

INSPECTION REPORT

**HOMEWOOD SCHOOL AND SIXTH FORM
CENTRE**

Tenterden

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118880

Principal: Mr D G Adam

Reporting inspector: Mrs C Gillies
20597

Dates of inspection: 17th - 21st February 2003

Inspection number: 249556

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of students: 11 to 18 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Ashford Road
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Kent

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs J Kirk

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

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| 20597 | Ms C Gillies | Registered inspector | Educational inclusion, including race equality | 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? |
| 12191 | Mr C Moxley | Team inspector | English | |
| 4351 | Ms J Strickland | Team inspector | English (sixth form) Media (sixth form) | |
| 10905 | Dr A Brewerton | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| 12607 | Mr S Relf | Team inspector | Mathematics (sixth form) | |
| 5241 | Dr C Millband | Team inspector | Science | |
| 2866 | Mr R Battey | Team inspector | Art and design | |
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| 20247 | Mr R Parry | Team inspector | Geography Special educational needs | |
| 25744 | Mr T Osgerby | Team inspector | History | |
| 10060 | Mr D Gutmann | Team inspector | Information and communication technology | |
| 10385 | Mr K Hopkins | Team inspector | Information and communication technology (sixth form) | |
| 4373 | Mr P McKenzie | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages | |

| | | | | |
|-------|--------------|----------------|---|---|
| 15208 | Mr A Briggs | Team inspector | Music | |
| 18888 | Ms J Boulton | Team inspector | Physical education Dance (sixth form) | |
| 14446 | Mr B Simmons | Team inspector | Physical education (sixth form) | |
| 12179 | Mr L Moscrop | Team inspector | Religious education English as an additional language | |
| 30825 | Mr K Hayton | Team inspector | Business (sixth form) | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students? |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Homewood is a much larger than average, foundation comprehensive school in Tenterden, Kent, with almost 1900 students aged 11 to 18, of whom 196 are in the sixth form. Its admission number went up a few years ago and by 2005 it will have 2300 students. Although the school is in a local education authority which has grammar schools, in 2002, for the first time, Year 7 pupils entered the school with average comprehensive school standards of attainment. The school is oversubscribed and increasingly popular. Over 98 per cent of the students are white and only seven speak English as an additional language, the majority fluently. Just over five per cent of students take free school meals, below average. The percentage of students on the school's register of special educational needs is also below average, and the percentage of students with statements is just below average. The school is structured as five mini-schools, with a six-day timetable and five-term year. In September 2002 the school became a specialist (performing) arts college, focusing on dance, drama and music. It has also achieved Investor in People, Sports England Sportsmark, Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark, School Staff Achievement Award, membership of the Technology Colleges Trust, a business education partnership award and a work experience quality award.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This innovative and forward thinking school effectively gives a large number of students a good education, which they enjoy and appreciate. Leadership is very good and the management of this complex organisation is very efficient. Teaching is good overall and during the inspection many very good and excellent lessons were seen. GCSE results are above average overall and have improved since the last inspection. Taking all the above factors, and the above average income per student into account, the school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Students make at least good progress in Years 7 to 11. In 2002 they attained an average points score in Year 9 national tests and an above average percentage attained five GCSE grades A*-C. The average total GCSE points score was well above average compared to similar schools.
- Standards in all years are above average in English, art and design, dance, media studies, German and information and communication technology (ICT). Standards are well above average in Years 10 and 11 in child development and performing arts.
- Teaching is good in the majority of lessons and it was very good or excellent in an impressive number of lessons seen during the inspection.
- Leadership is very good. The principal has successfully introduced several innovative arrangements and the management and organisation of this complex school are most efficient.
- Extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, dance and drama, and links with the community are very good.

What could be improved

- In 2002 less than one third of students attained GCSE grades A*-C in all three core subjects. Results were well above average in English but well below average in mathematics and science.
- The contribution of music to the performing arts is relatively weak.
- Teaching personal, social and health education (PSHE) in form time in Years 7 to 9 is an unsatisfactory arrangement. Sex and relationships, and drugs education are not included in these years.
- A low percentage of students study a modern foreign language for GCSE.
- Statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 to 13 are not met.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION (May 1997)

The last report highlighted seven important issues, most of which have been dealt with well:

(1) Teaching is now observed and monitored systematically and the school has successfully established self-review and evaluation; (2) Boys' achievement has been raised and the gap between boys' and girls' GCSE performance reduced; (3) The number of one-day exclusions has declined, but only since September 2002 when the reintegration centre opened; (4) The format of reports to parents has changed twice in recent years and parents now receive termly reports with grades for standards, targets and how

well students are working; (5) The leadership structure has improved with the introduction of mini-schools; (6) PSHE has been allocated more time in Years 10 and 11 and it is taught well. Arrangements in Years 7 to 9 continue to be an issue; (7) ICT is now taught to all students in all years – there have been considerable developments in this area. Taking all the above into account, combined with the steadily improving standards, progress since the last inspection has been good and inspection evidence suggests this is set to continue. Statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 to 13 are still not met.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by Year 11 and Year 13 students based on average point scores in GCSE and A/AS/AVCE examinations.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2002 |
| GCSE examinations | A | B | B | A |
| A/AS-levels/AVCE | D | D | n/a | |

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

Year 9: Based on the overall points score, standards were average in 2002. Results have gone up in line with the national trend and have improved significantly since 2000 in science and mathematics. The percentage of students reaching the expected level, Level 5, was well above average in science, above average in English and average in mathematics. Standards of work seen were above average in English, science, art and design, German and ICT and average in other subjects. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good in art and design and in English, and good in mathematics, science, geography, history and ICT.

GCSEs: Since 2000, between two and three times the predicted number of students have attained five GCSE grades A*-C. The rise in average points scores has been steady since 1998, above the national trend. English results were well above, mathematics below and science results well below average in 2002. Girls did significantly better than boys in art and design, design and technology, French, German and English. Standards of work seen were well above average in child development and performing arts, above average in English, art and design, dance, German, ICT and media studies and below average in French, geography, music and religious education – for those students not taking GCSE. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good in English, art and design and dance and unsatisfactory in music, design and technology and religious education – for those students not taking GCSE.

Sixth form: In 2002 over half the A-level and AVCE passes were grades A-C, the best results the school has attained. Students passed in 96 per cent of the examinations sat in Year 13. Over a third of students achieved higher grades than those predicted by their GCSE performance. In 2001, A-level media, physics and dance results were above the national average, English and physical education were average and results in other subjects were below or well below average. In 2001, girls attained a higher average A/AS/AVCE points score than boys.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Many students enjoy school, make the most of their lessons and join in extra-curricular activities enthusiastically. They like the six-day timetable and five-term year but some have mixed feelings about the mini-school structure. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Considering the size of the site and the number of students, most move round the school at lunchtime, breaks and lessons sensibly and calmly. They concentrate and behave well in the vast majority of lessons and listen respectfully to each other's contributions. The number of fixed-term exclusions was high in 2001 to 2002 but it has dropped since the reintegration centre opened in September 2002. |
| Personal development and | Most students generally get on well together and have good relationships with teachers. Several Year 7 students appreciate being supported by Year 10 mentors |

| | |
|---------------|--|
| relationships | and some prefect/mini-school links are effective. Elements of the PSHE/citizenship, and the thoughts for the week programmes support students' personal development very well. |
| Attendance | Average in all years. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of students in: | Years 7 - 9 | Years 10 - 11 | Years 12 - 13 |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Good | Good | Good |

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

In Years 7 to 11, teaching was good or better in two-thirds of lessons seen and at least very good in well over a quarter. The latter included 15 lessons when teaching was excellent. Overall teaching was most effective in Years 9 and 11 and the quality of students' learning closely mirrored this. Teachers' very good subject knowledge contributes to the success of many lessons. Students learn well when they are active or involved in practical work. Numeracy and literacy skills are taught well, especially in science and business studies. Generally, teachers demand high standards of behaviour and students respond well, although a tiny minority of students occasionally spoils learning for others. The quality of teaching in PSHE lessons is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching was good or better in close to three-quarters of sixth-form lessons and very good in a third, including eight excellent lessons. Teaching is excellent in dance and very good in art and design and media. Overall teaching was most effective in Year 12 where almost half was at least very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | This is good overall with particular strengths in the sixth form where students can choose from a wide range of AS-/A-level and vocational courses. Strengths in the main school include the performing arts options and the very good extra-curricular activities. Areas for development include modern foreign languages, religious education in Years 10 to 13 and the arrangements for PSHE in Years 7 to 9. The school's very good links within the local community benefit students' education. |
| Provision for students with special educational needs | Teachers and learning support assistants work consistently well together to give effective support for these students, who learn well. Several students benefit from valuable one-to-one sessions. |
| Provision for students with English as an additional language | The majority of the students who do not speak English as their mother tongue have no problems coping with the curriculum. For the very few who need support the school provides intensive and effective teaching, and external teaching support is brought in when necessary. |
| Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | The school encourages students to take responsibility for their actions and makes clear the key social standards expected. Breaches of the moral and social codes are dealt with firmly. Students' moral awareness and social skills are developed well. Apart from ethical and religious education lessons, students' spiritual development, which is satisfactory, does not have a high profile. Provision for students' personal development is good overall although appreciation of non-European cultures is not fostered in enough depth. |
| How well the school cares for its students | Mini-school vice-principals and tutors know their students well and a range of effective systems is applied for students who need extra support. The school development centre, opened in September 2002, successfully helps students who find school life difficult to cope with work and to develop their social skills. The school deals with the relatively rare incidents of bullying well. Senior managers and teachers try hard to reduce any tension related to minor persistent incidents, but they do not give equal attention to students' perceptions, correct or otherwise, that such tension continues. |

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff | The principal's very good, confident and determined leadership has steered the school forward successfully. Management of this complex school is very efficient. At the same time as successfully introducing significant changes such as the five-term year, and achieving specialist arts college status, the principal and the strong senior management team continue to plan for innovative developments. Leadership and management by principal teachers are good overall. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | With considerable experience and expertise, the governing body is fully aware of the school's strong features and involved in discussion about the key areas for development. Governors are sensitive to the benefits and constraints generated by the school's increasing numbers and most supportive of the principal's future plans. They do not meet the statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship or religious education in Years 11 to 13 but fulfil all other duties well and enthusiastically. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The principal has firmly established a very good culture of accountability, performance analysis and regular monitoring of teaching. Of equal importance and value is the school's response to the analysis of its critical self-evaluation, which has certainly contributed to the improving standards. |
| The strategic use of resources | The considerable sums the school receives from a wide range of sources are all used correctly and effectively, for example for valuable teaching and staff training and the development of vocational courses or performing arts work in the community. Very efficient financial management and planning are well linked to the school's development plans. The school applies the principles of best value very well and gives good value for money. |

Well qualified teachers are supported by effective learning support, technical and clerical assistants who contribute much to the school's success. Significant problems recruiting teachers in the previous academic year have been reduced. Overall the accommodation is good although a few areas need considerable refurbishment.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Over one third of parents returned the questionnaire, many of whom wrote comments as well, and 51 attended the parents' evening before the inspection.

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <p>At least 85 per cent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> believe the teaching is good feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems state that their children like school and are making good progress because they are expected to work hard and achieve their best confirm there is an interesting range of activities outside lessons | <p>A small minority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have concerns about homework – mostly that there is too little and it is not regular enough (particularly in Years 10 and 11) feel the school does not work closely enough with them do not think behaviour in the school is good |

The inspection confirmed all the parents' positive views. Most homework is set regularly, sometimes for the next day and sometimes for several days later. Students do occasionally complete homework in the lunch hour. Although unsatisfactory behaviour was seen in a few lessons, mostly in Year 11, the inspection team was impressed with the overall good standard seen in lessons and around the school during breaks and lunchtime. There was no evidence that the school does not work closely with parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Homewood's larger than average sixth form, with 196 students, is growing and becoming increasingly popular with its own Year 11 students and those from other schools. About half of Year 11 students stay on into the sixth form. About three per cent of students take free school meals, below average. Three students have statements of special educational needs. For two-year courses most students admitted into the sixth form have at least five GCSE C grades and, for a few subjects, a B grade is required. Lower grades are accepted for one-year courses. About one in five students, an average percentage, leave at the end of Year 12, the majority for employment and the remainder into training courses. An increasing percentage of Year 13 students, 70 per cent in 2002, proceed to higher education. The school offers a wide range of AS-/A-level and vocational courses and combinations of subjects, and responds flexibly to students' interests.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful because it offers courses which match students' interests and aspirations. Students, who have a wide range of attainment, achieve well overall on both the one- and two-year courses. Teaching is good. Leadership and management are both very good. The sixth form is cost effective.

Strengths

- In 2002 over half the A-level and AVCE passes were grades A-C, the best results the school has attained. 2002 results in English literature, dance, geography, art and design, and ICT showed these students had achieved well; over a third of students achieved higher grades than those predicted by their GCSE performance.
- Well above average standards seen in art and design, and dance.
- Teaching is good overall with examples of very good and excellent practice seen.
- The very good range and flexibility of the AS-/A-level and vocational courses on offer help students to move on to higher education, training or work with relevant, useful qualifications.
- The organisation, management and leadership of the sixth form are very good. Students receive helpful advice and guidance to weigh up their career options.

What could be improved

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

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 | Satisfactory. Average standards. Good achievement. Good teaching which draws out students' thinking and challenges them well but does not incorporate enough ICT. Low numbers in Year 13. |
| Business studies | Good. Average standards. Satisfactory achievement. Good teaching. ICT is used effectively in this subject. Good systems for students to assess their own work. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Information and communication technology | Good. Above average standards. Good achievement. Good teaching. A popular subject offering a range of vocational qualifications. Well-designed spacious accommodation. |
| Physical education | Good. Average standards. Good achievement. Good teaching which integrates theory and practical work well. Students do not carry out enough research or use ICT enough. |
| Art and design | Excellent. Well above average standards. Exceptional achievement. Very good and often outstanding teaching, delivered in superb art and design rooms. |
| Dance | Excellent: Well above average standards. Very good achievement. Excellent, exciting teaching. Students respond very positively to the teachers' high expectations and technical expertise. |
| Media studies | Very good. Above average standards. Good achievement. Very good teaching. Excellent accommodation and equipment. A popular subject, especially in Year 12. |
| History | Good. Average standards. Satisfactory achievement. Good teaching, which now focuses well on examination techniques. Little use of ICT. |
| English | Good. Average standards. Good achievement. Good teaching overall with some which is outstanding. Very popular subject. |

All other sixth-form subjects were sampled. Few students study chemistry and physics, French, German, design and technology, ethical and religious studies. Very good teaching was seen in law, psychology, performing arts and photography.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| How well students are guided and supported | Students receive helpful advice and guidance to weigh up their career options. Form tutors know their students very well and keep a careful and supportive eye on their progress. Teachers encourage students, whatever their academic level, to attain their very best and spend time and energy helping them to cope with the pressures of examinations. Students are well supported overall. |
| Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form | Both these areas are very good and the day-to-day organisation is efficient. The sixth-form vice-principal and principal teacher provide very good leadership to the team of tutors and keep a meticulous eye on what is happening. They convey genuine care for students' academic and pastoral development. They are strongly supported by the principal and governors who have resolved to see the sixth form grow and want it to be a major contributor to post-16 education in the community. |

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"> • The choice of courses matches what they want to do and they were given helpful information and advice about what to do in the sixth form. They were helped to settle well into the sixth form. • Teachers help them if they find the work difficult. • They are encouraged to study and research topics independently. • The majority enjoy being in the sixth form. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervised study periods which some, but not all of them, have to attend. They do not find them helpful. • How the school listens and responds to their views and does not always treat them as responsible young adults. • Keeping them informed about how there are progressing towards the qualifications they hope to achieve. • Advice about careers on what to do when they leave school. |

The inspection confirmed the students' positive views. Some students do attend more supervised study periods than others, but these are open to negotiation. Students are given timely assessments and potential grades, but interim support and guidance is more variable. Year 13 students' perception about careers advice may have been coloured by the failure of the UCAS electronic system last autumn, because the careers advice they receive is good and well planned. At present only two sixth form students sit on the school council, which may contribute to their views on how the school listens and responds to their views.

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

- Overall standards of work seen were average in all years.
 - Students achieve well and make good progress overall.
1. The percentage of students scoring below average in the test taken when students apply for the school, has decreased steadily from 1998, when it was two-thirds of entrants, to 2002, when it was below half. Thus, standards on entry have gone from being below average for the present Years 8 to 11, to just in line with average for Year 7. The average attainment level of students placed in the top sets has correspondingly increased slightly. These statistics reflect parents' growing confidence in the school as its results improve each year. Each year more parents select Homewood as their first choice.
 2. In September 2002 the number of boys who entered Year 7 significantly exceeded girls for the first time and there were more higher attaining boys than girls. The school sets more than just the legally required targets for English, mathematics and science, as all subject departments prepare their own, in Year 8 for the end of Year 9 and in Year 10 for GCSE performance. Senior managers review these targets against the standards on entry, Year 9 national test results and internal test results and, occasionally, the principal challenges a department to aim higher. The school just exceeded its realistic Year 9 and GCSE targets in 2002.
 3. Data show that the school convincingly improves students' performance against that predicted by their performance in the entry tests, or Year 9 national tests, showing that they make at least good progress. Since 2000, between two and three times the predicted number of students have attained five GCSE grades A*-C. Dividing the ability range on entry into four groups reveals how the school has improved the GCSE performance of the second tier – all these students have attained five grades A*-C since 2000 whereas less than 80 per cent did in 1998. The percentage of the third tier students attaining five GCSE grades A*-G has also improved. The school has therefore successfully raised standards for all students, whatever their academic ability.
 4. By the end of Year 9 in 2002, the percentage of students reaching the expected level, Level 5, in national tests was well above average in science, above average in English and average in mathematics. In English an above average percentage of students reached Level 6. Science and mathematics results have improved significantly since 2000 and, after a slight dip in 2001, English results were the best achieved by the school. The average points score for these three subjects was in line with that nationally. These results have gone up in line with the national trend. Achievement between 1999 and 2002, related to students' Year 6 test results, was above average overall and in comparison with similar schools. Averaging results over 2000 to 2002, girls have attained higher levels than boys in English and slightly lower levels in mathematics and science, matching the national picture.
 5. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection were above average in English, science, art and design, German and ICT, and average in other subjects. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good in art and design and English, good in mathematics, science, geography, history and ICT and satisfactory in other subjects.
 6. In three of the last four years (1999 to 2002), the percentage of students attaining five GCSE grades A*-C has been well above average, as it was in 2002. The percentage of

students attaining five GCSE grades A*-G was well above average in 2001 and 2002. Converting pass grades to points scores reveals a steady rise since 1998, above the national trend. The total points score attained by students has been consistently above average for several years and well above that for similar schools. If the points scores for each student's best eight GCSE grades only are examined, then results match the average for all and for similar schools. Statistics show that pupils made excellent progress between 2000 and 2002.

7. The impressive statistics above do not reveal that in 2002 just under 80 per cent of students, girls particularly, did not attain A*-C grades in all three core subjects – English, mathematics and science. As a well above average 72 per cent of students attained A*-C grades in English language, it is clearly the mathematics and science results which adversely affect the overall picture. A*-C grades were considerably better in 2001 in both the latter subjects. During the last academic year the school had more problems filling teacher vacancies than ever before and this was clearly linked to well below average results in science and physical education and below average results in mathematics, drama and electronics. Other significantly below average subjects were French, music and religious education, for those students not taking GCSE. Above average results were attained in art and design, media, dance, English language and literature, German, child development and statistics.
8. Girls did significantly better than boys in art and design, design and technology, French, German and English. Interestingly, boys performed well at the higher grades A*-B in English, mathematics and science, but a number with lower grades underachieved. The gap between girls' and boys' performance in English was reduced in 2002 after a particular focus on this.
9. In vocational courses students were more successful at the intermediate level than foundation. Poor attendance and incomplete coursework contributed to the latter. All students passed intermediate leisure and tourism GNVQ and over 75 per cent of students passed GNVQ intermediate ICT and business, the latter with several merits.
10. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection were:
 - well above average in child development and performing arts;
 - above average in English, art and design, dance, German, ICT and media studies;
 - average in mathematics, science, business studies, citizenship, design and technology, drama, leisure and tourism, physical education and history;
 - below average in French, geography, music and religious education – for those students not taking GCSE.
11. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is:
 - very good in English, art and design and dance;
 - good in mathematics, child development, citizenship, drama, geography, German, history, ICT, media studies and performing arts;
 - satisfactory in science, French and physical education;
 - unsatisfactory in music, design and technology and religious education – for those students not taking GCSE.
12. In **English**, higher attainers' work is of a very high standard. Practically all students speak articulately and confidently and they listen well. Many students speculate and analyse thoughtfully, both orally and in writing. By Year 11 most students are discriminating readers and they write extensively in many different styles, with careful redrafting. Students study poetry very well and analyse Shakespeare's plays sensibly. **Literacy** is taught well in other subjects, for example, glossaries of technical terms are used in mathematics, design and technology and geography and specialist vocabulary is included regularly in physical education and history, but less so in music.

13. In **mathematics**, higher-attaining students in Year 9 confidently solve simultaneous equations and in Year 11 quadratic equations and lower-attaining students solve linear equations in Year 9 and simultaneous equations in Year 11. Students' **numeracy** skills are good overall. Most students use mental arithmetic skilfully and with a good degree of accuracy. They use calculators competently. In all years, the lowest-attaining students' poor numeracy skills hamper their work in mathematics; they have some difficulty with basic number, times tables and percentages. Teachers encourage students to apply their numeracy skills in most other subjects, for example measuring and drawing and interpreting graphs.
14. Most students gain good basic skills in discrete **ICT** lessons by the end of Year 9. Students apply ICT skills well in several subjects, such as music and mathematics, but not in all subjects. Most students develop and explore sources of information well by research on the Internet, in class or on their home computers, and communicate information well. Their skills in modelling, using spreadsheets, and control, for example producing flowcharts from a simulation, are good and above average. Year 10 students on the recently introduced vocational GCSE course use the Internet effectively to explore the web and import photographs.
15. Students with **special educational needs** make good progress in English because the National Literacy Strategy progress units are taught well and the phonemic approach, using a commercially produced programme, works well. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced overall, but the use of 'catch-up' materials for students with below average attainment on entry has not been developed fully. **Gifted and talented** students make as good progress as others. Higher attainers are mainly being taught in top sets, the latter being identified by teachers, particularly in music and physical education.
16. In several subjects, particularly art and design, science and geography, work is well matched to students' learning or behavioural needs, so students with special educational needs make as good progress as others. For example, a Year 7 class, of whom two-thirds have special educational needs, visited the school farm in a geography lesson. They concentrated well on the farmer's talk and, through practical activities, understood why the feed was changed as calves gained weight. In a Year 11 art and design lesson, students with special educational needs developed print-making techniques as well as the rest of the class because they were well supported by the teacher and a learning support assistant. In music and modern foreign languages work is rarely adapted for these students so their progress is only satisfactory.
17. The school achieves much more than just academic success and the following suggest the range of achievements, from Year 7 to Year 13, in recent months:
 - over 60 Year 8 students had their poems printed in a national poetry competition;
 - best Young Farmer Handler at the Ashford Fatstock Show;
 - runners-up in the National Schools' Show-jumping Championships at Hickstead;
 - four Year 13 business studies students were runners-up for the quality of their presentation and portfolio at the UK Business Final Challenge;
 - highly commended delegate award attained during Model United Nations events;
 - two students invited to the European leg of the World Mathematics Challenge; and
 - sporting success at district level in athletics, football and netball.

Sixth form

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

18. In 2002 over half the A-level and AVCE passes were grades A-C, the best results the school has attained. Students passed in 96 per cent of the examinations taken in Year 13. In 2001, A-level media, physics and dance results were above average, English and physical education were in line and the others were below or well below average. The percentage of A/B grades was slightly down on 2001 results in 2002, but the overall pattern of results was the same. The average points score for AS- and A-levels in 2002 was well below average for boys and overall, but average for girls.
19. With a small number of students studying some subjects, the first year of the new A-level curriculum, and changes to how A-level, AS-level and AVCE points are calculated, it is not possible to see trends in particular subjects. However, over 60 per cent of students taking the following A-level subjects in 2002 attained grades A-C: art and design; media studies; dance; German; religious education; chemistry; English literature; drama and AVCE theatre studies.
20. Over a third of students achieved higher grades than those predicted by their GCSE performance. 2002 results in A-level English literature, dance, geography, art and design and AVCE ICT showed these students had made considerable progress over the two years. Progress was significantly less than expected in mathematics, law and history. Despite the law department's performance overall, one student attained full marks in the most challenging, synoptic, A-level paper.
21. In Year 12 in 2002, students who knew they were continuing with a subject in Year 13 did not necessarily take all the modules needed to attain an AS-level in one year. Highlights of the 2002 achievements in AS-level courses include the high percentage of A/B grades for English coursework and the 100 per cent pass grades in dance, chemistry, music, theatre studies, physical education, French and German. A few lower attainers, who often started courses with only GCSE grade C in the subject, did not make as much progress overall as higher attainers for a variety of reasons, such as attendance and problems recruiting staff.
22. About one in five students leave at the end of Year 12, the majority for employment and the remainder into training. Most of these students started Year 12 with less than five GCSE grades A*-C and/or relatively low entry test scores from Year 7, but they achieved reasonably well, particularly in vocational business and ICT courses. These, and other students, also retake GCSEs in English, mathematics and science. Retention rates within each year are good and the school carefully tracks the reasons why a few students do not complete one-year courses. These are usually linked to offers of training or employment in mechanics, retail or engineering. Occasionally, students leave after close monitoring and target setting reveal that they would struggle to attain qualifications.
23. Nine subjects were inspected in depth during the inspection. Standards seen were well above average in art and design, and dance, above average in media studies and ICT and average in English literature, business studies, history, mathematics and physical education. Progress is exceptional in art and design, very good in dance, good in English literature, ICT, mathematics, physical education and media studies and satisfactory in design and technology.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

- Students have good attitudes to school.
- Students' behaviour is good. The number of fixed-term exclusions is high but falling.
- Students' personal development and relationships are good.
- Attendance is average.

24. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good overall, and particularly so in Years 7, 9 and 10. This is an improvement on the last inspection. Students speak well of the school and describe many aspects of school life which they enjoy. Most students behave well and get involved in lessons, particularly when they are well motivated by purposeful teaching. Teachers' clear directions help them to co-operate with each other in English. In art and design and dance they work with interest and enthusiasm because they are highly motivated and their teachers relate to them very well. In geography, students are keen because teachers produce topical materials, sometimes from the local area, which they find interesting. Appreciating the relevance of citizenship topics, students willingly discuss and debate current issues. The well-designed science laboratories encourage good attitudes, even when teaching is unimaginative.
25. Rare exceptions to good behaviour occur when there is a lack of challenge in lessons and/or where students, in Year 11 particularly, simply decide not to be co-operative; the latter was seen in English, design and technology, statistics and music. In Year 9 French lessons, students, particularly boys, exhibit unsatisfactory behaviour by not respecting the French language. Poor attitudes to work in Years 10 and 11 mainly surface in subjects where students do not make enough effort to complete coursework, for example in foundation level vocational qualifications and design and technology. Not all students treat the musical instruments with care and so some keyboards are not in a good state of repair. However, students use music technology equipment well and computers in ICT lessons sensibly. Students wear the school uniform as required, even though many girls dislike the cord trousers, which one described as 'designed for the farm' and 'very hot in summer'. The school council, supported by senior management, has discussed uniform changes but students failed to agree on alternative options.
26. Relationships between students and teachers are mostly good, and enthusiastic respect for teachers was a significant factor in the success of many lessons. Most students acknowledge that 'teachers are there for them' and appreciate the support they are given.
27. A large number of boys and girls join in the high quality art, sports and dance activities outside lessons and many spend time at the farm. The sports hall is regularly buzzing with over 60 students playing badminton, netball, basketball, trampolining or practising for matches. Drama and production rehearsals are well attended. Over 100 students contribute to the annual dance performance. On one lunchtime during the inspection, over 80 students worked on their art and design, many Year 9 students attended the computer club and badminton was played on five courts in the sports hall. No regular music activities take place in the lunch hour and, compared with other after-school activities, relatively few students attend the music groups which all take place on one day of the week. Students would like a wider range of activities, such as more computer clubs and mentioned they would enjoy studying languages other than French and German.
28. Students are receptive to PSHE/citizenship and careers sessions and a group of Year 10 students showed a good awareness of the need for adaptability, moral and social skills in their future lives. They could explain the difference between careers and jobs. Discussing prejudice, students responded well to the moral dilemmas posed by the teacher and Year 9 students appreciated the link between values and moral behaviour.
29. Most students behave well around the school, at breaks, in assembly and at the bus and coach queues at the end of the day. This is because the teachers on duty marshal the students well, have high expectations of behaviour and students know the routines. Those employers who receive students on work experience placements are happy with

their behaviour and they occasionally suggest students carry on with part-time or holiday work. During the inspection, however, midday supervisors expressed concerns about students occasionally misbehaving in the dining room, and students reported occasional incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour on the bus. Senior managers do everything they can to reduce such lapses in behaviour. The very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds are totally integrated and, in that respect, the school is harmonious.

30. During the last school year the number of students excluded for one or more days was high, similar to the percentage excluded at the time of the last inspection. This earlier report highlighted the need to reduce the number of fixed-period exclusions, particularly by making full use of the graduated system of sanctions. After several years focusing on refining the latter, with little impact on the number of exclusions, the school introduced a reintegration centre in September 2002 and the number of exclusions when students spend time out of school is decreasing. The seating arrangement at booths in the reintegration centre is very well planned to encourage students to focus on the task in hand, and they are expected to produce their very best work. In the last school year, five students were permanently excluded, four of them girls. The number is typical for the size of school, though the number of girls is unusual.
31. Students are not encouraged enough to think about and express their views and opinions about the thoughts they hear in assembly, although a few form tutors use tutor time particularly well to develop respect and consideration for others. Students actually appreciate having this time organised and discussing worthwhile topics. It is commendable that some students can see the educational benefits of the five-term year, realising that, as the summer break is not long (four rather than six weeks) they do not forget work, nor get bored. Whether old enough to remember belonging to a year group or not, some students have mixed feelings about now being part of a mini-school with all years in it, and their sense of identity is related to how strongly the organisation of their mini-school generates a sense of unity.
32. Students know of incidents of bullying, and a few have first-hand experience of it; they understand that it is wrong but, whilst most of them are convinced that senior management respond swiftly and effectively to serious incidents, a few do not feel confident that teachers will bring about change following low level, persistent incidents. Senior managers and teachers try hard to reduce any tension related to minor persistent incidents, but they do not give equal attention to students' perceptions, correct or otherwise, that such tension continues. The root of some of the bullying is that, in this mainly homogenous school population, a very few students do not respect individuality. They are not entirely comfortable with their own identity and have difficulty recognising and valuing differences in others.
33. Students willingly take up suggestions made to them: to act as a mentor, to fundraise for charitable events, or to belong to the school or mini-school councils. But they also feel an element of frustration. They do not see the councils as being very effective and many consider they have little impact on major areas of school life: 'We never hear from the school council'. The Ashford Volunteer Bureau has enrolled 120 students wanting to work as volunteers locally, but now cannot find placements for all of them. This does not help students to see themselves as valued members of the community. Students do not feel trusted as many toilets are locked during lessons and sometimes in breaks and after school.
34. Attendance, at 91 per cent, is broadly in line with national figures although there has been a slow downward trend of one per cent since 1998. Unauthorised absence is above the national figures; the school accurately records such absences. Attendance figures have not been affected by the introduction of the five-term year. The first term,

during August when many other schools are on holiday, had the highest average attendance in the last school year. Any lateness in the morning is usually related to traffic problems and outside the school's or students' control.

Sixth form

- Students have very good attitudes to school.
 - Students' personal development and relationships are good.
 - Attendance is average.
35. Sixth-form students have very positive attitudes towards learning: these were excellent in almost a quarter of lessons observed during the inspection. By Year 13 students are highly motivated, genuinely interested and willing to contribute to their own learning. Students are often highly motivated by their subjects, for example, in English they do plenty of research, although occasionally they lack confidence to argue a point. In geography, a few students do not undertake all the research they are asked to do and are less reliable about getting to lessons on time. In business studies, students progress well because they are good at self-assessment. Students willingly fill in their weekly work schedules, and their evaluation forms show a healthy spread of confident, optimistic comments and self-criticism.
36. Prefects respond when asked to get involved in, for example, organising events to raise money for charity, arranging several balls each year or taking younger students into local residential homes to sing carols and play bingo. Members of the local Rotary Club Interact group, which started last year, have achieved a great deal, for example raising funds to fill Aqua Boxes for Uganda and organising a Year 9 disco which raised money for Riding for the Disabled. Male and female students involved in the community sports leader award are given plenty of responsibility and independence through taking lessons in school and in primary schools, and organising mini-school cross-country competitions.
37. Whilst several sixth-formers give up much time and show initiative, others do not involve themselves as much. Although students are loyal to the school, they had limited experience of mini-schools in Years 7 to 11, so their attachment to them is somewhat artificial. Students in Years 7 to 11 do not perceive the sixth form as a major force within the school. As numbers in the sixth form increase the role of its students within the school community has already been highlighted as an action point for the present school year. This includes 'Additional allocation of post-16 students to mini-schools, developing a sixth-form committee within the school and expanding post-16 events to improve social interaction'.
38. The inspection confirmed that the points above are important areas for development. When addressed, they may also help to make more than the present three out of five students feel that they are treated as responsible young adults and that the school listens and responds to their views. Students would like their progress reports to be addressed to them, rather than to their parents. The issue of different interest groups not respecting each other and bullying others of different ages, described in paragraph 32 above, has affected a very small group of sixth-form students. Sixth-form students who are not involved have noticed this. There is no doubt that senior managers have worked hard to resolve this concern, but some students' perception is that the issue remains.
39. Attendance at registration is between 70 and 77 per cent, but these figures do not accurately reflect attendance at lessons because some students have study time at home. Analysis of examination performance in 2002 highlighted where unsatisfactory attendance contributed to incomplete coursework or disappointing results in a few

subjects, such as A-level history, AS-level media studies or AVCE travel and tourism. Students dislike having to attend supervised study periods in school when they have no lessons, but the school sees these as an important part of its strategy to help students cope with the demands of their courses.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- Teaching is good overall.
 - Learning is good overall.
40. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all but a small percentage of lessons during the inspection. It was good or better in two-thirds of lessons and at least very good in well over a quarter. The latter included 15 lessons when teaching was excellent, three in art and design, two in English, two in dance, two in science, and one in each of design and technology, drama, history, mathematics, media studies and performing arts. Overall teaching was most effective in Years 9 and 11, which is significant as these are important test and examination years for students. In these years, teaching was at least very good in two out of five lessons. Students' learning closely mirrored the quality of teaching, the highest proportion of very good learning being seen in Years 9 and 11 and the lowest proportion in Year 10. Teaching is very good overall in English, art and design, child development and performing arts and excellent in dance.
41. It is clear that teachers' very good knowledge of their subjects contributes to the success of many lessons. It gives them the ability to answer unexpected questions, to use quotations to support comments in English, to explain mathematical concepts clearly or to tackle citizenship topics with detailed background knowledge. Art and design teachers displaying their own work or music teachers improvising skilfully, gives them credibility in the students' eyes. Expert demonstrations by performing arts, drama, physical education and dance teachers inspire students to emulate such skills. The modern foreign language teachers are fluent French and German speakers, who have to work hard to overcome students' reticence to speak these languages.
42. Lessons where students were active generated very good learning, for example Year 11 students moving energetically about the classroom, picking up and linking fragments of poetry before they analysed the whole poem in English; using compasses to understand bearings in mathematics, or Year 8 art and design lessons starting with Japanese greetings. Teachers' enthusiasm and genuine interest in their subjects, combined with stimulating activities, were another key ingredient of successful lessons. In a Year 10 lesson on forces and motion, students enjoyed the scenario of being a crash investigator at the scene of a car accident. Year 11 history students learned very well when the teacher set up a 'Nazi school' and treated them as if they were in Germany in 1939. A visit to the farm by Year 7 geography students developed their listening and observation skills well. Apt video extracts make learning interesting in history and child development. When students see the links between work and their own experiences, as in religious education, their learning is very good. Leisure and tourism students particularly enjoy the practical elements of the course.
43. Numeracy and literacy skills are taught well. Most teachers make a positive effort to stress technical and subject specific vocabulary and science and business studies' teachers contribute much to students' numeracy skills. All teachers use ICT competently but few take classes into the ICT rooms for lessons as they are in use most of the time for discrete ICT lessons. Most students have access to computers at home, or in the open learning centre, and confidently use the Internet for research in many subjects. Year 7 students observed 'Without a computer at home you would be lost'. A few students who do not have easy access to a computer outside school are at a disadvantage, which most teachers try hard to counteract. The music and media

teachers' competence with technology is a bonus for students, who use the equipment in many lessons.

44. Generally teachers demand high standards of behaviour and students respond well. In a few lessons teachers did not wait for silence but raised their voices over students', which is not good practice. Several teachers skilfully deal with students who arrive late, usually because they have come from some distant part of the site, without interrupting the flow of the lesson. In a few lessons, late starts or equipment not being ready for the lesson contributed to students' lack of co-operation, especially in the last lesson before lunch. A tiny minority of students spoiled learning for others; for example, a group of Year 8 boys in mathematics, a couple of Year 11 students in statistics, unenthusiastic French speakers in Year 9 or a few Year 8 students' childish behaviour in religious education.
45. Students learn well by helping each other and sharing ideas. In food technology, Year 7 students made good progress weighing and evaluating the properties of apples together. In all years, students have good practical skills in science and art and design and most use tools in design and technology sensibly. They contribute much energy in physical education, performing arts, drama and dance lessons, as well as participating enthusiastically in extra-curricular activities.
46. Teachers mark students' work thoroughly and helpfully in most subjects but inconsistency in quality is evident, particularly in mathematics, modern foreign languages, music and religious studies. In these subjects students are not given enough advice about how to improve their work. Marking is particularly helpful in ICT, art and design, and business studies. A group of Year 9 students commented that 'Science is hardly ever marked' and students of all ages observed that not all teachers stick to the homework timetable.
47. Particularly enthusiastic and dedicated form tutors make every 25 minute form time useful so, in Years 7 to 9, PSHE and general form time are indistinguishable. A few referred to the 'theme of the week' in the short morning registration. Students benefit enormously from such excellent practice and articulate their appreciation. The quality of teaching in specific PSHE sessions varied from satisfactory to very good in Years 7 to 9, but was mainly good in Years 10 and 11 where specialist teachers deliver discrete lessons. The quality of sessions on the inspection week's theme of pollution varied from superficial handing out of mundane worksheets to stimulating discussions in response to teachers' questions; for example 'Why is Britain so bad at recycling?'. In one tutor group, where most students ignored the teacher's combined comments on pollution and work experience, one student commented 'We don't normally do this kind of thing'. In Year 10 drugs awareness lessons, too little note was taken of what students already knew and the relaxed pace meant that little new ground was covered. The school has highlighted 'introducing a system of tutor twinning to spread expertise' and inspection evidence supports the need for this.
48. Some aspects of careers teaching are equally affected by the level of form tutors' knowledge of careers options and qualifications and interest. In a Year 9 session on future choices, the teacher's reference to religious choices confused students but they became animated when the topic of pocket money entered the debate. A Year 8 session on job specifications was hampered by too little time as the teacher had discussed the week's theme – pollution – at the beginning. In Year 11, one class, well directed by the teacher, clearly understood the generic skills needed for working life, whilst another class did not because the teacher allowed students' personal, trivial comments to dominate.

Sixth form

- Teaching is good overall.
 - Learning is good overall.
49. Teaching was at least satisfactory in practically all lessons seen during the inspection. It was good or better in almost three-quarters of lessons and very good in one third. The latter included eight lessons when teaching was excellent, three in both art and design and dance, one in English and one in media studies. The quality of teaching in dance was excellent and it was very good in art and design and media. Overall, teaching was most effective in Year 12 where almost half was at least very good. In the two unsatisfactory, and untypical, Year 13 lessons, students spent too long working in pairs, joined in very little and neither they nor their teachers communicated any enthusiasm or pleasure in the work.
50. Teachers not only have very good subject expertise but they apply it very well, planning and selecting the right activities, choosing resources carefully and selecting the best approach for particular work. ICT teachers have up-to-date skills and knowledge as well as commercial experience, so they adapt work to match both students' interests and particular skills and answer any complex technical questions students raise well. In performing arts, a teacher used his own performance skills brilliantly to demonstrate many of the concepts being explored and the media studies teachers are most competent using, for example, video equipment. Professional expertise was seen in physical education and outstanding skills in dance. The photography and art and design teachers are experts in their field, refer to their own work as exemplars and students achieve extremely well as a result. The religious education teachers' subject expertise helps them to guide students through philosophical debates. The best geography teaching links well-chosen case studies, for example on Bolivia, with global issues such as strategic development.
51. Relationships between students and teachers are very good, reflected in the high level of commitment students show and underpinning the success of many lessons. In many lessons the students' hard work and their determination contributed much to their learning. Year 12 students learned very well in almost half the lessons seen during the inspection. In mathematics, a Year 12 group showed considerable determination to master statistical expectation and variance; their persistence paid off and they learned well. In ICT, students work extremely well on their own and tackle software problems confidently. Those students involved in the community sports leaders award have acquired skills of responsibility and organisation in their coaching work with younger students. Physical education students put much energy into their practical work and dance students practise and repeat movements intensively to achieve technical precision. Photography students prepare presentations independently and speak confidently as they give them.
52. In a few lessons seen during the inspection, for example, in biology, chemistry, religious education, psychology, and travel and tourism, teachers worked harder than students, and did not always manage to get them to join in and take an active part; hence independent learning was not stimulated. A few physical education students rely too much on their teachers' guidance. Occasionally teachers do not use stimulating resources, for example in business studies or music, or they fail to highlight the relevance and significance of them to practical applications. In ICT, teachers encourage students to research commercially produced materials, such as marketing leaflets, so that their own work has a professional quality. Teachers' insistence on the use of specific vocabulary or subject notation was observed in numerous lessons, for example in mathematics coping with statistics, in dance linking theory with practical work, in media studies preparing magazine projects and in physical education related to anatomy.

53. In many subjects, teachers question students skilfully, judging well when to intervene in discussions or let students determine how the debate will flow, and knowing when to guide individuals with questions or let them discover things for themselves. They often bring out the best in students, for example in mathematics, a teacher's effective questions forced students to propose, reflect upon and refine their suggestions so that the quality of their thinking was high. One-to-one intensive guidance in ICT, art and design or design and technology is particularly valuable as students refine their designs. In physical education, students argue, evaluate and defend their viewpoints in debates and teachers ask just the right questions to stimulate discussions. In dance, excellent relationships help students to dance with feeling and emotion, responding sensitively to each other.
54. Most teachers monitor students' performance throughout their course well by setting assessment tasks every term and reviewing their targets with them. Teachers speedily and thoroughly evaluate students' performance in dance and physical education within lessons. In several subjects, particularly English, marking is thoughtful, analytical and combined with constructive comments. Teachers tell students how well they are doing and constantly push them to achieve their best, just occasionally, forgetting to praise them and offer encouragement (see paragraph 98).
55. It is evident from discussions, observations and from their analysis of 2002 results, that teachers are very aware of how they must modify their teaching styles and activities in relation to changing syllabuses, coursework requirements and students' performance. Now that the first examinations have been taken in the new courses, teachers are incorporating many ways to further improve students' work by:
- introducing different textbooks in several subjects;
 - preparing students for the slightly different examination questions they will meet in Year 13, by 'bridging techniques' between Years 12 and 13 in law, for example;
 - focusing on the balance between 'speed' and 'depth of delivery' in physical education;
 - spending more time on less successful parts of the dance course;
 - emphasising examination technique, plus more revision sessions in several subjects;
 - investigating strategies to teach male students French more successfully;
 - strengthening links between subjects such as science and design and technology; and
 - introducing smaller teaching groups in ICT to offer lower attaining students more support and improving guidance about options within courses to maximise achievement.
- Even departments with above average results continually seek ways to further improve their teaching. This critical self-evaluation is very good.
56. Teaching in the sixth-form PSHE/citizenship sessions is good. Teachers teach topics about which they are knowledgeable and have an interest in and hence students learn well. In a cooking-for-one session the teacher's enthusiasm, combined with much practical, useful information generated understanding of issues such as salmonella and the importance of diet. In another session, good teaching enthused students to consider how they could travel cheaply in Europe.

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

- The overall quality and range of learning opportunities are good.
- Statutory requirements are not met for religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

57. In Years 7 to 9 students have discrete religious education lessons but statutory requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11 where religious education is part of the PSHE programme. The few students studying two modern foreign languages in Years 8 and 9 have only one more lesson than those studying one; they miss a design and technology lesson for this. Since September 2002, Year 7 students have slightly less than the national average time for physical education but this is offset by a new performing arts lesson, which is very popular. It will be introduced in Year 8 in the next school year. ICT is now taught as a discrete subject in all years – its provision has improved significantly since the last inspection. Double ICT GCSE or vocational GCSE will be compulsory in Years 10 and 11 from September 2003. In addition to National Curriculum subjects, a good range of courses are available in Years 10 and 11 including media studies, business studies, drama, child development and performing arts.
58. In September 2002, the school decided that the current Year 7 would study only one modern foreign language when they are in Years 8 and 9. This decision, based on the difficulty the school had recruiting experienced language teachers, frustrates the school's desire to be international and outward looking. From September 2003 double science will become optional and only single science will be compulsory. The inspection team is concerned that only one quarter of the present Year 9 students, an even lower proportion than in the present Years 10 and 11, has chosen to study a modern foreign language for GCSE and the proportion which will study double science, by choice, is much lower than that seen nationally. Such choices may limit language and science take-up in the sixth form. The school has a thorough system to give students and parents information and consultation about the various options available and makes students and parents aware of the implications of such choices.
59. Students with special educational needs study the full curriculum, sometimes with additional support. A few Year 7 students with very poor levels of reading have individual teaching in the learning support centre. A number of students in Years 10 and 11 study two fewer optional subjects so they have additional time and further support with their remaining subjects in the learning support centre. This is good practice.
60. The number and range of extra-curricular activities are very good, particularly in dance, art and design, and sport. Surprisingly for a specialist arts college, the opportunities offered in music are less extensive. The Christian Union and Model United Nations groups meet each week, although numbers involved are small. Year 9 students are particularly keen on using computers in the lunch hour. Adventurous students can try circus skills. Departments arrange revision and coursework sessions at key points during the year. In the summer term a chef course operates after school. There are numerous opportunities for visits and trips including both fieldwork and exchanges with foreign students. Highlights include a football tour in Barcelona, the whole of Year 9 visiting Bewl water for geography, English visits to the Globe Theatre and GCSE rural science students attending the Kent County Show for four days.
61. The community education programme also benefits many students and teachers in the school. It offers an excellent spread of courses for eight- to 80-years-olds, activity weeks in every term break, Saturday and summer holiday classes for Year 6 primary students, formal and informal day and evening classes in ceramics, astronomy and ICT especially, in addition to training for primary and secondary teachers. It is hugely valuable to have this resource based at the school, as an example of lifelong enjoyment in learning and the value of developing interests. It is very well managed.
62. The community links generated by the school are a considerable strength and these benefit students of all ages. They operate at various levels, with teachers and students

involved separately and together. Specialist arts college status has given several of these initiatives extra funding and impetus. They include, in primary, special and other secondary schools:

- teachers leading workshops and classes in music, dance and physical education;
- combined performances with Homewood and other school students;
- participation in choral days and artist workshops.

In addition, the recently opened nursery on the school site is a valuable resource for the expanding child care courses. The farm is an essential component of rural science GCSE, in addition to being a welcoming and different environment for students to visit in the lunch hour. Members of the local community provide valuable placements for work experience students, and many others give support financially and in kind.

63. The relatively new, and growing, international links add a further dimension to the school's life, although their impact on students' education is mainly indirect and long term:
- three teachers visited schools in China and welcomed Chinese headteachers at Homewood;
 - staff visits to Slovenia and a return visit by Slovenian students who participated in Homewood's Christmas musical extravaganza; and
 - educational research in Calgary, Canada and links with Thailand, Zambia, Japan and several European countries.
64. Many of the 'thoughts for the week', which are also the focus of the weekly assemblies, and PSHE topics, contain moral and/or social messages for students, and provision for both these areas of students' development is good. The programme of 'thoughts for the week', which is well planned for the entire school year, includes shoplifting, greed and desire, common sense, bullying, theft and litter. During the inspection the theme for the week was pollution. The significance and consideration of these topics in students' minds depend a great deal on how well they are taught by their form tutors (see paragraphs 47 and 78). English, geography, history and media studies include a wide range of moral issues, from the past and present, which generate much valuable discussion.
65. Students are made aware of the high social and moral standards expected and these are reinforced through productions, residential and day trips, sporting activities and visits within the community. In addition, students are encouraged to work co-operatively in lessons and to borrow, use and return equipment safely. The school's zero-tolerance policy on unacceptable behaviour generates a firm message for all. Students in Years 7 to 9 have limited opportunities to take on responsibility and leadership, especially as relatively few of them are involved in the mini-school and whole-school councils, but Years 10 and 11 students who are mentors and prefects certainly develop social skills and consideration for others.
66. The satisfactory provision for students' spiritual awareness is largely taught through ethical and religious education lessons (see paragraphs 204 to 209). Complementing these lessons, one assembly each term and the associated 'thought for the week', are linked to a major world religion. The reflection programme within tutor time and the once a week assemblies, are the school's alternative to a daily act of collective worship. Statutory requirements for the latter are not met. Indeed, the last inspection report commented that 'Readings or reflections do not always take place' and this continues to be true.
67. There is much variation in the emphasis placed on spiritual and cultural issues. The science department, for example, has not, in its schemes of work, highlighted topics which lend themselves to these aspects, although students debate issues such as genetic modification and consider the work of a few great scientists. Islamic and Hindu

patterns feature in mathematics, but the department acknowledges that the spiritual content of its work 'needs to be widely adopted as an active element on a wider scale'. The last inspection report noted that 'Opportunities to learn about western cultures was a strength' and this is certainly supported by French and German studies and visits to European countries, but only a minority of students actually travel overseas. Students' wider cultural awareness is developed very well in art and design, where music and customs from a particular area or country are blended into the lessons. Dance students consider spiritual and cultural dimensions of their work through their response to performing and studying many styles, for example south Asian dance cultures. In English and media studies the creative power of language is valued. Ethical issues arise naturally in several sections of the business studies courses.

68. Historical and geographical topics inevitably alert students to different cultures although, just occasionally, opportunities to consider ethical issues are not exploited. The performing arts Year 7 unit on Kafue school gives students a very realistic impression of education in Zambia. In contrast, a few students' brash suggestions that 'jungle music' would be typical of India, went unchallenged in a music lesson. The ICT department debates issues such as data protection but has not focused on using specific data, such as world development statistics, to generate a greater understanding of citizenship, moral and cultural issues. The school's commendable focus on international links and visitors as yet involves relatively few staff and students, so its impact on students' education is at an early stage. Discussions with students, teachers and governors confirmed that the school's cultural focus is strong on western cultures but less focused on global ones.
69. In addition to the strong citizenship and careers education content (see paragraphs 70 and 147 to 153), the PSHE programme includes several topics which address students' lifestyles, now and in the future, for example: eating wisely and staying healthy and smoking in Year 7, or adolescence, health matters and becoming assertive in Year 9. Drugs, and sex and relationships education is not introduced within PSHE until Years 10 and 11, and students of many ages believe this is too late and that it does not build on what they have studied in primary school. The inspection judgement is that these topics are introduced too late. Students particularly value the first aid course in Year 10.
70. Careers education, closely entwined with citizenship and PSHE topics, is a particular focus in Year 8 where a course called The Real Game is used. This course was introduced in September 2001. Students consider 'The implications of some working world situations and choices and career exploration skills'. The materials are interesting and most students enjoy working through them. In Years 9 and 10 students follow a local education authority Steps course on careers, and examination of their folders shows that they benefit from this programme. The school organises a careers convention, and its successful Year 11 work experience programme has received a quality award.

Sixth form

- The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good.
 - Statutory requirements are not met for religious education.
 - Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
71. The range of subjects on offer is very good. The school is responsive to students' interests and flexibly alters subject combinations to try and accommodate all their different subject choices. All the subjects offered in Years 10 and 11, except for child development, are available for AS- and A-level, plus psychology, photography, law and theatre studies. Vocational options are well catered for with business, ICT, health and

social care, and leisure and tourism, and several of these are available as double AVCEs. Other qualifications offered include the community sports leader award and a computer technician's course, both valuable for the world of work.

72. Within the PSHE subjects, two teachers deliver a specific focus on ICT Level 3 key skills and all students have a key skills booklet. They have to produce a portfolio of evidence in this area as well as communication. In the last few months, key skills software has been installed on the school's computer network and further research and adjustments for this area are highlighted in the sixth-form development plan. The effective careers education programme is described in paragraph 91. Students are expected to attend a certain number of supervised study periods when they have no lessons but are also given the freedom to work at home for a limited amount of time. This appears to be a sensible balance.
73. Sixth-formers can attend a wide range of extra-curricular activities but in practice many do not participate regularly and limited provision is made for general physical education in the timetable. During the inspection, the boys' dance club, which included four sixth-form students, rehearsed a professional standard blues walk. Students studying for the community sports leaders award organise an 'adventurous' cross-country competition for the mini-schools. Sixth-form students participate in community education projects, can attend community education courses and meet international visitors.
74. Whole-school charity efforts make students think about those less fortunate than themselves, in the community and overseas and, as in Years 7 to 11, the same strong messages about moral and social standards permeate students' lives. Sixth-form students have to participate in at least one community project each year and the Aqua Boxes for Uganda scheme has generated greater awareness of cultural and social contrasts in a less-developed country. The school encourages and supports fund-raising efforts, especially by individual tutor groups. Earlier this school year, one Year 12 tutor group organised 'throwing three wet sponges at willing teachers!' Groups visiting other schools in the local area learn to appreciate the value of community action, for example, the boys' dance company tours schools with their workshop for Years 5 and 6 boys.
75. In PSHE lessons students experience an interesting range of topics, for example relaxation techniques, chess, ICT skills, cooking-for-one and using the Internet to plan travel. The sessions allocated to ethical and religious studies are too few to meet statutory requirements but overall students' spiritual development is satisfactory. A few tutors use the daily 25 minute sessions to generate worthwhile discussions which strengthen students' awareness of moral, social and cultural issues. In one such session students debated congestion charges and political issues related to Iraq, all firmly guided by a well-prepared tutor. Another teacher urged students not to take newspaper reports at face value by posing thoughtful questions on refugees and fundamentalism.
76. The degree to which students consider and reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues depends on what subjects they are studying. Students studying mainly sciences, ICT or mathematics do not receive as much input as those involved with the performing arts, languages, psychology or health and social care. Examples of subjects' particular contributions to students' personal development in the main school (see paragraphs 67 and 68) are similarly applicable to sixth-form lessons. The large number of students studying English literature benefits from the teachers' focus on setting texts within their social and cultural contexts and on the appreciation of the pleasure of poetry. The spiritual element of art and design, and dance is well nurtured in both lessons and extra-curricular sessions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

- Procedures for child protection and ensuring students' welfare are satisfactory.
 - Monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is good.
 - Educational and personal support and guidance for students are good.
77. The vice-principals of the mini-schools know their students well and, with their team of tutors, have a good overview of students' welfare and academic achievements. There are good systems for monitoring attendance, which give vice-principals information that is regularly updated, and helpful for identifying underlying problems. The electronic registration system, dedicated telephone line for parents to report absence, and the automated system of calling parents on the first day of absence all contribute to this well.
78. Four times a week, form tutors spend 25 minutes with their tutor groups. In theory this provides a good opportunity for tutors to get to know their students well and spot any problems early on. The majority of tutors use this time reasonably well for PSHE/citizenship/careers education and for making checks, for example on uniform or homework. Some tutors expect students to read quietly, others allow them to chat amongst themselves and a few organise each session to a tight programme, with debates about current affairs or school issues. The variable quality of PSHE teaching, and hence the degree of learning and value generated, is described in paragraph 47. In Year 7, silent reading is particularly worthwhile as it supports students' literacy skills. In contrast, one Year 8 session was a waste of time as the teacher talked over the students' chatter and no mutual respect was generated. Year 11 students spend many sessions preparing personal statements for their records of achievement. This is time well spent.
79. Students who are injured or unwell at school receive a good level of care from a qualified nurse, in a dedicated medical area. She e-mails details to the vice-principals each day, including an analysis of absence from lessons. The paperwork for logging accidents and injuries is very thorough, and the nurse also follows up and supports students returning to school after ill-health. The number of first aiders on the staff is good, although there are none in design and technology. All staff are fully aware of child protection matters and achieve the right balance between identifying and resolving problems. Valuable training is provided twice a year to cover all new teaching and non-teaching staff, which is very good practice. Two senior welfare managers have been allocated dedicated time to work with individual students and this is also very effective in improving behaviour and reducing exclusions.
80. Arrangements for managing students' behaviour have improved. The last inspection report charged the school with finding a way to reduce the number of exclusions. The reintegration centre, introduced in September 2002, is a good resource where students are internally excluded from lessons and from contact with others. They use the time to re-learn acceptable behaviour. On rare occasions a whole class is put into detention, contrary to school policy. A teacher with experience of managing students with behavioural difficulties runs the student development centre. Students in Years 10 and 11 who are approaching permanent exclusion follow an external programme off-site, which is successful for most of them.
81. Each mini-school has a co-ordinator for special educational needs. They write each student's individual education plan and agree targets with them. This is a good structure for giving personal support in a very large school. Those students with statements of special educational need receive support from the whole-school special educational needs co-ordinator and her team of support teachers. Mini-schools have a number of learning support assistants who specialise in supporting students in

particular subjects. They are familiar with the subjects and the teachers, so very good working relationships have developed in several subjects.

82. Not all teachers are aware of students' individual education plans and targets. For example, in a Year 7 ICT lesson the teacher referred to a summary of students' special educational needs. But in a Year 7 English lesson the teacher did not have this information and could only identify three out of the eight students with special educational needs. When a learning support assistant is in a lesson they can usually provide such information and give a good level of support. The school has usefully provided a page in students' diary/planners to record individual education plan targets, but not all students with individual education plans have completed them.
83. In a few areas the school could take more care over the detail of students' welfare during the day. Most toilets are locked during lessons and soon after school has ended, and, after vandalism by a few students, the newest ones are locked most of the time. Keys are available from designated teachers, but it is not satisfactory that a student should have to find and ask a teacher to use a toilet. During the inspection some students sat in extremely cold mobile classrooms for tutor time and a few lessons, and also a couple of very cold music rooms. Lack of heating had been a problem for several weeks.
84. Health and safety awareness is not a routine part of everyday teaching and classroom observation in several subjects, particularly physical education and music. The management of this aspect is not thorough enough. The response to reported concerns, for example about an unhealthy, very dusty gym floor, was neither thorough nor fast enough. Routine electrical testing is behind schedule and there is no system to make sure new items are added to the list to be checked. A related concern was noted during the inspection, when students had to remove their shoes for assembly in the gym, presumably to keep the floor clean, but most teachers did not. This raises issues of equality, teachers as role models and health principles.
85. The school formally assesses students' work in each of the five terms, and departments and form tutors use this information to generate termly grade reports. Headings for grades are attitude, ability to cope and meeting deadlines. Standards are given as National Curriculum levels, subdivided into three tiers which is good as it helps to show progress within a level. Parents do not receive any written text on these reports. Letters are sent home to students who are not making enough progress and to those who achieve high standards or work particularly well. It is also good that time is allowed, following each assessment period, for tutors to talk to students about their progress.
86. As in the sixth form (see paragraph 55) teachers use assessment results, combined with departments' meticulous analysis of examination performance each year, to alter their teaching plans and make adjustments to the order of topics studied. This practice, and the quality of assessment itself, is particularly good in art and design, design and technology and physical education but less effective in music and modern foreign languages. All data are used to set targets which teachers share with students and parents. Not all teachers check that these targets are entered in students' planners.

Sixth form

Assessment

- Monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is very good.

87. Assessment is very good overall, especially in English, where marking is of a high quality, and in business education where there is provision for guided self-evaluation. Teachers use assessment results very well to structure the curriculum and refine their teaching – described in paragraph 55. They are fully aware of the examination requirements for the subjects and courses they deliver and all students receive an excellent timetable for the year, showing coursework, assignment, and other important deadlines. External examiners' reports confirm that teachers mark coursework diligently and a few teachers appeal confidently if they believe their grades have been altered wrongly by a moderator. They also use informal and formal assessment to guide and advise students, particularly well at an individual level in art and design, dance, physical education, ICT and business studies.

Advice, support and guidance

- Educational and personal support and guidance for students are good.
 - The effectiveness of careers education and guidance for future courses is good.
 - The steps taken to ensure students' health and safety are satisfactory.
88. For two-year courses most students admitted into the sixth form have at least five GCSE C or higher grades and for a few subjects a B grade is required. Lower grades are accepted for one-year and vocational courses. The school acknowledges the increasing demands of the new-style AS-, A-level and AVCE courses and is reviewing its admission requirements and advice to Year 11 students. An increasing percentage of Year 13 students, 70 per cent in 2002, proceed to higher education. Documents about study skills and settling into the sixth form, provided for sixth-form tutors to use as they wish, are rather too simple, with clipart insertions; they do not convey the right expectations of adult behaviour and responsibility. Nevertheless, students have no problems settling into the sixth form and the introduction procedures are good. Tutor groups now have Years 12 and 13 students together, which has led to more joint activities, such as a sixth-form football team. It is good for these two years to share their work problems, learn from each other and share social events.
89. The good manual registration systems are monitored consistently, helping to identify attendance issues which tutors then discuss with students. The vice-principal and principal teachers for the sixth form have a good understanding of students' needs and feelings. They 'nip at students' heels' to encourage them to attain high standards and to take up the advice on offer. The support systems include supervised study periods and individual interviews with tutors for coursework, progress and self-assessment checks. Some tutors provide much guidance on students' progress and how they can improve their work, whereas others do not do this so thoroughly.
90. Tutors urge students to evaluate what they achieve each week – such practice is good at generating students' responsibility for learning and preparing them for higher education. In the best tutor sessions, stimulating discussions take place which contribute well to students' personal development. Students who have received the good quality careers advice have found it helpful. The careers service staff are knowledgeable and have enough time and knowledge to respond to students' queries.
91. The good careers programme in the sixth form includes external careers consultants brought in to give interviews and advice to sixth-formers. Sixth-formers are involved in the school's careers convention where they can meet employers to discuss advice and they can attend the higher education fair at Canterbury. The school tried to submit UCAS forms electronically in the autumn term 2002. The problems encountered adversely affected students' perceptions of the quality of careers advice. A clear and useful overlap exists between the careers, citizenship and PSHE strands, for example, examination of personal finance.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- Most parents have positive views of the school.
 - Students have mostly positive views about life in the sixth form.
92. Parents are supportive of the school and their children and over one third of them responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. In these, over 85 per cent of parents believe that teaching is good, their child likes school, their children are making progress because they are expected to work hard and do their best, they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or concerns and confirm that there is an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspection confirmed all these positive views.
93. A small minority have concerns: about homework, mostly that there is too little and that it is not regular enough; they do not think that behaviour in the school is good enough, and feel that the school does not work closely enough with them. Some students complete their homework in school time, and mostly it is set regularly. Unsatisfactory behaviour was observed in a very few lessons during the inspection, but none in Year 7, and overall the inspection team were impressed by the good standard seen in many lessons and around the school during breaks.
94. The school's new system of reporting to parents, introduced in September 2002, has strengths in that it provides five reports a year. These give parents a clear understanding of how their children are getting on, against national standards and against personal targets for each subject. They also grade students' learning attributes for each subject, which are explained in an accompanying guide. There is no written comment because extra detail is given to students and parents at daytime consultation meetings with form tutors and subject teachers. These started in January 2003. For the two consultation days students have Independent Learning and Study packs, so they only attend school, with their parents, for their review meeting.
95. Attendance at the first round of these meetings was reasonable: 75 per cent of Year 7 and 60 per cent of Year 11 parents attended, but less than half the parents of sixth-formers came. Nine out of ten who attended were satisfied with the process. Parents receive good quality written information, with a glossy whole-school newsletter and mini-school newsletters each term. Both report student successes in and out of school. Each mini-school newsletter has its own style and content, helping to establish its character. A few media studies students are involved in photography and journalism for the fortnightly page in the local newspaper. Parents like the student planners, and many want to support their children's work at home. The friends' association organise well-attended social events, such as the French evening. The considerable community links are described in paragraph 61.
96. Sixth-form students are pleased to be at Homewood. About 70 per cent responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and over 80 per cent of those students said that they are encouraged to study and research topics by themselves, find teachers accessible for help if they have difficulties with their work, that the printed information about course requirements was clear, accurate and helpful and that the school helped them to settle into the sixth form well. More than half expressed concern about careers advice. The questionnaire was distributed before Year 12 students had received careers advice. Year 13 students experienced problems with electronic applications for higher education through the UCAS system. Careers advice is in fact of good quality and timely.
97. Many students dislike the supervised study periods, but some who have negotiated their timing, so that specialist teachers or equipment are available, are more satisfied.

They would like to be trusted to get on with their work by themselves. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, many suggested that the school does not listen and respond to their views and that they are not treated as responsible young adults. Students said the same in a school-generated questionnaire. In discussion however, their main grievance was that their suggestions about car parking had not been followed up.

98. Students' feelings about the school's response to bullying have been described in paragraphs 32 and 38. About half of Year 12 students are also concerned that they do not really know how they are getting on and they cannot see how they can improve. Students had already had two formal assessments before the inspection, but not all teachers provide the type of running commentary they value, combining encouragement and criticism. They would also like to have their termly grades addressed to them at home, not to their parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- The leadership and management of the principal and key staff are very good.
 - The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well.
 - The school's monitoring and evaluation of its performance and taking effective action are very good.
 - The strategic use of resources, including specific grants and other funding, are very good.
 - The principles of best value are applied very well.
99. The principal's confident and determined leadership has steered the school forward successfully. Parents describe him as 'inspirational' and 'innovative' and his very good leadership has inspired staff and governor loyalty. His top priority is to have an excellent teaching force, so he found staffing problems during the last school year, when several teachers left at short notice, most frustrating. The situation has improved this year. The principal has not only introduced clerical support for all mini-school vice-principals but practical help for teachers, for example a person who creates attractive displays around the school. Clerical assistants have the time to follow up students' absences by telephone and sort out any minor problems discussed by parents. Teachers are also well supported by other administration and technical support staff, for example in the laboratories or computer rooms. These arrangements work very well and management of this complex school is very efficient.
100. At the same time as successfully introducing significant changes such as the five-term year, mini-schools, six-day timetable and achieving specialist arts college status, the principal and the strong senior management team continue to plan for innovative developments. Leadership and management by principal teachers are good overall, with particular strengths in art and design, English, mathematics, dance, ICT and media studies. Management of provision for music is an area for development. The number of vice-principals is enough to cope with the school's future growth – a good example of the principal's forward planning. The hard-working senior management team is made up of seven vice-principals, the director of finance and administration and the director of community education.
101. With considerable experience and expertise, the governing body is fully aware of the school's strong features and is involved in discussion about the key areas for development. Governors are sensitive to the benefits and drawbacks generated by the school's increasing size and are very supportive of the principals' future plans. The benefits generated by the school's size are evident in the wide range of subjects and flexible choices offered to students. The drawbacks are that, although many students do join in productions, for example over 100 in the dance performance, many hundreds

do not. The issue of having enough sports teams, musical groups, field trips, visits and performances for all to be involved, is considerable. A few students and parents have concerns about individuals feeling lost in such a large organisation, others consider it good preparation for higher education and working life. Governors do not fully meet the statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship or religious education in Years 11 to 13 but fulfil all other duties well and enthusiastically.

102. The principal has firmly established a culture of accountability, performance analysis and regular observations of teachers. Given equal importance and value is the school's response to the analysis of its critical self-evaluation, which has certainly contributed to the improving standards. As well as yearly reviews of results and progress against the previous year's action plans, departments are also monitored on a three-year cycle. These reviews are intensive, thorough and constructive. Hence, the school had already highlighted many of this inspection's observations about PSHE. The school development plan brings together not just department's plans but many others, for example those for the mini-schools, welfare, advanced skills teachers, administration and community learning. It is used as a working document and many individuals are responsible for its implementation.
103. Equality of opportunity is firmly established within the school's culture. In physical education for example, the principal teacher ensures that all students in Years 7 to 9 take part in every activity. Students really appreciate this: 'We all get to do the same thing – even the boys have to do dance'. Governors have recently extended this policy to address race equality, and the social inclusion policy already contains many relevant statements. The latter is put into practice and the school supports students in care well, for example. The school development centre was opened specifically to support students who find school life difficult.
104. Although aware of its Jehovah's Witness students, the school has not identified which different faiths are represented in the school. Although special arrangements were made for one talented linguist, and 20 gifted students performed a Shakespeare play, few specific plans exist for gifted and talented students, apart from most students with high attainment, probably taught in top sets, being given more work, some of which is more demanding. Many departments do not prepare completely different work to match these students' needs.
105. Support for students with special educational needs is managed well, although a few teachers are not fully aware of the details of students' individual education plans. An administrative assistant gives very good support and efficiently manages a large quantity of documentation. Meetings for learning support assistants and special educational needs teachers have a printed agenda and minutes, and are effectively chaired by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Good contact is maintained with parents, and liaison with primary schools means that staff are familiar with students with special educational needs when they start in Year 7. The vice-chairman of governors is responsible for special educational needs, visits termly, and keeps the governing body informed of developments. The local advisory service provides professional advice and training for support teachers and assistants.
106. Staff turnover has been high in recent years with almost one third new in September 2002. Most staff leave for promotion in other schools or to find areas where living costs are cheaper. During the last two years several teachers from overseas returned home. As a result of recent initiatives and many new appointments the school is now practically fully staffed for its present curriculum, with most subjects taught by specialists. Three advanced skills teachers contribute much to raising teaching standards in several subjects. In physical education there are not enough permanent, experienced specialists. No Year 7 students will study a second modern foreign

language in the future because the school cannot appoint enough French and German teachers. Teachers are supported by a large number of highly-valued learning support, technical and clerical assistants. There is no technician for food technology. Close links with several university education departments mean the school welcomes student teachers and many stay on when they have qualified. The principal and governing body are committed to improving the recruitment and retention of staff. Present considerations include obtaining low cost accommodation for new teachers and creating more posts for teachers studying on the graduate teacher programme.

107. The school has twice received the Investor in People award for its very good work on staff development. Throughout the year, and well planned far in advance, the school provides very effective training sessions, taught by its own teachers and outside consultants. Systems to identify and support teachers' training needs, linked to the school development plan, are particularly strong. The principal encourages teachers to seek promotion and many are following MA or advanced certificate courses. Administrative and technical staff receive some training alongside teachers and some specific to their own roles.
108. Induction and support for newly qualified teachers and for staff taking on new roles are very good. The school supports its newly qualified teachers by running sessions specifically for them and funding their attendance at courses. Their teaching is observed regularly. The support offered to experienced staff new to the school is less formal but they settle down very quickly through the use of an effective 'buddy' system. Targets for personal improvement are rigorous, and carefully develop the key areas identified by individual staff. Since September 2000, all teachers have an excellent, school-designed, professional portfolio which records all aspects of their career progress and training. Performance management review systems are comprehensive and very effective.
109. Since the previous inspection the quantity and quality of buildings have dramatically improved. All subjects, apart from the music and physical education, now have reasonable accommodation and several, such as art and design, ICT, design and technology and science have some excellent rooms. Although two music rooms have been refurbished, another one needs redecoration and is too small for the number of students. Indoor facilities for physical education are limited and outdoor facilities are of very poor quality. The attractive and extensive grounds are well maintained on a rolling programme so that most buildings are in generally good order, although parts of the mansion building need refurbishment. During the inspection the main hall was out of action for health and safety reasons and some extremely cold temporary classrooms were used for tutor times and lessons.
110. With the school expected to grow to 2300 students by 2005, an extensive building programme will create a new teaching block, a new open learning centre, new dance and drama studios, a larger dining room and, in the long term, a new gymnasium and fitness suite. The principal plans well and takes a keen interest in the design of new buildings, focusing on blending function with attractive architecture. Students take reasonable care of the school but a few individuals' thoughtless behaviour explains why many toilets are closed during lessons, which is unsatisfactory. Students drop no more or less litter than in most schools, but it is cleared up quickly and there was no evidence of vandalism or graffiti. In some areas, but not enough, displays of students' work and photographs of their activities do much to liven up corridors.
111. Most departments have enough books, materials and equipment although, as there are too few, students cannot take textbooks home in mathematics and some of those used in modern foreign languages are being updated. The extremely well organised open learning centre is well stocked and very well used, both in lessons and for private

study and research. It is rapidly becoming too small for the number of students who wish to use it. The number of computers, which has gone up significantly since the last inspection, is high and well above that seen nationally. All students benefit from having discrete ICT lessons and easy access to computers outside lessons.

112. The 1997 inspection highlighted seven issues for development:
- teaching is now observed and monitored systematically and the school has successfully established self-review and evaluation;
 - boys' achievement has been raised and the gap between boys' and girls' GCSE performance reduced;
 - the number of one-day exclusions has declined, but only since September 2002 when the reintegration centre opened;
 - the format of reports to parents has changed twice in recent years and parents now receive termly reports with grades;
 - the leadership structure has improved with the introduction of mini-schools;
 - PSHE has been allocated more time in Years 10 and 11 and it is taught well, but arrangements for PSHE in Years 7 to 9 continue to be an issue;
 - ICT is now taught to all students in all years and there have been considerable developments in this area.

Taking all the above into account, combined with the steadily improving standards, progress since the last inspection has been good and inspection evidence indicates this is set to continue.

113. Financial procedures for managing the substantial budget are comprehensive and effective. Governors oversee income and expenditure, and the minutes of the finance sub-committee demonstrate their active involvement in scrutinising and agreeing budget allocations. The director of finance and administration serves as clerk to the governors and is a member of the senior management team – this combined role aids open and transparent financial decision making and control. Governors apply the principles of best value sensibly, one outcome being that, after comparison and consultation about pricing, cleaning and maintenance arrangements are now undertaken internally.
114. Financial control is effective and robust systems ensure that income is used as intended. Income and expenditure are well balanced for Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Departmental funding is fair and effective. The most recent external auditors' report confirms there is good budgetary control. Basic income is spent prudently. The school spends a well above average percentage of its income on staff development but, as this is valuable and effective, this money is spent well.
115. The percentage of income spent on teachers' salaries is relatively low, reflecting recent staff recruitment difficulties and the present profile of teachers' age and experience. Also, the governors and principal have decided to spend an above average percentage of income on clerical, learning support and technical staff associated with, for example, students with special educational needs, the reintegration centre, mini-school administration and the school farm. The principal's philosophy of removing administration burdens from teachers and getting them into the classroom as much as possible is seen in practice.
116. The income generated by the significant specific grants is used most effectively. The funds linked to the specialist arts status have particularly benefited schools within the local community, as described in paragraph 61. When the new theatre is opened it will be used by the school and local groups. The nursery is useful for teachers, the community and as a resource for childcare courses. The farm both reflects the activities and employment within the surrounding community and is a resource for rural science. The principal and governors consider the community benefits of spending

decisions carefully. Taking into account the very good leadership and management, good teaching, improving standards, combined with an above average income, the school gives good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

- The leadership and management of the principal, vice-principal and key staff are very good.
 - The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well.
 - The school's monitoring and evaluation of its performance and taking effective action are very good.
 - The strategic use of resources, including specific grants and other funding, is very good.
 - The principles of best value are applied very well. The sixth form is cost effective.
117. The vice-principal and principal teacher of the sixth form provide very good leadership to the team of tutors and keep a meticulous eye on what is happening. They convey genuine care for students' academic and pastoral development and are sensitive to the issues that emerge when almost 200 adolescents study on the same site. They monitor carefully how students' career plans and university applications are proceeding and spend much time advising those who wish to leave at the end of Year 12 or decide that higher education is not for them. They know that several students have well-paid part-time jobs and exert just the right amount of pressure to remind them of the time needed to complete AS-, A-level, and AVCE courses. They are strongly supported by the principal and governors who have resolved to see the sixth form grow and want it to be a major contributor to post-16 education in the community. Hence the regular review of alternative curriculum options, such as new childcare qualifications now the nursery is up and running. At present students travel considerable distances to study childcare in further education colleges.
118. At senior management and departmental level, examination results are analysed meticulously and, in response, senior managers and principal teachers make alterations to examination boards, syllabus content and teaching styles (see paragraphs 75). If a department considers that its students have not performed well on coursework, for example, teachers attend relevant meetings and seek out examples of good practice. The school has a helpful data analysis system which predicts and then evaluates students' performance based on their GCSE points. This system provides further data about individual students' achievements and senior managers are already using it to pinpoint departments' strengths and identify any weaknesses. The school development plan has a separate section on the sixth form and for this school year it includes development of key skills and reviewing the development of the post-16 ethos within the school (see paragraph 37). The inspection confirmed that both are important.
119. The sixth form is growing, explained by the larger entry in Year 7 several years ago, more Year 11 students choosing to stay on and more coming in from other schools. Numbers in some subjects and groups, such as French and theatre studies, are very small and their future would normally be considered educationally and financially unviable. But at a time of predicted overall growth for the school, there is an understandable reluctance to discontinue offering such courses at this stage, especially as it is impossible to be sure how many students following an AS-level course will continue at A-level. The school has promised not to let one student down, for example in theatre studies, by removing the A-level course. However, all courses are evaluated annually at the end of Year 12, and quality reviews have led to some changes in course definition and staffing arrangements, with positive effect.

120. The principles of best value are applied very well and the school has a clear rationale for its spending decisions related to the sixth form as a whole and individual courses. Although Learning Skills Council funding rules have led to some financial penalties resulting from students not completing courses, staffing costs are largely covered by funding for sixth-form students. The very good range of courses, for nearly 200 students, is well managed. Given its economy of scale and the good progress students make, the sixth form is cost effective.

Resources

121. Sixth-form students use the same facilities as students in Years 7 to 11. The excellent spacious rooms for media studies, in an attractive new building, allow the layout of the room and teaching styles to be flexible and the department is very well equipped with technical resources such as digital and video cameras. The rooms and number of computers in business studies are very good but in this subject, as in several others, students buy their own textbooks as departments do not have enough to give them one each. The superb art and design rooms certainly contribute to students' enjoyment and success in this subject. In a few subjects which only have one or two computers in their classrooms, such as mathematics, teachers and students do not use ICT enough in lessons. This is because several groups study AVCE ICT and the computer rooms are also used intensively for ICT lessons in Years 7 to 11 as well.

122. The sixth-form common room was extensively refurbished during the last academic year and computers were put into the study area. These helps students to undertake their coursework and projects. The common room has a section with easy chairs and a separate working area. It is well kept and a pleasant area for sixth-formers to relax in, or work. Tutor rooms are in a different section of the school and some are more suitable than others. For example, an ICT room as a base is fine for university application work but the layout is not so good for group discussions and debates.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

123. In order to improve standards further, the governors, principal and senior managers should:

- (1) Increase the percentage of students attaining A*-C grades in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science by:
 - encouraging students to work more by themselves in mathematics;
 - supporting teachers and students to use more ICT in mathematics;
 - persevering with efforts to improve lower attainers' numeracy skills from Year 7 upwards;
 - purchasing and using more mathematical textbooks and equipment;
 - focusing on teaching students the skills needed to write up scientific investigations;
 - preparing work specifically for higher attainers in mathematics and science;
 - allowing enough time to review learning at the end of science lessons;
 - identifying specific learning targets in the separate sciences;
 - telling students how to improve their work when marking their books and checking that they take note of comments made.
(paragraphs 7, 13, 46 and 130 to 141)
- (2) Strengthen the contribution of music to the performing arts by:
 - sharing good practice to improve the quality of teaching;
 - planning work specifically for students with special educational needs and those with above average musical talents;
 - marking students work with constructive comments;
 - introducing more lunchtime and after-school regular extra-curricular activities;
 - organising the storage and handling of instruments so they are kept in good condition;
 - using more headphones;
 - improving the soundproofing between the two linked music rooms and refurbishing the others;
 - encouraging more students to learn instruments.
(paragraphs 16, 25, 27, 46, 52, 68 and 187 to 196)
- (3) Review the arrangements for personal, social, health education and citizenship in Years 7 to 9 and consider introducing sex and relationships education and drugs education in these years. (paragraphs 47, 69 and 150)
- (4) Encourage more students to study modern foreign languages at GCSE by:
 - persevering with efforts to appoint modern foreign language teachers;
 - considering carefully the long-term implications of the September 2003 timetable arrangements for modern foreign languages;
 - eliminating classes taught by more than one teacher;
 - making sure that as little English as possible is spoken in modern foreign language lessons;
 - using the school's international links to investigate the feasibility of having foreign language assistants.
(paragraphs 57, 58, 180 to 186 and 271)
- (5) Meet statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 to 13.

In addition to the main areas for improvement, governors and senior management could consider the following points for their action plan:

- establishing health and safety checks as routine procedures in lessons; (paragraphs 84, 195 and 203)
- improving students' access to toilets; (paragraphs 83 and 110)
- addressing students' perceptions of how bullying incidents are considered and dealt with; (paragraphs 32 and 38)
- monitoring present sixth-form students' attainment in mathematics, history, law and theatre studies as results in these subjects for the last three years have reflected less than expected progress based on GCSE grades; (paragraph 20)
- extending the school's focus on non-European cultures; (paragraphs 67 and 68)
- broadening the provision for gifted and talented students; (paragraphs 104 and 128)
- reviewing to what degree the reduced number of students taking dual award GCSE science will lower the already small numbers choosing sciences in the sixth form; (paragraphs 58 and 222)
- developing the role of sixth-form students in the school. (paragraphs 37, 38 and 118)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | | |
|--|------------|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | Years 7-11 | 201 |
| | Sixth form | 65 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students | | 140 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Years 7-11 | | | | | | | |
| Number | 15 | 44 | 75 | 56 | 10 | 1 | 0 |
| Percentage | 7.5 | 22 | 37 | 28 | 5 | 0.5 | 0 |
| Sixth form | | | | | | | |
| Number | 8 | 21 | 20 | 14 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 12 | 32 | 31 | 22 | 3 | 0 | 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 | 1696 | 196 |
| Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals | 102 | 6 |

| Special educational needs | Y7-11 | Sixth form |
|---|-------|------------|
| Number of students with statements of special educational needs | 39 | 3 |
| Number of students on the school's special educational needs register | 256 | 3 |

| English as an additional language | No of students |
|---|----------------|
| Number of students with English as an additional language | 7 |

| Student mobility in the last school year | No of students |
|--|----------------|
| Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 22 |
| Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 24 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 7.3 |
| National comparative data | 7.8 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 1.7 |
| National comparative data | 1.2 |

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

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

| | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | 2002 | 171 | 159 | 330 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 117 | 126 | 140 |
| | Girls | 136 | 113 | 124 |
| | Total | 253 | 239 | 264 |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | School | 77 (74) | 72 (67) | 80 (70) |
| | National | 66 (64) | 67 (66) | 66 (66) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | School | 37 (31) | 43 (38) | 33 (31) |
| | National | 32 (31) | 45 (43) | 33 (34) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 122 | 121 | 116 |
| | Girls | 143 | 118 | 113 |
| | Total | 265 | 239 | 229 |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | School | 80 (79) | 72 (67) | 69 (60) |
| | National | 67 (65) | 70 (68) | 67 (64) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | School | 40 (30) | 37 (32) | 27 (22) |
| | National | 32 (31) | 44 (42) | 34 (33) |

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

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

| Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2002 | 133 | 115 | 248 |

| 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 | 67 | 128 | 131 |
| | Girls | 69 | 111 | 115 |
| | Total | 136 | 239 | 246 |
| Percentage of students achieving the standard specified | School | 55 (52) | 96 (95) | 99 (97) |
| | National | 50 (48) | 91 (91) | 96 (96) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|---------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per student | School | 44.0 |
| | National | 39.8 |

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 |
|--|------|------|--------|-------|
| | 2002 | 49 | 53 | 102 |

| | | For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations | | |
|----------|--|--|--------|-------|
| | | Male | Female | All |
| School | Number of candidates | 49 | 53 | 102 |
| | Average UCAS point score per candidate | 175.1 | 204.1 | 190.2 |
| National | Average point score per candidate | n/a | n/a | n/a |

| | | 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 | 36 | 48 | 84 | 28 | 25 | 53 |
| | Average UCAS point score per candidate | 131.7 | 165.6 | 151.1 | 114.6 | 90.4 | 103.2 |
| National | Average point score per candidate | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a |

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

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

| Categories used in the Annual School Census | No of students on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| White – British | 1860 | 127 | 5 |
| White – Irish | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| White – any other White background | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Black African | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – White and Asian | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed – any other mixed background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Indian | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British - Pakistani | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – African | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – any other Black background | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 6 | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-9

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 89 |
| Number of students per qualified teacher | 19.5 |

Education support staff: Y7-9

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 27 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 687 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7-9

| Financial year | 2001-2002 |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| | £ |
| Total income | 5,046,137 |
| Total expenditure | 5,116,840 |
| Expenditure per student | 2,808 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 74 |
|---|----|

Average teaching group size: Y7-9

| | |
|-------------|----|
| Key Stage 3 | 26 |
| Key Stage 4 | 24 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| | |
|--|-------|
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 5,382 |
|--|-------|

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| Balance carried forward to next year | -65,321 |
|--------------------------------------|---------|

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 52 |
|--|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 59 |
|--|----|

| | |
|---|---|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
|---|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 7 |
|--|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 4 |
|--|---|

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 1892 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 653 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 33 | 53 | 11 | 3 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 33 | 53 | 9 | 3 | 1 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 18 | 57 | 15 | 4 | 6 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 18 | 54 | 21 | 6 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 20 | 65 | 9 | 2 | 4 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 33 | 50 | 13 | 4 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 41 | 48 | 8 | 2 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 54 | 40 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 19 | 57 | 18 | 4 | 2 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 32 | 52 | 8 | 3 | 5 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 29 | 55 | 11 | 2 | 3 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 37 | 49 | 6 | 1 | 7 |

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN YEARS 7 TO 11

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Consistently above average standards in Year 9 tests and GCSEs, with some students attaining very high standards.
- Very good progress in all years.
- Very good teaching reflecting the teachers' thorough knowledge and understanding.
- Students are enthusiastic, interested and learn well.

Areas for improvement

- For the lowest attaining students the range of alternative examinations to GCSE is limited.

124. 2002 Year 9 test results were above average; girls attained better results than boys, but the gap between them was smaller than it is nationally. In these tests the English overall points score was the same as science and better than mathematics. An above average percentage of students attained Level 6 in English. GCSE results have been above average since 1997; in 2002 they were well above average for both A*-C and A*-G grades, and the percentage of A*/A grades was above average. Girls out-performed boys by the same difference as found nationally. Both boys' and girls' results have improved since the last inspection. English results in 2002 were well above mathematics and very far above science. The high standards noted in the last report have been maintained. Almost all students take English literature at GCSE; standards were above average at A*-C and A*-G, but below average at A*/A in 2002.
125. Standards seen during the inspection in Years 9 and 11 were above average. Higher attainers' work is of a very high standard. Practically all students speak articulately and confidently. Drama is well integrated into Years 7 to 9 lessons and students use drama techniques successfully, for example, practising hot seating to consider characters in an Alan Ayckbourn play very well, or making sophisticated comments about a printed charity advertisement. Many speculate and analyse thoughtfully, both orally and in writing. By Year 11 most students are discriminating readers and they write extensively for a range of purposes, with careful redrafting.
126. Students make very good progress. Students' achievement is due to the teachers' expertise and dedication, strong understanding of how to prepare students for examinations and skilful use of their very good subject knowledge, for example, injecting relevant quotations to support students' observations about Shakespeare. Students' interest and enthusiasm also contribute to their progress, as does the department's commendable policy of promoting reading, through class libraries and silent reading at the beginning of every lesson. Students with special educational needs make good progress, because the National Literacy Strategy progress units are taught well and the phonemic approach, using a commercially produced programme, works well.
127. Students learn very well because teaching is very good overall. Virtually all the teaching seen was satisfactory or better; most was good or very good and in some lessons it was excellent. Students learned extremely well about Ted Hughes' poetry and discussed the play *Mother Figure* intelligently, owing to excellent teaching on both topics. In the former, Year 11 students moved energetically around the room picking up and linking fragments of poetry before preparing perceptive analysis of a whole poem

and in the latter the teacher varied the pitch and volume of his voice successfully keeping all students attentive. Students work diligently because teachers prepare their lessons most thoughtfully, for example helpful analysis grids for Macbeth's soliloquy in the scene chosen for the end of Year 9 test. Students learn well in the context of word, sentence and text, but teachers have not fully prepared them for the new style of questions in the Year 9 tests. Students with special educational needs are well supported by specialist classroom assistants, but not all teachers are fully aware of these students' targets in their individual education plans. Students wordprocess efficiently and teachers give them good Internet references to follow up, but overall students do not use ICT enough in lessons.

128. The leadership and management of the department are very good. High quality planning, sharing of ideas and a sense of team-work all contribute to the department's success. New teachers are very well supported and the department is notable for its arrangements for training new staff. Assessment is conducted carefully against National Curriculum levels, and there has been thorough self-evaluation to improve teaching further. Classrooms have attractive and thought-provoking displays; they are spacious, but some can only be accessed through others, which occasionally disturbs lessons. The progress of gifted and talented students is not monitored enough, but the range of extra-curricular activities is good. Students visit battlefields linked to their study of First World War literature, and the theatre, particularly for Shakespeare performances. As in the sixth form, there are no regular debating or discussion groups.
129. Literacy is taught well in other subjects with key words displayed in most classrooms. Glossaries of technical terms are used in mathematics, design and technology and geography, and specialist vocabulary is included regularly in physical education and history, but less so in music. In science students extend their technical vocabulary, but do not use such words regularly when they write up experiments. Art and design students in Year 12 made an excellent presentation of photographic work, both orally and in writing. The very good arrangements for encouraging silent reading in English are extended well in some tutor groups. Where this happens, it benefits students' progress in literacy.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching with some very good and outstanding features.
- Teachers' understanding and knowledge of the subject is good.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good

Areas for improvement

- Standards, particularly at GCSE.
- Too few books and too little equipment. Students do not use computers enough.

130. 2002 test results at the end of Year 9 were average. An above average percentage of students attained the expected Level 5 but a below average percentage attained Level 6 and above. Students' achievement in relation to their standards on entry was as expected. Results in English and science were better. Teachers' assessment of standards at the end of Year 9 were matched by the results. Since the last inspection, results have improved at a rate above that seen nationally. GCSE results were below the national and similar school averages in 2002. They were well below those for English but above those for science. A* and A grades were well below average. Whilst

results have steadily improved since the last inspection, they dropped in 2002. Lack of specialist teachers during the last academic year contributed to this.

131. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced overall, but there has been limited use of 'catch-up' course materials for students with below average attainment on entry. As a result of good teaching students are now learning well, extending their knowledge and understanding of mathematics and acquiring good skills. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are now average. For example, higher attaining students in Year 9 confidently solve simultaneous equations and use trigonometric expressions for right angled triangles. Lower attaining students are less confident, but still solve linear equations. Higher attaining students in Year 11 have a very good understanding of quadratic equations and can sketch the graphs of some mathematical functions. Lower attaining students are unable to solve quadratic equations but are confident with simultaneous equations. In all years, the lowest-attaining students' poor numeracy skills hamper their work in mathematics as they have difficulty with basic number, times tables and percentages. Students make good progress in all years.
132. Teaching is good and all students learn well as a result. Whilst teaching was unsatisfactory in a very small proportion of lessons seen during the inspection, in many lessons it was very good and there were also a few excellent lessons. The principal features of these effective lessons were the teachers' application of their good subject knowledge and their good well-focused planning which included clear objectives which they explained to students at the beginning of lessons. In many lessons, they used several different methods which maintained students' interest and engendered learning. In a Year 11 lesson lower attaining students enjoyed using compasses to understand bearings and the teacher's insistence on accuracy increased their learning. In the same lesson a learning support assistant knew exactly how to help a few students understand perimeters.
133. The level of challenge in the majority of lessons was very good; just occasionally, students were not expected to do sufficient higher level work nor to work enough by themselves. Teachers use tests very well to monitor students' progress, to identify underachievers and to adjust their teaching, but not fully to adjust the amount of time they spend on areas of weakness. Teachers' day-to-day marking is thorough but they do not always tell students how they could improve. Many students clearly enjoy mathematics and are eager to learn, although a Year 8 class made too little progress when a few boys refused to concentrate properly and in a Year 11 class the teacher did not monitor discipline and concentration systematically, so a few girls achieved too little.
134. The department is very well managed and the hard-working and dedicated principal teacher gives very good leadership to a now full complement of well-qualified teachers. The problems generated by staff shortages in the last academic year have been resolved. The principal teacher is well focused on how the department should evolve, and as a result there is evidence of new developments which are likely to lead to further improvements. Lesson observations to monitor the quality of teaching are used to develop further good practice within the department. The amount of equipment, such as graphical calculators, and number of books are barely satisfactory. There are too few books for students to take them home, which restricts their independent learning. Even though the school has many computers, students do not use them often enough so they rarely benefit from ICT as a teaching and learning tool. Some classrooms are too small for even average-sized groups which makes it hard for teachers to give individual students help and encourage group work. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Provided that the current good quality of teaching continues and the number of computers increases, the department has the potential for very good improvement.

135. Students' numeracy skills are good overall. Most students use mental arithmetic skilfully and with a good degree of accuracy. They use calculators competently, but are often discouraged from using them except for complicated calculations or to check answers. This is good practice. Year 7 students can divide decimal numbers, of less than one, by two, with a high degree of confidence and some can round numbers up or down. Students in Year 9 are able to use directed numbers skilfully in mental arithmetic. Teachers encourage students to apply their numeracy skills in most other subjects. In geography, for example, students make good use of measuring, graphs and tables to collect and interpret data. In science, they measure and transfer tabulated data into graphical form. In design and technology, however, they do not measure, and do not apply mathematical formulae often enough. The strategies for the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum are effective overall. All teachers have been trained about how to strengthen students' numeracy through their subjects. With a whole-school numeracy policy, these skills are being developed in a systematic way in most subjects.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Above average standards by the end of Year 9.
- Very good features of teaching which enrich students' learning.
- Good leadership and management to strengthen the department.
- Thorough analysis of test and examination results to judge the department's performance.
- Students develop good practical skills because of high quality technician support and learn and develop their numeracy skills well.

Areas for improvement

- The relatively low percentages of students attaining Level 6 and above in Year 9 and A*/A GCSE grades.
- Raising achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Targets which are too broad and do not focus on particular aspects of science.
- A lack of imaginative endings to lessons which effectively involve students.
- Teachers do not mark work constructively and do not routinely check that students have acted upon comments made.

136. Year 9 test results overall were above average in 2002, better than in 2001 when they were average. Boys and girls did equally well. These results represent very good progress in relation to standards on entry in Year 7. GCSE A*-C results were well below average in the double award examination in 2002, significantly lower than in 2000 when they were close to average. Although results in single science were better in 2002 than in 2001, they were below average. Progress overall was less than expected based on levels achieved by the same students in their Year 9 tests. Standards dipped noticeably in 2002, mainly because of extreme teacher vacancies which caused a number of students to underachieve. The department has actively recruited permanent teachers and adopted a new GCSE syllabus which includes more regular assessments. Results in GCSE rural science were very low. Most of the few students who studied it attained grade E.

137. Present Year 9 standards are above average and progress is good, but strongly linked to the quality of teaching. Year 7 students made very good progress learning about

separating mixtures, because their teacher's adept questions made them apply their primary school ideas about evaporation to recapturing liquid that had been separated from ink. Thus they learnt about distillation. Books show how regularly and well students sharpen their mathematical skills, for instance, in calculating speed, measuring electrical current, or drawing and interpreting scatter-graphs. These numerous opportunities to develop numeracy are a strength of the department. Students also write interesting poems about the solar system in Year 9, but, although they hear and understand technical language when teachers stress it, they do not use it often enough in their own explanations. They use computers fairly regularly, for example, to collect results, classify materials and construct circuits.

138. Standards in Year 11 are average. Attainment is notably affected by the quality of teaching, which is satisfactory overall in these years. Everyone enjoyed being a crash investigator in a Year 10 lesson about forces and motion because the teacher posed problems that made students think. They were then left to discover for themselves, what might have caused an accident between an Audi and a Ford Fiesta. They made excellent progress in interpreting relationships between force, mass and acceleration in this dramatic situation. Their learning was also strengthened by their very good teamwork. Year 11 students also honed up their understanding about respiration in cells, by helping each other to fathom out the process. All students know the stages they should take through an investigation but they do not justify their choice of apparatus and several find it difficult to identify flaws and anomalies in results because teachers do not focus on these skills early enough in Years 7 to 9. Inspection analysis of work highlights that the majority of students' observations, analysis of results, and evaluations in class work are too superficial. They do not draw accurately labelled two-dimensional diagrams enough.
139. Teaching is good overall, ranging from excellent to unsatisfactory. It is most effective in Years 7 to 9. This variation in the quality of teaching is reflected in the quality of students' learning. Teachers plan well in Years 7 to 9, with efficient help from high quality technicians' support, so students develop good practical skills. A strong feature in good lessons was students' eagerness to learn, which plays a major part in raising standards. They were also remarkably patient in uninspiring lessons. Excellent teaching was markedly imaginative in making students reason out problems about complex relationships in science; superficial answers were not accepted. Students with special educational needs make good progress and contribute well in lessons, because of good quality extra support. On the other hand, students who learn more quickly than others are not given enough challenging work to match their potential.
140. Lessons usually began well with starter activities that set the scene, but rushed endings prevented students from reflecting imaginatively about what they had done, so learning was less than expected. Teaching was unsatisfactory in a tiny proportion of lessons but there were shortcomings in others. Plans focused upon the organisation of activities rather than on what students needed to learn; too much time was given to simple work; pace was too slow and students were guided too much. Most teachers mark work to encourage students but not all give clear indications about how well students are progressing. The best practice makes students think, encourages them, and also routinely checks that they have responded to the comments.
141. Good teaching and learning results from good leadership and management. The high quality technical support also contributes much to students' learning. Teachers analyse students' test and examination results carefully but do not use this evaluation to identify precise and specific learning targets for students in the separate sciences, which would be useful. Teaching and learning are monitored well through classroom observations but not yet through regular analysis of class books. Progress since the last inspection has been good with revision of the schemes of work, planning for and

teaching numeracy and literacy, provision of new computer technology and new storage and preparation facilities in the laboratories.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very well and attain above average standards. They show very good attitudes to their work.
- The very good, imaginative teaching ensures that students learn very well.
- The principal teacher's excellent leadership is reflected in very good planning and schemes of work and excellent teamwork in the department.
- Very good provision is made for students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students.
- There is excellent extra-curriculum provision.

Areas for improvement

- Students' work is not displayed widely in corridors and open spaces around the school for all to enjoy.

142. Students' attainment is above average by the end of Years 9 and 11. Since the last inspection standards have improved, they are now consistently above average and usually better than predicted. 2002 GCSE results were above average overall but significantly over one quarter of the students attained A*/A grades (the highest percentage for any subject in the school) and very few less than grade D. Girls attained over 80 per cent grades A*-C, and the department continues with its determined and successful effort to narrow the gender gap.
143. Students' work and progress are guided by the teachers' very good schemes of work, planning and good, consistently applied, assessment procedures. Teachers successfully encourage students to be self critical and aware of their own standards. In a Year 9 lesson, because of the teacher's excellent detailed preparation and selection of resources, students very successfully interpreted a design to a portrait of their face in a cubist style. They successfully applied their very good understanding of what they had previously learned about Picasso's work. The teacher quickly picked up where students needed further help by perceptively assessing their work as the lesson progressed. Every student had their work evaluated, with suggestions for further development and improvement, and all responded with hard work, enthusiasm, understanding and motivation.
144. In Year 8 students follow an excellent sequence of work, starting with sketches of North American photographs and culminating in three-dimensional totem poles and animal masks. Another Year 8 programme helps them to acquire understanding of Japanese culture and history as they design puppet theatres or lacquered plates. One group was observed to a background of Japanese music, following Japanese greetings at the beginning of the lesson. Teachers extend students' understanding of social and cultural development introducing them to artists from a wide range of cultures.
145. Because the overall quality of teaching is very good and often excellent, students learn very well and make very good progress. In a Year 11 class the teacher clearly illustrated how students should improve the already high quality of their work by asking challenging questions which made students think. In a Year 7 lesson on pop art, students mastered how to develop two-dimensional designs into three-dimensional work after seeing the teacher's and other artists' work and using this to interpret their

own images. Students analyse, evaluate and justify their work most competently and describe how its style is influenced by their studies of a wide range of artists. They use computers well to research and record information about artists and for image development. Lessons proceed at a very good pace.

146. The management and leadership of the subject are excellent. The principal teacher has put into place, through regular weekly minuted meetings, a system whereby each teacher contributes their own very high talents and levels of expertise to the whole department. Planning and schemes of work are very good and the range of opportunities for students to study aspects of two- and three-dimensional art and design is very wide. From an already high standard there has been a good improvement since the last inspection and the accommodation is now very good. The department rightly believes this has contributed to the improving standards. The department has its own useful collection of books and pictures as does the open learning centre. Homework is linked very well to class work. A large number of students attend extra-curricular activities. Very good contacts have been set up within the local community, for example several primary schools send students to classes on Saturday mornings. Students' work is not celebrated enough as very little is displayed in corridors and open spaces around the school.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Specific citizenship units of work in all years.
- A valuable audit of how all departments can contribute to citizenship has raised awareness of this subject.
- Certificates of citizenship are available to the students who achieve well in this subject.

Areas for improvement

- The benefits that the students might have from the citizenship topics in Years 7 to 9 are limited by it being taught in two per week, 25 minute tutor sessions.
- Opportunities for students to extend their skills of participation and responsible action are limited.
- The schemes of work do not highlight the three important strands of the National Curriculum for citizenship in an explicit way.

147. The school has been developing citizenship topics for the last few years and so they are now well-structured. Citizenship is taught as discrete units of work within the PSHE programme in all years. In Year 7 the programme includes units of study on communities and lifestyles, rules, rights and responsibilities and Britain's government. Work in Year 8 looks at budgeting, preparation for the world of work and more global issues such as the reasons for and responses to disasters. Contributions to citizenship in Year 9 draw attention to authoritative bodies such as the police as well as to political bodies such as the European Parliament. In addition, students consider new scientific developments linked to the need to act responsibly towards the environment and animals. The study of citizenship in Years 10 and 11 covers broad topics such as prejudice and discrimination, homelessness, conflict resolution, representative democracy and the role of the United Nations.

148. The work described above represents the more formal learning aspects of citizenship. There are nonetheless other events and activities which help students to focus on aspects of their development that are equally important if they are to become good and effective citizens: skills such as enquiry and communication or participation and

responsible action. In terms of the former, in religious education in Years 7 to 9, the students do a significant amount of work which challenges them to justify their opinions on a whole range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Other work, particularly in Years 10 and 11, encourages them to analyse press information and to discuss issues such as travellers' rights. Other debates and discussions include the issue of the new airport at Cliffe.

149. PSHE lessons help students to think through and challenge stereotypes and injustice such as prejudice and discrimination. Opportunities for students to develop their skills of participation and responsible action are provided through the mini-schools and school councils though the number of students participating directly is relatively small. Hence students' appreciation of the democratic processes involved in these councils is fairly limited. A range of charitable activities provides occasional opportunities for students to take responsible action. In general however, too few opportunities exist for the students to develop these particular skills.
150. In Years 7 to 9 citizenship is only taught within the two per week 25-minute tutor sessions and so all form tutors teach it. In Years 10 and 11 a small group of teachers teach discrete PSHE/citizenship lessons, but form tutors also contribute within form time. The quality of teaching very much reflects the range of interest, expertise, and level of commitment that individual teachers and form tutors bring to the lessons. The quality of teaching also reflects the amount of time available. In Years 7 to 9 the two, 25-minute tutor times per week are too short. This significantly reduces the quality of the teaching as well as the quality of learning. The school has appreciated this and plans to have a few specialist teachers teaching PSHE/citizenship, in 50-minute lessons, are being discussed.
151. Overall however, in the lessons that dealt more directly with citizenship, the quality of teaching during the inspection was satisfactory overall, and often good. The best teaching was mostly in Years 10 and 11. The topics of the lessons seen included politics, personal finance, censorship, racism, and the role of the United Nations. Lessons are well planned, with good content and most teachers are confident and enthusiastic. At times teachers did not encourage students to be involved enough, particularly in discussions, which reduced the quality of learning; students found it difficult to discuss and express opinions about unfamiliar topics.
152. Most students are interested in citizenship topics and discuss how they appreciate the significance of the work to their future lives. In a few instances, the teachers' demands on the students were too low, in terms of both the level and amount of work they were expected to complete in the time available. Standards of attainment are largely in line with what would be expected at the end of Years 9 and 11 and students' progress is satisfactory.
153. Leadership, management and organisation of the subject are good. A lot of work has been done over the last few years to ensure that citizenship has a high profile. The range of documentation and the schemes of work are good though it does not always explicitly reflect the three main strands of citizenship highlighted in the National Curriculum. Procedures for formal assessment are being discussed but already certificates for achievement in citizenship are available.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

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| Strengths |
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- Effective organisation and planning of teaching in Years 7 to 9 lessons.
- Very good accommodation.
- Good leadership ensures a clear educational direction.
- Application of comprehensive procedures to assess students' attainment and progress.

Areas for improvement

- Below expected achievement for some Years 10 and 11 students.
- The organisation and planning of teaching in Years 10 and 11 lessons.
- The breadth of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11.

154. Teachers assessed 2002 standards at the end of Year 9 as close to average, with girls performing better than boys. GCSE results for design and technology overall have been consistently below average for several years. However, the 2002 results were significantly affected by very poor results in electronics, whilst food technology, graphics products and resistant materials results were close to average. In most technology subjects girls do better, and sometimes much better, than boys. Overall, standards have not changed much since the last inspection. Electronics is not taught at present. Standards of work seen are average overall in all years.
155. Students' standards are near those expected nationally on entry to the school although their experiences of technology are varied. They make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. Items students make themselves are often of a higher standard than students' design folders and to some extent this is the reverse of the observations made during the last inspection. In some cases the workbooks Year 9 students use limit their attainment – the lack of a flexible final design format inhibits them all, especially higher attainers. By the end of Year 11 several students produce work of an above average standard, but those who do not complete their coursework clearly attain below average standards. In food technology, most coursework is completed on time, so these students do well both in design and making. Girls often take more care over the presentation of their coursework.
156. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good overall and some is very good. It was excellent in one lesson. The overall quality reflects that teachers plan lessons very well with a clear time-scale for each unit of work. Staff use their knowledge and understanding to create interesting lessons, vary their teaching styles and they develop good relationships with the students. Teachers set short-term goals and mark work regularly to encourage students to complete it. In a Year 9 lesson, where students were constructing mirror frames, the teacher had explained the design process well, allowing students to be creative at the same time as constructing accurately.
157. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall but ranges from very good to poor. In the very good lessons teachers are enthusiastic and well organised. In particular they constantly monitor the progress of coursework and take action to ensure that students do not get behind with targets. In many lessons students were creative and enjoyed making unique items that they could later take home and use. In the lessons that were unsuccessful, students spent too long on irrelevant discussion when they needed to complete or improve their coursework. In a few groups teachers rely too much on students completing coursework at home, rather than letting them get on with it in lessons when guidance, encouragement and peer contact are available. Years 10 and 11 assessment records are not always easily accessible for teachers to refer to in coursework lessons. Keywords are regularly referred to and tested, thus improving literacy, but limited use of ICT and numeracy hampers the quality of some students' projects.

158. The quality of learning closely follows the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 and is therefore good overall. Students use a variety of hand tools and some power tools effectively when cutting and shaping wood, metal, plastic, fibreboard and cardboard. Most of this work is backed up by students' designs, but these sometimes lack precision. Students prepare increasingly complex food products and follow hygiene and cleanliness rules. In a Year 7 lesson where students were weighing and evaluating the properties of apples they co-operated well together and made very good progress. Students with special physical or behavioural needs are frequently helped by a learning support assistant. In Years 10 and 11 most students are keen to learn, listen attentively and are interested. In a Year 11 food technology lesson, learning and achievement were high because students had been trained to be well organised. However, the department recognises that time management is a difficult issue for some students. Several students achieve less well than expected in Years 10 and 11, partly because occasionally students are allowed to miss lessons to follow other interests in school.
159. The curriculum includes graphic products, resistant materials and food but not textiles or electronics, the latter due to a lack of staff with this teaching expertise. Some art and design specialist teachers have valuable expertise which contributed to above average design work in one lesson. Almost half Years 10 and 11 students do not study any technology subject. Comprehensive records of students' progress are kept. Marks, combined with end of unit assessment grades, are converted to National Curriculum levels, which is helpful to students in gauging progress against personal targets. A 'user friendly' departmental computer record has been developed and is particularly designed to highlight both higher and lower achieving students.
160. The newly appointed principal teacher, who gives good leadership, has a very clear understanding of the areas needing improvement and the right targets have been identified: further professional training for teachers and an increase in resources, especially computer-aided design and management. The accommodation is very good for the present number of students though the rooms are not all in the same building. There are too few basic items, such as chisels and saws, even for small classes, and no ICT room. Training for teachers in the use of design software is taking place. Staffing has been difficult but is now stable. Support for experienced and inexperienced teachers is strong, particularly needed in resistant materials and graphic products. The resistant materials technician teaches some lessons. However there is no technician for food technology - an area for development.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Students learn well because teachers plan interesting tasks that deepen understanding.
- Students display keen enthusiasm for learning and respond quickly to teachers' instructions.
- Regular assessment by teachers informs students clearly about their progress and how to improve.

Areas for improvement

- The below average proportion of GCSE grades A*-C.
- Students' ICT skills are underused in geography lessons.

161. In 2002 the percentage of students gaining GCSE grades was above average overall, but below average for grades A*-C. Good teaching and students' hard work meant that results were better than predicted by the students' standards in Year 9. A few students

under-performed because they failed to complete coursework despite teachers' vigorous reminders. Improvement in the percentage of A*-C grades over the previous three years has been good. Boys' attainment, although lower than girls', is better than at the time of the last inspection and the gap is lower than that seen nationally.

162. Standards of work seen by the end of Year 9 are average. However the proportion of students attaining Level 6 and above is below average. Students enter the school in Year 7 with mixed geographical experiences and most have knowledge below that expected. They achieve well by the end of Year 9 because they are enthused to learn by good teaching. Lower attaining Year 7 students, including those with special educational needs, understand farming terms such as *pastoral* and *arable*, but have difficulties with reading and writing. In Year 8, students identify the ways animals adapt to desert conditions. They provide geographical explanations for a snake's scales and its technique for moving over slippery sand. Year 9 higher attaining students use geographical language with confidence. They know the statistics that provide measures of development around the world, such as gross domestic product. They compare the provision of health care in different countries well. Students reflect on the moral disparities they discover and ask, for example, 'Are there any Fair Trade makers of trainers?' when they know the very low wages paid to workers in developing countries.
163. By the end of Year 11 standards in work seen are slightly below average, but students, including those with special educational needs, achieve better than expected. Lower attaining students know appropriate subject vocabulary but often need prompts to illustrate them. For example, students in Year 10 knew the term *pull factors* to describe what attracts people to move to cities in the Third World, but were slow to suggest better health care and other reasons. A graph helped Year 11 students explain how tourism grows rapidly with improved access and then stabilises when resorts become crowded. Higher attaining students use terms confidently and relate current news to the topics they study. Year 11 students studying world trade knew of the disease affecting bananas. They wondered about its effect on countries that relied largely on a single crop. Such students write extensively and present balanced arguments, for example about the proposed expansion of Ashford. They show skill in collecting and evaluating evidence, and writing conclusions to independent investigations, such as a traffic management scheme in Canterbury.
164. Teaching and learning are good; in many lessons they are very good. Lessons are consistently very well planned. At the start of each lesson students know what they will learn and how the lesson fits into a sequence within a particular topic. Teachers use their very confident subject knowledge to build up students' learning at an realistic rate. They frequently refer to vocabulary and spelling and students have a glossary of new subject words and a spelling list of words misspelled. Students' extend their numeracy skills by interpreting tables and graphs of statistics, such as population data. Teachers use methods and devise tasks that match students' abilities. For example, a class in Year 7 with a large number of students with special educational needs visited the school farm. This provided a case study for the topic of farming in south east England. Students were not expected to make notes but to develop the skills of listening, observing, and touching the animals and feeds. For homework students had a well-designed sheet to complete a record of what they remembered from this practical lesson. Those with learning needs received help with this task from learning support teachers.
165. Students are well informed about their progress through helpful marking and assessments that indicate standards against National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. They are clear how they can improve, and some lessons focus on how to answer questions to get higher marks. Occasionally the pace does not match the needs of higher attaining students, for example when eager, higher attaining Year 7

students spent too long colouring a graph. Students respond quickly to teachers and their behaviour is consistently good.

166. The principal teacher gives good clear leadership to a strong team that is committed to raising standards. Through effective management, observation of teaching and scrutiny of plans, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection, and standards are rising. In Years 10 and 11 the majority of students attain GCSE grades C and D, but skilful teaching is inspiring such students to achieve well. Students' ICT skills, developed elsewhere in the school, are not used enough to capture the dynamic nature of geography.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The attitudes of the students towards the subject are very good.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.

Areas for improvement

- Girls' below average GCSE results, which are significantly lower than boys'.
- ICT is not used often enough.

167. Year 9 standards seen are average. GCSE results, although improved since the last inspection, were below average in 2002. In the last three years, all students have attained grades A* - G, which is above average, and most have also exceeded their predicted target grades. Boys significantly outperform girls, which is the reverse of the national picture. In Years 10 and 11, present students are working at an average level which is due to more focused teaching and a good emphasis on examination skills. Most students have a good grasp of chronology and handle source material well. In a Year 9 lesson on censorship during World War Two, very effective teaching using first-hand evidence, led students to consider critically the issues involved both then and now. Lower attaining students find both retaining knowledge and answering examination questions difficult.
168. Students in Years 7 to 9 make good progress and achieve well. Most enter Year 7 with below average attainment and have reached average standards by the end of Year 9. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is also good as students with a wide range of attainment choose this subject for GCSE. As well as good and sometimes very good teaching, the students' very good attitudes to the subject also contribute to their progress – they are very interested and concentrate very well. An effective department policy on literacy helps students to understand terms such as 'Blitz' and 'segregation'. Many key words are displayed on classroom walls and teachers refer to these during lessons and to help students with their writing.
169. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are very well planned, teachers have thorough subject knowledge and their teaching methods are good, including a good variety of activities. Students generally behave well although some minor instances of restlessness were seen. Teachers use historical sources, especially video excerpts, well. This was seen in a particularly effective Year 10 lesson on the roles of Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King in the American Black Civil Rights struggle in the 1950s. Several stimulating examples of students carrying out role-play were seen. These helped students to learn. In a Year 11 lesson, both teaching and learning were excellent when the teacher set up a 'Nazi school' and treated the students as if

they were in Germany in 1939. The students joined in with great enthusiasm and their feedback at the end of the lesson showed how much their learning had increased. Students with special educational needs learn well because the tasks they are given closely match their attainment and learning support assistants help them well.

170. Teaching methods have been effectively reviewed with the aim of stimulating interest in the subject. As a result, numbers choosing the subject for GCSE have increased. The subject contributes well to students' spiritual awareness, seen in a Year 7 lesson on the murder of Thomas Becket. Students discussed thoughtfully the importance of religion then and now. Lessons have a strong moral content, challenging students to think deeply about issues. A lesson in Year 10 showed this very well, when a photograph of a black lynching in the Southern United States in the 1950s caused revulsion among the students and the Billie Holliday song 'Strange Fruits' stimulated them to discuss the rights and wrongs of the attitudes of the time. Cultural and social issues are well covered by the study of native Americans in Year 7 and of Nazi Germany in Year 11. There are good extra-curricular activities, including over 50 Year 9 students visiting Ypres, as part of their study of World War One. There is a good scheme of assessment, soundly based on national and examination requirements. Realistic targets are set and students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
171. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed principal teacher is already giving a clear educational lead to the department. All the teachers are qualified specialists. Teaching is effectively monitored and evaluated, with written feedback and discussion afterwards. With only one computer in the department, ICT is not used enough, which has an adverse effect on learning. Accommodation is just satisfactory, but some large teaching groups are rather cramped. There are good displays on the walls. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teaching has been thoroughly reviewed and it is now more sharply focused on students' learning, with a more stimulating variety of methods and more discussion work. Results are still below average, but the department is making good efforts to improve.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11.
- Above average GNVQ results in 2002.
- Good relationships between teachers and students who develop good attitudes.
- The high priority given to ICT and the very good computer facilities.
- Good assessment of students' progress.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not develop enough ICT competence in some subjects and use computers too little in several subjects.
- Several students' work too slowly in Years 7 to 9.
- Work is not always matched to students' needs and abilities.

172. All students have discrete ICT lessons. Years 9 and 10 students are taking the new vocational GCSE and/or GNVQ courses. Years 10 and 11 students take either the part one GNVQ course, at foundation or intermediate levels, or higher attaining students can opt for the full intermediate GNVQ course. The number of computers, their specification and the quality of software has improved significantly since the last inspection, with considerable school and outside funding. Standards are above average overall in all

years, reflecting good achievement given students' standards when they enter the school.

173. The inspection confirmed teachers' assessments of Year 9 students' above average National Curriculum levels in 2002, maintaining the high trend from previous years. Better, more consistent teaching and more rigorous assessment have helped to improve standards and raise achievement. In 2002 nearly two-thirds, an above average percentage of GNVQ students, attained grades A*-C overall. Girls did better than boys. The foundation GNVQ students, mostly boys, did not achieve as well as expected; their examination performance was badly affected by several changes of teacher and their weak literacy skills, which lowered their coursework marks. Many students on the full intermediate GNVQ course achieved better than teachers expected.
174. Most students, including those with special educational needs, gain good basic skills in discrete ICT lessons by the end of Year 9. In Years 7 and 8, a few do not fulfil their potential because teachers do not always match tasks to their individual ability, so they work too slowly, especially in large classes. Students apply ICT skills well in several subjects, such as music and science, but not in all subjects. Most students develop and explore information well by research on the net, in class or on their home computers.
175. Years 7 to 9 students make at least satisfactory progress in lessons and those who use computers at home or in lunchtime clubs make very good progress. Additional support for students with special educational needs was not seen during the inspection, although they made satisfactory progress. Most students develop, explore and communicate information well and skills in modelling, using spreadsheets, and control, producing flowcharts from a simulation, are good, and above average. In a good Year 7 lesson seen, students developed good basic presentation skills with well-planned PowerPoint slides, and they manipulated images well. They understood letter display and how to mail merge well, often better than students in higher years. Some Year 9 students showed very good attitudes by voluntarily attending extra lessons after school. They use formulae very well to show the income and expenses of a theme park. Higher attaining students have created a database of retail stores and can generate interesting queries.
176. Year 10 students on the new vocational GCSE course use the Internet effectively to explore the web and import interesting photographs, for example to design brochures. Year 11 GNVQ coursework projects show students evaluate problems well. They prepare good business documents, including business cards and letterheads. In a very good lesson, higher attaining students supported each other very well in rapidly producing print-outs of their databases for a world tour of their chosen pop group. They showed above average skills in creating and using macros. In all ICT lessons, students are positive about the subject and support each other willingly. Moral aspects of ICT, such as the impact of the Data Protection Act, are satisfactorily covered in schemes of work, but students do not gain enough experience of the impact of ICT in different cultures. Students make good progress in Years 10 and 11.
177. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11 where most teaching is by specialists. Teachers have good relationships with students and create a calm working atmosphere. Most students work well on their own, for example, on mail merging and spreadsheets. Teachers plan and structure lessons well to make full use of practice time. They support individual students well and keep most of them well motivated and interested. Students use equipment safely and responsibly.
178. Teachers mark completed work constructively and regularly, against National Curriculum or GNVQ levels, so students are clear about their progress. Students record these marks on useful checklists and on the GNVQ course students can

improve their grades after teachers' detailed feedback. Teachers set useful homework, for example planning tasks and web research. Most students have home computers and use them well for wordprocessing and research for other subjects.

179. Severe teacher recruitment problems have affected ICT standards since the last inspection, but more stable staffing, together with very good accommodation and computer equipment, has helped to raise standards. Overall, leadership and management of ICT are very good and the large teaching team, mostly specialists, is very ably led by the co-ordinator, who has brought in rigorous procedures for effectively monitoring and assessing students' progress. There is insufficient monitoring of the use of ICT in other subjects, to fully address the government's new ICT strategy. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good overall and the subject has good capacity for further development.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Above average standards in German in all years.
- Good teaching in German.
- Recent progress in leadership of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing breadth, balance and entitlement in the modern foreign languages curriculum.
- Improving students' below average standards in Years 10 and 11 and attitudes to spoken French by reducing the amount of English in teaching.
- Establishing and implementing policies on teaching and learning.

180. Only higher attaining students study German, as their first language in Year 7, with French as a second modern foreign language in Year 8. From September 2004 no students will learn two languages in Years 8 and 9. Standards in German have improved since the last inspection and GCSE results have been well above average since 1999. GCSE French results have been well below average since 1998 and have declined since the last inspection. Girls' standards in both languages at the end of Year 11 are higher than boys', by more than the national average.
181. Standards observed in French are average in Years 7 to 9. These are similar to the standards reported at the last inspection. In two Year 9 classes seen, poor attitudes and a disrespect for the French language precluded any real progress. This is the long-term impact of teachers using too much English in lessons. In a Year 8 French lesson, well-motivated and gifted students lacked the confidence to move around the room and talk in French to each other in order to carry out a survey. A Year 7 class discussing clothing made good progress because they spoke a lot of French and enjoyed this active approach. Standards observed in German in Years 7 to 9 are above average. In a lesson, when they rehearsed short plays, Year 8 students used German naturally to communicate and worked with enthusiasm. They used tenses in context and were able to adapt language.
182. Standards observed in French in Years 10 and 11 are below average. Students are well motivated but speak hesitantly, although they understand spoken and written French,

and higher attainers write accurate French after re-drafting. As in Year 9, their speaking standards are lower than the other skills because of the long-term effect of too little teaching and learning in French. Standards observed in German in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Students make good progress because they learn through hearing and speaking German but they do not write enough at length. In a Year 11 lesson, discussing an article from a German magazine, students spoke German naturally to the teacher and each other.

183. Learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, although teaching is good. The quality of teaching has therefore been seen to have improved since the last inspection because it is well planned and most teachers talk French or German in lessons. Years 7 and 8 students will often speak in French and always in German. Year 9 students show that they are uncomfortable with the use of French, particularly, by making frivolous comments in English. They are more comfortable when they are allowed to use English to explain that they understand a piece of French or when they can read or write. This is because in the past they, and their teachers, have not spoken French enough in lessons. Although teachers plan their lessons in detail, there is rarely any work specifically for the highest attainers and never any for students with special educational needs. This means that these students do not learn as effectively as others.
184. The curriculum in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory in organisation, balance and entitlement. In previous years only about a third of students could study more than one modern foreign language in Years 8 and 9. From this school year, no student will have this option. This restricts choices for GCSE and the sixth form. Only a quarter of the current Year 9 students have chosen to continue studying a language for GCSE. Students say that they would welcome the opportunity to study more than one language, including languages not currently taught in school.
185. Too many classes are shared between two teachers during the week, which does not help teachers to establish a constructive atmosphere in which students feel confident to speak French or German. Time allowed for Years 8 and 9 students studying two languages is low and it does not give teachers enough time to develop and practise students' speaking in particular. This issue has remained unresolved since the last inspection. With too few text books, students can neither have one each in the classroom nor take a book home to help homework. The German course, in particular, is out of date. The modern foreign language rooms and corridor are enhanced by a high standard of display, creating a stimulating environment.
186. Teachers are well qualified and three of them are native speakers. The lack of foreign language assistants deprives staff of potential support and students of additional role-models. Leadership and management of the department are good. The two acting principal teachers have developed a team ethos and led work on monitoring teaching and learning, policies and schemes of work. All policies are not yet reflected in practice: teaching does not include enough speaking and marking is inconsistent.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The good use of ICT to support learning.
- Students are willing to learn and respond well to good teaching.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and good musicians.

Areas for improvement

- Below average standards overall in Years 10 and 11 - students underachieve because teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers' marking of students' work is not constructive, so students do not know how well they are doing or what to do to get better.
- Students with special educational needs and those with above average musical talent do not make enough progress because teachers do not modify work for them.
- The poor soundproofing of the music room leads to lessons being disrupted.

187. Standards by the end of Year 9 are average; this represents satisfactory achievement given students' standards on entry to the school. 2002 results in GCSE were below average. Students' results in music were lower than those they attained in their other subjects. Boys and girls achieve similar standards. Standards by the end of Year 11 are below average; students make unsatisfactory progress between the end of Year 9 and GCSEs.
188. In all years, students use their good computer skills to create, manipulate and refine sounds using electronic keyboards and a good range of music software. Higher attainers create melodic lines using computer software and add various tracks to develop their ideas. There are fewer instrumentalists than normally found in a school of this size which prevents the highest standards being obtained. Lower attaining students produce simple compositions but find it difficult to add suitable rhythmic accompaniments to their melodies. They cannot always maintain their own part accurately in group performances even when clapping simple patterns.
189. Staffing difficulties have contributed to the lack of consistency in teaching and hence the below average GCSE results in 2002. Students' practical work is the strength of their GCSE coursework but few reach the expected standard and they lack confidence with the more theoretical and historical aspects of the examination. Two Year 11 students could not accurately suggest baroque or romantic composers or pieces, even though they had recently studied these periods. Higher attainers are good performers on their chosen instruments. Using music software they compose pieces that demonstrate a clear understanding of structure and musical shape. Lower attainers rely on pre-recorded sampled sequences to structure their dance style pieces using the computer software. This helps them to produce good sounding imaginative short pieces.
190. Students use the Internet well to carry out research for their assignment but their written work is generally too brief and of a much lower standard than their practical work. They do not use or understand the technical language of the subject and tend to answer teachers' questions with short responses. Teachers tend not to use musical vocabulary when talking to students and at times give praise when students do not use precise terms themselves. Students with special educational needs and the more musically talented do not make enough progress in lessons because teachers do not modify work for them.
191. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory; it is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers are very knowledgeable and good musicians and students are eager to learn and enjoy performing music on the keyboards and computers. The good lessons were carefully planned with a range of stimulating activities and lots of practical work. In a Year 9 class on improvising question and answer musical phrases the teacher enthusiastically provided a range of activities that students found really interesting. Teachers play a good part in developing reading skills by asking students to read aloud and undertake research using the Internet.

192. Unsatisfactory lessons rarely have clear learning objectives at the outset and do not end with a summary to evaluate and check learning. In some lessons, the pace slows to a crawl as students spend too long on one single activity, become bored, start to chat and misbehaviour develops quickly. In one unsatisfactory Year 10 lesson the teacher underestimated the amount of work the students should be doing and even praised them when they produced hardly anything at all. Occasionally more musically talented students do not sustain concentration and drift off the work set. This is normally when teaching is more mundane and the lesson becomes boring.
193. Teachers do not always make helpful comments on students' written work so students are not sure how well they are doing or what to do to improve their work; for example, the comment 'a nice effort' in one Year 9 student's folder is not constructive. The quality of teaching in the extra-curricular activities lacks enthusiasm. In a wind band rehearsal the teacher arrived ten minutes late and drank a cup of coffee throughout the session. Students balanced their music on chairs instead of music stands – creating an unprofessional atmosphere not normally associated with a specialist arts college. No extra-curricular activities take place during the lunch hours, although at least 700 students are free in both of them. The department contributes significantly to several successful, major events during the year, for example, concerts outside school, the Christmas extravaganza and a music competition that attracts a large number of performers, but regular enjoyment of music making by many students is limited.
194. Leadership is satisfactory whilst management is weak. The principal teacher has a clear vision for the future of the subject which is shared with the staff of the department. Students respect his musical performance ability. He has improved many aspects of the department, particularly the ICT resources. Staffing has improved but the school has not recruited teachers with the right level of expertise to match students' needs and a part-time specialist is still needed. Teachers rarely watch each other to share good practice and newly qualified teachers do not receive detailed guidance about coping with the wide range of abilities. The principal teacher, as part of the school's specialist arts college programme, regularly spends a day in local primary schools, generating enthusiasm for music. The value of this work is considerable, but it leaves the department to cope without its principal teacher.
195. The department does not have enough good quality rooms as several need redecoration and are cramped. Some refurbishment has taken place with two new good size rooms but the soundproofing between them is not good enough. In one Year 8 lesson students tried to focus on their singing but were interrupted by a clarinet playing 'Somewhere over the rainbow' in the next room. There are too few quality electronic keyboards and several need either to be replaced or upgraded. Not all students treat the instruments carefully enough. There are too few headphones, which makes it hard for students to concentrate. None of the electronic equipment has been correctly safety tested and this has resulted in some keyboards having bare wires, power leads joined by insulating tape and even plug sockets without covers.
196. Despite a recent investment in the subject since the school became a specialist college for the performing arts, improvement since the last inspection has been limited. The gap between the school's below average GCSE results and the national average has widened and standards at the end of Year 9 have dropped. Music makes a contribution to the life of the school but it has not achieved the same impact as dance or drama. Less than ten per cent of students are regularly involved in the musical extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons; a very low percentage. The school groups contribute to the local community well and senior singers take part in the music for youth national competition.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- Students' attitudes are good and they have very good relationships with their teachers.
- Teachers have good ICT expertise and use it well in lessons.
- Extra-curricular activities are very good and 30 per cent of students participate in a wide variety of activities.

Areas for improvement

- Standards, especially at GCSE where 2002 results were well below average.
- Curriculum organisation and staffing as some groups are far too large in Years 7 to 9.
- No details of the four National Curriculum physical education strands, ICT, literacy and numeracy in the schemes of work.
- Risk assessments are not consistently carried out and dealt with before the start of each activity.
- Outdoor facilities and indoor provision are very limited for the number of students in the school.

197. On entry to the school, students' attainment is average in the few activities they have experienced. At the end of Year 9, students attain average standards in most activities and above average standards in dance. The majority of students make satisfactory progress. GCSE results in 2002 were well below the national average and continued a downward trend. However, four out of five students achieved as well or better than expected, based on their academic test results on entry. Girls' attainment was well above average and their achievement was very much better than boys'. The department has identified boys' course work as a weakness, so an examination with a different format is now being studied.
198. Students are receptive and learn new performance skills well but teachers do not encourage them to warm up and stretch independently at the start of lessons. Boys in Years 7 and 8 perform gymnastic movements with control and work co-operatively in pairs to build sequences. Playing hockey, girls in Year 9 have good ball control on the fast uneven surface of the playground. Their football skills are less well developed and frequently break down in small-sided games. In all years, students do not develop their evaluative skills as teachers provide limited guidance about this strand of the National Curriculum, and it is not identified in the schemes of work. Girls and boys are taught separately and teachers monitor students' progress closely. These new initiatives are successfully extending and helping both higher and lower attaining students.
199. Girls in Year 11 are attaining well in the theoretical aspect of the GCSE course. Boys have good badminton skills and a good understanding of the rules and tactics of singles play. Students' files are mostly neatly presented and well organised. In the physical education lessons for all Years 10 and 11 students, they attain average standards. Their skills in trampolining, health-related exercise, netball and football are well developed but most students do not have the confidence to lead or take responsibility for planning activities.
200. Individuals and teams attain high standards in district and county competitions in athletics, football, hockey and badminton. Talented students attain well above national average standards and benefit considerably from the many extra opportunities provided by their physical education teachers and several other teachers in the school. Over 30 per cent of students attend these activities on a regular basis. There are mini-school competitions and sports visits abroad that also raise students' social and moral awareness and provide a variety of cultural experiences. Teachers have established very good connections with many sporting organisations and through the school sports

co-ordinator programme, the department has developed constructive links with five local primary schools.

201. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good overall. In most lessons students learn well because teachers expect students to organise themselves and learn independently. They use videos of students' previous performances to help them understand how to improve their movement. Relationships are very good and students are enthusiastic and interested. These factors help them learn and allow them to stay interested even when they are in very large teaching groups with over 30 students. All lessons include a health and fitness session that takes the form of warm up and stretches. Teachers recap previous work and share the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson with the students. In a minority of lessons learning was less successful because teachers did not encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Lessons in games, for example, are very performance based; students are not set tasks to look at and evaluate their own and others' work or to plan their own skill practices.
202. In the only unsatisfactory lesson seen, the teacher did not take into account the students' wide range of abilities so not all of them were challenged or motivated. The practice of teaching two or three activities in the sports hall simultaneously limits teaching methods and students do not concentrate fully and lose time because there is too little court space. The indoor facilities are limited for the number of students in the school and the outdoor facilities are of very poor quality. During the inspection the all-weather surface and the playing fields were under water.
203. Although risk assessments are recorded teachers do not consistently check all areas and aspects before the start of lessons. Despite the problems of space, the principal teacher maintains a curriculum that gives all students equal access to all activities. His leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Teaching has been monitored with a special emphasis on GCSE classes. Assessment procedures reflect National Curriculum levels and very good analysis of GCSE results has promoted higher standards in Years 10 and 11. There is one staffing vacancy in the subject at present. Overall, satisfactory improvements have taken place since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The majority of lessons have strong content drawn from world religions.
- The teaching has a good emphasis on learning *from* religions as well as learning *about* them.
- The majority of lessons have a good spiritual dimension which encourages the students to reflect on a wide range of issues.

Areas for improvement

- Apart from the small GCSE group, statutory requirements are not met for Years 10 and 11 students. This was the case at the time of the last inspection.

204. Students following the GCSE course attain at least average standards in work seen. In 2002 over 40 per cent attained grades A* to C and all attained a pass grade. Students exceeded their target grades. Present GCSE students have a sound working knowledge of Christianity and Judaism and they use a range of key words with confidence. They understand how religious traditions respond to many of the philosophical issues raised by human experience such as questions of meaning and

purpose and appreciate how basic beliefs work themselves out in personal and community activities such as worship and celebration. Students produce pieces of long writing as well as discussing and expressing personal opinions. Standards of the 575 Years 10 and 11 students who have not chosen to study GCSE are well below those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. These students' written work is very limited and it has very little explicit religious content. Their work is largely restricted to a range of moral and social issues. They make unsatisfactory progress.

205. At the end of Year 9 standards are broadly in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and often above it. Students have a good working knowledge of many world religions, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. Students recognise many concepts which are common to religions and use religious language in a meaningful way. They are familiar with the belief systems that underlie many religious traditions and can often see how many of them share similarities and also have differences. They appreciate that their knowledge and understanding might have relevance to their own lives and experiences. They produce developed written work and discuss and express opinions with confidence.
206. Overall Years 7 to 9 students and GCSE students achieve satisfactorily. Students with special educational needs make the same progress as others as some work is specifically planned to match their abilities. Teachers do not do this consistently. More difficult work for higher attainers and gifted students is limited.
207. Overall teaching and learning in all years are good, ranging from very good to satisfactory lessons. All lessons include strong content taken from world religions. More often than not learning objectives are displayed to help students to know what is expected but they are not always explained thoroughly or referred to, so learning is not as strong as it might be. When teaching is very good, lessons have a fast pace, so students cover much ground in the time. These lessons are also characterised by a very clear emphasis on the need for students to relate their learning to their own lives and experiences. Consequently the students not only learn *about* religions but also learn *from* them, which is very good practice.
208. On rare occasions students lose concentration and do not apply themselves, usually when the teacher does not demand high enough standards of behaviour. Most students behave well, are interested and concentrate well. They respect each other and the teachers. They also respect other viewpoints and opinions. Relationships are positive and pleasant and the students are keen to participate in lessons. When the teaching is less effective the focus is on accumulating facts about religions at the expense of the more 'spiritual' dimension of learning.
209. Very little ICT is used in lessons. Teachers assess work well but some mark in more detail than others. Leadership and management are good. Teachers foster literacy skills well by using texts, exercises in writing and discussion work and significantly contribute to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by tackling topics such as the meaning and purpose of life and the study of moral codes in world religions. As statutory requirements are still not met for the majority of Years 10 and 11 students, improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

PERFORMING ARTS

210. This is a flourishing and exciting area of school life. The performing arts enjoy a high profile within the school and the community and the school has very good links with local secondary, special and primary schools. The principal teachers for performing arts visit primary schools regularly to work with children to foster a love for the arts. Links with visiting artists are particularly well developed. A significant number of extra-

curricular activities are rooted in the performing arts and students, parents and young and old within the community appreciate the numerous performances mounted each year. So far the contribution of music to the performing arts as a whole is relatively limited, as described in paragraphs 187 to 196.

211. Performing arts, introduced in September 2002, is a popular part of the curriculum for Year 7 students and will be extended to Year 8 from next September. Students experience a range of drama, dance and music through a well designed course. Currently the scheme of work has a bias towards drama skills. Most of the teachers are specialists in particular arts elements so the overall quality of teaching and learning is good, particularly in dance. Standards in Year 7 are high; all students are keen to learn and really enjoy the practical activities. In one lesson, taken at a breathtaking pace, the teacher moved students through well planned sequential tasks that developed improvisation and listening skills very well. In a completely different lesson style, students eagerly discussed what parts of the school they would video, to send information to a link school in Kafue, Zambia. Other groups used African masks to help them devise and write plays.
212. In Years 10 and 11 students can choose to study GNVQ performing arts. This course is growing in popularity and taught particularly well. In one excellent Year 11 lesson shared by two specialist teachers, the students were excellently directed and there was a very good balance between fun and hard work. The standard of work produced was well above average for this stage of the course. Current numbers are low however, and this makes some aspects of the course very difficult to teach. In one Year 10 lesson with five students the teacher struggled to get the students to interact at a level that would ensure good quality dramatic skills were gained. Again the focus of these lessons is predominantly drama based.
213. The provision for GCSE drama is good. Results have been above average in four of the last five years (1998 to 2002) but staffing problems led to a dip to below average in 2002. Arrangements are in place to remedy this fall, and standards seen were average overall. Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Students collaborated superbly to produce a piece of non-naturalistic drama, under the inspiration of gifted teaching. They benefited from a visit by a stimulating theatre-in-education group, whose presentation and workshop both extended their drama skills and promoted safe driving. The accommodation during the inspection was temporarily unsatisfactory because asbestos had been found in the hall, but work was in hand to put this right and the hall will be converted into a full theatre in the future. Leadership and management of the subject are good.
214. The provision for GCSE media studies is good. This is a popular subject. GCSE results are above average, as were standards seen during the inspection. Teaching seen was at least satisfactory, with good use of computer technology and outstanding teaching about film openings. Students reflected thoughtfully about famous icons in two different genres, as a result of excellent teaching. The department is well staffed and resourced to meet current students' requirements.
215. 2002 GCSE dance results were above average, continuing a rising trend – 70 per cent of students achieved better in dance than they did in their other subjects. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Students have a good understanding of dance terminology and use this vocabulary frequently when preparing their own choreographed dances. Students in both year groups are prepared to practise to improve their performances, repeating movements with increased accuracy and expression. They have a very good understanding of compositional principles and respond to music with a good sense of timing and rhythm. Teaching and learning were excellent in both lessons seen.

216. Dance teachers have excellent subject expertise and are able to take high quality technique sessions at the start of lessons. This expertise helps the students to learn new movements and to develop a feel for body tension and control. Teachers circulate well and work sensitively with groups. They assess work during lessons and set deadlines so that students know exactly what needs to be done to improve their work. Students are always given time to look at each others' work and give constructive feedback. Students are fully committed to the subject and attend many extra-curricular activities and performances.

OTHER GCSE COURSES

217. In 2002 GNVQ **business studies** results were close to average. Given students' attainment at the start of the course this represents good achievement. Standards seen are average and indicate that students make good progress. Students discuss the work they are doing confidently and use business vocabulary accurately. Teaching and learning are good. The well-qualified, enthusiastic teachers prepare and organise lessons well and students respond with interest and enjoyment. Teachers give lower attainers just the right amount of individual help and additional written guidance. All students are helped with their study skills and the work teachers do to guide self-assessment is particularly impressive.
218. Students use ICT most competently and teachers support their good research skills by giving them suggested websites to examine on the Internet. The subject is well managed and based in excellent rooms which have 30 computers but are large enough to be used as conventional classrooms too, a bonus for learning. There are not enough textbooks for students to take them home, a disadvantage. Teachers promote numeracy skills, both in the use and interpretation of graphs and calculation practice. This subject has developed well since the last inspection.
219. **Child development** GCSE is an increasingly popular and successful subject. GCSE results are well above average, as is the work of present Year 11 students. Students often continue with childcare courses in further education colleges or take the recently introduced health and social care AVCE in the sixth form. The opening of the nursery on site has created a wonderful resource for all courses. In one lesson seen teaching was very good because students were guided logically through an excellent video extract, information sheets and explanations. In some folders work has not been marked constructively, with just scattered ticks and isolated comments, in others comments are detailed and constructive. Students' coursework is mainly of a very high standard and the subject co-ordinator appreciates well, with a wide range of abilities, the fine balance between tight structures and independent learning.
220. The department already has several useful contacts within the community to bring in speakers. Students particularly enjoy learning from practical experts, for example community health visitors and midwives or nursery and early years teachers, as well as parents and expectant mothers. In a lesson taken by a health visitor, a Year 11 group asked sensible questions and were keen to know more. The department has an impressive collection of reference books but not enough textbooks for students to take home. With only two computers in the main teaching room it is not easy for students to use the Internet during lessons, though many do at other times.
221. Attainment in 2002 GNVQ **leisure and tourism** at intermediate level was as predicted by the students' Year 9 standards. All seven students passed and two gained merits. None of the three students entered for foundation level passed. The subject has increased in popularity this year with two classes in Year 10. These students are studying the new vocational GCSE. Standards in Year 11 are in line with expectations

based on the students' Year 9 standards. Students achieve well. They know the differences between companies' internal and external customers by drawing upon their own work experiences. A foundation level student spoke positively of his experience in a taxi company, explaining that customers value a worker's knowledge of a company's services. Teaching and learning are good as teachers plan imaginative lessons. For practical experience of marketing, Year 10 students will promote the school production of West Side Story. A drama teacher stressed the importance of securing an audience and got students to brainstorm their ideas for promoting the production. Students are excited by their responsibility for this and already understand some of the financial and legal aspects of such an undertaking.

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

In the inspection, nine 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 2002

GCE AS level courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average UCAS point score* | |
|--|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Applied mathematics | 13 | 46 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 14.6 | N/A |
| Art and design | 17 | 71 | N/A | 24 | N/A | 25.3 | N/A |
| Biology | 14 | 71 | N/A | 14 | N/A | 22.1 | N/A |
| Business | 26 | 58 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 14.23 | N/A |
| Chemistry | 4 | 100 | N/A | 25 | N/A | 30 | N/A |
| Dance | 8 | 100 | N/A | 38 | N/A | 38.8 | N/A |
| Drama and theatre studies | 2 | 100 | N/A | 50 | N/A | 45 | N/A |
| English literature | 1 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 40 | N/A |
| French | 4 | 100 | N/A | 25 | N/A | 32.5 | N/A |
| German | 4 | 100 | N/A | 50 | N/A | 47.5 | N/A |
| Geography | 19 | 58 | N/A | 21 | N/A | 20.5 | N/A |
| Health and social care | 3 | 33 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 6.7 | N/A |
| History | 12 | 92 | N/A | 17 | N/A | 31.7 | N/A |
| Information and communication technology | 17 | 71 | N/A | 6 | N/A | 22.3 | N/A |
| Law | 6 | 56 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 13.3 | N/A |
| Mathematics | 1 | 0 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 0 | N/A |
| Media | 21 | 91 | N/A | 24 | N/A | 31.4 | N/A |
| Music | 1 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 40 | N/A |
| Music technology | 1 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 30 | N/A |
| Physical education | 15 | 100 | N/A | 13 | N/A | 36.7 | N/A |
| Physics | 5 | 80 | N/A | 40 | N/A | 32 | N/A |
| Psychology | 8 | 50 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 11.25 | N/A |
| Statistics | 2 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 30 | N/A |
| Technology and design: food | 6 | 83 | N/A | 33 | N/A | 31.7 | N/A |
| Technology and design | 9 | 33 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 11.1 | N/A |

* A = 60, B = 50, C = 40, D = 30 and E = 20 points

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average UCAS point score* | |
|---|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Art and design | 5 | 100 | N/A | 80 | N/A | 92 | N/A |
| Biology | 5 | 33 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 28 | N/A |
| Business | 18 | 89 | N/A | 22 | N/A | 53.3 | N/A |
| Business (Double A -level) | 4 | 75 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 22.5 | N/A |
| Chemistry | 5 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 68 | N/A |
| Dance | 10 | 100 | N/A | 70 | N/A | 102 | N/A |
| Drama and theatre studies | 3 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 60 | N/A |
| English literature | 47 | 100 | N/A | 30 | N/A | 76.6 | N/A |
| French | 4 | 100 | N/A | 50 | N/A | 95 | N/A |
| German | 2 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 50 | N/A |
| Geography | 7 | 98 | N/A | 20 | N/A | 74.3 | N/A |
| Health and social care | 15 | 80 | N/A | 20 | N/A | 56 | N/A |
| History | 11 | 82 | N/A | 27 | N/A | 56.4 | N/A |
| Information and communication technology | 11 | 100 | N/A | 9 | N/A | 67.3 | N/A |
| Information and communication technology (Double A-level) | 13 | 100 | N/A | 46 | N/A | 80 | N/A |
| Law | 9 | 89 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 55.5 | N/A |
| Mathematics | 8 | 88 | N/A | 14 | N/A | 55 | N/A |
| Media | 27 | 96 | N/A | 30 | N/A | 78.5 | N/A |
| Music | 2 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 40 | N/A |
| Music technology | 1 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 60 | N/A |
| Physical education | 14 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 58.6 | N/A |
| Physics | 4 | 75 | N/A | 25 | N/A | 55 | N/A |
| Technology and design: food | 6 | 100 | N/A | 17 | N/A | 66.7 | N/A |
| Technology and design | 4 | 100 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 65 | N/A |
| Religious studies | 6 | 100 | N/A | 33 | N/A | 83.3 | N/A |
| Travel and tourism | 2 | 50 | N/A | 0 | N/A | 20 | N/A |

* A = 120, B = 100, C = 80, D = 60 and E = 40 points

Intermediate vocational qualifications

| Qualification | Number in final year | % gaining qualification | | % gaining merit | | Average point distinction | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Part 1 Business studies | 14 | 57 | N/A | 7 | N/A | 0 | N/A |

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics was inspected in depth. Biology, chemistry and physics were sampled.

222. Provision for **science** subjects in the sixth form is satisfactory. The numbers taking these subjects are usually small, in single figures, but a group of 12 is following AS biology and provisional numbers for September are higher for all sciences. 2002 results are likely to be below average, although the small numbers make statistical comparisons difficult. Taking the students' GCSE grades into account and their potential, they make reasonable progress. The teachers are well qualified and work as a team with the students, who are committed and work well. The teaching seen was at least satisfactory. Although interested, students tend to be passive and teachers do not always set hard enough work or emphasise the subjects' relevance and practical applications.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Good teaching draws out students' thinking and challenges them well.
- Students' learning is well supported by an experienced teaching team.
- Students display interest, enthusiasm and persistence in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Recruitment and induction as some students with GCSE grade C have found the new AS and A-level courses difficult.
- Too little use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool.
- Limited encouragement of students to undertake research and independent study.

223. A-level results in 2001 were well below average, with no A/B grades. They were better in 2002 as over 75 per cent of students passed, though A/B grades were few. AS results in 2002 were particularly disappointing as over half the students, mainly boys, did not pass. The department acknowledges that only A*/B GCSE students should start AS- and A-level courses, which are nationally acknowledged to be more demanding than in years past. Nevertheless, standards seen during the inspection were average. Students' folders, which are mainly well kept, contain an extensive amount of worked examples and exercises with satisfactory coverage of all the modules studied so far. Teachers mark work regularly and occasionally provide constructive written feedback. Students' progress and achievement are good.

224. Teaching is good overall and always satisfactory so students learn well. One well-taught Year 12 lesson emphasised statistical vocabulary and notation throughout. Students were challenged to discuss aspects of statistical expectation and variance, and interpret and explain some examples of mathematical shorthand associated with the topic. They struggled at times, partly due to a lack of confidence about what they had learned before and so the pace of the lesson was quite slow. Nevertheless they persisted well, were determined to understand, and learned a considerable amount.

225. In another very good Year 13 lesson, the teacher's effective questions forced students to propose, reflect upon, and refine their own suggestions for resolving the factors affecting constrained, versus unconstrained, motion in a vertical circle. The quality of students' thinking was very high, resulting in very good progress. Other teaching is

somewhat less demanding, but students learn well by adopting step-by-step approaches to recording and solving problems. The individual attention given to one student who speaks English as a second language is particularly effective, resulting in good learning.

226. The department is well managed on a day-to-day basis, and students consider themselves well taught and advised, within and outside lessons. The recently appointed principal teacher has updated the schemes of work and recruited a strong team. Improvement since the previous inspection cannot be assessed as the report contained little detail about sixth form mathematics. Some main school initiatives, such as the systematic sharing of good teaching practice, setting meaningful targets and the increased use of ICT to support students' learning, have not yet permeated sixth form practice. Teachers do not encourage students to carry out research and study independently enough - learning skills that students will need to apply in higher education. Similarly a minority of students would welcome a broader approach to mathematics, whereby recommended reading could be incorporated into module study.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology product design and food were sampled.

227. In 2002 all four female students passed in A-level **product design** and six students passed **food technology**, one with grade B. AS results were encouraging in food technology but disappointing in product design. AS textiles and ceramics have been introduced this year. Students benefit from the small numbers as several teachers are able to provide expertise and support for each individual. Staff willingly teach students after school when necessary. One Year 13 student has attained commendable standards in coursework, using artistic talents to make a high quality product. Most students find the theory work more difficult than practical work. Design work last year showed effective application of critical path analysis and ICT.

BUSINESS

Business studies was inspected in depth.

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

Strengths

- The very good system, which guides students to assess their own work themselves ensures they reach their full potential.
- The department makes full use of its very good rooms and ICT resources.
- Students are keen and interested and they learn well.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not include enough specific short-term targets to guide students' learning.
- Further sharing of good practice and guidance for new teachers.
- Too little work which is stimulating and demanding.

228. In 2002 students took AS/AVCE in Year 12 and single and double AVCEs in Year 13. Results in the former were slightly below the 2001 results and national averages but Year 13 results are likely to be above average. Standards seen are average and students make satisfactory progress, based on their attainment at the beginning of the course. Students have a sound understanding of basic principles and discuss topics confidently using the correct business terms. In particular, they have a very good understanding of finance.

229. Teaching is good overall. Students know what is expected of them. Teachers monitor students' level of performance throughout the courses well and mark written work carefully, often with helpful comments, but teachers do not all do this consistently. Teachers do not give students enough short-term specific targets for improvement. A very good system, of questions and check lists for topics, helps students to see what they must do to reach the highest grades. This practice is valuable as it allows students to assess their own work and to see what they must do to reach their full potential.
230. In some lessons, the examples used are not particularly interesting or stimulating, or teachers do not highlight their relevance and broad significance by asking probing questions. In a lesson on balance sheets, the teacher did not analyse the figures in detail, to bring out the practical significance of such sheets. In another lesson, on stakeholder groups, students were actively involved by taking on the role of one group and encouraged to discuss their ideas with the class. This activity resulted in a brisk, active lesson and good learning. Students also learn well because they are interested and clearly enjoy the subject. All students and teachers apply ICT very capably, using spreadsheets, wordprocessing and the Internet with ease and making full use of software to improve presentations.
231. Management of the department is good with clear, detailed work schemes and plenty of reference books and materials. More experienced teachers are supporting those new to the department. The rooms and ICT resources are very good. As there are too few textbooks some, but not all, students buy their own, which is unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection the subject has become increasingly popular and good progress has been made in the last few years.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Information and communication technology was inspected in depth.

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

Strengths

- Good teaching ensures good progress in lessons and good achievement over time.
- Students work most effectively on their own in lessons.
- Very good computing facilities in well-designed spacious accommodation.
- Very good leadership and management of all aspects of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Higher attaining students are not all attaining the very highest grades.
- A few students do not fully complete their A-level courses and final examinations.

232. The sixth form offers a very good range of computing courses: AS and single and double award AVCE, a key skills certificate and a technician's course. These courses meet the needs of a very wide range of students' academic abilities and effectively help them to follow both academic and vocational directions which suit their needs. A very good feature is the substantial number of study units that include a range of transferable skills. Students can choose units which provide several routes through to a qualification.
233. Results in the 2001 single and double award AVCE were broadly average for A/B grades and an above average percentage passed. Results in 2002 were slightly higher than in 2001, reflecting a rising trend. Very few female students choose this subject. The course retention rates are average although in 2001 to 2002 a number of students did not fully complete the double award.

234. Present standards of work for most students are above average. Students make good progress. They use the Internet to research information and professional documents, such as a range of commercially produced marketing leaflets on advertising techniques and to illustrate some of their own ideas for presentation. Students have a good knowledge of the software they have studied. In their work on spreadsheets, for example, they understand the importance of accuracy and use their knowledge to find mistakes in fairly complex programs. Their practical skills are very good and in some cases excellent, reflecting their high degree of confidence in their ability. Much of the coursework demonstrates a close attention to detail, but occasionally the analysis of both problems and solutions lacks the depth required for students to attain the highest AVCE grades.
235. The quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good. Teachers have very high expectations and students respond positively. Students respect the teachers and trust them to help them to make good progress. Teachers have up-to-date knowledge and skills to teach the full range of ICT applications. All lessons are very effectively planned to suit the needs of individuals as well as the whole group. Very good relationships have been established between teachers and students which have improved students' confidence and raised their aspirations. Teachers are well informed about the requirements of the different courses and use a variety of teaching methods which encourage students to think and work independently. Their reviews of learning at the end of lessons are particularly effective.
236. Teachers deal with simple and complex questions confidently and ask probing questions to extend and reinforce students' understanding. Teachers are developing a range of high-quality resources on the network and in other formats to support learning and revision. Students use these effectively. As a result students are not only well motivated, but well focused on producing a range of well produced work in each unit of study. In practical lessons, students work confidently and effectively on individual assignments with teachers providing good one-to-one support. Students are encouraged to tackle a range of assignments at a variety of levels matched to their capabilities and are provided with continual advice and guidance on problems, for example with formula development in spreadsheets, without the need to refer to any support materials. The pace of work is brisk and purposeful throughout and students are well informed about how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
237. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The number of computers and range of software are very good and the computer rooms are well designed and spacious. Teachers and technical support staff work extremely well together and teachers always share their lesson plans or new ideas. This is excellent practice. The principal teacher has an outstanding knack of pinpointing exactly those factors that should improve the students' achievements, such as providing a wide range of courses and planning to make best use of the time available in every lesson. The improvement in ICT since the last inspection is significant. This is a department that is being driven forward, where even the most effective practice is questioned to see how it can be improved, and there is no complacency regarding what has been achieved to date.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

A-level physical education was inspected in depth. There is limited planned provision for general physical education. Travel and tourism and the community sports leaders award were sampled.

238. In 2002 two students sat the new AVCE in **travel and tourism**. Only one passed with a low grade. Poor attendance contributed to this performance. One satisfactory lesson

was observed. Students were too reliant on the teacher and did not actively contribute much. They do not study and learn independently enough. Fifteen students take the **community sports leaders award** as a voluntary sixth-form activity. Two lessons were observed and both students and teacher really enjoyed them. Students learn to take the responsibility for teaching and organising younger students. In one lesson the students had prepared a basic badminton lesson and taught a class of Year 7 students. It was a most successful experience for all involved. The course is an excellent initiative and gives many opportunities for students to take responsibility for helping and coaching others.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good. It is well planned and integrates theory and practical work well.
- Highly committed students.

Areas for improvement

- Students' research skills are not developed fully.

239. During the last few years there has been a steady increase in the number of students opting to take A-level physical education. In 2002 the percentage of AS A/B grades is likely to be average. The percentage of students gaining these grades at A-level was below the 2001 average although all students passed. Twelve students are taking A-level at present and they are all, as are Year 13 students, producing work that is just above average, with a few doing better. Students engage in productive debates about a range of topics, including commercialism in sport, the role of women in sport and the psychological advantage of a team playing on its home ground. Students' files contain good quality work and reflect well the demands of the A-level syllabus. Students' practical performances show a good range of skills in different activities. They analyse practical performances confidently, and use these evaluations to improve their work.
240. All Year 12 students are making good progress and achieving well. In lessons students work conscientiously, are attentive and concentrate well. They share a real rapport with their teachers and establish good relationships when they work in groups. However students do rely heavily on their teachers, who work hard for them. Some students do not take enough responsibility for their own learning. In discussions most display a range of good debating skills as they argue, evaluate and defend their viewpoints and they usually arrive at informed and perceptive conclusions. Most have a good command of the subject's technical language and use it accurately and effectively. Students readily use the Internet to broaden their knowledge, and to research individual topics.
241. Teaching on both the AS- and A-level courses is at least good, with some very good features. Teachers know their subject very well, demonstrating a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical expertise with awareness of students' learning needs. Assignment work is demanding. It requires students to engage in practical work and answer questions involving reading and research. Teachers know their students well, are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and are skilled at asking just the right questions in order to prompt thought and to stimulate discussions.
242. Attendance in the lessons observed was high. Students respond very well to the good teaching and learn well. They answer questions eagerly and show good levels of

understanding. In a lesson identifying the type of muscular contraction occurring in sporting activity, students worked co-operatively in pairs to both demonstrate the movement and effectively explain to each other the physiological effect that the contraction was having on their bodies. The relationships between teacher and student are extremely positive and underlie the students' total commitment to the course. Teachers evaluate students' work speedily and thoroughly and, where necessary, counsel individual students and help them to improve their work. Teachers provide students with good advice on how to structure their work under examination conditions. The subject is well led and managed. Teachers work well together by sharing views on successful ways of teaching, and show a very strong commitment to their students.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care was sampled.

243. This new **health and social care AVCE** course was examined for the first time in 2002. One student passed the single award and six students completed the double award, 70 per cent at grade C and above. Over 20 students are now studying this subject. They are well motivated and respond enthusiastically to the consistently good teaching, although in a Year 13 lesson the teacher contributed more energy to the double lesson than the students. The teacher handles potentially embarrassing topics sensitively so that students are happy to ask any questions for clarification. In Year 12 the teacher skilfully deepened students' knowledge about the history of health care by blending in their own families' experiences with extra information about how care has evolved in other countries.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art, dance and media were inspected in depth. Music, performing arts, photography and theatre studies were sampled.

244. 2001 **music** A-level results were average. One Year 13 lesson was observed and teaching and learning were satisfactory. The lesson was well planned with a good variety of tasks. The teacher and students wasted time dealing with musical extracts so the pace of learning was slower than expected.

245. One Year 12 **performing arts** lesson was observed in which students learned about 'sub-text' through exploring what characters said and comparing this with what they were actually thinking. Higher attaining students understood the Stanislavski concept of psychological realism and related this to their evaluation of their monologues. The lesson was very good because the teacher used his own performance skills brilliantly to demonstrate many of the concepts being explored.

246. The school is very successfully offering GCSE and AS-level **photography**. A professional photographer and art and design teacher make an excellent team and their teaching is excellent. Standards are very high and the students achieve exceptionally well. In the 2002 GCSE examination over 80 per cent attained an A*/A grades and all passed. The six Year 12 GCSE students and the three Year 13 AS-level students are on line to achieve similar very high standards. In a Year 12 lesson students gave short presentations on different aspects of photography. These were all very thoroughly prepared and clear, with ICT produced handouts and practical demonstrations. Students' excellent learning and confidence was evident when they answered other students' and the teachers' searching questions well.

247. The entry figures for **theatre studies** A-level varied from 13 to 17 between 1998 and 2001. In 2001 there was a sharp drop to three students and in the current year there is

only one student in Year 13. Staffing problems were a major cause of this drop in recruitment but as these have now been resolved the new team looks forward to an increase in numbers next year. Six students are currently taking theatre studies in Year 12. The continuing popularity of GCSE drama study over the years provides a good foundation for AS- and A-level work. Although standards have remained below average overall, most students have achieved reasonably well in relation to their previous attainment levels.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Current students attain well above average standards and achieve exceptionally well.
- Teaching and learning are very good. Combined with very high expectations these ensure that students make very good progress.
- Excellent subject leadership from the principal teacher, reflected in excellent teamwork in the department.

Areas for improvement

- Limited display of students' work in the corridors and open spaces around the school.

248. 2001 A-level results were below average and in 2002 half the students attained low grades because a significant percentage did not complete the coursework. This year's students have much better attitudes and they are completing their work and presenting it very well. They are supported by the now very good teaching, which is sometimes excellent. Standards are well above average. More female students, who do better than male students, follow the course. The department is actively addressing this difference.

249. Year 13 students are doing very well. Teachers expect them to work equally hard at both representational art and design and abstract work. Very high standards are evident in the students' sketchbooks:

- excellent application and analysis of the work of chosen artists;
- very good applied skills of figure drawing allied to the work of Lucian Freud;
- abstract art and design with an analysis of optical illusions;
- good standards of observational drawing of flowers, figures and other objects;
- exciting drawing and experimentation with colour; and
- very good image distortion, modification and development using ICT, for an 'Ugly' project on faces developed into images of dreams and memories.

250. Students in Year 12, following on from their well above average GCSE grades are doing equally well. They have a very good command of a wide range of media and know how to interpret and apply their understanding of a wide range of artists studied. For example, work in progress shows students making very good personal interpretations of the works of Georgia O'Keeffe, with near-abstract interpretations of paintings based on enlargements of flower and plant forms. Students in both years work very hard with high levels of understanding, motivation and interest. They develop their personal learning skills in an excellent manner.

251. Teaching is very good overall, and students learn very well as a result. Teachers interpret the examination requirements in an exciting way, with meticulous planning combined with valuable individual support. As a result students learn very well and their achievement is exceptional. In an excellent Year 12 lesson students had to justify, analyse and evaluate their work in progress – aided by the teacher's suggestions they

gave clear reasons for what they had done and clearly understood how their work could be even better. Students question, offer ideas and carry out research confidently.

252. The principal teacher gives excellent leadership and management to a very strong team of very experienced and very well qualified teachers. He encourages and supports them, as well as students, to give of their best. Students have clear targets for improvement, which are discussed after thorough assessment and evaluation of their work. The art and design rooms are excellent and exciting to work in. Too little students' work is displayed in the corridors and open spaces outside the art and design rooms and around the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good because standards and achievements have risen and the weaknesses in drawing, ICT and presentation no longer exist.

Dance

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

Strengths

- Well above average results and attainment in both years.
- Excellent joint leadership and management of the department.
- Excellent teaching, characterised by a very high level of subject expertise.
- Students are totally committed to the subject and their attitudes are extremely positive.
- Extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- Students make very good progress supported by valuable Individual help and guidance.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of planned opportunities to use ICT.

253. A-level results have been well above school and national averages since 1999. They have improved since the last inspection. In 2002 a higher number of students attained A grades than in previous years. 2002 AS-level results were equally impressive and all students achieved better or equalled their performance in their other subjects. Fewer boys than girls take the subject but over the years several boys and girls have attained the higher grades in both examinations.

254. Current students are working to well above average standards and their achievement is very good. Most students deepen their knowledge and understanding from GCSE dance but one boy who had no dance experience has made excellent progress, especially in his practical work. Students pick up new routines and techniques quickly and transfer these from introductory sessions to their solos. Students in both years have a sense of performance, and dance with feeling and emotion responding sensitively to each other. Students are prepared to practise and repeat movements to achieve technical precision and accuracy. Their written work includes examples of different choreographic styles and clear and critical analysis of a variety of performances. Most files are well presented and illustrated with graphics and photographs. There is some material derived from the Internet in a few files, where students have carried out independent research tasks but this is an area that teachers have not developed fully, partly because there is only one computer in the department.

255. Students are totally committed and spend much time in the department, working independently and joining in theatre visits, dance company visits, and performances before local schools and community groups. The boys' dance club is well attended and performs to a very high standard. Examination students contribute fully to the annual school dance production and the Christmas extravaganza. Students benefit considerably from the excellent opportunities offered by the teachers' hard work and

dedication. The subject significantly contributes to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The increased numbers of students taking the examinations reflect students' excellent attitudes and involvement in the subject.

256. The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers are subject experts and use their knowledge to make learning stimulating and exciting. Teachers lead technique sessions and give students a clear visual image and feeling for set movements. Students' learning is excellent because it is based on a demand for practical accuracy and high standards, combined with rigorous questioning which constantly challenges students' perceptions. Teachers frequently connect theory to practice and always use technical language – both help to extend students' knowledge and understanding. Students find the teachers' frequent assessment and feedback on their practical work helpful and informative. There are many well organised resources in the department and the library is also well stocked with dance books and other resources.
257. The department is led jointly by two principal teachers who provide clear educational direction and excellent leadership. All teachers are highly motivated and the students find joy and inspiration in the way they are taught. Results have been well analysed and teachers have worked with the English department to develop ways to help students who find the theory paper hard. The department makes a major contribution to the life and ethos of the school.

Media studies

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching.
- Excellent accommodation and good resources.

Areas for improvement

- The low number of A/B grades at AS- and A-level in 2002.
- Strengthening links with other departments.

258. Media studies is now taught as a discrete subject, though some staff teach in both the English and media departments. In 2001 A-level results were above average. In 2002 one in four students gained A-level A to C grades. In terms of both entry figures and examination results, this is one of the school's most successful subjects – only English literature and ICT attract more students. A target for the department now is increasing the number of A and B grades. Although most students take GCSE media this is not a requirement for advanced work and students feel the course benefits from being open to a wide range of students. There are fairly equal numbers of male and female students in both years.
259. Work seen in lessons, in folders, and on film indicates that these above standards are being maintained and improved. Students are very enthusiastic and systematically acquire the practical skills, theoretical knowledge and critical perceptions that the syllabus requires. They understand key media concepts and use the correct criteria and terminology confidently. They understand the importance of evaluation and look critically at their own and others' work and make constructive suggestions for improvement.
260. Working on a magazine project, Year 13 students made detailed analyses in preparation for presentations. Their discussion showed good critical awareness of such issues as representation, audience and ideology. They were confident in their use of many features of media language and their judgements were sharpened in a good discussion, very skilfully led by the teacher. In two lessons seen, Year 12 students

were completing the first stage of their practical project with a choice of advertising or documentary as their topic. Examples of both, produced by student groups, were shown and discussed. Looking at some imaginative and entertaining short advertisements, the class identified strengths and weaknesses and made practical suggestions. The documentary option involved a good deal of work outside school, where students interviewed local people and used some inventive camera work to explore aspects of life in the local community.

261. Students' folders showed good examples of research and note-taking, thoughtful evaluations and essays on media which had been carefully marked to encourage further investigations and ideas. Topics such as 'The increasing popularity of reality television programmes' or 'How the representation of women through the James Bond film series changed to fit society's perceptions' produced well-argued, interesting work. These and other topics which students have tackled link their media studies with many other curricular areas, including English, history, sociology and politics.
262. Teaching is very good and it was excellent in one lesson seen during the inspection. The two teachers seen are enthusiasts, have good knowledge and practical competence. They plan lessons carefully and make very effective use of space and resources. A particular strength in these lessons was the well managed discussions as a means of evaluation - interaction was lively, thoughtful and productive and the balance of teacher guidance, independent and group work always carefully judged.
263. Students are keen to express their pleasure in their work, as a hands-on experience which helps them to see with new eyes and 'puts a whole new aspect on being a consumer'. They appreciate the good teaching and the opportunities provided for work outside school. The department makes a valuable contribution to activities across the curriculum and intends to develop these further. A film made during the last school year introduced Homewood to local primary schools and another illustrates the effects of the specialist arts college status on the school's development. The school is considering inviting sixth form and Year 11 parents to view their work.
264. The two teachers who undertake most of the teaching in the department work very effectively in partnership. They have recently been joined by a new team member who maintains useful links with the English department. Leadership and management are very good and there are imaginative and practical plans for the subject's future development. The excellent spacious rooms, in an attractive new building, allow the layout of the rooms and the teaching styles to be flexible and the department has a good range of technical resources. Teachers use outside resources, visits, links with relevant institutions and work in the local community and further afield very well.

HUMANITIES

History was inspected in depth. Geography, ethical and religious studies, law and psychology were sampled.

265. In 2001, **geography** A-level examination results were below average. In 2002 all students passed, two with higher grades, which was an improvement. In one very good lesson students used case study evidence to evaluate different strategies of development in Bolivia. Students' learning in another lesson was only satisfactory because they largely failed to prepare work for a discussion on report writing.
266. There has been a big improvement in **religious education** results on previous years. The teaching is very good as it has strong specialist input. Learning consequently is also very good and students achieve well. It was the first year of A-level **law** examinations for the new course – eight out of nine students passed, but only two passed AS-level. The results were below the school pattern. Difficulties with staffing

had a significant effect on the results. Currently teaching is very good. **Psychology** is a new course so no results are available. Teaching and learning are very good and students are achieving well as a result.

History

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

Strengths

- The good quality of teaching and learning.
- Students enjoy the subject and are positive about it.
- Good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Below average A-level results.
- Limited use of ICT.

267. Standards of work seen are average. With fluctuations, A-level results have been below average since the last inspection. In 2002, nine out of eleven students passed, three with grade B, representing an improvement on 2001 results. A few students did not attend lessons regularly. AS-level results in 2002 were encouraging as only one student did not pass. The recently appointed principal teacher analysed the below average grades and identified as weaknesses examination skills and, in particular, poor performance in the new synoptic paper. The syllabus has now been simplified in terms of teaching objectives and teachers are now teaching their own subject specialisms. Most students understand the need to be discerning in evaluating sources of evidence well, shown in a Year 13 lesson on the Irish Partition Treaty of 1921, when pairs of students used evidence to effectively argue the conflicting views of the participants.
268. Students' achievement is satisfactory. The numbers taking history are rising and written work shows much better work than the 2002 A-level results would suggest. Students respond very well in lessons, are very interested and concentrate very well. Teachers support them well and check carefully for understanding, for example, in a Year 12 lesson on the French Revolution students had to explain terms like 'Girondin' and 'sans-culotte' accurately.
269. The quality of teaching is good, and sometimes very good. Teachers plan and organise lessons very well and focus clearly on the examination skills required. In a very effective Year 12 lesson the teacher concentrated on how to select relevant material to answer a question on the causes of World War One and students learned very well. In another successful Year 13 lesson on Lloyd George, students produced very good answers selecting carefully from their knowledge to cope with synoptic questions. Although students learn well overall their files showed limited amounts of information gleaned from independent research. Teachers give good support to students with special educational needs and they make good progress.
270. Leadership and management are good. The department has developed an effective scheme of assessment so students' work is regularly marked against examination criteria. Students are supported by constructive comments and they know how well they are doing. They know what they have to do to improve and also that the teachers will readily give help, if required. The specialist teachers hold regular meetings to evaluate students' performance. There are plenty of books but ICT is rarely used as the department has only one computer. Students attend helpful sixth-form conferences on examination topics. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teaching methods have been reviewed thoroughly and improved, so that students discuss more

and use different sources of evidence to evaluate conflicting points of view in lively debates.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature was inspected in depth. French and German were sampled.

271. **French and German** standards seen are average. Few students study modern foreign languages. Students enjoy the courses and are enthusiastic about learning languages. In French, particularly, speaking skills are less than the standard expected because students did not speak enough French when they were younger whereas listening, reading and writing skills are as expected. Teaching and learning are both good: a combination of good planning, consistent use of French or German and students' commitment. Opportunities for students to visit and study in France and Germany are not provided.

English literature

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

Strengths

- The considerable interest stimulated by good English teaching in Years 10 and 11 and well above average GCSE results.
- Teachers' hard work and commitment.
- Good achievement sustained over time.

Areas for improvement

- An optional alternative A-level course in English.
- More effective sharing of best practice in the department.

272. English is an increasingly popular subject; over 50 students have chosen it in Year 12. This is testimony to the good work the department does. A-level results were above the school average in 2002 and the overall pass rate has remained consistently above average. More girls than boys choose the subject, but boys attain well compared to boys nationally. Results dropped significantly to below average in 2000, but since then the percentage of A/B grades has risen to over 30 per cent in 2002 – just below the national average recorded in 2001.
273. Standards of work seen in Years 12 and 13 are average. Most students acquire good knowledge and understanding of the books they study and use critical terminology with increasing confidence and accuracy. There is clear evidence of some above average attainment in both years, although the range is wide and in Year 12 some students still have difficulty writing and thinking at the standard expected for AS-level. Teachers work hard, preparing lessons and good materials, to give maximum support to these students, which undoubtedly contributes to the overall above average pass rate. In some lessons, however, the level of teacher guidance, in the form of prompt sheets, notes and handouts, is less suitable for the full ability range, particularly higher attaining students, because it limits individual exploration and shared discovery through whole-class discussion. These are increasingly important as students move away from teaching and learning styles which served them well for GCSE, towards independent and seminar style activities which also prepare them for higher education or training.
274. Teaching is good overall and occasionally it is very good or outstanding. In the very good, highly enjoyable lessons students are encouraged to read with increasing understanding, make connections, and see the work being studied in its social and cultural context. There is further evidence of this excellent teaching in the schemes of work – at the start of Year 12 students choose a period of literature to study and

present to the class after several weeks of research and preparation. In two very effective poetry lessons students eagerly shared and developed their responses and ideas, skilfully encouraged by the teachers. In preparation for detailed reading of a modern poet, Year 12 students tried to recall their own experiences of the world of their early school days which the poet was evoking. They were animated and involved as they shared these with the rest of the class, and this lively introduction gave impetus to the work in pairs which followed. In a small tutorial class, two students were being prepared to retake the GCSE examination with remarkable patience and skill.

275. In a Year 13 class, teacher and students discussed their various reactions to Keats' odes, working together towards an appreciation of language and mood, sound and sense. The importance of individual response was well illustrated when the teacher asked the students *not* to confer but to reflect individually before sharing their thoughts – a useful reminder that pair or group work is not always the best route to understanding. In both these lessons students developed an appreciation of the poems as a pleasure to be savoured and not merely as a comprehension exercise. As in other good lessons, the balance between whole class and group work was well judged, use of worksheets and prompt sheets was limited, and teacher's own input and enthusiasm were key factors in the students' good learning.
276. In the very few lessons where teaching was less effective, students spent too long working in pairs or on writing tasks which could have been done at home as preparation for the lesson. Although students were co-operative, the pace was slow, the buzz of interest missing and teachers did not communicate or generate that real pleasure in the work which was such a feature of the good lessons observed.
277. Teachers assess and mark work very well. Students' folders include excellent examples of teachers' thoughtful analysis and constructive comments which give the student a clear direction to improvement and development. This quality of marking establishes a productive dialogue between teacher and student and is one of the department's strengths, much appreciated by the students. The leadership and management of the department have been, and are, good. The new principal teacher took over a successful department and the team also includes four other new teachers. They have received good induction and support and work very well together. Time is spent on researching and collecting material to strengthen teachers' knowledge of texts and their background, and the examination requirements. In this self-evaluative department there has been limited critical appraisal to identify which teaching styles and methods work best and not enough sharing of the very best practice. The department plays an important part in the life of the sixth form, contributing much to students' personal and cultural development as well as to their examination successes.