most of the lessons seen, and excellent in two. Excellent teaching was also seen in two geography, one citizenship and one French lesson. Starting new phases of their education in Years 7 and 10, students in these years were particularly receptive in lessons.
 31. The most striking feature of the lessons seen was the excellent, constructive relationships teachers had with the students. On the very rare occasions when students were not concentrating fully, a mere glance or subtle comment restored the focus. Teachers never raise their voices or demand silence unnecessarily. They listen to students' comments attentively, and assume, rightly, that the rest of the class will do

the same. Students respond to being treated as adults and appreciate the relaxed, yet intellectual, atmosphere of many lessons. Most teachers are excellent role models as they set high academic standards and convey the enjoyment to be gained from learning together, and from each other. In one lesson, a teacher cheerfully admitted he did not know the answer to a question, and the boys respected his honesty. The religious education teacher discusses spiritual and moral themes sensitively so that no students are embarrassed.

32. There is no doubt that teachers have very good and often excellent knowledge about their subjects, which means they give clear explanations and handle students' interesting questions with skill. In English, teachers use perceptive, critical approaches, which help students to analyse and evaluate texts and to make connections. In history, teachers prepare stimulating worksheets and source material and guide students to extract the relevance and significance of these documents. Those teachers who have worked outside education, for example in technology, ICT or business, insert valuable insights and reality into their teaching. Physical education teachers provide high quality demonstrations, resulting from their own high level participation in several sports. Music teachers can explain the complexities of composition software, so GCSE students use it confidently. All the language teachers are expert linguists, so students hear fluent and natural French and German in all lessons.
33. Most, but not all, plan their lessons carefully but are quite happy to be flexible as issues arise, which is good practice. Planning in business studies, citizenship, geography and music is particularly strong. When planning is ignored, as happened in a couple of science lessons, then teaching is unsatisfactory because the work set is too easy and students coast along and learn too little new material. Art teachers do not incorporate specific teaching about basic skills enough; areas which students cannot learn about without guidance.
34. The majority of teachers appreciate that, although students willingly work hard, they must make their lessons as interesting as possible. In many mathematics lessons, fun, fast and furious starts get students on board and they remain lively and interested when the rest of the lessons include a good range of activities. Before Year 10 citizenship students had even settled in one lesson, they had been asked to check out where their bags and clothes were manufactured! In contrast, some lesson plans do not include reference to different teaching and learning styles, and so variety is lacking. In English, novels are not always tackled in imaginative ways, with too much repetitious reading followed by questions, rather than more varied approaches. Few science lessons capture students' interest from the first moment.
35. Occasionally work does not move students on fast enough from primary school or respond to students who attain very highly early on. In English for example, too many comprehension, spelling and grammar exercises have reduced the number of extended essays written. In this, and a few other subjects, 'extension by outcome' suggests that the needs of gifted and talented students have not been considered carefully. In contrast, a few students found it hard to keep up in one or two highly paced history lessons. In Year 10 drama, the pace is controlled extremely well, as the teacher knows exactly when to intervene, and when to stand back so students can develop their ideas.
36. Marking is variable both within and between subjects. In English it is a brief comment and little else, in mathematics it is thorough, but does not always highlight how students could improve. It is particularly helpful in ICT, geography and history. Where there is good practice in science teaching, marking is encouraging and teachers wisely check that their comments have been noted. Departments analyse and use assessment data

with varying degrees of success; those that have raised standards and the percentage of high GCSE grades have realised how important accurate targets and monitoring are.

37. The cramped rooms in several subjects make it hard for teachers to circulate in order to look at students' books, and difficult for them to arrange discussions and group work. In modern foreign languages this is particularly hampering, as there is too little room for students to get up and role-play. It is amazing how well teachers and students cope in these difficult situations. Most teachers encourage students to use ICT for research and wordprocessing, and many guide students to useful websites. Students' independent learning skills are nurtured by the use of the Internet and CD-Roms. The teachers' own ICT skills determine how much they use computers in lessons; too little in art.
38. Students contribute a great deal to the success of many lessons, as they arrive ready to work and most concentrate very hard. They are attentive, interested and more than happy to answer and ask questions. Whatever their ethnic background, or if they have special educational needs, all students feel equally confident to join in and make the most of the work to be tackled. They are eager to participate and much appreciate the help and support they receive.
39. Students with special educational needs are generally taught well. Teachers are fully informed about the nature of students' special educational needs, and most teachers take these needs into consideration in their lesson planning. The three learning support assistants contribute much to these individual students' progress. Building confidence is a key feature of much effective teaching. In religious education, for example, teachers ensure that students with language difficulties are drawn into discussions so that they gain experience in expressing their ideas. Students achieve very well in mathematics because tasks are challenging and yet carefully matched to their requirements. However, in some other subject areas, such as physical education, teachers' awareness of students' needs is not always translated into appropriate learning, and so occasionally students do not make enough progress during the lesson.

Sixth form

- Teaching is very good overall.
 - Learning is very good overall.
40. Apart from one unsuccessful lesson, all teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory. It was at least good in almost 80 per cent of lessons. It was very good in over 50 per cent of lessons, including six when it was excellent, twice in mathematics and once each in chemistry, ICT, music and business. The standard of teaching was very similar in Year 12 and Year 13. Students' learning closely reflected the quality of teaching, but it was slightly better in Year 12.
 41. In numerous lessons, the key strength of the teaching is the superb relationships established so that students debate with confidence, and enjoy the cut and thrust of discussions, which teachers control so well. This was particularly seen in general studies, history, geography, government and politics and the Year 12 general education/careers lessons. Students from different ethnic backgrounds all join in and all listen to each other. The maturity which many students display significantly contributes to the success of so many lessons. It also shows that the school's approach to education prepares students very well for university life. They have sensible work habits, know they have to plan their time well and cheerfully acknowledge that if they go into the town in a free lesson, they will probably regret it later.

42. Superb subject knowledge is another hallmark of many lessons. It inspires confidence in students as they appreciate that they are being taught by experts. In mathematics, teachers sensibly respond to questions which deviate from the task in hand, thus acknowledging that students' thoughts are always valuable. In design and technology, the individual guidance and reviews students receive, helps them to focus on specific areas they need to improve. The history teachers constant use of an extensive range of subject-specific terms seeps into the students' minds and they pick up the habit. The very high quality discussions in biology occasionally go on so long that some students lose concentration.
43. The quality of marking varies between teachers and between subjects. How could any general studies student not be motivated to keep up high standards when helpful notes and comments are added, such as 'Another gem, thank you. Any chance of you doing your essays before the lesson so I can use your knowledge?'. Marking in business studies is outstandingly helpful and thorough. It is very thorough in biology and history. In all three sciences, lower attaining students particularly, do not have their work assessed regularly enough to know early on if they are not going to reach their target grades, and how to improve. The momentum seen in Year 12 is not forcefully directed into high A-level grades. Not all science teachers prepare work that is really challenging for the high flyers, with adaptations for those who find it difficult.
44. Before the inspection, one student wrote 'A teacher has taken the idea of independent learning too literally, and as a result we are having to teach ourselves'. Clearly, the school is getting across the message that learning is a two-way process! Helping students to know how to study independently is indeed a key role for sixth- form teachers. The headteacher believes that a greater focus on this will raise the percentage of A/B grades. Students in English do not get enough guidance on how to structure their notes for easy reference and revision. Business studies students are handed too much information on a plate – the lack of any computers in the rooms used contributes to this, but in contrast they are encouraged to define terms in their own words, and not rote learn them. In biology, a few students, who find the subject difficult, need a little more regular guidance about how they are doing.
45. Physical education students benefit from taking the role of teacher themselves, either through teaching experience or by helping younger boys in clubs and lessons. German, and French students particularly, are unwillingly to improve their speaking skills by making mistakes in front of each other, hence they do not speak enough. ICT teachers insist on students evaluating their own projects and the software they use, and thus they learn to think critically and independently. History students are given considerable responsibility for their own learning and background reading. In geography, not only do teachers use ICT most effectively, they also show students how to write succinct notes and annotate sketch maps, photographs and graphs to highlight significant features.

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

- The quality and range of learning opportunities are good.
 - Statutory requirements are not met for design and technology in Year 7.
 - Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
46. Curriculum changes introduced in 2001, resulting in a new five-hour day and a two-week timetable, have largely been successful. In Years 7 to 9 time for the humanities and music has increased so they are now close to national averages, but time for drama remains low. Students in Year 7 receive an above-average amount of time for

ICT. This is because they do not study design and technology as the department is not fully staffed. Time for design and technology in Years 8 and 9 is less than average and the department does not provide the 'making' aspects of the subject. Apart from this the curriculum meets statutory requirements.

47. All boys study French and German. Once a fortnight Years 7 and 8 spend a lesson in the library focusing particularly on literacy skills. This is a good idea, but lacking in specialist staff, these sessions are variable in quality. In Years 7 to 9 students have a fortnightly drama lesson. It is good that this is taught separately from English, but the gap between lessons results in a lack of continuity. In Years 8 and 9 students have a fortnightly classical civilisation lesson, which covers several important elements of citizenship issues, such as democracy. In Years 7 to 9 students are taught in mixed-ability groups, except in mathematics from Year 8 upwards; these arrangements work well.
48. In addition to all National Curriculum subjects and religious education, Year 10 students can choose from GCSE drama, physical education and Latin. Business studies is also included and has replaced economics, last taken in 2001; business studies results are better. This provides a good breadth of choice. All students study dual award science and the short course GCSE in religious education.
49. The formal tutorial period only happens once a fortnight. This is a relatively low amount of time for personal, social and health education (PSHE) topics to be covered thoroughly. In Years 9 to 11 students follow a fortnightly general education course, which delivers three citizenship and two careers modules and touches on several PSHE topics. The PSHE programme includes topics on drugs and sex education. The introduction of citizenship has been well considered and planned. However, the fortnightly PSHE and general education lessons are too far apart for really effective learning. The school is already considering altering these arrangements.
50. Careers education is a strength of the school. A Canadian scheme called 'The Real Game' in Year 7, a 'Steps' programme in Year 8, 'Be Real' in Year 9 and constructive advice about GCSE choices, culminates in well-organised work experience in Year 11. Students are introduced to the world of work and the local community through several charity efforts and elements of the citizenship programme.
51. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good. It is excellent in physical education with a very extensive range of sports activities including rugby tours to South Africa. Other subjects, particularly music, ICT, drama, French and history, also provide learning opportunities beyond the taught curriculum, through instrumental groups and choir, clubs, theatre visits, trips and exchanges to France and trips to Ypres, Belgium. The school also runs the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme for students in Years 9 and 10.
52. The contribution of the community to students' learning is very good. The physical education department has use of the local rugby facilities and astro turf, and has very strong links with the local sports clubs. The school participates in the borough's 'Future Town' project and the design and technology department has links with local industry, though not enough. The school's relationships with its primary schools are good. The mathematics department runs masterclasses in the local primary schools and the science department participates in study days in two schools. The ICT and drama departments have also established effective links.

53. The school makes satisfactory provision in the main school for students with special educational needs. Students have full access to the curriculum. Setting in mathematics ensures that work is well matched to students' needs. Classroom support has a positive impact on students' achievement, especially when subject teachers and learning support staff work together in the planning of the lesson. This does not happen often enough, and opportunities for teachers to benefit from the expertise of the learning support staff are missed. Students make a smooth transition from one stage of education to another because of the school's good relationships with its partner institutions, and there are efficient arrangements to ensure that additional help in examinations is available for those who need it.
54. The school makes very good provision for its highest attainers in mathematics and also for students with specific talents in sport. These students make excellent progress in their areas of specialism. Provision for gifted and talented students in other areas of the curriculum is still relatively limited as was shown in the recent department audits. A successful summer school enabled Year 7 students to develop the skills of independent learning and gain confidence in giving formal presentations to outside visitors.
55. The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Although it is not formally planned for, and there has been no audit of provision in the subjects of the curriculum, the strong informal network, identified at the time of the last inspection, provides effective support for students' development. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The good links with the local church – the vicar is a school governor – contribute to students' appreciation of the spiritual dimension to life. Themes in school assemblies give students an opportunity to show a concern for people who are in need of support.
56. Students contribute generously to local and national charities. In religious education lessons students talk sensitively about spirituality. This was particularly evident in a Year 8 lesson on the sacrament of Christian baptism, when students made very perceptive comments about the symbolic importance of candles and water. However, the lack of provision for a daily act of worship (a statutory requirement) results in lost opportunities for further spiritual development, and in most subjects teachers do not take advantage of opportunities to explore the spiritual side of life.
57. The school's provision for students' moral education is very good. Students respond positively to teachers' clear expectations of good behaviour, and sixth-form students provide very good examples of taking responsibility in school activities. Themes for assemblies reinforce moral messages, and there are numerous opportunities for moral development across the curriculum, especially in citizenship and PSHE lessons. Teachers encourage students to be mindful of others, as witnessed in the very good relationships. Students are given a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong in subjects, for example English and drama, where they study books such as 'Animal Farm' and work on presentations on the theme of the 'seven deadly sins'.
58. Opportunities for social development are excellent and students are impressive ambassadors for the school. In sport, students of all ages enjoy a variety of activities together. They work very well together in lessons, even under trying circumstances. For example, in a very crowded Year 8 German lesson, students undertook a survey in an exemplary fashion. In music lessons students share keyboards harmoniously, and they enjoy playing together in groups such as the guitar club and the jazz orchestra. Subjects such as history, drama and ICT encourage collaborative work.

59. The school expects students to take responsibility, and the school council offers students the experience of representing others and learning to be impartial in decision-making. Boys enjoy preparing presentations for assemblies. Students are encouraged to take part in local community activities that contribute very positively to their social development, and there is a very good programme of visits and journeys to European countries and further afield, that enable students to widen their social horizons.
60. Provision for raising students' awareness of cultural diversity is satisfactory although opportunities to explore the diversity of non-European cultures are limited. In music, students appreciate different styles of composition and performance, and in English there is a good range of reading material from different literary periods. Visits to Germany and France allow students to encounter other European cultural traditions. Physical education students host visiting teams and tour South Africa. In music, students take part in workshops on Indian music, and in religious education students learn about world religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism. In the art department there is some good use of artwork from several cultures, but further work is needed to make it fully effective. Some opportunities exist in other departments. This was a key point for action in the last report, and one that remains an area for development within the school.

Sixth form

- The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good.
 - Statutory requirements are met.
 - Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
61. The choice and breadth of AS subjects is very good as theatre studies, business studies, economics, classical civilisation, government and politics and physical education are offered. A general studies course is provided in Year 12 and a few students continue to A-level in Year 13. In conjunction with local schools, students can study psychology, or a vocational course, off-site; on-site, twilight classes for A-level design and technology are run. These arrangements work well. Qualifications in key skills are offered in ICT at Level 2, for students who have not achieved grade A*-C at GCSE, and communication at Level 3 to all Year 12 students. There is also a teaching programme for six students in Year 13 who wish to become physical education teachers. The LEA has kitemarked the sixth-form curriculum as an example of good practice.
62. As in the main school, PSHE, careers and citizenship are intertwined in two general education lessons and one tutorial session a fortnight. Topics studied include medical ethics, philosophy, management skills, local issues and the financial implications of living away from home. These are combined with well-organised and effective preparation for higher education, university applications and life beyond school. As in the main school, the organisation and guidance for careers is excellent. Year 12 students also take part in the 'Challenge of Management' conference which involves advisers from the local community. Students studying German can visit the country for work experience. The school also provides an extensive games programme each week which is compulsory for students.
63. Statutory requirements for religious education are now met through the general education programme and the religious education conferences. The two half-day conferences, organised in conjunction with a neighbouring girls school, provide all students with good opportunities to discuss and reflect on contemporary spiritual and moral issues. These are valuable, but the programmes of study for religious education

within the general education course do not fully reflect the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. Sixth-form teaching generally values students' beliefs and ideas, but in English, opportunities to explore spiritual themes explicitly are treated too lightly.

64. A strength of the sixth form is the opportunity for students to be involved with the wider life of the school, by running clubs and sports activities and promoting the personal and social development of younger students. For example, prefects help with the summer school, when younger students work on presentations on the public image of transport. Many Year 13 students are prefects, and they are expected to perform their duties reliably and sensitively. It is not always easy to describe the school's provision for students' social and moral development, but it clearly permeates down from the fine example set by all teaching and non-teaching staff. Hence a senior career liaison officer from the Royal Air Force writes: 'I am reassured by the knowledge that I will receive a warm and friendly, yet business-like welcome from the school', and the headteacher of a local junior school comments 'Your boys are always so co-operative and efficient'.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

- Procedures for child protection and ensuring students' welfare are very good.
 - Monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development are good.
 - Educational and personal support and guidance for students are good.
65. A real sense of common purpose pervades the life of the school, and it achieves its aim of providing 'opportunity and challenge in a caring environment'. The school has very good procedures to support students' welfare. Induction to school is very good and teachers make themselves available to answer any problems. Parents shown round the school were delighted with this practical aspect of induction; for one mother it helped to know the size of her son's locker. Year 7 students settle in remarkably quickly and find themselves enjoying school very soon.
66. Heads of year know their students really well, and have a good overview of all aspects of their welfare. They treat students individually, and take time to talk and to resolve difficulties. They expect, and get, good behaviour and the sensitive way they achieve this is excellent. Students are allowed to be inside school at all times and they appreciate and respect this arrangement. The school has no need for a rigid system of behaviour controls; for many students, a firm word is enough. Praise and punishment are well balanced, and this works very well, with appropriate and effective use of sanctions, including internal exclusion, when needed. Attendance monitoring is satisfactory, and the new telephone system allows parents to leave absence messages. Form tutors have registration sessions on three afternoons a week to monitor students' personal development, but this time is not always well used.
67. Good care is taken of students who are injured or unwell at school, although the medical room is somewhat bleak, and it requires better ventilation. Internet security is carefully monitored, and a breach is subject to discipline. Health and safety matters are routinely considered and reported to governors, and departments are particularly good at undertaking risk assessments for their activities. The child protection officer is appropriately trained.
68. The school's care for students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Its strengths are the effective systems for identifying students in need of extra help and the support from visiting specialists and classroom assistants. Pastoral and subject staff co-operate efficiently in referring students who give cause for concern. Specialist

support from the Minority Communities Achievement Service is very good and ensures close monitoring of students' academic and personal progress. The learning support assistants have a strong commitment to promoting the wellbeing of students in their care, and create an atmosphere of trust which gives students the confidence to succeed. However, they are not involved enough in sharing lesson plans, nor do they contribute to the assessment of students' progress through regular monitoring and reports for annual reviews.

69. The school does not give up on students, and makes use of external support agencies for those with behavioural or counselling needs. An employee of the local education authority observed that the school 'shows a genuine desire to support the boys' emotional and behavioural wellbeing'. Some of the oldest students have been trained as peer-counsellors, but the scheme is not yet in operation.
70. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall but there are inconsistencies between departments. The school is trying to address these through its involvement with the Kent Assessment for Learning Project. The history department is at the forefront of these developments, which involve setting tasks with specific assessment criteria, linked to National Curriculum levels. The emphasis is on providing quality feedback to boys which will tell them what they need to do to improve, and to achieve the next level. At present, in several subjects, particularly physical education, students are not aware of the National Curriculum levels at which they are working.
71. Once teachers have assessed the standard of a student's work, they allocate it one of five letters, to put into the short reports which are sent home each term. They do the same for effort. Boys in Years 7 to 9 are not clear how the letters for standards relate to National Curriculum levels. A relic from the past is that some departments still grade standards according to their subject's previous examination results. This inconsistent practice is not very helpful for parents or students.
72. The use of test and other assessment information, to guide teaching plans, is satisfactory overall but is applied inconsistently. Very good practice is found in mathematics, geography and history. The geography department analyses results by teachers, groups and modules of work, identifies areas for improvement, and then sets action targets. As well as recording students' effort, their progress is monitored three times a year, in order to ascertain their achievement. The main purpose is to identify underachievement, so that support can be set in motion, such as mentoring by the subject teacher, form tutor or head of year.

Sixth form

Assessment

- Monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is good.
 - Educational and personal support and guidance for students are very good.
 - The effectiveness of careers education and guidance for future courses is excellent.
73. Procedures for assessing, monitoring and supporting students' attainment and progress are good. Students have individual reviews of their progress with their tutors twice each half term. During reviews, collated information from subject teachers is used, in conjunction with target grades, to track progress. Any problem areas are quickly identified. As a result subject action plans may be triggered to support the

student. Both the subject teacher and tutor monitor these. Students with academic difficulties are watched carefully and their parents may be contacted if necessary.

Advice, support and guidance

- The steps taken to ensure students' health and safety are good.
74. Students are confident that induction to the sixth form is very good, and they are able to change courses in the first few weeks. They are very confident that teachers are accessible if they have difficulties, although almost a third do not feel well enough informed about their progress. From this term, time is identified for tutors to interview and discuss action plans with students, four times a term. Very few students leave at the end of Year 12, and they are well supported to move into employment or further education elsewhere.
75. The management, content and impact of careers guidance is excellent, because the co-ordinator is gifted, very experienced, and willing to innovate. The advice students receive is appropriate and timely and, because university applications are made electronically, these may be started very early and altered frequently. Concerns about careers expressed in the student questionnaire relate to the quality of the external careers service.
76. The school is in the process of introducing an electronic method of registration, and in the meantime students register with their teachers in individual lessons. This means that there is no record of the actual number of students who may be on the premises at any time, working in study areas or the library, or relaxing in the canteen. This is a health and safety concern.
77. Careers education and guidance, which is linked in with PSHE and citizenship topics, have been described in paragraph 62.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- Parents' views of the school are very good.
 - Students have very positive views about life in the sixth form.
78. Parents strongly support the school, and feel confident that the school expects their son to work hard and achieve his best. They think the teaching is good, and that the school is helping their son to make good progress and to become more mature and responsible. Large numbers of parents offer exceptional support to sporting activities; charitable fund-raising events and the summer schools are well supported.
79. Almost a quarter of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire did not feel well informed about their son's progress and did not feel the school worked closely with them. The frequency of the written information they receive is commendable, but its content inadequate. Parents have no real measure of their son's achievement. A boy could get the same grades throughout his school career, and yet achieve really well (see paragraph 71). What is written in a student's annual report lacks consistency between subjects, with some much better than others. Only a few subjects give a clear indication of the knowledge and skills gained during the year, and also indicate what needs improvement and how to do it. Fewer still give any indication of standards reached, compared with national expectations or the student's potential. Attendance data is not complete.

80. Parents are consulted each half term: a representative group of parents from the same school year meet with senior staff each half term. Although this means, on the school's calculations, that every parent will have their say during their son's career, for such communication to be an effective two-way process it has to be widely transmitted, whether on paper or electronically. The newsletters are good, but not issued at a regular frequency so that parents can expect them. Parents are proud of their sons' achievements and support them with homework. The school has a good partnership with parents of students with special educational needs and meets all statutory requirements. Parents are supportive of their son's efforts to succeed and are generally pleased with the progress their sons are making.
81. Over 90 per cent of sixth-form students feel they are taught well, challenged to do their best and treated as responsible young adults. All the Year 12 students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that they are helped and encouraged to study and feel teachers are accessible if they have difficulties. Year 13 students were not quite so positive in their responses, possibly because they were adjusting to the new sixth-form arrangements, which included them losing their common room. In discussion during the inspection, they accepted the reasons for this and acknowledged that the school had provided enough rooms for them to study in. Negative comments about careers advice was not directed at the school's efforts, which are admirable, but rather at the local careers service. A small number of students do not feel the school responds to their views, but they were consulted about the new arrangements, and so far they are working well.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are good.
 - The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well.
 - The school's monitoring and evaluation of its performance and taking effective action are good.
 - The strategic use of resources, including specific grants and other funding, are good.
 - The principles of best value are applied well.
82. The headteacher took up post five terms ago, following a difficult period when the previous headteacher was unwell for a long period, so improvements suggested by the last inspection report did not move forward. During this time the deputy headteacher kept the school functioning extremely well. Standards have gone up, although a significant gap persists between the percentage of GCSE A/B grades compared to all selective schools, particularly in art, science and design and technology. Improvement since the last inspection has been reasonable and it is gathering momentum under the present headteacher.
83. The headteacher inspires confidence with his very good, clear style of leadership. He has already pinpointed and concentrated on several key areas to raise standards, especially consideration of how students learn and how teachers must respond. With learning a key focus, many teachers are using a better range of teaching methods than before, an issue for improvement in the previous report. By monitoring teaching, and students' books, systematically, the headteacher has identified those teachers who plan interesting and varied lessons and he is encouraging them to share their ideas and skills with others. The need for such action was identified in the last report.
84. The headteacher is ably supported by the deputy and assistant headteachers so management at this level is good and the school functions most efficiently. Despite lacking a full complement, heads of departments are now generally more involved in

planning and decision making and in contributing their ideas to the whole-school development plan. This is a slim, interesting document, which encapsulates the headteacher's ambitious and forward thinking ideas. Most sections are costed and dated. All policies are in place although the race equality one has to be formalised by the governors. This policy, rightly, strives to encapsulate the already excellent practice – the complete lack of racial tension, and appreciation by students and staff alike of its importance, is striking. The quality of department leadership varies considerably. It is excellent in mathematics but unsatisfactory in art. It is particularly strong in careers.

85. The management of special educational needs is satisfactory. The newly appointed co-ordinator has made a good start, by providing teachers with easily accessible information about, and planning training for them on, students' needs. Statutory requirements are met for students with statements of special educational needs. However, meetings to assess students' progress and decide on planning priorities are irregular. Too little attention has been given to the role of the learning support assistants, to improve their classroom effectiveness and raise their status within the school. Individual education plans are in place for students who need them, but their quality is uneven. Subject teachers do not contribute targets which are realistic, precise and measurable. No member of staff has formal responsibility for students who come into the school with English as an additional language, but in practice they receive effective individual help.
86. The governing body brings a wide range of experience and expertise to its deliberations, for example from education, business, personnel, ethnic minority interests and health and safety. It does not accept information it receives at face value but questions and probes the headteacher about all issues. All meetings are regular and well attended. Links with subjects exist but few have been realised significantly and this is an area for development. A few governors come into school and offer support, for example in the careers library, or by attending the Year 9 Town Centre Project. All governors back the headteacher and his open style of debate with them, and appreciate his emphasis on learning styles and how teachers should adapt their teaching in response. They are keen to see the school attain mathematics and ICT specialist status and several of them, particular the chair of governors, are devoting much energy and initiative to realise this. Attendance statistics are reported in the prospectus, but not at present in the governors' annual report to parents, as required. Annual reports to parents do not indicate all absences, only unauthorised absences.
87. Procedures for financial management and control are very good. They are effective and efficient. Governors oversee the school's income and expenditure properly. The financial committee actively scrutinises and agrees budget allocations. Well supported by senior management, governors competently manage and effectively apply the key considerations to ensure good value for money. At present the school carries forward a significant balance. This includes a contingency to cover for a planned, but reducing, overspend during the next few years, together with an amount specifically for further improvements in ICT facilities. The latter is closely related to the specialist status bid. The government grant for the National Grid for Learning is managed efficiently. Funds, for example those for students with special educational needs, are used correctly. Systems to allocate funds to departments for basic materials are fair and effective and departments bid for additional funding on the basis of development plans. The most recent audit report shows there is good budgetary control.
88. Staffing levels are unsatisfactory, with too few specialist teachers for design and technology, English and drama. This impacts on the curriculum and how these subjects are taught. In design and technology the short-term solution has been to cut

the subject in Year 7, give additional ICT this year, and use art teachers in Year 8. When design and technology is fully staffed by specialists it is planned to redress this by the end of Year 9. In English the quality of non-specialist teaching is patchy. The headteacher has explored all possible means, such as writing to all teacher training establishments, to find suitably qualified teachers. The difficulty of attracting interest appears to be linked with high accommodation costs locally and the absence of a cost of living allowance, which is paid in relatively adjacent areas. The governors' staffing committee is kept fully aware of the movement and availability of staff by the headteacher. In other subjects staffing is satisfactory or better. The effect of art being taught by non-specialists in the past, however, is still evident in present standards.

89. The school's arrangements for continuing professional development and performance management are good. A new annual cycle is being established to run from January, linked to the school development plan. Members of the senior management team provide heads of department with guidance and monitoring, an improved arrangement since the last inspection. Teachers can use their ten hours of training a year flexibly, to suit their individual requirements. This often includes twilight training sessions in school. This is good practice. Non-teaching staff provide very valuable support to the smooth functioning of the school. They are not appraised formally, but a member of the senior management team has responsibility for all of them. A few have attended relevant training to update their knowledge and skills. There is a good programme for the induction of new teachers and for training teachers under the graduate teacher programme. The school works in collaboration with Christchurch College Canterbury and the Open University. Newly qualified teachers and students in training at the school meet weekly with the staff development co-ordinator. They find these sessions very helpful.
90. The accommodation is poor. It does not allow learning to be effective in ten subjects. There are severe weaknesses in the facilities for physical education, mathematics, design and technology, biology and modern foreign languages. The sixth-form workrooms do not provide a stimulating environment for personal study. Almost all classrooms are small, ageing and drab, despite some noble attempts to cheer up the walls with displays. It is difficult for teachers to move around easily and difficult for students to work in groups; both deserve better classrooms. Music, drama and biology are housed in mobile classrooms, and several other subjects use them occasionally; these are even less conducive to learning than rooms in the main buildings. They have no services and have been scheduled for demolition for many years. The new building is accessible for wheelchairs but the top floor of the main building is not.
91. The chemistry laboratory and ICT rooms in the new building are very good. The art rooms are far apart, which contributes to this department's problems. The boys' physical education changing rooms are cramped, unhygienic and inhospitable. There are too few outside hard play areas. The medical room and the photocopier both have poor ventilation. However, students value and respect their school in spite of the poor accommodation. There have been few improvements since the previous inspection and the accommodation in most areas has deteriorated. The local education authority's net capacity assessment shows the school does not have enough space for the number of students.
92. In most subjects resources are unsatisfactory. They are especially poor in art, design and technology and physical education. Despite a recent improvement, the student:computer ratio is still just below the national average. All departments, except mathematics, have too few computers. The art and business rooms have none, so independent research is very difficult. In no way does provision for business studies

create a professional vocational environment. As yet few classrooms have Internet access or networking. Most subjects have enough books and equipment. The equipment in two design and technology rooms is old and obsolete, and totally inappropriate for the National Curriculum. All the mats in the gymnasium are in a very poor state of repair and need replacing. Too few keyboards, in only one music room, hinders students' progress. The science department has much old equipment that is still useable only because it has been well looked after by the laboratory technicians. The library, with five computers, has a reasonable stock of subject books but fiction books are old and uninspiring.

93. The school has retained the 'very good atmosphere and respectful ethos' noted in the last report and it continues to provide very good pastoral care and guidance for all students. Teachers and students cheerfully put up with the staffing problems, and the grim accommodation. It is to their credit that the school nevertheless gives good value for money and provides a very effective education.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are good.
 - The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well.
 - The school's monitoring and evaluation of its performance and taking effective action are good.
 - The strategic use of resources, including specific grants and other funding, are good.
 - The principles of best value are applied well. The sixth form is cost effective.
94. As for the main school, governors support the sixth form most effectively and appreciate how important it is that it is financially viable. Hence some courses are offered off site. A few governors attend sixth-form events such as the Management Challenge day in Year 12. They are fully aware of the pros and cons of recent changes in sixth-form attendance and facilities, and accept that Year 13 students particularly, feel rather lost without a common room.
95. Whilst a specific long-term plan for the sixth form is being discussed, its development is included in the whole-school plan, which is described in paragraph 84. Governors are focusing on the future of the sixth form, the formation of links with other institutions, on the courses which will be offered, and the impact specialist status could have. They have evaluated AS- and A-level and vocational courses carefully. Governors are very supportive of the sixth form and are eager to see it grow and succeed even further.
96. The recently appointed head of sixth form, who is also head of careers, gives very good leadership. She combines her two roles most successfully and has already organised the practical management of over 200 students extremely well. She is very well supported by the assistant head of the sixth form. Tutors know what they are supposed to be doing, how they are to meet students to monitor their progress, and the complicated arrangements for the Year 12 general education course; fortnightly tutor sessions, and university applications are all operating smoothly. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, over 90 per cent of sixth-form students stated they are treated as responsible young adults. All the Year 12 students who responded observed that they are helped and encouraged to study and consider teachers are accessible if they have difficulties. This suggests that the new systems and attendance arrangements are bedding down well.

97. Financial planning, management and monitoring are good. Good planning has ensured that the changeover from local authority funding to reduced funding by the Learning Skills Council has been managed well. As a result the sixth form is cost effective. Financial administration and monitoring are good and day-to-day procedures are efficient. The strategic use of resources is good. The school gives students two years of worthwhile education.

Resources

98. The significant poor features of the accommodation and resources have been described in detail in paragraphs 90 and 91. They impact almost as much on sixth-form students as they do on younger ones. Some sixth-form geography lessons take place in the new building, so these students do use computers in lessons. The lack of space in the art rooms makes it impossible for students to leave their work out, or continue with it during their free lessons. This certainly contributes to the below average results. Although the small sixth-form study rooms have no computers, students actually manage to get access when they want, either in the library or the computer rooms. Chemistry and physics are taught in modern laboratories, but several biology lessons are in the old ones which are not suitable for A-level work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

99. **In order to maintain improvement, governors and senior management should:**
- 1) Raise standards in GCSE science, art and design and technology by:
 - meeting statutory requirements for design and technology in Years 7 to 9;
 - teaching basic skills methodically in all years in art;
 - starting lessons in an exciting and interesting way, and allowing enough time at the end to summarise what students have learned;
 - sharing good practice in teaching styles, both within and between subjects;
 - methodically planning the concepts students are to learn in each lesson;
 - building on assessment results, for example going over work that has not been understood well, altering the order of topics if necessary and making sure students know if they should be doing better.
(paragraphs 120-130 and 138-145)
 - 2) Persevere with all efforts to recruit teachers in design and technology, English and drama and to secure funds to improve the significant poor features of the accommodation. (paragraphs 88, 90, 91)

Sixth form

- 1) Raise the percentage of A and B grades in AS- and A-levels by: (see sixth-form subjects)
 - sharpening up the monitoring of students' academic progress;
 - checking that all departments analyse and learn from previous examination performance;
 - making sure that lessons end with a quick summary of what has been covered;
 - increasing the effectiveness of tests in the sciences, so that underachievement is spotted quickly and addressed;
 - confronting students early on, if they are not working at the level suggested by their predicted grades;

- keeping up the momentum, seen in many Year 12 lessons, throughout Year 13.

In addition to the above, the governors and senior management could also consider the following minor issues for inclusion in the action plan:

- Gifted and talented students – further work on identification and provision. (paragraphs 11, 35, 107, 156 and 199)
- Reports – clearer statements on standards, skills and knowledge and what students need to do to improve. (paragraph 71)
- Fortnightly lessons – too far apart for the best learning. (paragraphs 49, 135, 146, 149, 198)
- Results and standards – monitoring by ethnicity. (paragraph 11)
- ICT – increasing use of computers by subjects, particularly in business. (numerous paragraphs, especially 200 and 236)
- Learning support assistants – making sure they know in advance how they can best support students in class. (paragraphs 68, 85, 141 and 157)
- Medical room and the photocopy room next door – ventilation. (paragraph 91)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 to 11	119
	Sixth form	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		74

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	6	31	37	38	5	2	0
Percentage	5	26	31	32	4	2	0

Sixth form

Number	6	28	18	13	0	1	0
Percentage	9	42.5	27	20	0	1.5	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

	Y7-11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	983	243
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	22	0

Special educational needs

	Y7-11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	4	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	45	8

English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	34

Student mobility in the last school year (excluding the sixth form)

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year. The national comparative data is for 2000 to 2001

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	142	n/a	142

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	141	141	140
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	141	141	140
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (99)	99 (99)	99 (99)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	94 (78)	99 (99)	95 (92)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	141	140	141
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	141	140	141
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (100)	99 (100)	99 (100)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	99 (89)	95 (95)	96 (85)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	144	n/a	144

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	143	144	144
	Girls	n/a	n/a	0
	Total	143	144	144
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	99 (99)	100 (99)	100 (99)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	60.3 (61.4)
	National	39.0 (38.4)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations	Year	Male	Female	Total
	2001	103	n/a	103

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	103	n/a	103
	Average point score per candidate	18.6	n/a	18.6
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	103	n/a	103	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Average point score per candidate	18.6	n/a	18.6	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

Ethnic background of students

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 students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
808	10	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
88	1	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
17	0	0
24	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	51.6
Number of students per qualified teacher	19.2

Education support staff: Y7-11

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	217.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7-11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67
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Average teaching group size: Y7-11

Key Stage 3	29
Key Stage 4	27

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	2,765,346
Total expenditure	2,715,199
Expenditure per student	2,876
Balance brought forward from previous year	213,846
Balance carried forward to next year	263,993

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	18
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.8
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	983
Number of questionnaires returned	390

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	48	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	45	4	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	53	5	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	51	12	4	2
The teaching is good.	38	52	6	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	47	10	2	10
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	44	5	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	68	29	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	25	54	11	3	8
The school is well led and managed.	38	43	8	3	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	49	5	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	45	5	1	6

(Rounding of figures means that horizontal lines do not all add up to 100)

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- The very high results attained in GCSE English language and English literature.
- Students' very positive attitudes and good response to their teachers.
- The enthusiastic approach of the new teaching team.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of one full-time English specialist.
- The limited variety of learning styles offered in Years 7 to 9.
- Irregular setting and marking of written work.

100. The department is currently affected by staffing problems and changes, and it is important that its work is seen in this context. A fourth English specialist has to be appointed and the three who are now sharing most of the teaching include two newcomers. The head of department, appointed in September 2002, is the only member of the team who was present in the previous academic year. Several non-specialists are teaching English, so the department inevitably lacks the cohesion necessary for good shared planning and evaluation. Despite these difficulties, some good work is being done, and all students are achieving well. Provision is likely to be better when the team is up to strength and when all English lessons can be taught by specialist teachers.
101. Results in the 2001 Year 9 national tests were very high and compared favourably with mathematics and science. They were well above average in comparison with selective schools. Lower results in 2002 were similar to those attained between 1997 to 2000, with the percentages of students attaining the higher levels being considerably below selective schools and very much lower than those attained in science and mathematics. All students take both English language and English literature GCSE. In 2001, results were very high, particularly in English language. In 2002, students did exceptionally well in both examinations, as well over half of them attained A*/A grades. They matched the very good mathematics results and were better than those in science.
102. Although no Year 11 lessons were observed, standards of work in reading, writing, speaking and listening in Years 10 and 11 remain generally well above average, reflecting some of the qualities which produced such good results last year. Teachers use perceptive, critical approaches, which help students to analyse and evaluate texts, make connections, and express their findings in thoughtful and well-argued essays. Often the text is used to stimulate creative writing, and good examples of this were seen, for example, in work on '*Of Mice and Men*'.
103. Years 7 to 9 present a more varied picture. Standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening are above average. Significantly, teaching in these years is satisfactory, whereas in Years 10 to 11 it is good. Excellent potential is not always fully realised when Year 7 students are not adequately challenged and extended to work to their full capacity. Some very good imaginative work on poetry reading and writing has been done but exercise books and folders show a lack of regular sustained writing of any

length over the first six weeks of the term. Short comprehension, spelling and grammar exercises, although useful, do not feed in to longer and more thoughtful pieces of writing. In some classes too little work has been marked since the beginning of term. Marking is often a brief comment, which does not always establish a dialogue with students about their work, or set targets for improvement.

104. The structure, activities and detailed timing recommended in the National Literacy Strategy are being used well in some lessons but not at all in others. The lack of variety in teaching methods, noted as an area for improvement in the last inspection report, is still a concern in some classes. For example, in several lessons the study of a novel relied too much on repetitious reading round the class, with the teacher posing questions, usually to check comprehension, after each section. Different approaches were not explored. Again, although it is useful to check understanding of parts of speech or use of capital letters, the majority of these higher attaining students have well understood these language features at primary school. The exercises and worksheets used to revisit them should offer something new, to develop students' understanding and use of them at a more sophisticated level.
105. The lively work seen in some classes shows that there is good practice to be recognised and shared. For example, in one class, Year 7 students had clearly understood the irony and wit in Shakespeare's sonnet '*My Mistress' Eyes*' and enjoyed trying to echo these in their own writing. In a Year 8 class, students shared their knowledge of Arthurian legends in a brisk brainstorming session which made a very good starting point for the reading of '*The Lady of Shalott*'.
106. Students are articulate and ready to learn, often eager to participate and take a lead. The cramped classrooms provide inadequate space for movement or group work; using the hall or drama studio occasionally would allow greater variety of drama and discussion activities. The regular library lessons are not yet carefully integrated into schemes of work or used to introduce students to new books and writers, but this will be possible when the department is fully staffed. This extension of range is important at all levels. For example, in Years 7 to 9, the well-chosen poems being studied are presented as photocopied handouts. Students have no anthologies or poetry collections in front of them to encourage them to browse, make discoveries and see connections.
107. Students in GCSE classes spoke warmly of the help and support offered to them in their English work, and good relationships were a feature of all the lessons observed. However, lesson plans did not always take enough account of students with special educational needs, students with English as an additional language or very high attainers who would benefit from extension activities. The comment in one lesson plan, that extension for gifted and talented students would be by 'outcome', suggests that the department has not yet given enough thought to providing for these students.
108. Previous leadership and management had some good outcomes but the new head of department has not inherited systematic procedures for record-keeping, data analysis, development planning and sharing good practice. There is much to be done in these areas and a good start has been made. The very good systems in some other subject areas would provide a helpful model. A recently appointed teacher is reviewing and revising the schemes of work for these years, with a view to increasing the variety of learning styles students are offered. All teachers in the core team are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. During this period of understaffing they have had good support from non-specialists who have taken on English classes. With a full staff complement, the department has the capacity and the will to maintain the excellent

results achieved in GCSE and to improve teaching, learning and standards in the earlier years.

109. A whole-school plan for literacy was produced by a co-ordinator, who has now left. Targets identified for improvement included spelling, research and study skills, and the organisation of writing. Implementation began in September 2001 and a number of staff training and consultation sessions followed. Some, but not all of the initiatives proposed have been tackled. The work of co-ordinating and monitoring the plan now awaits the appointment of a new English teacher.
110. Students arrive at the school with above average literacy skills. However, the inspection identified subjects where attention to literacy is particularly successful and areas of weakness or inconsistency. In most subjects students speak and listen well. Research skills vary but some useful work has been started, such as the library induction lessons for students in Years 7 and 8. Spelling standards remain a concern. In some subjects, including design and technology, religious education, science and history, spelling does not receive enough attention. In most subjects vocabulary work is a central feature and the understanding and use of key words is emphasised. In drama, physical education and design and technology, specialist vocabulary is particularly well used.
111. In history there is good sustained writing and vocabulary work. Geography teachers are committed to developing literacy. They stress key words and glossaries and give spelling tests. They identify and target writing weaknesses, recognising that these prevent students from getting the highest grades. In ICT, written work is drafted effectively on computers. In design and technology, teachers do not stress the importance of drafting and presentation skills enough. A lack of sustained writing was noted in science, religious education and also in English in the earlier years. In music and art there is little evidence of departmental policies for literacy.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good with some outstanding features.
- Present standards and all results are very high.
- Achievement in all years is excellent.
- Students work very hard and with great interest and diligence.

Areas for improvement

- The small, cramped rooms.
- The small number of computers and limited use of ICT.

112. Standards and results in all years are very high; the best in the school. In 2001, Year 9 test results, compared with selective schools, were well above average for Level 6, and above average for Level 7. Teachers assess Year 9 students' attainment accurately. In GCSE 2001, over 60 per cent of students attained A* and A grades – well above selective school results. Since the last inspection, results have improved at a rate well above that seen nationally; they improved even further in 2002. Students' achievement and progress in relation to standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are exceptional. The school has been designated a 'Leading Mathematics Department' by the local education authority.

113. As a result of teaching which is very good overall, students make excellent gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Higher attaining students in Year 9 use Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometric functions confidently. Lower attaining students are less secure, but apply Pythagoras to right-angled triangles well. Most students in Year 11 have a very good understanding of circle theorems and plot accurate sketch graphs of trigonometric functions. The standards of numeracy throughout the school are exceptionally high with, for example, students in Year 7 able to round numbers up or down to the nearest decimal place.
114. Students' eagerness and enjoyment of learning mathematics, and their diligence and application, contribute significantly to their excellent progress. The level of challenge teachers generate in many lessons was very high and in several it was excellent. Students learn very well as a result. The principal strengths are the teachers' very good subject knowledge, very high expectations, good, well-focused planning and, in many lessons, their selection of a range of activities which maintain interest and stimulate learning. In one Year 7 lesson, for example, the teacher skilfully challenged students to investigate the links between the perimeter and area of rectangles. This took place after a fast, furious and fun opening session on calculating and completing angles of various shapes. In an excellent Year 9 algebra lesson, students were expected to apply prior knowledge and understanding to new situations and they did. In just a few lessons students had too few opportunities to work independently. Mostly, lessons are charged with the magic of learning mathematics.
115. Teachers set effective homework, often structured questions, which extends classwork very well. They assess work thoroughly to monitor students' progress and thus identify underachievers, to adjust teaching and to guide curriculum planning. Day-to-day marking, whilst thorough overall, does not always show students how they could improve, neither does it provide any targets for future work. The identification of challenging learning objectives, coupled with good support for students' learning, enables all students to make excellent progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts.
116. Students apply what they have learned before to new problems very well. For example, Year 7 students applied their understanding of the area of rectangles to determine the area of triangles. In a very good Year 10 lesson, students applied previous learning on linear equations to formulating, and solving, simultaneous equations based upon real-life situations, for example the cost of fruit. In the great majority of lessons students work hard and at a good pace. They think through problems logically, applying the 'first principles' approach with a good degree of success. The application of mathematical logic is encouraged by the many logic challenges displayed in and around the mathematics classrooms. Students are eager to learn and clearly enjoy mathematics.
117. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. The hardworking and dedicated head of department is supported by a very good team. Educational direction is clear and focused. As a result, there is evidence of new developments which are likely to lead to further improvements. Development plans are effective and manageable, but long-term ones, with costs and focused success criteria, have not been written. Teachers keep very good records of students' progress and use them very effectively to guide future teaching. Teaching is observed regularly, helping to share and develop further good practice. Even though the department has recently acquired some new computers and can use the school's new suite, there are too few computers in the mathematics rooms. Several rooms are too small for any movement, which has a negative impact on teaching and learning. In some rooms, teachers cannot get round easily to help individuals, and group activities are very difficult.

118. Students' numeracy skills are outstanding. Students carry out mental arithmetic with a high level of skill and a very good degree of accuracy. They are very familiar with the use of calculators, but are discouraged from using them except for complicated calculations or for checking. For example, Year 7 students round numbers up or down with ease and Year 9 students use directed numbers very skilfully. Numeracy skills are used very effectively to help students make very good progress in other subjects. In design and technology, for example, students make very good use of measuring, graphs and tables to collect and interpret data. In modern foreign languages, they use graphs effectively to analyse surveys and in science they calculate wavelengths effortlessly. Although the National Numeracy Strategy is now in place, the school has yet to implement an overall numeracy policy, so these skills are not being developed in a systematic way in all subjects.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Students' strong, keen drive to learn.
- Numbers reaching Level 7 in Year 9 tests.
- High quality relationships between students and teachers.
- The valuable contribution technicians make to students' education.

Areas for improvement

- The percentage of GCSE grades A*/A.
- Teachers do not always generate high enough levels of intellectual challenge and application for students.
- Daily lesson plans and the need to monitor the quality of teaching and learning so as to explore and share imaginative teaching styles.
- Sharper identification of learning targets for individual students.
- Unifying the management of separate science subjects.

119. Year 9 test results have been very high in recent years. This trend continued in 2002. In 2002, the number of students attaining Level 7 was the highest since 1998. Results were average compared with selective schools in 2001. GCSE double award results were very high in 2001 but lower than they were in 2000. The percentage of students attaining A*/A grades is well below selective schools and it has declined over the past four years.
120. Standards in Year 9 are well above average and achievement is very good. Early in Year 7, students know how atoms and molecules behave in solids, liquids and gases and use kinetic theory to explain why ice melts in a drink. They are better at explaining ideas orally than in writing, but accurately record measurements to explain differences in melting time. Year 9 students ably link their observations of how the volume of a solvent affects the mass of a substance. Applying class work to everyday situations, they successfully construct a burglar alarm. Books reveal repetition of ideas similarly dealt with earlier. Students' planning develops well when teachers do not direct them too much, and their evaluation of evidence improves when teachers guide them to analyse results in depth.
121. Standards in Year 11 are well above the average. Achievement and progress overall are good. Year 10 students understand the electronic structure of several elements, by

capably using computer simulation programs. Many have excellent numeracy skills and competently deal with calculations and formulae. Completed work in Year 11 files shows that students can explain why the higher a ball is dropped the higher it bounces – in terms of molecules and force. Year 11 work also reveals that teachers do not always generate high enough levels of intellectual challenge and application for students. Students do not always present their records well in coursework although there are examples of very good standards, when students perceptively identify sources of error from patterns in results. The majority, however, have some difficulty using their own knowledge of science ideas and research in their evaluations, and their explanations are sometimes superficial.

122. Teaching is good overall. Students learn very well, because they are strikingly well motivated and eager to learn. The quality of teaching ranged from very good to poor in lessons seen during the inspection. The best teaching stemmed from clearly structured ideas, presented in interesting ways, which quickly capitalised on students' enthusiasm and capabilities. This was evident in Year 7 lessons as students understand well reasons why substances change their molecular structure. Effective teaching helps students to see the big picture more easily. Year 9 students' understanding, about aspects of physical phenomena, became clearer as they fitted ideas together and saw how they were linked. They applied facts well and effectively drew threads together about magnetism, electricity and their everyday applications. The teacher's adept and nimble questions, that pushed students to apply their ideas, made this happen. Teachers and students generate enjoyment in this subject, and students' learning thrives in this atmosphere. Most teachers mark work encouragingly; the best practice makes students think, respond and improve their work.
123. Lessons where teaching was satisfactory had some good features, but students did not learn fast enough. Plans lacked imagination and challenge, did not sharply focus upon learning, and students' efforts to explore and apply ideas were thwarted by the teacher's unnecessary guidance. Poor teaching relied upon specialist knowledge, past experiences of topics and dictated notes, rather than on methodical planning. Generally, these lessons too rarely began by capturing students' imagination, or ended with enough time to think about what had been learned.
124. Management and leadership are satisfactory. Notable improvements have been made since the last inspection although certain features remain to be addressed. The number of students in Year 9 successfully entering the national test extension paper has gone up. Computers are now used effectively, but there are too few in the laboratories. All students have a textbook and the quality and amount of equipment and apparatus are better. Old equipment is meticulously and expertly maintained by the high quality technical support. The new and refurbished laboratories are not ideal as they are scattered on three sites. In certain rooms, limited space makes independent investigative work difficult, not all laboratories have adequate services for effective practical work and the lack of blinds also restricts the curriculum. This affects the quality of education students experience. Teaching and learning, students' books, and marking, are not yet monitored regularly. So, very good practice is not shared. Assessment data is not used enough to check students' progress, to set them learning targets or to monitor the department's performance. The teachers of the three separate science subjects do not operate enough as an integrated team.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Some three-dimensional work is good.
- Most Year 10 students whose work falls below C grade make good progress in Year 11 to achieve C grades.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory because progress over time is not good enough.
- In Years 7 to 9, students acquire key skills, especially in drawing and painting, too slowly.
- Students do not progress rapidly enough in their understanding of other artists' work, or link these studies well enough with their own work.
- Sketchbooks are not used effectively or imaginatively enough; they provide an unsatisfactory record of students' progress.
- There are too few high grades at GCSE. Assessment does not always give a true impression of students' standards.
- The lack of ICT prevents proper incorporation of creative computer work into art.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory; rooms are not adjacent and one room is unstimulating for learning or teaching.
- There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection report; standards have fallen and the quality of teaching has declined.

125. Students enter the school with average standards. Attainment remains average at the end of Year 9, which means that students are not achieving enough. GCSE results in 2001, whilst comparing favourably with national ones, were below average for grades A*-C and well below average for A*/A grades compared with selective schools. 2002 GCSE results show a similar picture; although more students gained C grades the percentage of A*/A grades fell further. Students do not achieve as well in art as in their other subjects at GCSE.
126. Students' make too little progress between Years 7 and 9 because their learning of key techniques, such as drawing and painting, is weak. Although they have excellent mathematical skills, they make little progress applying spatial concepts, such as proportion and space, to represent their observations accurately. Many Year 9 students cannot realise perspective well enough, or understand the consistency of ellipses in their drawings. Students' use of colour, using crayons or water-based paint, is also weak. In all years some three-dimensional work is better, being of an average standard. Students' ability to link what they study about other artists' work with their own is also underdeveloped, in both two- and three-dimensional studies. They are not guided how to use sketchbooks properly; these lack the creative, visual investigations expected of higher attainers in Year 9. All these skills need to be improved significantly by Year 9 if students are to achieve their potential in GCSE work later on. Their achievement in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.
127. GCSE students' attitudes to work are good and they speak positively of the opportunity to take a creative subject. Many begin Year 10 with unsatisfactory skills (see paragraph above). After making limited progress in Year 10, and realising the implications of falling below C grades, they do work harder in Year 11 to improve attainment. Overall achievement however, is unsatisfactory. Year 11 portfolio work to date shows standards for the majority are currently below expectations and only about average overall.
128. Year 10 two-dimensional work, based on a visit to a local churchyard, showed a lack of competence in basic art skills, which they should have mastered already. In another Year 10 class, students' tonal portraits were still only average; higher attaining students are normally very secure in such skills by the end of Year 9. An interesting debate about

'What is Art?' showed that Year 10 students have good oral skills – Years 7 to 9 students need to debate more. Gifted artists do attain A* grades, but most other students are not achieving well enough. Students with special educational needs achieve similar standards to their peers, sometimes making good contributions to discussions. Art makes a satisfactory contribution to students' cultural development.

129. Although teaching seen in most individual lessons was satisfactory, it is unsatisfactory over time because it does not promote fast enough progress. Most lessons show that teachers' understanding and knowledge are secure and their class management is satisfactory. In one lesson, the latter was unsatisfactory because a minority of boys, with disappointing attitudes, were not managed well enough and they spoiled others' learning. This is rare, however. Teachers plan their curriculum separately, so work in different classes is dissimilar and expectations of skills to be learned are not common, and often too low. Skills teaching is not rigorous. In some lessons time is wasted on homework reviews. These do encourage oral presentation skills usefully, but a few boys were not articulate and in rare cases they made insensitive comments about each other's work. A much wider range of teaching methods is required if students are to gain both the confidence and skills they need. Assessment is often over-generous.
130. The department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last report. Year 9 attainment has fallen. Students' strengths in painting and drawing are no longer evident and GCSE results no longer compare favourably with other selective schools. The quality of teaching has declined. Marking remains an issue. The breadth of curriculum described at that time has narrowed. The management of the department is unsatisfactory because of the decline, particularly in standards. The department lacks cohesion because rooms are too far apart, in different blocks, and because staff involved in teaching art have too many whole-school responsibilities to concentrate sufficiently on subject improvement. Accommodation in one room is unsatisfactory and provides a poor environment for students' learning. The department has no computers and does not use ICT, so this remains an unsatisfactory provision, as at the time of the last report.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The co-ordinator's excellent subject knowledge and expertise. He, and two other experienced teachers, teach the discrete units very well in Years 9 to 11.
- Thorough and well-considered planning. Lessons contain such good and stimulating materials and ideas that boys cannot fail to be interested.
- The imaginative local crime and crime prevention unit, taught through ICT in Year 7.

Areas for improvement

- The present lack of any discrete citizenship units in Year 8.
- The fortnightly lessons, which are too far apart for students to learn most effectively and remember the momentum of previous lessons.
- The incomplete audit of citizenship elements within other subjects which, in Years 10 and 11, currently includes subjects which are not studied by all students.

131. In the discrete topics they have studied so far, Year 9 to 11 students' attainment is at least in line with the expected standards. During the inspection it was only possible to observe Year 7 and Year 10 lessons, but discussions were held with students in all

years. Few of them know that citizenship is now a compulsory subject, but they all find the topics being covered interesting, and see the relevance and importance of them to their future lives. Few students can define democracy as yet; more could in Year 7 than in Year 10, but the politics unit should address this effectively. Students are increasing their knowledge considerably and achieving very well.

132. In each of Years 9 to 11, as discrete units within the general education course, students have twelve lessons on global economics, crime and legal awareness and British political systems. The content of several of these is imaginative and interesting. The religious education department delivers key parts of the citizenship programme most effectively, particularly topics such as faiths and lifestyles, racism, and tolerance, and the geography department discusses many global inequality issues. However, the valuable audit of how other subjects cover citizenship topics includes option subjects at GCSE, which, as they are not studied by all students, are not relevant. Several departments have not yet formally recorded what citizenship elements they cover. This should be done soon to check for any minor gaps in the whole programme.
133. The co-ordinator brings a wealth of relevant subject expertise to his work and has recently written an excellent textbook on crime and legal awareness. He, a geographer teacher and a history teacher, teach the discrete citizenship elements. They are enthusiastic, and have excellent, relevant subject knowledge, coupled with extremely high expectations. All are keen to review the course regularly and rightly acknowledge that the lessons will evolve over the years, both to keep materials up to date and topical and to respond to students' improved knowledge as the programme unrolls. They are skilful at generating and guiding debates and discussions.
134. The Year 7 unit, delivered through ICT lessons, is stimulating and students are enjoying it. They are researching and preparing presentations on topics such as bullying, vandalism, racism, football violence and alcohol, set within the local community. It is interesting that many Year 7 students define a good citizen in terms of the local community, but future work (seen in the present Year 9) should certainly widen their horizons. Teaching was very good in the lessons observed, although the focus on the citizenship elements varied. Teachers missed opportunities for all to share the key elements of the projects they were preparing.
135. In the Year 10 lessons, teaching was very good and sometimes excellent. Students are encouraged to develop knowledge and understanding but also to articulate their reasons and judgements on issues and how these impact on society. A lesson on drugs was linked to the students' own awareness and sensibly used the school's drugs policy as the basis for debate. Websites and ICT play a key role in several lessons – opening up students' eyes to the wealth of information available on the Internet. What stops students learning most effectively from these discrete lessons is that they are only timetabled once a fortnight. The school is already considering altering this arrangement.
136. Studying pay conditions in the less developed world, students did a most effective paper-folding exercise linked to low pay and demands. Their knowledge of terms used, for example 'inequality', 'exploitation', 'child labour' or 'sweatshops', increased significantly. Up-to-date resources and fun ideas, such as 'Where do your bag and clothes come from?', to show the impact of less developed countries on manufacturing and prices, are built into the schemes of work. The teachers' relentlessly challenging questions get students thinking at full speed. Students ask perceptive questions, think quickly, and enjoy debating and arguing. In one lesson a student asked 'What is the difference between citizenship and nationality?' and the lesson took off.

137. The contribution of the school council to students' knowledge of citizenship is not that strong as several of them do not feel it makes much difference to their lives. This is an area for development. Careers education definitely does contribute well to students' knowledge of the world of work. The week's project on issues within Gravesend is significantly community based and valuable. Whole-school charity work is excellent as it ranges from support for individuals with personal school links to global needs. During the inspection one Year 7 student defined being a good citizen as 'being kind'. This has to be an encouraging perception for the school to build on as its citizenship programme impacts on all students in future years.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good leadership has generated a very good working ethos in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers know the students very well and give them high levels of individual support.

Areas for improvement

- National Curriculum statutory requirements are not met. No design and technology in Year 7 and below average time and limited practical work in Years 8 and 9.
- The department is not fully staffed – more specialists are needed.
- The accommodation and resources are poor.
- Limited links with industry.
- Assessment is not yet linked to teaching plans and monitoring students' progress.

138. Students enter the school with very mixed experiences of design and technology from their primary schools. The present Year 7 are not studying this subject because the department is understaffed, thus achievement overall is clearly unsatisfactory in the first three years. Standards in Years 8 and 9 are variable and at best average. Non-specialists teach several classes in these years. With more students than workstations in the technology rooms, students cannot make items properly. If class sizes were reduced, the staffing situation would be even worse. The headteacher could not have done more to try and appoint specialist teachers. The poor provision for this subject is largely beyond the school's control.
139. Years 8 and 9 students find it difficult to apply the knowledge and skills they acquired in Year 7 to more demanding design and make activities. In the academic year prior to the inspection, supply teachers taught some of them. Standards in graphics are not strong, which hinders students' progress when they want to develop their ideas. They do make progress through research, analysis and evaluation. They work in small groups to investigate, develop and model a product design of their own choice. The presentation of their work improves when they use ICT as a design tool, for example modelling electronic circuits. Standards are average overall.
140. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 8 and 9. In the better lessons teachers evaluate students' understanding at the end of lessons and revisit any areas of misunderstanding. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, teachers direct the students too much by focusing only on the specific task, rather than linking it to general principles and probing students' understanding. Designing a chair on the computer, Year 9 students applied their understanding of ergonomic concepts reasonably well, but they were given too few opportunities to discuss their ideas. Their work is neat and most of them found the task interesting.

141. Year 8 students are well motivated and creative, working on the design and purpose of logos. However, this work is not extending their making skills at all. Another Year 8 group is using card and clips to make a model with five moving parts. Although this is more complex than a similar task they did in Year 7, it is not stimulating enough, especially for higher attaining students. A learning support assistant supports students with special educational needs very well but is not told in advance about the concepts to be learned.
142. In 2001, for the last time, all students took GCSE design and technology. Although the percentage of A*-C grades was well above average, results were well below those of selective schools, especially the percentage of A*/A grades. Results were a little better in 2002 but were still low compared to students' achievements in their other subjects. The good progress the present Years 10 and 11 students are making is significant, reflecting the commitment and hard work of the specialist teachers. Standards are above average overall. Students become increasingly autonomous learners and learn to use the correct methods of investigation and research, for example designing a penholder and emulating Art Deco design and style.
143. Overall, sketching techniques are less well developed and in some instances this slows design fluency. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good overall. It was very good in one Year 10 lesson. Teachers manage their students well because they know them as individuals and work energetically to help them all make good progress. Students' excellent numeracy skills mean that they cope confidently with scale drawing and angles, but with no experience of using resistant materials for two years, these students have to work hard to catch up on basic skills; most of them do. Alongside the opportunities to continue their work out of lessons, the department is also involved in the Young Engineers Scheme and a technology week for all Year 10 students.
144. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The relatively new head of department leads well by example and has worked extremely hard to remedy some of the existing weaknesses, in particular in planning and deployment of teachers. Schemes of work and assessment procedures have been reviewed; however, the assessment of students' work is not yet used to set targets for improvement, inform curriculum planning and evaluate teaching and learning. The technical assistant makes a valuable contribution to the running of the department.
145. The overall poor quality of the accommodation, particularly two of the three specialist rooms which have antiquated equipment, along with too few workstations for the size of some groups, has a significant negative impact on the quality of education provided. The recent acquisition of computer-assisted design and planned purchase of computer-assisted manufacturing equipment will allow the control aspects of the National Curriculum to be met. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- The interest and enthusiasm shown by teachers and students.
- The very high GCSE results.

Areas for improvement

- The need for a drama specialist head of department.
- The fortnightly lessons, which are too far apart for quality learning.
- Areas of planning and class management in Years 7 to 9.

146. At the time of the previous inspection there was no separate drama department and the subject was not offered at GCSE. Drama is now taught throughout the school, and offered for GCSE, which represents a considerable improvement. A successful department has thus been built up since 1996 with a good record of examination success. Drama amalgamated with music in 1997 to form a performing arts faculty. Currently, however, provision is only satisfactory because a new head of drama has not yet been appointed to replace the teacher who left last summer. Students in Years 7 to 9 now have only a fortnightly instead of a weekly drama lesson. With one full-time specialist teacher short, the work is being continued by a drama teacher in training, acting as head of department, and by the head of history. Both teachers bring subject skills and enthusiasm to their work and when a specialist has been appointed to lead the subject, provision should be very good.
147. In 2001, over 50 per cent of GCSE students attained A*/A grades, very high compared to average and just above the selective school average. In 2002, when more students took the examination, just under 50 per cent attained grades A*/A. These are encouraging results.
148. In work seen during the inspection week, Year 10 students worked well. They were following an imaginatively planned unit of work to match the requirements of the examination. At this early stage of their course they showed very good understanding of drama techniques and possibilities. In one lesson they developed an improvisation thoughtfully from an agreed starting point, and in another a rehearsal of work on the same theme showed they have good mime and movement skills. In both lessons students were clearly taking the work very seriously, with excellent concentration and collaboration and much enjoyment evident. Good teaching was seen in both lessons, with carefully judged interventions, which gave students opportunities to develop their own ideas.
149. In the Years 7 to 9 classes observed, standards of work and teaching were less consistent, though average, but promising work was seen. The fortnightly gap between lessons make it difficult for teachers to establish drama routines and disciplines and to achieve continuity in the work planned. A Year 7 lesson was unsatisfactory because the students' energy and enthusiasm was not directed into thoughtful observation and controlled response. The boys tended to emphasise the physical and turn the drama situations into a fight or a rough and tumble whenever possible, missing opportunities for more interesting interaction. In a more successful Year 9 lesson, students responded thoughtfully to the reading of a war poem as a starting point for a tableau and made good use of the ideas this generated.
150. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, with some good features, and good in Year 10. The schemes of work are imaginative, though more detailed planning is needed in adapting the Year 11 work on Shakespeare's *Seven Ages* to the needs and skills of Year 7 students. The teachers have drama skills and complementary subject specialisms which they use effectively; historical understanding provided Year 9 students with a riveting introduction to the war poem.
151. Drama is accommodated in a good-sized studio though this is situated at an inconvenient distance from the main school and the hall. The subject plays an important part in the school's extra-curricular programme, with major annual

productions as well as a number of other performances. These involve other teachers and departments in lively co-operation across the curriculum. During the week of the inspection, boys were preparing a production of Shakespeare's *'Julius Caesar'* under the direction of a government and politics teacher. Drama provides good opportunities to extend students' cultural and social experiences and to explore moral issues. At all levels it makes a contribution to students' personal development, their sensitivity to others and their self-confidence.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Well-planned lessons and good, creative teaching challenge students to reach very high standards.
- Students respond very positively to teachers' high expectations for thoughtful, carefully reasoned and well-presented work.
- Very high levels of respect between students and their teachers create very favourable working relationships.

Areas for improvement

- The percentage of students attaining GCSE A*/A grades.
- The lack of ICT for use in lessons.
- Finalising the assessment plans linked to National Curriculum levels for Years 7 to 9.

152. Standards in Year 9 are high. In 2001 almost all students reached Level 6, and half reached Level 7 and above – well above average. These teacher-assessed levels were accurate. In 2002 the proportion at the higher levels increased. In 2001 all students attained very high GCSE grades, with over 40 per cent grades A*/A – slightly below the selective school average. In recent years, including 2002, the percentage of grades A*/A has declined. The percentage of A*-C grades has fluctuated, but remained very high.

153. Students have very good number skills. For example, they use statistical formulae very adeptly to test the relationship between two variables. Students make good progress and achieve well. Their writing improves because teachers check spelling, extend subject vocabulary in lessons and display key words on classroom walls. Standards in Years 10 and 11 continue to exceed well what is expected. Students undertake independent investigations for GCSE, such as collecting data on the effect of sea currents on the movement of beach materials along the Reculver coastline. Excellent standards of analysis, interpretation and presentation are evident in a high proportion of this work. It develops students' independent study and research skills very well. This represents good achievement in understanding geographical issues and using appropriate methods to test a hypothesis. It is the outcome of very good teaching and very positive attitudes to enquiry work.

154. Teaching is good overall with many very good features. Excellent teaching was seen in two lessons during the inspection. Students learn rapidly and apply their new knowledge, understanding and skills effectively to investigate geographical questions. For example, Year 9 students worked very well together in groups to find evidence to evaluate whether Brazil was a more, or less, economically developed country. They handled indicators of development confidently, and selected the correct statistical or graphical methods to present their findings in the form of a television programme to the class.

155. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly based on very good knowledge and clear understanding of what students need to learn. They use methods that appeal to students' imagination and sense of fun, with the result that they are keenly interested, enjoy learning, and are creative with new learning. For example, Year 10 students were lined up to represent the sides of a valley. Using pencil-cases as rock fragments, three students acted as a glacier, showing how it erodes and straightens a river valley. For homework students applied their understanding of glacial processes to write a story as 'Stuart the snowflake'. When teachers use less imaginative methods and the pace is slow students learn less effectively because their interest is not stimulated.
156. Learning support assistants give good support to students with special educational needs so they engage in lessons, learn effectively and make good progress. Teachers do not include enough guidance for learning support assistants in their lesson plans. Teachers need greater awareness of gifted students and how geography can develop their potential. Limited access to computers has prevented their use in geography, but the new computers in the school should improve this.
157. The head of geography gives very clear direction and manages the subject very effectively. Assessment and analysis of students' work in Years 10 and 11 is very good and thorough and it constructively feeds into curriculum development, teaching methods and target setting. The department has begun to implement plans to do the same for the earlier years, and this requires urgency. Identification of individual students' strengths and targets for improvement should help to increase the number of students who gain A*/A GCSE grades. The department has addressed all key points from the previous report so progress has been good overall.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- GCSE results are well above average.
- Leadership and management are very good and result in detailed planning and a sophisticated evaluation of departmental performance.
- Students' achievement is assessed and tracked very well.

Areas for improvement

- Although results have shown a steady improvement over time, the percentage of grades A* and A in 2002 was not high enough.
- Further consideration of how students learn in different ways so that teaching styles match their individual needs.

158. Teachers' Year 9 assessments, which are generally accurate, confirm that students' attainment is well above average, with examples of Level 7 work in Year 7 and evidence that students in Years 7 to 9 make good progress learning to analyse and evaluate source material. They use historical terminology accurately and confidently but, for a minority, spelling and expression need attention.

159. 2001 GCSE results were very high with a high percentage of A* and A grades. Inconsistencies in the production and quality of coursework meant that 2002 results were not as good – even though the percentage of students attaining A*-C grades was well above average, the percentage of A*/A grades decreased. However, the department has analysed these results in detail and established a good range of strategies for improvement. Thus standards seen during the inspection were higher – at least well above average – than the 2002 results suggest. Students in Year 10, for example, compare and contrast the policies of Kerensky and Lenin in a most cogent fashion and make thought-provoking comments on the usefulness of sources offered to them during their study of the Russian Revolution. Moreover, students interviewed in Year 11 can discuss the reasons for the outbreak of war in 1914, with a maturity which belies their years.
160. In most lessons, students experience a range of activities which interest them, engage them intellectually, meet their learning needs and make it clear high expectations are the norm. Teachers have developed varied and interesting ways to encourage students to acquire historical skills. Students achieve well overall. Year 8 students working in groups were fascinated by Henry VIII's break with Rome and rose with a will to the challenge of tackling quite complex sources. Year 9 students were delighted to be given opportunities to learn from and with each other, when they were faced with a most demanding collaborative assignment on the siting of a factory during the Industrial Revolution. On rare occasions a minority finds it difficult to keep up with the pace of the lessons and finds the levels of challenge too much. Nonetheless, teaching is good overall and, in a third of lessons it is very good. Secure subject knowledge, very good classroom management and the treatment of students with dignity, lead to very warm relationships, a real interest in the subject matter and very good behaviour. Students speak highly of their teachers and are choosing GCSE history in increasing numbers.
161. Leadership and management in the subject are very good; well-founded strategies for improvement have been put in place. The very effective assessment policy, for example, is already having a most positive effect. Teachers encourage students to identify exactly how they can improve their standards and offer detailed feedback on what is needed to move to the next level of performance. Students themselves pay tribute to these arrangements and say that their teachers are approachable and always available when help is needed. They also make reference to the wide range of fieldwork activities, the annual visit to Ypres and the Somme, for example.
162. To supplement the reasonable resources, teachers work hard and imaginatively to produce very high quality worksheets and notes. The history rooms are far apart and two of them are very small, which inhibit more active approaches to learning. Accommodation is, therefore, unsatisfactory. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and in the opportunities it provides for students to use ICT.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Outstanding GCSE results, 76 per cent A*/A grades in 2002.
- Students' very good skills of evaluation and critical judgement.
- The few subjects, such as music and history, which use ICT well in Years 7 to 9.

Areas for improvement

- The few projects that do not stretch higher attaining students.
- Too little ICT used in English, mathematics, science, art and business studies.
- In Years 7 and 8, some very good PowerPoint presentations are spoiled by incorrect spelling and grammar.

163. All students have discrete ICT lessons, except those in Year 11 who chose not to study it for GCSE. In 2001 teachers assessed standards at the end of Year 9 as well above average. In 2002 they recorded an impressive percentage of students working at Levels 7 and 8 – a significant improvement since the last inspection. These levels are accurate, although students are not so skilled using spreadsheets for modelling problems. Over 50 students took the GCSE in 2001 and over 40 per cent attained A*/A grades, a great improvement since the last inspection. In 2002, 76 per cent of students attained A*/A grades – an outstanding result.
164. Standards of work continue to be above average in Years 7 to 9. In Year 7, students search topical websites (related to local citizenship issues) and work very well together to design PowerPoint presentations integrating text and graphics effectively. Some of these are spoiled by incorrect spelling and grammar. Year 9 projects provide students with very good opportunities to reach high levels in control, where they design their own roller-coaster rides following a visit to a theme park. Most students use wordprocessing well for homework, at home, in the well-attended computer clubs at lunchtime and after school, but they have limited opportunities to design spreadsheets to model and test numerical problems, or critically analyse data. All students, including those with special educational needs, use ICT safely and develop particularly good planning and evaluation skills. All achieve well.
165. Opportunities to use computers in other subjects have been very limited in the past, but recently a new computer room opened. Students are beginning to use ICT well in some subjects:
- Year 9 history – to download and edit pictures from the Internet on the First World War.
 - Year 9 science – to simulate experiments.
 - Year 8 students compose backing tracks using music software.
 - French students use spreadsheet data to draw graphs of their favourite drinks.
 - During the Year 9 Town Centre Project students, working with members of the local business community and primary school children, design effective computer slides which incorporate digital photographs.
166. Years 10 and 11 students attain well above average standards. For coursework, Year 10 students consolidate theory on flow charts very well by designing their own library databases for a primary school. Higher attaining students have limited opportunities to create their own project ideas because of the prescriptive GCSE syllabus. Year 11 coursework is well above expectations, with well-argued evaluation of spreadsheets designed for a stock control system. Students' macros were comprehensive and well-annotated, and the highest attaining students made good use of programming skills in visual basic to introduce higher-level code. All students, including those with special educational needs, work hard and achieve very well.
167. Standards of ICT work in most other subjects taught in Years 10 and 11 are below expectations. Better work using the only recently improved ICT facilities includes:
- Year 10 technology students using computer-aided design software to design boxes, and complicated printed circuits in electronics.

- New science software which allows students to simulate experiments.
 - Year 10 GCSE history students have designed very good slides showing how the First World War weakened the Russian government.
168. Surprisingly, business studies students make little use of ICT. Most students have home computers which they use regularly for wordprocessing and researching the web well in most subjects. Soon more computers will be set up in classrooms, which should make it easier for ICT to be used in more subjects.
169. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Year 10. In all years students are well motivated although, just occasionally, Years 7 and 8 students lose concentration or talk too much. This is usually when work is either too easy or too difficult for them. GCSE students concentrate very well and demonstrate mature co-operation. Students are clearly aware of their progress. Teachers support individuals well, set homework regularly and generally mark work constructively, so students know how to improve. This allows GCSE students, in particular, to meet examination criteria very effectively. GCSE students make very good progress. The few Year 11 students who have not chosen this subject make satisfactory progress only.
170. Students use computers well in the well-supervised clubs at lunchtime or after school, and at home, and develop good independent study skills. Teachers generally assess and monitor students' attainment and progress well and are keen to involve students in taking responsibility for evaluating their own progress in lessons. Teachers in other subject areas are gaining expertise to extend students' ICT capability by completing government-funded training.
171. ICT is well managed by experienced teachers with good industrial experience. They maintain a very good working ethos in the computer rooms, ably assisted by a very good technician and an extremely competent graduate trainee teacher. Consistency in teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection. The rooms are well maintained although some ventilation is unsatisfactory. The number of computers has improved significantly since the last inspection but is still slightly below national expectations. Access for other subjects during lesson time has recently improved, and further rooms and equipment are planned and funded. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- High standards, notably in Years 7 and 8 and in GCSE.
- Consistently good to excellent teaching in Years 7 and 8.
- Students' understanding of spoken and written French and German.

Areas for improvement

- Speaking standards in Year 9 and above.
- Teachers' planning for students' individual levels.
- Inconsistencies in marking.

172. Very few students have studied a modern foreign language before coming to the school. All students study French and German for the first three years. Standards, which are well above average overall, are very good in listening, reading and writing. Speaking is very good in Years 8 and 9. Students make good progress during these

three years. GCSE results were very high in 2001, as they have been since 1999, with over 40 per cent A/B grades in French and German. German results were just above, and French results just below, the selective school averages. The percentage of A*-C grades dropped in French in 2002 but over 50 per cent attained A*/A grades. Standards observed and work seen during the inspection were well above average. Students listen and read particularly well but their speaking levels are not as good. Excepting a few higher attaining students' work, most writing too often reflects how English is structured. Progress from the levels attained at the end of Year 9 continues to be good.

173. Teaching is good with some very good and excellent features. Teachers, who are excellent linguists, consistently speak French or German, from the first greeting to the very end of the lesson. In Years 7 and 8, teachers insist that students use spontaneous target language for genuine communication. These students are confident in asking, as well as answering, a range of questions. However, particularly in French, older students are encouraged to prepare what they are going to say in writing, which results in a lack of fluency and accent.
174. Students are encouraged to write accurately and to produce pieces of extended writing from Year 7. Teaching is based on a good range of imaginative resources, many produced by the teachers themselves. ICT is used well and students' work shows that they have used a good variety of computer programs. In an excellent Year 7 lesson, speaking standards were improved by recording conversations so that students could hear their accents and fluency. A weakness in some lesson planning is when teachers do not include any different levels of difficulty, so the work is the same for fluent linguists, or those who do not speak French or German so easily. Occasionally the latter struggle to keep up.
175. The great majority of students makes good progress in knowledge and skills and learn well. They concentrate hard, are committed, and make every effort to carry out tasks as instructed. Students who speak English as an additional language, apply their language-learning skills and make good progress. Although some students in Years 9 to 11 are not very keen to speak out in lessons, it is clear that they could work more effectively in groups or pairs. This is rarely possible beyond Year 8 because of the very poor accommodation. Every classroom is too small, the mobiles especially so, and older students cannot take part in speaking activities which involve moving around the rooms. This situation was criticised in the previous inspection report.
176. Leadership and management of the department are good. The recently-appointed head of department has already had a considerable impact and has developed new systems for assessment, based on National Curriculum levels. Development targets are in place. She recognises the need to establish consistent marking procedures, to plan for the full range of attainment, and to put in place strategies to improve speaking; improvements in all these areas are already evident. Very high standards were noted at the last inspection, and the percentage of GCSE A/B grades has improved further.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Good teaching integrates performing, composing, listening and appraising activities well.
- A good range of extra-curricular activities which contribute well to students' social and cultural development.
- The effective use of ICT to enhance students' composing skills.

Areas for improvement

- Cramped, awkward accommodation, poor soundproofing and too few instruments. All these restrict what teachers and students can do, especially in composing and performing.
- Lack of challenge for higher attaining and talented students, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

177. Most students enter the school with below average musical skills but by the end of Year 9 standards are average, reflecting good progress. In Year 9, students have a good understanding of how to compose a melody over a chord pattern. Their knowledge of music vocabulary and theory is good. Keyboard skills develop well but students are held back by having to share keyboards. Students can improvise rhythmically simple melodies over a 12-bar blues chord pattern but only some improvise creatively, with a real feel and understanding of the blues style. Their singing in lessons is not good enough.
178. In 2001, GCSE results were very high and in 2002 all students attained grades A*/A. Since the last inspection results have been consistently impressive. However, numbers taking this subject are small. Students taking GCSE perform very well, either individually or in ensembles. Several of them learn to play instruments, which certainly helps their GCSE work. Students use music sequencing software very skilfully, both to record the various layers of their compositions and to help them compose very effectively for a variety of purposes and in different styles. For instance their film music, composed to accompany a hunt scene, showed their very good understanding of how to use a wide range of musical elements to achieve their intended effect. Standards are well above average as students make very good progress.
179. The quality of teaching is good overall and results in students learning well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and integrate performing, composing, listening and appraising activities well. As a result students receive a balanced diet to develop their musical skills and they enjoy the varied and well-organised activities. However, teachers do not focus on developing singing often enough, and students rarely sing in parts. Teachers' plans focus very well on what students are to learn. So, in a single lesson, one Year 8 class increased their knowledge and understanding of major and minor modes. However, particularly in Years 7 to 9, work is not always challenging enough for those students with particular musical talents, or those who play instruments very well – they could achieve more. Teachers encourage students to use ICT effectively to develop their composing and performing skills. By recording composition elements onto keyboards or a computer, students in Years 9 and 10 checked how well their melodies fitted with the chords they had chosen, and then made adjustments.
180. Resources have improved since the last inspection, and teachers use them well, but there are still too few keyboards and other instruments. Although GCSE students can record their compositions on keyboards, they cannot save work for the next lesson. One of the music rooms is new, but it has no practice rooms nearby for group work. It is also far away from the main music room, which is cold and depressing. Here the practice rooms are very cramped and too small for students to practise properly in small groups. The lack of soundproofing is a particular problem, both when students want to record work or need to listen carefully. Thus the poor accommodation and resources seriously affects the quality of music teaching and learning.
181. The good range of extra-curricular activities develops students' performing and social skills very effectively and contributes well to their awareness of other cultures. Students

can take part in tabla (Indian drums) drumming, jazz orchestra, choir and concert band. Students of all ages take part and there is very enthusiastic singing from both students and staff in the choir. A guitar group is organised by a very enthusiastic Year 12 student. Opportunities are also provided for students to go to the opera and concerts.

182. The music department is well managed by a recently qualified teacher, pending the appointment of a head of department. The department has made a good start developing assessment criteria for units of work. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- For several years GCSE results have been very high and above selective school averages.
- With little prior experience, students make rapid progress in rugby and play to a high standard.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent; students attain very high standards in national and county competitions.
- Students are active, energetic and very enthusiastic.

Areas for improvement

- Small, grim, unhygienic and dilapidated changing areas.
- Schemes of work which do not include the National Curriculum content, ICT, literacy and numeracy.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not reflect the National Curriculum levels and criteria.
- Professional development for the department.

183. The percentage of students who attained GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 was well above average and above that for selective schools. It improved in 2002 but fewer students attained A*/A grades. Whilst most students did very well in the theory paper, their marks in a few practical activities were only average. This explains the difference between their predicted scores, based on their performance in Year 9 national tests, and the half grade lower that they achieved in 2002. However, students' achievement was very similar to that in their other subjects.

184. Average attainment on entry reflects students' lack of experience of some areas of the National Curriculum, for example gymnastics and rugby. However, students have a basic understanding of fitness and reasonable football skills. By the end of their first unit of work, Year 7 students have made satisfactory progress in all activities except in rugby where they make excellent progress; they have sufficient skill and understanding to play inter-house competitions. By the end of Year 9 students attain average levels in most activities and above average levels in hockey and rugby. Their movement, body tension and control in gymnastics is below average but they work very co-operatively

together to plan and choreograph sequences. To balance the intense games curriculum, the head of department has recently introduced gymnastics and dance activities, but the schemes of work are not fully developed. This leads to a repetition in some teaching and learning, which was the reason for the only unsatisfactory lesson observed.

185. GCSE students' attain well above average standards in the theoretical aspects of the course. Their knowledge and use of technical language is very good, for example when describing the muscles attached to and the movement at a joint. Files are well organised and very neatly presented. Teachers mark homework and tests thoroughly with constructive comments but class work is not regularly checked to see that it is complete and correct for revision.
186. In the physical education lessons for all, Year 10 boys attain standards above those expected nationally and their achievement is good. They have a good knowledge of health and fitness and play football and rugby with consistent skills and a clear understanding of the rules. Boys have good co-operative skills and body tension when building their four-man counterbalances in gymnastics. Teachers do not teach students how to evaluate their skills regularly enough, to give them the confidence and understanding to attain above average standards in this component of the National Curriculum and GCSE course.
187. A few talented individuals and many teams achieve very high standards in national and county competitions in athletics, badminton, basketball, cricket, football, hockey, karate, skiing, rugby and the modern pentathlon. The attainment of these talented students is very high and they benefit considerably from the many opportunities offered by their teachers' hard work and dedication, especially establishing very good links with many sporting organisations. The partnership with the local sports clubs, who use the astroturf, has allowed the school to successfully promote hockey, and several teachers have strong links with other sports clubs and county teams. Students enjoy the excellent extra-curricular provision and large numbers are keen, enthusiastic and participate regularly. Students and parents appreciate the benefits of the many sporting visits and tours that not only raise students' social and moral awareness but also provide a wide variety of cultural experiences. Inter-house competitions are always very well attended by parents and can involve over 400 students on a Saturday morning.
188. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is mostly satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. All lessons include a health and fitness session that takes the form of warm up and stretches. In the good lessons students learn well because they are given the opportunities to acquire new skills, to select and apply these skills and to evaluate their own and others' work. Opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning are infrequent. Games lessons are very performance-based and students are not set tasks to analyse and improve their performances. In a few gymnastics lessons, teaching does not develop students' individual movement skills enough. However, in the majority of lessons teachers circulate well to extend the more able and to help those students finding the activity difficult. In major games lessons, students are divided into ability groups. This is a positive strategy that helps all student to learn. Most teachers give high quality demonstrations. This gives students a good visual image of the activity and shows them clearly how to improve their skills.
189. When lessons are indoors, teachers use the whiteboards and word maps to focus on key words and objectives but ideas to develop numeracy skills are not yet identified. There is one computer in the department but it is not connected to the school's network and students rarely use ICT. The boys' enthusiasm helps them learn and allows them

to remain interested in the subject, even though the facilities are poor. There are three changing rooms in the main school building – far away from the fields and sports hall – and only one has showers. The gymnasium is old, the equipment, including all the mats, antiquated, and the floor is in need of repair.

190. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The head of department is relatively new and is still developing curriculum and assessment strategies. He has supported a new teacher well and has monitored all the others. Few members of the department have experienced enough professional development. Assessment procedures do not reflect National Curriculum levels and criteria. Students do not know what they need to do to improve their work in each activity. The schemes of work lack detail, for example in indicating the four components of the National Curriculum and how they will be assessed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Well above average GCSE (short course) results attained by Year 10 in 2002.
- Good teaching and learning, to which students' interest in lessons and very good relationships with their teachers, contribute.
- Students' good speaking skills.
- Good leadership of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Limited opportunities for extended writing in Years 7 and 8.
- Assessment of students' progress is not related to the expectations of the Kent Agreed Syllabus.

191. Students did very well in the GCSE short course examination in 2002. They took the examination in Year 10, and were the first year group to follow an examination syllabus. The majority of students were entered for the examination, and despite the limited teaching time, almost all of them passed, over 40 with grades A*/A. This represents very good achievement.

192. Students' attainment by the end of Year 9 matches the expectations set out in the Kent Agreed Syllabus and exceeds them in many areas. Teachers pass on well their good understanding and knowledge of the subject. Most students have a good knowledge of the main beliefs and practices of Christianity and other world religions, such as Buddhism and Islam. They are also good at explaining what they learn from religious beliefs. Students achieve well because they find the lessons interesting and they are keen to take part in discussions. They use key religious words accurately, and understand the spiritual significance of symbols. They make good progress.

193. Standards of written work in Year 9 are above average. Students express themselves well. For example, they make perceptive comments on the Buddhist approach to the problems of greed, hatred and suffering, and they evaluate their own growth in understanding in a thoughtful way. However, most written work in Years 7 and 8 does not match the quality of students' verbal contributions in class. This is because the written tasks set are not challenging enough, with too much photocopied material, and few opportunities for extended writing. Students' careless spelling and grammar

sometimes remain uncorrected, and although work is regularly graded, comments are too brief to show students how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

194. The subject is not studied in Year 11. In Year 10, the good teaching and students' mature attitudes enable them to reach well above average standards. Summarising the conclusions of group discussions on religious attitudes to wealth and poverty, in a lesson on religious responses to moral issues, most students spoke audibly and very confidently. There were also several examples of very fluent and cogent explanations of personal viewpoints. Most students can select information quickly and accurately from textbooks. Written work is neatly presented, and students make very effective use of spider graphs in recording information.
195. The study of world religions gives students many opportunities to extend their understanding of other cultures. In a Year 9 lesson on Buddhism, students showed their respect for other people's beliefs and opinions; they were also introduced to the art of meditation. Students were very responsive in discussing their reactions, and were attentive and appreciative listeners. Students use ICT effectively to present their work and carry out research.
196. The quality of teaching is good and this has a positive effect on students' learning. The major strengths lie in the well-planned lessons, and the good rapport established between teachers and students. This makes an openness of response possible, particularly in discussions on spiritual and moral themes. The aims of the lesson are stated at the outset, so students know what is expected of them, and lessons proceed purposefully. Students with special educational needs take an active part in discussions because they are well supported by staff and fellow students. Homework plays an important role in consolidating work. In a Year 7 lesson on Islam, most students could remember the complex rituals of Moslem prayer, and gave the Arabic words for the key areas in a mosque. In satisfactory lessons, the teacher talked too much and did not allow enough time at the end to check progress by finding out what students had learned.
197. Leadership and management are good. Non-specialists receive good support, but the long-term work of the department is hampered by the lack of stable staffing. Assessment of students' progress is not related to the expectations of the Kent Agreed Syllabus. Progress has been satisfactory since the last inspection. The revised locally agreed syllabus has been implemented, and students now take an examination in the subject at GCSE. Students have more time to cover the syllabus by beginning to study some of the units in Year 9.

OTHER SUBJECTS

198. In Years 8 and 9, once a fortnight, students follow a classical civilisation course. Elements of this, such as comparing English and Latin sentence structure, contribute well to literacy skills. After a few weeks, Year 8 students can translate simple Latin sentences. Teaching is satisfactory, the strengths being the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and respectful manner in dealing with the students. In a lesson seen a few higher attaining students finished a written task quickly, and needed more challenging work. The study of Roman citizenship and slavery contributes well to the citizenship programme.
199. In 2001 almost 90 per cent of students attained grades A*-C in GCSE Latin. 2002 results were a little lower. Year 10 students, at an early stage in the course, are insecure about noun endings and cases but more confident with verb endings.

Although satisfactory, their lessons are too teacher-directed and lack variety, so a few of them tend to chatter. The teacher has superb knowledge of the language and texts.

200. In the past students studied economics, but GCSE results were well below average, particularly in 2001. The 2002 business studies students performed well compared with their other GCSEs. Over 30 per cent attained A*/A grades – likely to be very high compared to average and not far below the selective school average (when national data is available). Teaching is good. Students are given simple practical experiences, for example of a production situation, from which they learn theory. So far, most students find it easier to report on, rather than evaluate, situations. Whilst studying the location of industry, students learned well and several discussed variables intelligently, but the lesson lost pace during the middle and a few switched off for a while. Overall, students make good progress. Occasionally teachers dictate too many notes. The lack of ICT in this subject is a significant weakness although students clearly use their home computers for coursework.

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

201. In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Taken by Year 13 in 2001							
Chemistry	1	0	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
Information technology	6	100	74	50	13	2.83	1.75
Design and technology	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	2	n/a
Further mathematics	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	3	n/a
General studies	2	100	77	0	19	2.50	1.92
Mathematics	3	33	62	0	15	3	1.5
Statistics	2	50	n/a	50	n/a	2.5	n/a

GCE A-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Taken in Year 13							
Art and design	12	100	96	25	46	6.17	6.57
Biology	11	91	88	36	34	6.00	5.25
Business studies	16	100	92	50	32	6.63	5.50
Chemistry	11	100	90	27	43	5.27	5.90
Classical studies	3	67	95	67	49	6.00	6.51
Theatre studies	7	100	93	43	31	6.00	5.53
Economics	7	100	89	43	36	6.29	5.52
English literature	32	94	97	28	37	5.69	5.91
French	6	100	89	33	38	6.00	5.59
Full design and technology	28	93	91	21	30	5.00	5.38
Further mathematics	3	100	n/a	67	n/a	8.67	n/a
General studies	9	100	85	77	30	8.00	4.91
Geography	30	93	92	40	38	6.00	5.74
German	14	100	91	36	40	6.43	5.81
History	14	100	88	43	35	6.14	5.45
Mathematics	44	100	87	57	43	7.14	5.80
Music	2	100	93	100	35	8.00	5.74
Physics	30	80	88	20	40	4.33	5.67
Government and politics	23	96	87	39	34	5.83	5.30

Physical education	12	100	92	42	25	6.50	5.09
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SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics were inspected in depth.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Outstanding examination results.
- Very good teaching which results in exceptional achievement.
- The very good leadership and management of the department actively promote the highest standards.

Areas for improvement

- The minority of lessons which are too teacher-directed, and do not allow students to independently apply their skills and knowledge in new situations.
- Too few computers and not enough work using ICT.

202. Students study AS- and A-level in combinations of pure mathematics, mechanics, statistics and further mathematics. Work in key skills, which will be based on an investigation, will start at the end of the autumn term. At all levels, mathematics results up to 2001 were well above average; those for 2002 were even better, particularly as over 60 per cent attained A and B grades, which was outstanding. Mathematics results are the highest in the sixth form.
203. Present standards, which have improved since the last inspection, are very high. Students' enthusiasm for the subject contributes to these. In Year 12, students are fluent with algebraic manipulation. In a lesson seen they dealt successfully with simultaneous equations containing a quadratic and a linear equation, and then moved on to solving pairs of equations, where one equation was an ellipse. Students use their knowledge to develop new ideas and understanding. In Year 13, students related previous work on kinetic energy to effectively develop ideas about solving problems concerning coefficients of restitution.
204. In many lessons students are given the opportunity to use their previous learning and knowledge to investigate new topics independently. They are encouraged, when this effective teaching approach is used, to reach very high levels of personal achievement. Year 12 students investigated the development of differentiation from first principles. Because of their capability with algebra and the effective work done at GCSE, they rapidly understood the basics of differentiation and quickly moved on to generalising the differentiation of simple polynomials.
205. Students' attitudes to work and their general level of involvement and willingness to learn are very good. Teacher-student relationships are also very good. Students are totally confident in their teachers' skills. During all lessons, when teachers posed questions, students were never reluctant to suggest answers. Often these demonstrated an excellent understanding of the work and a desire to move on. Even studying difficult topics, students' willingness to move forward was clear. For example, several Year 12 students, presented with the equation of an ellipse, correctly deduced the shape of the curve following some effective class discussion.

206. The overall quality of teaching is very good. The best lessons allow students time to develop their own ideas and strategies, after discussion of general principles. Working on matrix algebra Year 13 students investigated and then applied it in work on composites of Euclidian transformation geometry. The teacher made the students explore and explain the mathematics, rather than directing their thought. In some classes students were not given the same opportunities. Although learning was effective, the class responded more passively and did not make the same progress.
207. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The schemes of work are effective and the head of department supports staff very well by promoting and encouraging effective teaching and the highest standards. The department shares teaching ideas and techniques, which certainly reflects its commitment to improvement. A mathematics clinic, held during lunch break for students wanting extra help, is staffed by five members of the department; it is often very well attended. The departmental marking scheme is not always followed as closely as it could be, although most marking is very detailed and gives students good help and guidance; some is not so helpful. ICT resources are poor. Although there is adequate software, the number of machines available to students is low so, to a certain extent, they are missing out on this exciting way to learn.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge.
- Supportive relationships with students.
- Often an outstanding quality of class discussions.

Areas for improvement

- The limited range of approaches to teaching and learning.
- Too little specific work for gifted scientists.
- Elements of how students' work is assessed, and how their progress is monitored and tracked.
- The old fashioned and unattractive laboratories.

208. Students start the course with broadly average standards. They make good progress. A few, very high attaining students, aim to read medicine or veterinary sciences at university. A-level results were well above average in 2001, but lower in 2002. They have fluctuated like this since 1998. In 2001 and 2002 over 35 per cent of students attained A/B grades, well below the selective school average. Biology results are relatively lower than the grades attained by the same students in their other A-levels; school data shows that they underachieve. Year 12 students adapt to the increased demands of sixth-form work very well, and show a good understanding of the standards required.
209. In lessons, most students show a high level of commitment. Teachers lead many discussions which reveal how well students have understood the work. In a Year 13 lesson on the role of carbonic anhydrase, chloride shift and control of blood pH, students showed an impressive level of understanding of the inter-relationships between components of blood and their function. A group of Year 12 students showed a very good level of practical competence in extracting a sample of DNA from wheat

germ. This reflected the very good teaching of practical skills. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some very good features. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of biology are excellent and class discussions contribute markedly to the quality of learning. In the lesson on blood, mentioned above, the quality of discussion was outstanding and all students, including the highest attainers, made substantial gains in their understanding. Standards overall are above average.

210. This very good teaching was characterised by an excellent understanding of how young people learn, and of how to inspire them to invest the maximum intellectual effort in their learning. Such was the teacher's skill that the highest attaining students demonstrated really rapid learning, and those who needed help were equally well supported. The teacher arranged to provide further detailed support for a few students. In other very good lessons, although the discussions effectively maintained most students' attention and interest, a lack of variety in the hour lesson resulted in a few students losing concentration and their learning suffered as a result.
211. Notwithstanding these strengths, teachers do not always challenge students enough, for example when a practical activity involves a period of waiting for a change to take place. On other occasions, the very high quality discussions can last so long that some students lose concentration. These issues relate to planning of individual lessons and to the structure of the course as a whole. They need to be addressed at departmental level.
212. Assessment is an integral part of the teaching. Teachers set tests regularly and mark these, homework and private notes carefully and fairly. Their standards are firmly rooted in national standards. They give good feedback to help students to improve. During lessons, teachers are continually assimilating an awareness of students' learning. Higher attainers know well how to study effectively, so that they know how to organise their time and learn very well. A few students, however, are not clear how well they are progressing and need more support. They do not have a tight regime of short-term targets and frequent tests, combined with being told how well they are doing.
213. Management of the department is satisfactory, and teachers are well supported by excellent technical staff. Although some lessons are taught in modern laboratories, most take place in poor quality, wooden classrooms. Despite imaginative procedures for splitting classes for practical work, classrooms are often cramped, and large numbers of students compete for the teacher's attention. This limits the opportunities for practical work. Access to modern ICT facilities is barely adequate. A range of extra-curricular activities takes place to increase the richness of students' experience of the subject.
214. Medium- and long-term strategic management of the department is not developed far enough to widen the range of techniques used to improve learning and standards. In particular, the department does not work as a team enough, to check that students are fully engaged throughout all lessons, and to generate adaptable resources and work to challenge high flyers, and support those who find the subject difficult. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Further development of monitoring procedures, of both students and staff, is likely to be an integral part of this work.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning.
- Very good relationships with students.
- Very good leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of ICT facilities in laboratories.
- Students' evaluation skills, and their ability to challenge the subject at a high level.
- Too little time, especially after practical work, for summaries at the end of lessons.

215. Students' attainment at the beginning of Year 12 is broadly average. In 2001 A-level results were average, but they improved significantly in 2002. In both years, three students attained A/B grades; only five took the examination in 2002. Based on their predicted grades from their overall GCSE performance, students have underachieved in the past. The teachers' efforts to raise standards are beginning to bear fruit so that present standards are above average.
216. The department has recently been through a period in which staffing difficulties have seriously affected the quality of teaching. Classes have been taught by a succession of teachers who proved to be unsatisfactory. The lack of stability has prevented the head of department from moving forward as she would have wished. However, staffing is now good. Good teaching and a new course have inspired students to do well. They are now making very good progress.
217. In a Year 13 lesson, students had a good understanding of the concept of dynamic equilibrium and how it could be applied to the equilibrium between dinitrogen tetroxide and nitrogen dioxide. Using a model with counters, they showed that any such system is expected to proceed to equilibrium where the numbers of molecules dissociating and associating are the same. The insight they gained from this exercise helped them to understand the concept of K_c . In Year 12, students carry out quantitative practical work with confidence to obtain accurate results. These students adapt particularly well to the demands of the AS-level course.
218. Teaching, based on well-planned schemes of work, is very good. In the very best lessons, extremely positive relationships give rise to an excellent approach to learning – students and staff work together to get the very best out of the hour. This was particularly well illustrated in a lesson on the properties of Group 7 elements of the periodic table in which a short, fast discussion introduced the investigative part of the lesson. Some students failed to take note of the excellent instructions provided, and found they could not interpret their observations. The teacher skilfully made a really good learning point out of this failure, turning what might have been a weakness into a strength. In another lesson, students obtained really accurate titration results and nearly all had mastered the procedures for calculating the results from a back titration involving the carbonate of an unidentified metal. All this would not have been possible without the teacher's well-judged support.
219. Occasionally, and especially in practical lessons, shortage of time prevents the teacher from consolidating students' learning in a summary at the end. Support for all students is very good, for example when a student found the complex typographical conventions associated with information on equilibria difficult, the teacher most skilfully explained how the correct ones must be used. The high quality discussions, which are a strength of many lessons, should be developed further, so that students learn to challenge their own understanding of chemical ideas and principles, leading to still better learning and evaluation.

220. Both teachers recognise the importance of assessing work and monitoring students' progress; they gather data in lessons and practical classes, as well as when marking homework. Plans to assess students' progress more frequently are still to be fully implemented. This can only improve students' learning still further. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department, appointed two years ago, has made considerable progress by developing excellent schemes of work that cater for all abilities. Working with an experienced teacher who is quite new to teaching A-level chemistry, and a student teacher, has led her to evaluate carefully the department's working style. She has inspired the team, which is supported by excellent laboratory staff, to work together most effectively. Students benefit from this. Resources and the modern laboratories are good, although access to ICT needs development.
221. Since the last inspection the new head of department has counteracted considerable staffing difficulties to raise the quality of learning and improve examination results. Her efforts are still to bear fruit in some areas, but the rapid progress students make, the above average work they produce, and the stimulating learning atmosphere generated, show that progress overall has been very good, and that the department is set to improve further.

Physics

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

Strengths

- The quality and range of teachers' subject knowledge.
- The use of questions and discussion to promote good learning.
- The relationships between staff and students.

Areas for improvement

- The range of strategies used for teaching and learning.
- The use of assessment to improve achievement and raise attainment.
- The use of assessment data in planning the day-to-day curriculum.
- The range and accessibility of ICT resources.

222. Many students who choose this subject attained A*/A grades in GCSE double award science, and in mathematics. It continues to be the most popular sixth-form science subject but, after 30 students took A-level in 2001, the number halved in 2002. Year 12 shows some signs of recovery. Three students took AS-level in 2001 and did not continue. A-level results were below average in 2001, only 20 per cent of students attained A/B grades. They improved slightly in 2002. Compared to their other A-levels and their GCSE results, students underachieve.
223. Year 12 students understand the need to take accurate and lucid notes from which they can learn the detailed subject matter, and quickly adapt to giving higher-level explanations and to using technical vocabulary consistently. Students' excellent numeracy skills mean they cope with calculations very well. They play an active part in class discussions and grasp ideas quickly. They interpret and evaluate experimental results with insight and intelligence. In their homework, they answer most questions well, and can spot when they obtain an answer that is likely to be wrong. They achieve well in lessons and over time, so that by Year 13 they have a good knowledge and understanding of the course. They can explain the production of both line and continuous spectra, and make perceptive observations about various light sources which they have observed in the laboratory using a diffraction grating. Work seen was

better than the 2001 results would suggest, but the challenge remains, to match students' predicted grades so they do not underachieve. Students say that they enjoy their physics lessons and find the subject both demanding and stimulating.

224. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is outstanding, and they use it to make the subject inspiring and interesting. Teachers lead very helpful discussions, which stimulate students to articulate their understanding using the correct terms. They also give excellent demonstrations which both clarify the subject, and help students to learn how experimental work has led to advances in knowledge. In a lesson on waves, the teacher used good demonstrations to model the action of polarising material and showed how polaroid sunglasses can reduce the effects of glare. Teachers challenge students to think carefully, for example when they consider how a beam of electrons is deflected by electric or magnetic fields, or the effect of changes in the experimental arrangement. One lesson during the inspection went wrong because the questions posed by the class led the teacher down a blind alley and the intellectual organisation of the lesson was lost. In this lesson teaching and learning were unsatisfactory overall.
225. Teachers mark work regularly and offer constructive comments which contribute to students' understanding and learning. Formal assessments take place regularly so AS- and A-level students know their targets. Students do not have enough tests, and short-term goals, so they can identify problems as they arise and seek help when they need it. They do not practise writing long answers enough. Teachers do not always manage the hour-long lessons well, because they do not always separate the different concepts being covered clearly enough. They sometimes leave too little time to summarise what has been covered.
226. Overall leadership and management of the department are good. Although the laboratories have been refurbished, with over 20 students in Year 12 space is at a premium. The excellent laboratory staff makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the department. The computers in the laboratories are old and too slow. Access to the school's computer suites is often difficult and rooms need to be booked in advance. Since the last inspection a new head of department has been appointed, new courses have been taken up, and students have a good level of confidence in the subject. These changes, and the inspiration of the head of department, mean that progress since the last inspection has been good.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology was inspected in depth.

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

Strengths

- Excellent student teacher relationships generate a constructive learning ethos.

- The department is well led.
- Students receive valuable individual support.

Areas for improvement

- A lack of resources and systems for pneumatics, hydraulics and electronic testing.
- Links with industry and higher education institutions are not fully developed.
- No focused skills programme for students who did not follow a resistant material course at GCSE.

227. Design and technology resistant materials is offered for AS- and A-level. In 2000 and 2001, A-level results were average, but well below the selective school average, with a low percentage of A/B grades. Results were similar in 2002, though fewer students took the examination and none attained grade A. During the last academic year, staffing shortages meant that students had only about half the number of lessons expected for sixth-form work. They now have an average number of lessons. A twilight course is also offered, in conjunction with other local schools. In the past, students' grades have not matched those predicted by their GCSE results, but present progress in Year 13 is satisfactory. Standards of work seen are in line with what is expected at this stage of the course, overall. Students who did not study resistant materials for GCSE struggle to tackle AS-level work.
228. Students analyse problems well and several come up with innovative and creative ideas when they are designing. A few do not have a sound understanding of construction and materials technology. Designing and producing a garden plant holder with a solar lighting system, Year 13 students clearly understood the design process and their research into the size and lighting system was good. Their understanding of the electronic circuitry required and how to manufacture the adjustable drainage system was less secure. Sixth-formers have been involved in an exciting technology project – successfully designing a CD about the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, to be distributed to other schools.
229. Use of ICT and Internet research is improving standards. The recently acquired computer-assisted drawing and electronics modelling software, and planned purchase of computer-assisted manufacture equipment should enable the control aspects of the course to be met. There will still be a lack of further system and control, and electronic equipment. A few Year 13 students attend extra sessions after school. The head of department teaches all lessons. Teaching is good. It was very good in two lessons seen during the inspection. The teacher knows the students well and has excellent relationships with them. In the most effective lessons, he intervenes at just the right moment to question and extend the students' understanding. A Year 12 group, modelling electronic circuits, investigated a range of components in their circuit designs competently and the teacher then effectively guided them to consider the practical application of such circuits, for example street lighting with automatic on/off systems.
230. Students take full advantage of their free lessons and often work in the lunch hour and after school. This certainly helps to improve their work. They have limited contact with industry and higher education institutions, so these links should be strengthened. The head of department has arranged a visit to see design work at Loughborough University later in the year. Through discussion and helpful marking, students are quite clear about what they must do to meet the examination requirements. The organisation of courses in both years is good.

BUSINESS

Business was inspected in depth and economics was sampled.

231. A-level economics has been offered for a number of years. It competes to an extent with business studies, as students are not allowed to study both. Results have improved steadily, from being below average in 1998 to significantly above in 2001, when they compared reasonably with other subjects. Strengths include high quality teaching and the serious attitudes of the students. The majority contribute to discussions with authority and interest.

Business

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment, in particular in the case of those who find learning less easy than others.
- Development of real understanding of the subject's language, concepts and systems.
- All aspects of teaching, in particular planning, variety of activities and marking.
- Links with local firms.

Areas for improvement

- The complete lack of access to networked computers and data projection facilities.
- Excess of teacher-centred support for learning.
- Achievement of the higher attainers.

232. Having declined since 1998, the number of students taking A-level rose dramatically in 2002. The trend in results has been upwards; they were well above average in 2001, but were lower in 2002. The percentage of A/B grades has varied from year to year, for no apparent reason. School data shows that, overall, students do not attain the grades predicted from their GCSE performance. Inspection evidence suggests that those who find the subject difficult achieve well, whereas some higher attainers do not reach their full potential. AS-level results have been encouraging, with over 30 per cent attaining high grades.

233. Present standards are at least above average. Students have an unusually clear understanding of the concepts and techniques required and most also understand well the subject's technical vocabulary. When asked to write down what investment is, nearly all the Year 13 students concerned could do so – but they gave different definitions, showing they have not learned the language by heart without thinking, which is good practice. Teachers have focused particularly on understanding and vocabulary and sixth-form students now have vocabulary books. Year 13 have learned how to set out their notes in a helpful style.

234. Standards in Year 12 are not as good as those in Year 13. Some Year 12 students do not seem to be deeply interested in the subject, and they do not work as hard as they should. This is not the case in Year 13. Generally, however, students have good attitudes to this subject, whether or not they find it difficult. Their progress, whether they did or did not study the subject for GCSE, is very good, and sometimes rapid.

235. Teaching is always very good; it was excellent in one lesson during the inspection. Teachers always plan their lessons very carefully and include learning objectives, but these are not always specific, or shared helpfully with students. Lessons move fast and involve a remarkable range of relevant and enjoyable activities. One lesson included a

role-play exercise, which successfully brought out different stakeholders' priorities concerning the new London airport proposal for the nearby estuary. Group work is common, and several Year 12 students debated issues with considerable maturity. Other particular strengths of teaching are the homework, which is as well planned as the lessons, and the outstandingly thorough and helpful marking. A significant concern, however, is that teachers hand out every learning resource students could possibly need – the variety of textbooks, reference materials, and worksheets is very good – but this does not encourage students to research and develop as independent learners. Nevertheless, the high quality teaching is a marked improvement since the last inspection.

236. Leadership and management of the subject are very good, despite the fact that both teachers have a number of other teaching and management responsibilities. The co-ordinator has developed the schemes of work well in response to specification changes, and to meet individual student's needs. Effective and helpful links with local firms have been established. The rooms used are not suitable because they are too small. Teachers have difficulty circulating, and students cannot work together in groups easily. Neither room has a single computer in it. This total lack of accessible ICT, which is most unusual in this subject, makes it extremely hard for teachers to prepare students adequately for higher education or related careers. It prevents students from tackling work through spreadsheets, data analysis and graphical presentations. It means that teachers print out information from relevant websites, rather than students exploring the Internet and finding out which ones are best. Such experiences would help to raise standards for all, particularly higher attaining students.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology was inspected in depth.

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

Strengths

- Results in the 2001 AS-level examination were well above average; they reflect good achievement for students from high GCSE levels.
- Students have a good grasp of basic theory and confidently create complex database systems.
- Teaching is very good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and very good relationships with students, who develop excellent attitudes and motivation.

Areas for improvement

- Students' use of local business and industry and work placements for ICT projects is underdeveloped.
- Some lower attaining students do not have enough opportunities to draft written answers in class.

237. A-level is being studied for the first time this year. Six students took the AS-level examination in 2001 and three attained B grades – well above average. Results were as good in 2002 and 11 of the 18 students have continued the course in Year 13. Two students are making good progress following the AVCE course taught off site. Projects they are involved with will benefit the school and local business. Present standards are well above average.

238. Consistently effective teaching, coupled with the recent expansion of computer equipment, contributes to the good progress students make. AS-level projects show

that students use several software applications most competently. Creativity and challenge feature strongly in students' original design specifications, well geared to real users' needs. Students' evaluations are constructive and detailed, and they fully understand why validation procedures are necessary. Early signs are that Year 13 are achieving very well in their projects. These include a fantasy football league and a payroll system for a local petrol station. Some students, working with teachers, are analysing and developing the school's administrative and curriculum systems. Using content analysis and web design creatively, they are helping subject teachers to put new software on the school's Intranet which younger students can then use in lessons.

239. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. In a very good Year 13 lesson, students showed they fully understand how top-down diagrams help them to link theory with their project analyses. Teachers monitor students' project objectives very well so their planning consolidates theory. This is achieved by creating relational databases, for real users, that incorporate relevance, purpose and challenge. Highest attaining and gifted students are well stretched. Teachers make lesson expectations and homework deadlines very clear, and stress methods of independent research. This helps students develop excellent interest and enthusiasm for the subject, both working individually on computers or in pairs. In one lesson students were critically analysing the strengths and weaknesses of different models of the systems life cycle, and applying these principles to their own projects. Teachers constantly stress the value of proper planning and evaluation.
240. One student with special educational needs is achieving very well and supporting his studies effectively by helping younger students in the lunchtime computer clubs, where he ably supervises proper use of the Internet. Students learn rapidly and teachers interject at just the right moments, to check that concepts and processes have been understood before the class moves on. A few lower attaining students need to improve their written theory work by having more time to draft definitions of concepts learned.
241. Information and communication technology is very well led and managed. The excellent team of teachers and a very good technician have very well defined responsibilities and a clear vision for further improvements. This includes local visits and work experience for ICT projects. A computerised system for recording progress and predicting grades is being developed. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was inspected in depth.

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

Strengths

- Above average standards.
- Good teaching; teachers use interesting and varied ways to help students to progress.
- Students' are very positive about the courses and they have very good relationships with their teachers.
- Students' involvement in extra-curricular activities is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of encouragement for students to use ICT, especially for independent research.
- Teachers' monitoring of students' files, which is not regular or thorough enough.

242. Physical education is offered at AS- and A-level and all students in the sixth form participate in one lesson of recreational sport. This compulsory lesson is very well planned and boys can choose from a broad range of activities both on and off site. Thus they continue their interest in specific sports and are encouraged to remain fit and active – very good practice.
243. A-level results were well above average in 2001; 40 per cent of students attained A/B grades. Results have been consistently above average since 1999. In 2002 they were not so impressive, because no students gained A/B grades. There was a direct correlation between these students' attainment at GCSE and their final A-level grades; they did better in physical education than they did in their other subjects. The department analysed results thoroughly and teachers interviewed students to gain an understanding of their views. Both agreed that the unexpected changes in staffing after one term had disrupted and hindered students' learning during the previous academic year.
244. Most students are working at above average levels. In both years, about a quarter of students are attaining very high standards. Year 13 students are in line to achieve better grades than they did in the AS-level examination. They have a very good knowledge of their chosen sports, for example cricket, hockey and rugby, and analyse performances in them rigorously. They understand how different attitudes to sport can lead to success and failure. Higher attaining students use psychological terminology accurately when discussing this topic. Covering the skill acquisition and psychology units, teachers give students many opportunities to discuss and to relate theories to their practical experience. They learn very well doing this.
245. The history of sport unit is not delivered through enough primary evidence and experience. Teachers do not arrange visits which would illustrate and expand on elements of this course. For example, students' limited knowledge about the public school system made it hard for them to track the transition from popular recreation to national recreation. However, teachers willingly share evidence from their own experiences to illustrate a variety of topics, and this contributes to the very good relationships observed in the department.
246. Year 12 students, only a little way into their course, are achieving well. Most are successfully moving on from their GCSE work and showing greater depth of knowledge and understanding about how skills are acquired. A few are very competent basketball players with accurate shooting skills, even under pressure. Students in both years work extremely well together, co-operating on group tasks. Students are extremely positive, keenly interested and enthusiastic about the subject. These attitudes are reflected in the amount of time they spend in the department, helping with clubs and lessons and assisting younger students. This helps their learning and gives them time to understand and apply the theory they study to practical situations. The introduction of a teaching experience programme, for those Year 13 boys who are thinking of making it their career, is a very good initiative which students much appreciate.
247. Teaching is good overall and two very good lessons were observed during the inspection. In these lessons, teachers planned a wide range of activities that motivated and challenged all students, whatever their abilities. Teachers mark tests and essays well and write helpful comments, but they do not keep a careful eye on students' folders and notes, some of which will not be easy to revise from. The teaching base has no computers and the only one in the department is not linked to the Internet. This limits how some topics are taught and has a negative effect on students' learning. The head of department has successfully introduced the examinations since the last inspection

and members of the department have attended professional development courses on them. Schemes of work and monitoring procedures are in place and students are consulted about their progress. Students observe how valuable they find the courses, because they lead to an accreditation linked to their proposed careers, in sports science for example.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not offer subjects in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art was inspected in depth, music, music technology and theatre studies were sampled.

248. Only a few students study music or music technology in Years 12 and 13 (usually taught together), so it is not possible to see patterns in results, though grades C and above are common. The quality of teaching is good overall. Analysing a piece by Haydn, the teacher's excellent knowledge and continuous probing questions made students apply their previous knowledge effectively so their understanding, particularly of fugue structure, was significantly strengthened. In another lesson, the teacher's knowledge of how technology enhances composing and recording was very good. Students completing their compositions on a computer made greater progress than those who were merely looking at specimen composition tasks. Students do not have access to enough sophisticated software, including better audio tracks, to attain high A-level grades.

249. Theatre studies is an increasingly popular A-level option and results have improved since 1999 when it was first taken. In 2001 results were well above average and they were better in 2002. In a Year 13 lesson the teacher skilfully showed students how to direct and stage manage in preparation for their public performance and he, and the students, worked together thoughtfully and productively.

Art

Overall, the quality of provision in art **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- Year 12 have the potential to achieve the standards they should at AS-level.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching is unsatisfactory so students do not achieve well enough and standards are much too low.
- Students' AS-level attainment was unsatisfactory in 2002, even after an appeal and a remark, so they started Year 13 from a low base. These students are demoralised and hard to motivate.
- The lack of a sixth-form workspace, combined with single, 60-minute lessons, means that students work in a 'stop/start' manner which hinders depth in their work.
- The department has no ICT facilities so students do not experience this whole area of creative work.

250. The percentage of A-level A/B grades in 2001 was well below that attained in selective schools. In previous years pass rates were well below national ones (comparing highly unfavourably with selective schools) but they rose in 2001 to about average nationally.

In 2002 A/B grades fell further. The 2002 AS-level grades were re-marked during the inspection and the department's original grades were reinstated. Even so, these results are likely to be below expectations. Students' achievement against their prior attainment at GCSE is unsatisfactory. As a result of their downgraded examination results in the summer, half of the group who took AS-level in 2002 dropped out, leaving a small number in the current A-level group.

251. Students enter Year 12 with an average range of GCSE grades, seldom below C. Very few have not taken GCSE. Current Year 12 students are attaining standards in line with these expectations, for example in their expressive work using ideas based on natural form. Here, the range of their practical drawing and colour work reflects the competences they bring from Year 11. Students are less secure about linking their contextual studies, the study of other artists and styles, with their own. Guidance about this theoretical work has improved since the last inspection, but is still somewhat isolated, and students do not apply what they learn to their own practical studies analytically enough. However Year 12 students achieve satisfactorily in art and have the potential to reach the standards they should at AS-level.
252. The range of attainment in Year 13 is broad. Few students are likely to achieve A/B grades however, and attainment is below average overall. Students' weaknesses in painting and drawing provide many with a weak basis on which to develop the individual style and creative visual explorations expected from higher attaining students.
253. Although Year 12 students' attitudes are positive, many lack the ability to explore ideas independently so as to create visually stimulating research or sketchbook explorations. This is a residual weakness from their GCSE work. The curriculum is relatively narrow, with three-dimensional work often the strongest component. This is limited to modelling with plaster bandage applied to card or wire armatures. This lack of breadth in the media used hinders some, particularly lower attaining, students from achieving better standards.
254. By Year 13, students' work often lacks depth because they have not learned to apply their critical studies well to practical outcomes, and because the practical work itself often lacks the level of skill expected. In a Year 13 lesson on contextual studies about Munch's work, students' oral analysis and critical discussion on other artists' work lacked articulation and conviction. All sixth-formers are disadvantaged because they have no dedicated studio space where they can leave work out, to work on during their free periods. This shortcoming is compounded by the nature of their single, 60-minute lessons, so any large-scale work, particularly three-dimensional work, is impeded by the 'stop/start' nature of this unsatisfactory arrangement. Thus, overall achievement is unsatisfactory.
255. The quality of teaching in the lessons seen was satisfactory. Over time, however, it is unsatisfactory because students do not reach the standards of which they are capable. Those with talent reach the highest grades, but too many do not achieve as well as they could. As at the time of the last inspection report, the range of teaching methods is too narrow, although contextual studies lessons have been provided. Teachers do not include the creative use of ICT in their range of provision, a medium in which less artistically able students, particularly boys, can often find inspiration. This is partly because no computers exist in the department, but also because teachers have not been trained to use them effectively.
256. Lack of motivation in Year 13 is an added barrier to good learning which teachers have not yet overcome. The one-to-one discussions and mini-tutorials, which students have

with teachers in lessons, are not notably successful in improving standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. A-level standards were an issue then and they have not improved. The quality of teaching has declined. Accommodation remains poor in one of the art rooms, providing a very unstimulating environment for A-level work. Teachers assess grades accurately, as demonstrated by the re-mark at AS-level. No health and safety issues exist now because the fume-generating screen-printing has stopped.

HUMANITIES

Geography and history were inspected in depth. Classical civilisation, general studies and government and politics (all offered for AS- and A-level) were sampled. Two students are studying psychology off-site.

257. Teaching was satisfactory in the one classical civilisation lesson observed. Students' enthusiasm is not exploited enough as the teacher's own expert knowledge and enthusiasm tends to dominate in lessons. Questions do not encourage students to expand on their answers. A-level results have been below, or close to, average for the last four years. In 2002, the nine students who took this subject performed relatively well compared to their other subjects.
258. General studies is a very strong sixth-form subject. Teaching is always good. A-level results are always well above average and they were even better in 2002; AS-level results are equally high. In a Year 12 lesson on stereotyping, the teacher established the perfect atmosphere for students to debate eloquently. In such an ambience, a Sikh student offered perceptive comments on his own ethnic background. After considering an imaginative challenge – how well an 85-year-old would cope with school life – students laughed at the stereotypes they had applied. The teacher most skilfully deflated any biased opinions whilst developing students' thinking skills. In another lesson on social mobility, where a refugee student contributed thoughtfully, the teacher addressed moral issues sensitively as well as exemplifying examination techniques. Subject matter for Year 13 coursework is thought provoking and relevant to topical issues. The teacher has prepared interesting newspaper extracts to get students thinking and to stimulate both highly academic and less confident students.
259. About 20 students choose government and politics each year. A- and AS-level results are consistently above, and often well above, average. In 2002 almost 50 per cent attained A/B grades, the rest grade C. Teaching is very good and students are well read, fully aware of current events and use correct political terms confidently. Their assured debating style is down to the superb role model offered by the teacher.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Very effective learning because teachers ask challenging questions and inspire students to acquire detailed understanding of new knowledge.
- Very high standards in independent investigations because teachers set high expectations and students put in great effort.
- Students use and develop their ICT skills very effectively because teachers have very good ICT skills that they demonstrate creatively.
- Students work very hard and get on very well with each other and with their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The slightly lower than selective school percentage of A-level A/B grades compared to selective school results.

260. Year 12 students performed very well in the AS-level examination in 2001; half attained high grades. This percentage went up in 2002. Almost all students continue the subject in Year 13. A-level results in 2001 were above average with 40 per cent of students attaining A/B grades. These results were close to the selective school average but below in A/B grades. Results were slightly better in 2002. Relative to the other subjects they take, students do well. Geography is a popular subject. Present standards are well above average.
261. Students attain very high standards in their independent geographical investigations. They apply skills taught in school, and at a residential field study centre. Using scientific methods they successfully test hypotheses by collecting, analysing and interpreting first-hand data. Students achieve well by the end of Year 13. They write succinct notes which include annotated sketch-maps and photographs, diagrams, graphs and tables. They can explain and interpret all of these. They have very good ICT skills and apply them to demonstrate their thorough understanding of physical processes, and patterns in human geography. For example, by using population projection software, they made astute observations on the dynamics of population change and age structures. Students absorb facts quickly and recall subject terms accurately. They show excellent attitudes towards learning together and listen carefully to each other and their teachers. They achieve well overall.
262. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge which they use most effectively to advance students' understanding of new ideas, terms and skills. Lessons move fast and time is not wasted. Students concentrate hard and are alert to the teachers' sharp questions. Teachers plan their lessons very thoroughly, and make excellent use of ICT, overhead projection, and video extracts to link learning about geography with the real world. Year 13 students collect documents from the teacher by using the school Intranet. They use the Internet to collect data, images and text, for example to study the characteristics of a particular ecosystem. This increases the pace of lessons because students can refer to the most up-to-date resources. They highlight key words and phrases as they skim-read documents on screen. To record their understanding they cut-and-paste text and images to their notes. All this is very good practice.
263. Occasionally, higher attaining students do not have extension work provided when they finish work quickly. Often they are quick to answer questions, and they do so more than others do if the teacher does not balance students' contributions skilfully. Teachers mark work carefully and give students helpful guidance on how they can improve. They assess work very well, to identify trends, evaluate progress, set targets, consider how the course content and teaching methods could be improved, and to spot underachievement. All this is very impressive. The head of department gives very clear direction to sixth-form work. The courses and field trips are managed very effectively.

History

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very secure subject knowledge; teaching is good and in half the lessons seen it was very good.
- Relationships are very good and students find the subject enjoyable, valuable and challenging.

- Students' achievement is tracked very well and the quality of essay marking is very high.
- The evaluation of departmental performance is very secure and planning for future development is detailed.

Areas for improvement

- Although results have improved considerably over time, the percentage of A/B grades has decreased recently.
- Teachers should consider how to challenge students with lower levels of attainment more realistically.

264. A-level results have improved considerably since the last inspection; they were above average in 2001. Half the students attained A/B grades. Because of less-than-expected performance in two papers, results were not so good in 2002; the percentage of students attaining A/B grades almost halved. However, 2002 standards in AS-level were encouraging, amongst the best in the school. Following detailed and sophisticated evaluation of examination results to establish what changes were needed, notably alterations to the subject content, the above average standards seen during the inspection were higher than the 2002 A-level results.
265. Students in Year 12 achieve well and have already begun to handle complex material, for example on culture during the Weimar Republic. Furthermore, because teachers always challenge them, Year 13 students make quite perceptive comments, for example on early Stuart parliamentary literature and they recall the major points of dispute between parliament and the monarchy in the late sixteenth century. There are high levels of historical debate, impressive use of subject terminology and the quality of note making is often outstanding. Year 13 students also make good progress.
266. Students benefit from both collaborative ways of learning and from the knowledgeable and clear expositions teachers provide. Most students speak highly of their teachers, enjoy the cut and thrust of historical debate and respond positively to the very challenging questions teachers pose. Where this is not the case, on rare occasions, a minority of students is passive, finding the challenge too sophisticated. Students enjoy the contrast between Tudor and modern international history and say that they are given more responsibility for their learning and for background reading than in GCSE years.
267. Teachers use historical terminology naturally and extensively and thus students do too: 'Mussolini was a dynamic alternative to communism and his rhetoric was impressive' is just one example of a high level comment, made during a very good lesson on the nature of inter-war Italian fascism. Teaching is good overall and was very good in half the lessons seen. It is characterised by very good planning, very secure subject knowledge and very warm relationships between teachers and students. As a result, students enjoy the subject matter, work hard and act willingly on the extensive feedback they receive, both in class and after the completion of assignments.
268. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and teachers work extremely well together. Improvement plans are well founded and the department has modified the syllabus content after a detailed analysis of examination performance in 2002. Students can attend a range of study conferences to support their learning. Teachers produce notes and assignments of very high quality and prepare their students very well for the rigours of sixth-form study and the requirements for university entrance. Improvements since the last inspection have been good, particularly in the quality of teaching and standards. The department has real capacity for future success.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were inspected in detail, German was sampled.

269. German attracts slightly more students than French. A-level results were average in 2001, after two years of well above average results. 2002 results were similar to 2001 but fewer students were entered. Lessons are delivered entirely in German and students debate topics about current issues with lively interest. Many imaginative resources are used, most of which the teachers prepare. Teaching was very good in the Year 13 lesson seen.

English

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

Strengths

- Students' respond confidently and enthusiastically and have good relationships with their teachers.
- The varied and engaging teaching strategies.

Areas for improvement

- The percentage of A/B grades.
- The limited arrangements for sharing of good practice in teaching.
- The need to collate ideas for improvement in a clear development plan.

270. A-level results were above average between 1998 and 2000, but they dropped to average in 2001 and were similar in 2002. The percentage of A/B grades has declined in recent years, to below average. AS-level results were better in 2002 than in 2001. In comparison with results in other subjects, performance in English A-level is less strong than that at GCSE level. The subject is a popular choice for AS-level and a good proportion of students continues to A-level. Present standards are well above average, in lessons and over time. They are often very high in lessons. A reason for the apparent discrepancy between work seen and previous results is that the department has recently analysed the pattern of results in the different examination papers. Teachers are now focusing on analysis of unseen passages, as this emerged as previous students' weakest paper. Another factor last year was a period of absence of a key member of the department. Three of the five full-time members of the department left at the end of the previous academic year, and the present head of department started in September 2002.

271. Students make very good progress. They are articulate in discussions and show very good knowledge and understanding of texts. They respond enthusiastically to the variety of learning styles teachers set up. They feel free to risk making speculative observations and keenly add further points, even when the discussion is about to move on. Teachers encourage students to use formal terms of literary criticism from an early stage, and students use their good understanding of these terms in essays. Their writing acquires crispness of expression and depth of insight as the course goes on.

272. These features of students' learning reflect creditably on teaching, which the previous report criticised for having a narrow range of approaches. Teaching is now very good. Teachers instigate discussion based on preparation through homework, or assigning groups within the class to preliminary consideration of different aspects of a passage. As well as encouraging the use of critical terms, teachers continuously draw attention to the conventions of the text, for instance insisting that students not only comprehend the speeches but also interpret plays from the director's point of view. Teachers enrich students' experience of texts by showing extracts from cinema interpretations or

referring to thematically-related material from non-literary sources, or published criticism that takes, for example, a feminist point of view. This engaging approach is backed up by thorough attention to structuring essays clearly and correct usage of literary terminology. Whilst teachers have addressed previous weaknesses, just occasionally, they do not allow enough time for sustained reading of texts for students to appreciate the full effect, or they ask questions that interrupt the reader's appreciation.

273. Teachers give clear guidance on structuring essays effectively. On the whole, teachers prepare students well for independent study, but do not provide enough guidance on how to structure notes for quick reference and revision. Teaching is monitored within the department, but arrangements for dissemination of good practice are not yet well established. Whilst students do encounter some profound spiritual ideas, as in a discussion exploring how the humanity of 'the proles' in Orwell's '1984' lies in their capacity for empathy, they do not readily recognise the significance, over and above textual study, that such ideas may have for their own lives. Despite good-humoured relationships with students, teachers rarely include specific reference to the wider significance of the ideas they are dealing with.
274. Leadership is satisfactory and a collegiate team spirit is evident. Management is good and organisation is effective. Priorities have been clearly identified but an improvement plan has not been drawn up, with appropriate deadlines, allocation of responsibilities and measurable progress indicators.

French

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Teachers' role models in French.
- Use of authentic materials in teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in speaking.
- Lack of opportunity for students to visit France.

275. A-level results in 2001 were just above average, although the percentage of students attaining A/B grades was below average. Higher results were attained in 2000 and 2002. Students make satisfactory progress from the standards they achieved at GCSE, although the number of students taking French is disappointingly low.
276. Present standards of work are average. Students are quick to understand spoken and written information about topics. In a Year 12 lesson students showed a good appreciation of symbolism and Year 13 students clearly understood the teacher's opening comments on the dangers of smoking. Students use idioms well and the subjunctive correctly in their writing, but this contrasts with elementary errors of agreement and verb forms. In Year 13, students' writing lacks the depth of style expected at this stage, because too often it reflects that they have thought in English. This is the long-term impact of an over-English dominated teaching style in earlier years. Encouragingly, teaching observed during the inspection was conducted entirely in French. Teaching is good: it is well planned, offers challenge through the use of authentic materials and is based on good relationships. With small numbers in both years, teachers have to work hard to generate group discussions in French – students prefer to work on their own. Particularly in Year 13, students display high levels of

concentration and commitment to learning and their enthusiasm for speaking is increasing.

277. Speaking standards are not as good as students' reading and writing. Year 13 students are hesitant, building too much on English thinking. They make elementary errors and do not respond spontaneously, which is expected at this level. Year 12 students, with one notable exception, lack confidence speaking, and make limited contributions in class. Although the school has a wide range of visits in earlier years, there is no opportunity specifically for the sixth form. Occasionally, however, students do accompany younger students on visits.
278. Within the structure of the modern foreign languages department, leadership and management of French are satisfactory. Schemes of work are in place and assessment procedures are good. Resources contribute well to teaching and learning and the teachers provide excellent role models of fluent French speaking. The uninspiring accommodation is a poor environment for students and teachers to work in.