

# INSPECTION REPORT

**THE BENNETT MEMORIAL DIOCESAN  
SCHOOL**

Tunbridge Wells, Kent

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118841

Headteacher: The Reverend J Caperon

Reporting inspector: Mrs R Fox  
4617

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> February 2003

Inspection number: 249620

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

© Crown copyright 2003

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of students:	11 – 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	The Bennett Memorial Diocesan School Culverden Down Tunbridge Wells Kent
Postcode:	TN4 9SH
Telephone number:	01892 521595
Fax number:	01892 514424
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	The Reverend C Dench
Date of previous inspection:	12 – 16 May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Sixth form subjects	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
4617	Mrs R Fox	Registered inspector	French	The school's results and achievements How well are students taught?
19693	Mrs S Hall	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Students' views
29742	Mrs P Fyans	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry	
2495	Mr B Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology	
10761	Dr P Willan	Team inspector	History Sociology	
2496	Dr A O'Sullivan	Team inspector	German	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students? Sixth form coordinator
30800	Mrs B Colley	Team inspector	Physical Education	
18178	Mr I Matthews	Team inspector	Mathematics	
24142	Mrs S Argyle	Team inspector	English Media studies	
32231	Mr A Lyons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)	
2501	Ms R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design	How well is the sixth form led and managed?

The inspection contractor was:

**e-Qualitas Ltd**, Langshaw, Pastens Road, Limpsfield Chart, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0RE.

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

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>PART D: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>28</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?</b>	<b>32</b>
Assessment	
Advice, support and guidance	
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>33</b>
Leadership and management	
Resources	
<b>PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>35</b>

## **IN THE SIXTH FORM**

### **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

#### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The Bennett Memorial Diocesan School is a Church of England aided school for students aged 11 to 18. Numbers have increased since the last inspection and with 1247 students on roll, including 230 in the sixth form, the school is bigger than other secondary schools. There are now about the same numbers of boys as girls and the school population is generally stable. Since 1993, when it opened its doors to boys, the school has established itself as an all-ability mixed comprehensive school within a wholly selective local education authority and attainment on entry is broadly average. The exception to this is the current Year 7 whose attainment is above average. Students come from over 80 primary schools covering Mid and West Kent and East Sussex and although they represent the full socio-economic range, they are generally from more advantaged backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. Very few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Two per cent of students have English as an additional language but only a very small number are at an early stage of learning English. Seven per cent of students are on the special educational needs register, which is below average, as is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs. The majority of needs relate to emotional and behavioural difficulties and specific learning difficulties. Most students continue with their education after the age of 16 and about two thirds continue into the sixth form. The school has gained the Investor in People award.

#### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The Bennett Memorial Diocesan School is a very good school with excellent features. Students' achievement is excellent in the National Curriculum tests, and in the GCSE examinations. Students' attitudes to the school and to their work are excellent. The excellent relationships between students and with teachers, together with the very high quality of much of the teaching, enable them to make very good progress. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and, with the strong support of the governing body and senior staff, manages the school very well. There is a very clear focus on improving standards and ensuring that the needs of all students are met. The school provides very good value for money.

##### **What the school does well**

- Students' achievement is very good overall and standards are well above average in Years 7 to 11.
- The school's strong Christian ethos, and commitment to educational inclusion, creates an outstanding climate for learning that results in excellent attitudes and behaviour.
- The very good teaching and learning enable all students to achieve very well.
- The quality and range of the learning opportunities provided by the school, including extracurricular provision, contribute very effectively to the high standards achieved.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher provides very clear direction for the work of the school, supported by the very effective management of senior staff and the very good work of governors.

##### **What could be improved**

There are no significant areas for improvement.

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection in 1997 and has the capacity to improve even further. Results have remained consistently well above national figures. They have risen overall at the end of Year 9 and have been maintained at GCSE. Results in the sixth form have risen and are now broadly in line with those of all maintained schools and above those of all post-16 providers. Teaching and learning are now very good overall. The quality of education provided by the school is very good and continues to be good in the sixth form. Leadership is excellent and management is very good. The two key issues, namely the clarification of the management structure, together with raising standards in ICT, have been dealt with.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 and Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A level/AS level examinations.

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

**Key**

Very high and in the top 5% of the country      A\*

well above average      A

above average      B

average      C

below average      D

well below average      E

Results in English, in the end of Year 9 national tests in 2002, put the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Results were well above average in mathematics, which is considerably better than at the time of the last inspection, in science, and for all three subjects together, and have improved more than the national average over the past five years. When compared with similar schools, that is schools where a similar proportion are eligible for free school meals, results were very high in English, well above average in science, above average in mathematics and well above average overall. Since 1998, GCSE results have remained consistently well above both the national average and the average for students in similar schools, and have improved in line with the national trend. When account is taken of their earlier attainment, students' achievement was excellent both in the end of Year 9 tests and in the GCSE examinations. The school's targets were suitably challenging and were met in 2002. Performance at A level in 2001 was in line with national averages for all maintained schools and above average when compared with all post-16 providers. At the time of publication, no national comparisons are available for 2002, but results were broadly similar.

Inspection evidence shows that students' current work is well above national expectations in the main school and above average in the sixth form. Students achieve very well in English, mathematics, science, and ICT and very well overall.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	<b>Excellent.</b> Students' attitudes are excellent and their enthusiasm for learning has a very positive impact on their high achievement.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	<b>Excellent.</b> Students' behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the school. Very high expectations of good and respectful behaviour are underpinned by a strong moral code.
Personal development and relationships	<b>Excellent.</b> Students respond extremely positively to the strong feeling of community. The very good provision for social development helps them to become well-rounded young citizens. The school is a very open and friendly place, and the ethos of valuing the individual is evident in all aspects of school life and in the excellent relationships between students and with teachers.
Attendance	<b>Very good.</b> Attendance is well above the national average and has improved since the last inspection when it was above average. The rate of unauthorised absence is well below the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 - 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Very good

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

Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form and good in Years 10 and 11. In the main school, teaching is very good in English, in science in Years 7 to 9 and in mathematics in Years 10 and 11. It is good in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and in science in Years 10 and 11. Good, very good and sometimes excellent teaching was observed in a range of subjects. Strengths of the teaching include excellent relationships and an inclusive style, which involves every student in the learning, very high expectations and very good student management, very good subject knowledge and very good planning. In excellent lessons, teachers' very effective checking of the students' understanding and excellent references to prior learning, resulted in excellent achievement and progress. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good across the subjects of the curriculum and several subjects use ICT appropriately as an integral part of the teaching and learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	<b>Very good.</b> The quality and range of the learning opportunities provided by the school, including extracurricular provision, contribute very effectively to the high standards achieved and meet the needs and aspirations of sixth form students extremely well. National Curriculum requirements are met with the exception of citizenship.
Provision for students with	<b>Very good.</b> Students with special educational needs are given very

special educational needs	good support, are well integrated into the life of the school and achieve very well.
<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Provision for students with English as an additional language	<b>Very good.</b> The small number of students learning English as an additional language are fully included in the learning process and achieve well.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>Very good.</b> The school's strong Christian ethos and commitment to educational inclusion, create an outstanding climate for learning, where every student is totally focused on learning and determined to succeed. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and permeates many aspects of school life.
How well the school cares for its students	<b>Well.</b> The school provides very good support for students' personal development and child protection procedures are appropriate. Monitoring of behaviour and punctuality is very good. Assessment procedures, and the use of the information gained to inform planning, are good. A few health and safety issues require attention.

The school's strong ethos for learning pervades every aspect of school life and ensures that every student is fully included in the learning experience. The school provides a daily act of collective worship, which contributes very effectively to its strong Christian ethos. Religious education is being inspected separately under Section 23 of the Education Act.

#### **HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	<b>Very good.</b> The headteacher gives excellent leadership, and ensures that the needs of every individual are met. Management is very good. Subject leadership is good overall.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	<b>Very well.</b> The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities very well. Governors are very well informed and play a significant part in shaping the school's future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	<b>Very good.</b> The school monitors and evaluates its effectiveness very well. Senior managers use performance data very well to monitor progress towards meeting the targets that have been set.
The strategic use of resources	<b>Very good.</b> Financial planning is closely linked to the school's educational priorities and resources are very effectively deployed to benefit students. Where additional funding has been received, the school has used it very well for its intended purposes. The school applies the principles of best value well and provides very good value for money.

The school's commitment to sustaining its very pleasant environment, and to improving facilities, greatly enhances the quality of education on offer.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children like school.</li><li>• The school's high expectations and the good progress their children make.</li><li>• The way the school helps students to become more mature and responsible and the good behaviour.</li><li>• The good quality of leadership and management.</li><li>• The good standards of teaching.</li><li>• They feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or problems.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Closer working relationships between the school and parents.</li></ul>

Parents were very positive about the school and the education it provides. Inspectors' evidence fully supports their positive views. There was little evidence to support the concerns expressed by a small number of parents about closer working relationships.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

About two thirds of students continue each year into the sixth form, where they are joined by a small number of students from other schools. The sixth form is larger than average with about the same number of boys as girls, and has expanded steadily to the current 230 students, with 127 in Year 12 and 103 in Year 13. Students are given very good advice and support as to the sorts of courses they should take, and most continue with them through to Year 13. A wide range of subjects is on offer and to follow such a course, students need to have gained a minimum GCSE standard of five grade A\*-C passes. However, the school continues its policy of inclusion into the sixth form and there are students currently following courses who did not entirely meet these requirements. Attainment on entry is close to the national average.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

This is a good sixth form with some very good and excellent features. Since the last inspection, standards have risen and are now above those of all post-16 providers and in line with maintained schools nationally. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and financial management is very good. Teaching and learning are very good and are characterised by very high expectations and excellent student management. Learning is greatly enhanced by the very good attitudes and behaviour of students. The vast majority of students enjoy life in the sixth form and attendance is very good. Students flourish in a climate of openness and mutual respect and are provided with very good educational and personal support and guidance, which help them as they make their choices for their future careers. The curriculum responds extremely well to local circumstances, in that the school offers high-quality post-16 education with a distinctive Christian ethos – a feature that is much appreciated by students and parents alike. Provision for personal development is very good. Monitoring of the effectiveness of what is provided is good and the sixth form is cost effective. A very small number of students in the sixth form have special educational needs. They make good progress and achieve well because of the special attention and care they receive. Similarly the gifted and talented and the few students with English as an additional language, achieve well. Currently ICT is not used enough in other subjects of the curriculum or for independent study, but overall, the sixth form provides good value for money.

**Strengths**

- Good achievement overall and very good in English, mathematics, design and technology, ICT, physical education and media studies.
- Students' very positive attitudes to learning. They are highly committed and fully involved in the work of the school.
- Very good teaching and learning with strengths in teachers' high expectations and excellent student management.
- A broad and balanced curriculum that meets students' needs and aspirations well.
- Very good educational and personal support and guidance.

**What could be improved**

- The use of ICT both in other subjects of the curriculum and to develop students' independent study skills

*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.

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
Mathematics	<b>Very good.</b> Results are rising and are currently above expectations. They are better than would be expected from the students' GCSE results. Students achieve very well. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and teaching is very good.
Chemistry	<b>Very good.</b> Results in the 2001 and 2002 GCE A-2 level examinations were well above average and these standards are reflected in current work. Students did better than expected in relation to their GCSE grades and achieved well. They have a good understanding of the concepts and respond well to very good teaching.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> GCE 2001 A-2 level examination results were average and improved in 2002. Students achieved well, gaining higher grades than could have been expected from their GCSE grades because of good teaching and very good relationships that promote a secure learning environment. Current standards are close to national averages, though the written work of Year 13 is above average.
Design and technology – graphical applications	<b>Very good.</b> Results at A-2 level in 2001 were well above average. In 2002, they were above expectations and although the proportion of A-C grades was lower, all gained A-E grades. Current standards are well above expectations for this stage of the course. Students build on prior attainment and achieve very well because teaching is very good and staff have very good subject knowledge.
Information and communication technology	<b>Very good.</b> A-2 level results in 2001 were in line with national averages. Students attained results that were well above what might be expected from their GCSE results and achieved very well. Current standards are above expectations. Relationships between teachers and students are very productive. Teaching and learning are very good.
Physical education	<b>Very good.</b> In 2001, A-2 level results were well above national averages. In 2002, they were not as good because staffing and facilities were not fully in place to cope with the popularity of the course. Current standards are above national expectations. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well.
Art and design	<b>Good.</b> In 2001 the results at A-2 and AS level were similar to the national average. In 2002 the results were lower. Current standards are improving as a result of good teaching. Teachers have excellent specialist skills and plan very challenging lessons. Students are highly motivated and achieve well.
Media Studies	<b>Good.</b> A-2 level results were well above average in 2001. Grades were lower in 2002 and current standards are above expectations. Students who start the course with little media knowledge and average GCSE results, achieve very

	well. More equipment and technical support is required to broaden the practical aspects of the course. Teaching and learning are very good.
--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Sociology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results of the 2001 A-2 level examinations were well below the national average but were better in 2002. Standards of current students are below national expectations; their achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have very good subject knowledge but there is little evidence in students' files of first-hand independent research.
History	<b>Very good.</b> Results for A-2 level in 2001 and 2002 were above average and these standards are reflected in current work. Teachers have very good subject knowledge; their assessment practice is good and supports students' learning well. Teaching and learning are very good
English	<b>Very good.</b> Results were well above average in 2001 in the joint Language and Literature examination but were not so good in 2002 when the syllabus changed and the numbers of students taking English increased. Current standards are above average. Students achieve very well, particularly those who start their advanced studies with average qualifications at GCSE. Teaching and learning are very good with some excellent features.
French	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results were above average in 2001 but numbers in 2002 were too small to enable valid comparisons to be made. There are now more students taking French in Year 12 and current standards are in line with expectations. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students achieve appropriately.
German	<b>Good.</b> Standards are consistently above the national average. Students have very positive attitudes and achieve well in response to good teaching. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The educational and personal support and guidance for students is very good. Students consider that the induction programme works well and that their chosen courses suit their talents and aspirations. Assessment, monitoring and attendance procedures are good. Reporting arrangements are good, with regular progress reports including half termly monitoring of performance in all subjects. Careers advice is good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is an integral part of the school and shares similar aims and purposes. The Christian ethos underpins its life and work, the decisions that have to be made and the challenges the school faces, and ensures equality of opportunity for all. Leadership and management of the sixth form and monitoring and evaluation of standards are good. ICT is not used enough at present, either by subjects or for independent study and the school development plan does not contain enough detail about sixth form development to enable parents, governors and the leadership team to assess how well the school is fulfilling its vision for the sixth form.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The choice of courses suits their talents and aspirations.</li> <li>• They are well taught and challenged.</li> <li>• They are helped to study independently.</li> <li>• Teachers are accessible for help.</li> <li>• They enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information on the progress they make.</li> <li>• The advice about future options.</li> <li>• The school's response to their views and the extent to which they are treated as responsible adults.</li> <li>• The range of activities and enrichments.</li> </ul>

Students have very positive views about life in the sixth form. The vast majority enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it. Forty per cent of students who returned the questionnaire did not feel that they had been given enough advice about future options but the students interviewed during the inspection remarked on the very helpful guidance given, both for university applications and for those students who wish to pursue other options. A significant minority considered that they were not well informed about their progress, but the inspection team judged that students receive sufficient information through the interim assessments and annual reports. Similarly, inspectors judged the school's extracurricular programme to be a strength. The main concern from the students centres on the lack of a common room and on the arrangements for private study. Some students feel that they are not given enough independence to organise their own study, but others admitted that their results will probably be better because their study periods have been closely supervised.

## 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**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

#### **Students' achievement is very good overall and standards are well above average in Years 7 to 11**

1. Standards overall are well above average. Students' achievement is excellent in the National Curriculum tests, and in the GCSE examinations, when account is taken of their earlier attainment on entry to the school. They make very good progress overall. Attainment on entry is broadly average although the attainment of the current Year 7 is above average.
2. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have improved more than the national average over the past five years. GCSE results have improved in line with the national trend and have been consistently well above both the national average and the average for students in similar schools. Students make very good progress and achieve very well in the majority of subjects.
3. Results in English in the end of Year 9 tests in 2002 were very high and in the top five per cent when compared with all schools nationally. Results were well above average in mathematics and science and for all three subjects together. They were well above average when compared with similar schools, very high in English, well above average in science and above average in mathematics. The results of teachers' assessments in other subjects were well above average in art, well below average in modern foreign languages and broadly average in the rest.
4. Over three quarters of students gained five or more grades A\*-C in the 2002 GCSE examinations and the school's performance on this criterion was very high in relation to national figures. The highest results were in biology, chemistry, double award science, design and technology, English, English literature, French, geography, German, history, ICT, mathematics, physical education, physics and religious education, which were significantly above the national average. The lowest results were in art and design, business studies and music, where results were in line with the national average. A level results in 2001 were average when compared with all schools nationally and above average in comparison with all post-16 providers.
5. Inspection evidence shows that the standard of students' current work is well above national expectations in the main school and above average in the sixth form. It is well above average in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science and above average in ICT. Students achieve very well in English, mathematics, science and ICT and very well overall. The school's targets were suitably challenging and were met in 2002.
6. Students of all ages and abilities are confident and articulate in class. In a Year 7 class based on the study of newspaper reports, for example, lower ability students could choose a newspaper article and give the rest of the class a range of reasons why they had done so, whilst in a Year 11 higher attaining group, students interpreted and commented perceptively on the text of *Twelfth Night*. Students have well developed numeracy skills and make appropriate use of ICT to support their learning in many subjects.
7. Parents are pleased with the school's high expectations and the very good progress their children make.

**The school's strong Christian ethos and commitment to educational inclusion create an outstanding climate for learning which results in excellent attitudes and behaviour**

8. Teachers, governors and students are strongly committed to the Christian principles on which the school's aims are based. The atmosphere of inclusion and mutual respect fosters in students a desire to learn together and to succeed. Students' attitudes are excellent and their enthusiasm for learning has a very positive impact on their achievement. Staff promote students' spiritual awareness very well and they are skilled at developing their sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Students become confident when contributing to discussions and thrive in an atmosphere where they feel safe to take risks in their learning. In many lessons, teachers' enthusiasm rubs off on the students and makes learning exciting. This was seen in a Year 10 drama lesson when students were introduced to *Hobson's Choice*. The teacher's lively description of the setting and characters enabled all students to begin to 'get under the skin' of their chosen parts quickly, trying hard to include accents and movement, even during the first reading. They worked very well in mixed gender groups, accepting and giving constructive criticism to help refine their group performance. Their excellent attitudes enabled them to make significant progress in their learning.
9. Students' behaviour is exemplary, both in lessons and around the school. This is not a highly regimented community but one where there are very high expectations of good and respectful behaviour, underpinned by a strong moral code. Students do not misuse the trust of staff, who allow them to use the tutor rooms at breaks and lunchtime without close supervision. No inappropriate behaviour was seen during the inspection and the site manager commented that there is very little litter, vandalism or evidence of students smoking. Throughout the school, all students respected displays, such as the high quality textile work set out in the corridor on the ground floor.
10. Students' personal development and relationships are excellent. The school has established a very strong feeling of community and its very good provision for social development helps students to become well-rounded young citizens. The ethos of valuing the individual is evident in all aspects of school life and the school is a very open and friendly place. Staff are very approachable and students are very supportive of each other. They are proud of their school and some Year 7 students said that the best thing about school was that '*teachers are friendly and they respect us*'. In assemblies and tutor time, staff are skilled at creating an atmosphere for worship and reflection, as, for example, in a Year 11 tutor period, where darkening the room and lighting a candle created a very powerful atmosphere of contemplation for the class assembly. Carefully chosen themes, such as forgiveness, are explored and students feel comfortable in expressing their thoughts and prayers without fear of ridicule. This provision is not only for the students; a weekly staff prayer group means that the needs of staff are also catered for.
11. Students are sensitive to the needs of those less fortunate than themselves, and are enthusiastic fundraisers. They enjoy participating in the excellent range of extracurricular activities, but their ability to improve aspects of school life is limited as no year councils operate in Years 7, 8 or 9. Peer listeners visit tutor groups regularly to listen to individual concerns.
12. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and permeates many aspects of school life. The school has developed a strong mission statement, emphasising its Christian ethos and the importance of respecting the individual. It is evident that all members of the school community, including staff, students, parents and governors, share the same beliefs as they work together to create a strong and supportive environment for learning.

This very good provision is enhanced by the beautiful surroundings the school finds itself in and by the new facilities such as the sports hall.

13. Students enjoy and would recommend their sixth form, particularly for the choice of courses, the very good teaching and challenge, the accessibility of teachers and the opportunities to study independently.

### **The very good teaching and learning enable all students to achieve very well**

14. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. Teaching was judged to be very good or better in almost half of the lessons observed and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. In the main school, teaching was slightly better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 and this was mainly because teachers took more risks and were more creative with the younger students. Teaching is very good in English, ICT, in science in Years 7 to 9 and in mathematics in Years 10 and 11. It is good in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 and in science in Years 10 and 11. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good and is supported by helpful displays in many classrooms.
15. Very good teaching was seen in most subjects with some excellent teaching. Strengths of the teaching include excellent relationships and an inclusive style involving every student in the learning. Expectations are very high with very good student management, very good subject knowledge and very good planning. Many teachers have excellent structure to their lessons, reviewing previous learning well and conducting effective plenary sessions at the end of the lesson.
16. Planning is very good. In a Year 9 science lesson, excellent planning and organisation of resources enabled high ability students to investigate pressure as force spreads over an area. Students worked very sensibly in groups and the laboratory became a hive of activity as they shared their ideas. In a Year 11 German lesson on films and television programmes, careful planning and preparation meant that students reviewed previous vocabulary and structures well, and could use them effectively as a basis for discussions based on personal experience. In a Year 7 English lesson, it was the teacher's very good time management in covering the subject material, and effective plenary session, that enabled students to make perceptive suggestions as to the reasons why the newspaper article they were reading had been set out in a particular way.
17. One of the major strengths of the teaching is the excellent relationship between teachers and students. Teachers manage students very well. Students are comfortable in the learning environment and willing to take risks. In a Year 10 dance lesson, the teacher worked hard to raise attainment in a group that had had little previous experience of dance and pushed them gently to improve their performance and to recognise what they were capable of achieving. In a Year 11 history lesson on public health in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the teacher's excellent management and organisation meant that students acquired enormous skill and knowledge and by the end of the lesson, could turn away from the information on the board and present powerful arguments to make-believe politicians, as to why the sanitation problems being encountered should be resolved.
18. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding and explain very clearly to their students what it is they want them to learn. They have very high expectations of their students. As a result, students learn very well and make very good progress. Teachers use effective questioning techniques to enable their students to explore their ideas and consolidate opinions. This was seen in a Year 11 English lesson, based on a South African poem, where the teacher's

very effective questioning meant that students fully understood the poem and developed their higher order thinking skills well.

19. A further strength is that teachers are very well aware of the need to include every child in the learning process. Strategies for dealing with those students with special educational needs, the few students with English as an additional language, and the gifted and talented, are very good. In a Year 9 design and technology lesson, for example, the teacher's effective questioning enabled a gifted student to tell the class what he knew about systems as they began a section on electronics. In Year 10, a small group of students with special educational needs were given very good support and guidance as they used computers to improve their literacy skills, with the result that they were reluctant to leave the room when the bell went at the end of the lesson. In a sixth form lesson on product design, a student with English as an additional language was very well integrated into the learning, and although she had missed part of the course, every effort was being made to help her to catch up.
20. Parents say that their children like school and are pleased with the very good teaching and learning provided.

**The quality and range of the learning opportunities provided by the school, including extra curricular provision, contribute very effectively to the high standards achieved**

21. The quality and range of the learning opportunities provided by the school, including extracurricular provision, contribute effectively to the high standards achieved. The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements, with the exception of citizenship. The full National Curriculum is offered in Years 7 to 9. Features distinctive to the school are the enhanced provision of religious education, consistent with the school's denominational status, and increased time allocation in English and mathematics, to give students good grounding in basic skills and improve their access to the whole curriculum. Students study either French or German as their first foreign language, with the option of starting a second in Year 9. A daily act of collective worship – prayer and reflection – is built into the form tutor period and contributes very effectively to the school's strong Christian ethos
22. In Years 10 and 11, students follow a substantial core curriculum, with options that include, for some, the possibility of studying three sciences and two languages. Less academic students are offered extra support in number and information technology skills, a technology module and a work experience placement. All students benefit from work experience at the end of Year 10. This is monitored and reviewed effectively as part of the good careers education programme.
23. The school has recently made very significant advances in the provision for ICT. ICT lessons take place in Years 7 to 9, and in Years 10 and 11 some students take GCSE IT. The Key Stage 4 National Curriculum entitlement is delivered through English, mathematics, science, design and technology, modern foreign languages and religious education. Interactive whiteboards and data projectors are used effectively, and are in great demand by teachers. The use of a data projector is a standard feature of assemblies and adds power to their spiritual impact. Although there is still work to be done in enabling students to develop their ICT skills across subjects, the majority of staff have been trained in its use and good progress has been made in integrating information technology-based work in subjects.
24. A well-planned programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught through a combination of tutor time and a rolling programme of withdrawal lessons. However, this is seen as a transitional arrangement, pending the full integration of the programme into the curriculum and the review of provision for citizenship. The school has carried out an audit to identify where the existing curriculum can contribute to the delivery of citizenship, and has begun to identify those areas where it is already happening, but a specific scheme of work has not yet been developed. As a result, current provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory at both key stages.

25. Plans for further development of the curriculum include the introduction of more vocational GCSE courses and the complete integration of ICT in subjects. The school has both the will and the capacity to implement these plans.
26. Provision for extracurricular activities is very good. The school provides an extensive range of extracurricular and enrichment activities, which support students' academic and personal development very well. Activities include a wide variety of sports events and a comprehensive music programme including wind ensembles, a string ensemble, an orchestra and a jazz group attended by large numbers of students. Many staff give time to these activities, but in the case of the jazz group, sixth form students took the practice themselves and students had enormous fun making music and enjoying themselves. The school was rehearsing for Godspell whilst inspectors were in the school. A group of students from Years 10 to 13 is visiting Malawi next year and a high number of students are taking the Duke of Edinburgh awards

**The excellent leadership of the headteacher provides very clear direction for the work of the school, supported by the very effective management of senior staff and the very good work of governors**

27. The headteacher gives excellent leadership and has a major impact upon the Christian ethos of the school and the strong ethos for learning. He ensures that the needs of every individual are met. He has a strong commitment to the further development of the school and has put in place a team with the capacity for even further improvement.
28. Management by key staff is very good. The leadership team provides the headteacher with very good support and is particularly effective in terms of its support for curriculum development. The principles of best value are implemented successfully. Financial planning is closely linked to the school's educational priorities and resources are effectively deployed for the benefit of students. Resources for learning are well administered. Where additional funding has been received, the school has used it well for its intended purposes and monies accrued from the sale of land have been set aside as part of a bid to improve facilities in several subject areas. The school provides very good value for money.
29. Subject leadership ranges from very good to satisfactory but is good overall. Issues to do with clarifying the management structure, enhancing communications and refining school development planning, monitoring and evaluation, which were raised in the previous inspection report, have been dealt with and these aspects of the school are now good. The school development plan, for example, provides clear direction to the work of the school and is effectively timed and costed. However, this good practice is not yet fully embedded into sixth form planning. Senior managers are very aware of their individual responsibilities and communications within the school are good.
30. The governing body is very involved in the life of the school and is committed to providing a caring, safe community that promotes high achievement. Governors are very well informed and play a significant part in shaping the school's future. There are very good relationships between the governing body and staff and the two groups get together and share their views frequently, both formally and informally, when deciding the future direction of the school. Governors provide the senior management team with appropriate support and fulfil their role of critical friend well. They are particularly effective in evaluating and monitoring the curriculum, and in promoting the school's strong Christian ethos. With the exception of citizenship, whose implementation is a little behind the national timetable, and risk assessment, they fulfil their statutory responsibilities very well.



31. The school monitors and evaluates its effectiveness very well. Senior managers use performance data very well to evaluate the school's performance in public examinations and to monitor progress. Departmental evaluation is very good. Most departments are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas and have taken appropriate steps to remedy past weaknesses in examination performance. Staff, such as newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school, feel well supported.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **There are no significant improvements for the school to undertake**

A small number of lesser improvements are required, relating to health and safety issues, the full integration of PSHE into the curriculum and the development of a programme of study for citizenship.

32. Overall, the school has good arrangements to ensure students' welfare, health and safety. Teachers know students very well and the school provides very good support for students' personal development. Assessment practices and the use of the information gained to inform planning are good and appropriate procedures are in place for child protection and first aid. However, although sufficient risk assessment is undertaken in departments such as science and for school visits, and the deputy headteacher and governors make regular safety checks of the building, lack of monitoring of individual subject areas has resulted in deficiencies. For example, in design and technology, the management of risk assessment is not rigorous enough. Issues brought to the school's attention are being dealt with and measures are being put into place to improve risk assessment procedures.
33. The school has undertaken an audit of where subjects might contribute to the development of citizenship but at present, arrangements are not formal enough to guarantee the full entitlement of the course for every child. Tutorial work, which encompasses aspects of citizenship and PSHE, is taught three times a week in two 25-minute slots by tutors. Provision in these sessions was found to be very good and is enhanced by the excellent quality of the assemblies which occupy the other two 25 minute slots. The school is currently reviewing provision in this area with a view to introducing a more structured course.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

34. To improve further the quality of education students already receive, the governors and staff should:

### **Sixth form:**

Extend the use of ICT both in subjects and to develop students' independent study skills by:

- Improving facilities for sixth form use of computers. (*paras 38 45, 67, 77, 84, 88, 94*)
- Requiring teachers to make more use of computers in their everyday classroom work and when setting homework for students. (*paras 38, 49, 55, 88, 119, 135, 145, 150*)
- Monitoring the use of computers by sixth form students more systematically. (*paras 70, 77*)

Other areas the governors may wish to include in their action plan:

### **Whole school:**

Draw up and implement a whole school policy for risk assessment. (*paras 32, 101*)

**Main school:**

Follow up recent review of the place of PSHE and citizenship in the whole curriculum, so that both are fully integrated into what is on offer to all students. (*paras 24, 33*)

**Sixth form:**

Consider involving students more in their planning of independent study time, and, as funding allows, provide a study area for the sixth form. (*paras 38, 45, 55*)

Make the vision for the sixth form clearer in the school development plan, with appropriate criteria by which success can be evaluated (*paras 70, 74*)

Explore ways of improving specialist accommodation for design and technology (as mentioned in previous report) and for science; update and extend resources in a few subjects, particularly history and media studies (*paras 76, 77, 96, 101, 124, 129*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### *Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 -11	55
	Sixth form	50
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		71

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	2	23	20	10	0	0	0
Percentage	4%	42%	36%	18%	0	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	3	21	19	7	0	0	0
Percentage	6%	42%	38%	14%	0	0	0

*The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7 to 11 and/or the sixth form here as each lesson represents about two percentage points.*

### *Information about the school's students*

Students on the school's roll	Year 7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1017	230
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	28	2

Special educational needs	Year 7 – 11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	14	1
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	80	1

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	18

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11

Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	24
----------------------------------------------------------------------	----

### ***Attendance***

#### **Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	7.8

#### **Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	0.1
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)***

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	108	88	196

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	101	95	97
	Girls	83	74	76
	Total	184	169	173
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	94 (87)	87 (91)	89 (93)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	77 (53)	68 (67)	62 (64)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	92	98	94
	Girls	80	77	75
	Total	172	175	169
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	88 (70)	89 (93)	86 (91)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (34)	63 (56)	44 (44)
	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	110	81	191

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	77	105	107
	Girls	68	79	79
	Total	145	184	186
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	76 (78)	96 (97)	97 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	51.4
	National	39.8

***Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13) 2001***

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	27	71	98
	Average point score per candidate	15.9	16.7	16.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.7	17.4

***Ethnic background of students******Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of students on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	1161	10	
White – Irish	0		
White – any other White background	1		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	0		
Mixed – any other mixed background	0		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0		
Black or Black British – African	0		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	6		
Chinese	2		
Any other ethnic group	11		
No ethnic group recorded	66		

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	76.4
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.13

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	413

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.5
-----------------------------------------------------------	------

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	24.4
Key Stage 4	21.1
Sixth form	17.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	21
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	29

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/02
----------------	---------

	£
Total income	4169544
Total expenditure	3818903
Expenditure per pupil	3090
Balance brought forward from previous year	273441
Balance carried forward to next year	624082

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	1247
Number of questionnaires returned	639

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	52	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	52	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	57	3	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	59	14	4	2
The teaching is good.	31	62	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	30	50	15	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	40	7	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	33	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	29	49	18	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	54	41	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	43	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	50	7	1	5

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and students' achievements**

35. Results in the 2001 A level examinations were in line with those of all maintained schools and above those of all post-16 providers. Boys' results were above the average of boys' results nationally and girls' results were in line with those of girls. There were more than twice as many girls in the cohort as boys, whereas in the current sixth form there are about the same number of boys as girls. Results in the 2002 examinations were broadly similar but as yet there are no national comparisons for these results. Standards have been gradually rising since the previous inspection. Students achieve well overall.
36. Results in 2001 were well above average in English, graphical applications, media studies, physical education and religious studies. They were above average in French, geography and history, average in art, biology, business studies, food technology, ICT and physics and below average in textiles. Results were well below average in sociology and were very low in the general studies paper. There were too few candidates entered in chemistry, German, mathematics and music for valid comparisons with national data to be made. The percentage of passes at the higher A/B grades was broadly in line with the national average and the overall pass rate of 98 per cent was a five and a half per cent improvement on the 2000 results. Students gained higher grades than might be expected from their GCSE examination results in English, mathematics, business studies, biology, chemistry, ICT and media studies. Results were higher in 2002 in ICT, biology, textiles, food technology and business studies, but were slightly lower in art and design, media studies, physical education, English and French.
37. Current standards range from well above average to below but, overall, they are broadly in line with the expected levels of the courses being followed, and are similar to those of 2002. In some subjects, students' standards are approaching near degree level. This was seen in the Year 12 textiles group, where students were making a three-dimensional model from a two-dimensional drawing. Similarly in Year 12 and 13 physical education lessons, although standards are above expectations overall, in some of their work students have mastered first year undergraduate work and difficult concepts such as energy systems and mind maps, because theory and practice are closely linked. Standards are well above expectations in chemistry and design and technology and above expectations in English, mathematics, history, German, ICT, physical education, and media studies. Standards are in line with expectations in art, biology and French and below expectations in sociology. Students achieve very well in English, mathematics, design and technology, ICT, physical education and media studies and well in biology, chemistry, art and design, history and German. They achieve satisfactorily in sociology and French.
38. Students use ICT well when given the opportunity to do so but at present there are not enough computers for independent study in the sixth form and teachers and students do not use computers enough in lessons.
39. A very small number of students in the sixth form have special educational needs. They make good progress and achieve well because of the special attention and care they receive. Similarly the gifted and talented and the few students with English as an additional language achieve well.

40. Most students continue in education at the age of 16 and many do so at the school. A small number of students join the school in the sixth form, including visiting overseas students who stay for between six months and a year to help perfect their English. Teaching in Year 12 is generally adjusted accordingly, although these students would benefit from a more formal system of support.

### **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

41. The vast majority of students enjoy life in the sixth form and attendance is very good. Students have very good attitudes to learning, and flourish in a climate of openness and mutual respect. This was seen in a Year 12 psychology lesson, when students were exploring studies of brain activity. The teacher established a very good relationship with the students and this enabled them to debate issues confidently amongst themselves and to ask for clarification when they did not understand. They listened carefully to their teacher, using their note taking skills appropriately. They worked well together in mixed gender groups and were totally focused on their experiments and tasks, so that by the end of the lesson they had made significant gains in their learning.
42. Students' personal development and relationships are very good. Many students progress from the main school where they learnt to be well rounded young citizens. Through the Year 12 council and other meetings with staff, they are confident in challenging senior staff on issues such as the lack of a common room and the lack of accommodation for private study. Students grasp the opportunities to take responsibility and show initiative through the varied enrichment programme. Training for peer listeners not only enhances the students' personal development, but students in the main school appreciate being able to talk through their concerns with people who are not teachers. Students gain valuable social skills through fundraising for charity, working in the lower school and helping with after-school clubs; they make good use of their periods of private study and are able to work independently; their relationships with teachers and fellow students are very good.

### **Students' views**

43. Students have very positive views about life in the sixth form. The vast majority who returned the questionnaires enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it. They feel that their choice of course suits their talents and aspirations and they are well taught and challenged. They appreciate the support they receive from their teachers and feel that they are helped to study independently.
44. It is evident from the questionnaires and through discussions with students that students do have concerns about a few aspects of the sixth form. Forty per cent of students who returned the questionnaire did not feel that they had been given enough advice about future options. However the students interviewed during the inspection remarked on the very helpful guidance given both for university applications and to those who wished to pursue other options. A significant minority considered that they were not well informed about their progress, but the inspection team judged that students receive sufficient information through the interim assessments and annual reports.
45. Students' main concern centres on the lack of a common room and arrangements for private study. Staff are sympathetic and acutely aware of students' concerns, but are not able to meet their demands at present as space is at a premium. Year 12 students have good facilities for silent private study, but accommodation for group work and access to computers is far from satisfactory. Some students feel that they are not given enough independence to organise their

own study, but others admitted that their results will be probably be better because their study periods have been closely supervised.

#### **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

46. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are very good in English, mathematics, chemistry, design and technology, history, ICT, physical education and media studies; good in biology, art and design and German and satisfactory in French and sociology.
47. The main strengths of the teaching relate to teachers' very high expectations of students, their excellent student management and the very good relations between teachers and students. Excellent relationships enable students to take intellectual risks. In a Year 13 English lesson on Philip Larkin's *The Whitsun Wedding*, the teacher gave just enough time for pair work before requiring students to lead the discussion. Extremely effective intervention from the teacher, who knew the students very well, ensured that every aspect of the poem was discussed and that meticulous attention was paid to the text. As a result, students made extremely good progress in developing their understanding of the poem and its form, whilst continuing to develop and extend their skills of annotation and their recall of previous learning. In a Year 12 textiles lesson, the teacher showed excellent graphics work to illustrate the key points of the lesson and provided students with a wealth of activities, both by supplying very clear models for them to follow, and by drawing from them ideas of their own. This exceptional management and direction meant that students made excellent progress in designing their own models and could evaluate their progress and take critical decisions about what they needed to do next.
48. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding. This was seen in a Year 12 physics lesson relating to the measurement of motion in a sporting activity. Here, the teacher's very good subject knowledge and understanding of the subject kept students on their toes, as they answered very demanding, challenging questions, and ensured that every student fully understood what was going on and was able to cope with the homework question on elastic energy. In a Year 12 tutorial session, the teacher's excellent knowledge of the different ways in which people learn, ensured that by the end of a session on learning, all students had a deeper insight into their preferred learning style, and were able to apply that knowledge when considering their progress and achievement in other subjects. Teachers' planning is also very good; they are well aware of course and examination requirements and ensure that their students are extremely well prepared
49. Teachers use a variety of very effective teaching methods and resources to get their point across. In a Year 12 history lesson, students made very good progress in understanding the suffragette movement and in identifying the arguments both for and against introducing the vote for women, as a result of the teacher's very good use of resources, including ICT. When required, teachers take time out to work with students individually, as in a Year 13 information technology lesson, where the teacher allowed students to work independently but spent time giving individual tuition to ensure that every student made very good progress. The teacher was observed helping students learn a new skill and then returning a few minutes later to check that they had grasped the idea and were implementing it for themselves. In a Year 12 German lesson on job interviews, the high quality of the teacher's introduction and full coverage of the main teaching points, enabled students to incorporate them easily in their own oral presentations. Currently there are not enough planned opportunities for the use of ICT in lessons.
50. The quality of ongoing assessment is very good. Teachers know their students extremely well. They mark work thoroughly and suggest how it can be improved when handing it back. Homework provides a very effective further tool in ensuring that students use their home time to continue their studies, and that classroom learning is fully understood. Students feel that they are

helped to learn independently and that they are provided with very good learning skills that are developed from the time they enter the school.

51. The very few students with special educational needs are provided with very good support and teachers know them well. Where necessary, special training is given to teachers and learning support assistants and other agencies are involved for students with statements of special educational need. Students have regular feedback and the special educational needs department organises good monitoring and feedback so students are aware of their achievements. In examinations, concessions are sought for students in the sixth form with special educational needs. All students are well supported by their peers and are well integrated.

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

52. Overall the curriculum provides equality of opportunity and access to an effective sixth form. It is very broad and offers students a wide range of subjects that meets their personal interests and aspirations well. The school goes to considerable lengths to ensure that students are able to study the subjects they choose.
53. Students are offered a wide range of AS and A-2 level courses and a recently-introduced advanced vocational business course. They choose from 25 courses, covering the full range of areas of learning. A number of recommended pathways of study are provided, from two-year AS and A-2 courses to a one-year course of AS subjects, with possible continuation in the further education sector. The curriculum is consistent with the school's aim of maximising the educational achievement of each individual student and corresponds well to the needs and aspirations of the great majority who meet the school's GCSE entrance requirements. Although the current range of courses is predominantly academic, the school has plans to extend the number of advanced vocational courses. The curriculum responds very well to local circumstances in that the school offers high-quality post-16 education with its distinctive Christian ethos – a feature much appreciated by students and parents alike.
54. The curriculum is very well planned and managed, with particular strengths in ICT, design and technology, history, art and media studies and good quality in mathematics, chemistry, biology, German and physical education. Governors take an active and informed interest in the curriculum through their curriculum committee. The successful introduction of Curriculum 2000 has been carefully monitored.
55. The school does not teach key skills as a discrete programme. Students' standards of literacy, numeracy and communication skills are above average on entry to the sixth form. They also tend to have sufficient capability in ICT to access and process information for their own purposes. However, they are not provided with sufficient opportunity to develop these skills in the taught curriculum in all subjects. One of the key aims of the sixth form is to foster their development as independent learners and there are clear signs of progress in many areas. Students have full timetables that incorporate supervised private study time. Whilst ensuring that study time is profitably used, this arrangement does inhibit students' autonomy and sense of responsibility for their own study. Facilities for private study are no more than adequate overall.
56. The school's extracurricular programme is a strength and sixth formers are a key element in its success. In addition to participating in the range of activities offered, they play responsible roles in sports coaching, music practice, event organisation (including an ambitious sports festival for primary schools to be held during the Summer of 2003) and charity work. One of the best features of their involvement is the service they provide to the school community through peer

listening, support work in tutor groups and counselling, for which a small group has been professionally trained.

57. The tutorial and assembly programme provides a good basis for students' personal and social development. Key issues such as careers education, including specific events for students who are not seeking to go on to higher education, sex and drugs education, are covered and work experience is available at the end of Year 12. The school's ethos and the quality of relationships within subject areas are important factors in furthering students' personal development. Statutory requirements for religious education and daily collective worship are fully met.
58. The caring ethos of the school underpins the steps taken to encourage students to form supportive and positive relationships with one another. Students new to the sixth form settle into the daily routines, quickly make friends and become valued members of the school community. In lessons, however, some fare better than others. Teachers sometimes underestimate the language and learning needs of the small number of visiting overseas students who spend time at the school perfecting their English, and very occasionally they require further support to profit from the learning that is taking place.
59. As in the main school, provision for social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very good. The strong Christian ethos and emphasis on respect for the individual is evident in many aspects of sixth form life.
60. Staff make the most of opportunities for students to explore their spiritual awareness. For example, in a Year 13 English lesson about Philip Larkin's poetry, the teacher's careful planning on the theme of life and death and the notion of distress in poetry visibly moved the students and they left the lesson still discussing the poem. Assemblies offer students good opportunities for worship and reflection. Visiting speakers talking about moral issues such as the effects of war, deepen students' awareness. The enrichment programme enables students to develop particular social skills such as peer listening, debating in a model United Nations General assembly, leading worship and organising charity events. Through meaningful links with overseas charities, expeditions to Africa and working alongside foreign students, students' cultural awareness is developed very well.
61. The school has well-established links with the local college of further education that ensure continuity of provision both for sixth formers following one-year courses, and for students from the main school whose needs are not best met in the sixth form. There are close links with several higher education institutions in Kent and Sussex, which offer visits, careers fairs and other enrichment activities.
62. The curriculum has remained largely consistent since the last inspection: it continues to reflect the needs of the great majority of students by providing primarily academic courses of very good quality and range. There has been a move to introduce advanced vocational subjects and this is recognised as an area for early further development.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

### **Assessment**

63. The school has good arrangements in the sixth form for the assessment and monitoring of students' academic performance. Students' progress is closely monitored and termly assessments give students and their parents clear information about their progress. Teachers

give high priority to individual monitoring and target setting. A key feature is the setting of minimum target grades, based on each student's previous achievements.

64. Students are involved in the monitoring of their progress and building up a useful record of their individual progress. Teachers know each student well and provide good guidance about how they are doing and how to improve. For example, in design and technology, students make their own notes in individual discussions with their teacher about their work and this supports their personal development and encourages the development of independent learning skills. Reporting arrangements are good, with regular progress reports, including half termly monitoring of performance in all subjects.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

65. The educational and personal support and guidance for students is very good. Students consider that the induction programme works well and that their chosen courses suit their talents and aspirations.
66. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good and mirror the good practice established in the main school. In Year 12, students are registered in their tutor groups, whilst Year 13 self register through signing in and out. Tutors and subject teachers keep a close eye on any poor attendance levels, which are quickly followed up by senior staff.
67. Sixth form staff provide very good advice and guidance to learners. Relationships between students and their teachers are very good and students feel able to ask for help, particularly with their academic work. A good and structured tutorial programme operates well for Year 12 students. Students are encouraged to develop their independent study skills but feel hampered by the lack of designated study areas, particularly for group work and when they need to use computers.
68. Careers advice is good, particularly with regard to university applications, but staff are careful to ensure that students who do not wish to go onto higher education are also given timely and relevant advice. Students are encouraged to use the expertise of the careers advisers from Connexions when considering their future options. Topics such as pensions are covered in tutorials and there are appropriate opportunities for work experience.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

### **Leadership and management**

69. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The sixth form is an integral part of the school and shares similar aims and purposes. The Christian ethos underpins the life and work in the sixth form, the decisions that have to be made and the challenges the school faces.
70. The rationale for the sixth form and its development are not unequivocally spelt out in the school's documentation. This makes it difficult for parents, governors and the leadership team to assess how successfully the school is fulfilling its vision for the sixth form. The school does however, have clearly expressed academic targets that support the school's targets and the drive for improved examination results.
71. The line management responsibilities work well overall. A watchful eye is kept on how well heads of department are meeting the goals they have set and whether further monitoring and support might be helpful. Students benefit greatly from the strong leadership and management of subject leaders.
72. Monitoring and evaluation of standards are good. Members of the leadership team review examination performance data very thoroughly and probing questions are raised with subject leaders about results and where improvements can be made. These meetings effectively set an

agenda for improvement, that informs whole school and department development plans, the professional development of staff and the distribution of resources. The school has some excellent role models in departmental management and some excellent and very effective teachers. In the spirit of self-evaluation and improvement, these skills could be shared more widely across the school.

73. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. Governors are well informed and the Chair plays a prominent role in shaping the Christian ethos of the sixth form. There is a very effective sub-committee structure, chaired by experienced and well-informed governors. The school is held to account and governors carry out their role as critical friend effectively. Governors share a good understanding of the sixth form, which subjects are performing well and where there are weaknesses. They also offer a thoughtful account of what they would like the sixth form to become in the future.
74. Funding for the sixth form is managed well, ensuring that it operates within the budget it receives and is self-financing. There is a clear rationale for the curriculum and for offering the subjects currently offered. Careful account has been taken of provision in other local schools and colleges, the constraints of funding available for the sixth form and the implications for the main school as a whole. The school development plan is currently being redrafted to meet the criteria of the bid for Technology School status. In its present form there is not enough reference to the sixth form.

## **Resources**

75. Staffing for the sixth form is very good. Teachers and support staff are very well matched to the needs of courses and students. Teachers have good training and qualifications, which are appropriate to the subjects taught. The professional development of staff is strong. Technical support staff assist the work of teachers in the classroom very well, especially in science subjects. A very good mentoring system links departments to senior staff, so that the work in departments is carefully monitored and the needs of the department and its staff are quickly met. This includes training and development as part of the school improvement plan. The school has strong links with teacher training providers.
76. All students and staff work in a very pleasant environment with access to buildings of historical interest and surrounded by extensive grounds and parkland. Subject accommodation for sixth form students is good, especially where rooms are in suites such as in English and languages. Facilities for physical education are very good, with a well-furnished sports hall and specialist teaching areas. Other specialist areas also assist students with their courses. Some science lessons are taught in classrooms rather than laboratories and this inconveniences teachers who work hard to overcome the practical difficulties incurred. The school has already submitted a bid to the DfES to improve accommodation in design and technology but at present, rooms need refurbishment and are unsatisfactory. Sixth form provision for accommodating students outside lesson and tutorial times is satisfactory. There is a study area for students but no social area or separate refreshment facilities.
77. Resources available to subjects are satisfactory. All subjects have sufficient resources to deliver the curriculum and those in some subjects such as physical education, are good. In media studies, however, resources and technical support for practical work are insufficient in both range and quantity for the number of students involved and there are too few textbooks to support independent and wider reading and research by students in history. Students purchase their own copies of textbooks voluntarily in sociology. The provision of ICT has improved but there is not enough access to computers and computer facilities, or systematic monitoring of the

use of computers by sixth form students. The available resources within the library are good, with a wide range of books and eight computers and Internet access is available for students to research topics. This makes a good contribution towards students becoming independent learners.

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

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

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

#### **GCE AS level courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	4	60	76	0	26	1.00	1.51
Biology	2	100	52	0	2	2.50	0.79
Health and social care	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.00	10.79
Vocational studies	5	60	76	0	26	2.80	4.36
Religious studies	2	0	26	0	85	0	2.38
German	1	100	82	0	13	1.00	1.85

#### **GCE A-level and AVCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	10	100	87	20	43	5.40	5.80
Chemistry	3	100	90	33	43	6.67	5.90
Biology	11	100	88	27	34	5.27	5.25
Physics	9	89	88	22	40	5.11	5.67
Food technology	9	89	83	22	28	5.33	4.73
Graphical applications	14	100	88	50	22	7.29	4.74
Business studies	22	95	93	27	32	5.27	5.50
Information and communication technology	8	100	86	0	23	4.00	4.62
Physical education	11	100	92	45	25	6.36	5.09
Art and design	18	100	96	44	46	6.67	6.57
Music	1	100	93	100	35	8.00	5.74
Geography	19	100	92	32	38	6.53	5.74
History	14	93	88	29	35	5.86	5.45
Religious studies	10	100	92	70	38	8.00	5.84
Sociology	16	88	86	6	35	3.25	5.32

English/language	29	100	92	41	30	6.62	5.28
Media studies	19	100	93	37	31	6.42	5.53
French	5	100	89	60	38	6.80	5.59
German	4	100	91	50	40	7.50	5.81

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, biology and chemistry, but physics was also sampled. In physics, results in 2001 were broadly in line with national averages, but were some what lower in 2002. In the lesson observed, very good teaching led to very good learning: lively and challenging work on projectile motion enabled students of all abilities to make good progress by the end of the lesson. Good support was given to individuals.

#### Mathematics

Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**

##### Strengths

- Teaching is very good; lessons are well structured and build effectively on students' previous knowledge and teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- The subject is well led.
- Students are highly focused on learning, and as a result of the good teaching, achieve very well in relation to their previous GCSE results.

##### Areas for improvement

- Increase the use of ICT in the department.
- Apply the very good practice of some staff in target setting, assessment and marking, consistently across the department.

78. The number of students being entered for A-2 level during the past five years shows considerable fluctuation. In two of the years up to and including 2001, the size of the group entered for A-2 level has not been large enough to allow comparisons to be made with national figures. In the two years where the group has been larger, results at A-2 level have been below national averages, particularly at the higher, A/B grades. In 2002, although the group taking A-2 level was small, the results obtained show that the grades are much higher than would be expected from students' GCSE results. For those students, achievement was very high. The school also enters students at the end of Year 12 for the AS level exams. In the 2002 AS examinations, the overall grades also showed very good achievement.
79. During the inspection, class observations and students' work, indicate that standards at AS and A level are rising and are now above average. Tight lesson structure with appropriate emphasis on the use of correct notation and terminology, and imaginative teaching, results in effective learning. Some Year 12 students could demonstrate their understanding of forces and acceleration of moving particles, through a series of problem solving presentations by the students themselves. Students in Year 13 working on the coefficient of restitution, were able to deduce correctly how to apply the ideas in cases of oblique impacts. In both cases, teachers made very effective use of the students' prior learning to enable the development of new ideas and understanding. As a result, students' achievement was very good.
80. Standards in the GCSE re-sit class were more variable. Although some students had successfully taken the re-sit exam in November, the overall standard of attainment of some of

the remaining students was below the standard expected to achieve a grade C. This was partly due to the poor motivation of a small number of students in the class.

81. The effective learning is related to the effective teaching and is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and successfully create a positive learning atmosphere in the lessons. Students in Year 12, who are only part way through the first year of the course, have to sit an 'entry test' in September, which effectively assesses the basic skills necessary to cope with AS level work. This can potentially be used as a diagnostic tool to ensure that students can cope, for example with the level of algebra demanded at AS level. The level of algebraic skill observed in lessons was generally high and enabled very good progress to be made. For example, Year 13 students working on differentiating the product of functions, were able to apply their algebraic skills following a successful review of differentiation from first principles, and very quickly learned the process.
82. Work is well marked and provides detailed corrections. In some of the exercise books, this was also related to a grade and together with a personal 'target' grade, enabled the students to see how they are progressing. This was not, however, seen in all books and the system is due for further development.
83. Students respond well to the positive teaching and the support provided by staff. In Year 13, students choose statistics or mechanics modules and teachers provide helpful advice on selection. Teachers also give considerable additional time during breaks, lunchtime and after school, to ensure that students understand the routine class work. In all A-2 and AS level classes, there was an atmosphere of 'corporate learning', which promoted high effort and concentration.
84. The department is well led. There is a range of developments that are either in their early stage of implementation or are being planned. ICT provision, whilst currently unsatisfactory, is earmarked for future development and the current good practice of some staff in marking and target setting, will soon be fully implemented across the whole department. Resources and accommodation are generally good. Although provision of resources in the library is poor, the department does provide some additional resources in the classroom. The enrichment of the mathematics syllabus to include subject matter that enhances the curriculum, is very desirable. Examples of such enrichment were seen during a discussion originating from a physics class on the derivation of the exponential function, and this approach is currently not sufficiently embedded in routine work. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, although the recent results suggest that the subject is now improving at an increasing rate.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Well above average attainment.
- Very good teaching with well planned lessons that develop students' individual learning skills well and ensure that they have a very good understanding of concepts.
- Excellent relationships enable students to take intellectual risks.
- The management of the department and good teamwork including excellent technical support.
- The good use of data for tracking performance so that students understand how to improve.

### Areas for improvement

- Use ICT more as a support to learning.
- Increase specialist accommodation.

85. Although student numbers were small in the 2001 GCE A-2 level examination, all students achieved a pass grade and the average point score remained well above average. A larger sample took the examination in 2002, and again achieved a point score that was well above average. A one hundred per cent pass rate has been maintained since 1998. The majority of male and female students did better than expected in relation to their GCSE grade and achieved well. In the AS examination in 2002, student attainment was above average. The majority of students made better progress than expected, but students with lower average GCSE point scores found the course demanding.
86. The standard of work of current students is also well above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE grades. In the lessons seen, they responded very well to the challenging ideas they discussed and the brisk pace of the lessons. In one lesson, students were confident as they presented their understanding of transition metal chemistry to the class. Their written work showed that they could impart their ideas clearly and concisely in writing and could tackle a variety of calculations and examination questions well.
87. Students in Year 12 are also achieving well overall. Higher attaining students are performing at a high level. Lower attaining students work hard, but some find the concepts difficult to assimilate. The majority of students have good numeracy and literacy skills to enable them to tackle the work they are given, but lower attaining students find it hard to explain concepts in their own words.
88. Learning is very good overall and results from very good teaching. Teachers use their excellent knowledge and understanding to plan very clear lessons. Teachers have very high expectations of students and encourage them to use high-level technical language. Students are very keen to learn. They are very business like in the laboratories and stay focused on their tasks, particularly in Year 13. Very fast question and answer sessions allow them to demonstrate their level of understanding effectively, whilst excellent relationships and good humour enable them to take intellectual risks publicly. Students are helped to become independent learners through carefully structured homework. Although ICT is used for some research and occasional experimental work, difficulty of access makes this an underused resource.
89. Students are very enthusiastic about chemistry, finding it interesting and challenging. They very much appreciate the quality of the teaching they receive. They feel very well supported by their teachers both in and out of the lessons.
90. The very good teaching and learning result from good management and direction. The department is very well staffed and there is a commitment to building on achievements, which is reflected in the growing numbers studying the subject successfully. The department is very good at tracking and reporting student performance in comparison to expectations. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The current numbers studying chemistry in the sixth form is the largest to date, the high standards are being maintained and progress is good.

Accommodation is limited and some lessons have to be taught outside laboratories. The increase in numbers in the sixth form makes this lack of accommodation more critical.

## **Biology**

Overall the quality of provision in biology is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- Standards are improving.
- Good teaching results in good learning.
- Very good relationships promote a secure learning environment in which students take risks and learn well.
- Good team work and good departmental management supports student learning effectively.
- The tracking and support for student learning to improve performance is good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Ensure better access to ICT as a support to learning.
- Clarify aims of lessons within topics.
- Create more opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning.

91. The GCE A-2 level examination results in 2001 were average. In 2002, results improved and all candidates achieved a pass grade. The majority of students did better than their GCSE results predicted. Over the last four years there has been a steady improvement in results. Girls and boys do equally well, and some students with modest GCSE results have done very well. Results at AS level in 2002 were average, but the majority of students did better than expected in relation to their GCSE results. Students make good progress and achieve well.
92. The standards of work of the current students are close to the national average, although the written work of Year 13 is above average. Higher attaining students did very good course work investigations and used ICT well to write up their work. It was not possible to observe Year 13 during the inspection because of timetabling constraints.
93. Year 12 students showed interest in their work and recalled factual information effectively. They were able to use a high level of technical language to express their thoughts and responded well to teacher input. Their written work was well presented, but very much a record of factual information. They enjoyed a lesson on the structure of the heart and responded well to questions on lung capacity, using mental arithmetic to calculate answers. Some students found aspects of biochemistry challenging.
94. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which enables them to set up good question and answer sessions using a range of well-explained technical language. Very good relationships promote a secure learning environment in which students take risks and learn well. Students are keen to answer questions, and enjoyed sharing their understanding of the workings of the heart, as they interacted with a video on the topic. In this lesson the teacher gave them good strategies for learning new vocabulary. Teachers made sure all students were included in lessons by targeting their questions. However, some lessons lacked sharp lesson objectives and resources were not always organised to enable students to participate more in lessons rather than listening. Although there was evidence of the use of ICT, access problems make it difficult to use it as much as the department would like.

95. Students are very enthusiastic about biology. They find the subject matter relevant and interesting. They appreciate the good teaching, but would like a greater variety of activities in some lessons. They feel well supported by their teachers and get the help and explanations that they need. Although they would like more practical work, they feel that the syllabus is difficult to get through in the time allocation that they have.
96. Good leadership and management support the teaching and learning effectively with a commitment to continued success. The department is very good at tracking performance of students against predicted levels. The department is well staffed, although recruitment is becoming increasingly difficult. Accommodation is limited, with some lessons taught outside laboratories. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Numbers are increasing steadily and attainment is also improving. This increase in numbers will put even more pressure on available laboratory space.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on design and technology – graphical applications, but textiles and home economics were also sampled. Results in textiles in 2001 were below national averages but improved in 2002. In the lesson seen, excellent teaching promoted very high standards in three-dimensional modelling. Students were exceptionally creative and mature in their approach to their work. Their folder work is of near-undergraduate standard. Food technology results in 2001 were in line with national averages, but improved in 2002. In the lesson seen on the changing role of women within the family, students made very good progress in response to very well-structured teaching underpinned by the teacher's very good subject knowledge. The teacher's high expectations were matched by real commitment from students. Folder work featured very good use of ICT.

### Design and technology – graphical applications

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

#### Strengths

- Standards are well above average and achievement is very good.
- The very good learning resulting from very good teaching and well-organised, consistent programmes for delivering the AS and A-2 level courses.
- Marking and assessment procedures that inform students and enable them to achieve to their potential.
- Very good personal development and working relationships foster independent learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Improve aspects of accommodation and resources relating to access to ICT and modelling and making equipment.
- Implement health and safety procedures.

97. Numbers taking the graphical applications course have been consistent and results attained have been very good over time. Students who join the course have usually attained high grades in their GCSE courses. There are also courses in the sixth form for food technology, where 2002 results were in line with national averages and textiles where they were below average.
98. Attainment at A-2 level in 2001 was well above average, with a high proportion of A and B and A-C grades. All students achieved A-E grades. In 2002, results were good and although the proportion of A-C grades was lower, all gained A-E grades. Attainment over time has been above, and in most years, well above the national average, in terms of points scored, for both boys and girls. Students make substantial progress through the course and achievement is therefore very good.
99. Standards of current students are also well above expectations. All students make very good advances in knowledge, understanding and skills as they progress through the course. They are good at analysing existing products and, after carrying out substantial research, are able to develop and evaluate their own creative ideas. For example, in Year 12, students research packaging and 'point of sale' products, and in Year 13, the skills learned are applied in individually selected projects. The quality of work in design folders is very high. Students use well-annotated sketches and drawings to express and communicate ideas, and their work shows depth of content and creative thinking. Presentation of work is a particular strength. Students use a wide range of graphical techniques to express their ideas, and computers are used extensively for computer-aided design and some aspects of computer-aided manufacture. Students show a very positive attitude to their work and make very good progress. Working relationships in lessons are excellent. Students and teachers work in partnership and, as a result,

students' personal development, particularly the development and use of independent learning skills, is very good.

100. Teaching and learning are very good. Shared teaching of the product design courses is planned and executed very effectively between two teachers. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and this is used very well to plan and deliver well-structured courses and lessons. Teachers have very high expectations of students and their work. Regular monitoring and assessment of work, linked to individual feedback to students in lessons, is very effective in reinforcing learning and enabling students to improve their work. A good range of teaching methods is used and time is used very effectively. For example, good input on researching techniques was reinforced by providing a range of research resources from which students could choose. Good individual and small group support was given when using computers for computer-aided design and manufacture. Teachers guide students well and in response, students are very positive about their work. They demonstrate high levels of commitment and work at a good pace. They are given very good, individual advice and support, and as a result, are able to develop a good range of knowledge and skills and apply these enthusiastically in individual, creative work.
101. Leadership and management are good. Staff work cooperatively and use their individual areas of expertise well in the planning and delivery of the course. As a result, courses provide structured and well-organised experiences for students. Resources are used well, but aspects of accommodation and the provision for modelling and making, and computer related work, are limited. Health and safety procedures in resistant materials/graphics areas, especially with respect to the switching, guarding and wiring of machines are not rigorous enough.
102. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards are now very good but although there are plans to develop technology accommodation and resources, as suggested in the last report, these are not yet in place.

## **BUSINESS**

Lessons in AS level business studies and the new business AVCE course were sampled. Results in business studies in 2001 were in line with national averages, but improved significantly in 2002. Students gain higher grades than might be anticipated from their GCSE performance. In the lesson observed, good learning was achieved through well-focused teaching, clear guidance and well-structured activities. In the AVCE lesson, students used the Internet to collect data on businesses for presentations. Their very good computer skills were focused and directed by very knowledgeable interventions from the teacher. They made good progress in a relaxed and pleasant working atmosphere.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

This was a focus subject for A-2 and AS level information technology.

### Information Technology

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

#### Strengths

- Many students achieve results that are well above what might be expected from their GCSE results.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and the quality of teaching is very good.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very productive.
- The course builds sequentially on students' knowledge and skills, making very good use of situations from the real world of business.
- Constructive guidance and feedback are given to students, enabling them to make very good progress.

#### Areas for Improvement

- Acquire the latest versions of software to conform to business standards.
- Provide more opportunities for students to work on computers out of formal lessons.

103. Standards and attainment are above average. The subject has only recently been introduced, so there is limited information to comment on past results, but results in 2001 were in line with national averages. School data on the 2002 results show that the department is particularly successful with students with average GCSE results, who achieve very well. In AS and A-2 level examinations, most students exceed their predicted results by between one and three grades.
104. Very good teaching leads to very good learning. This enables students to achieve very well and to score high marks through clear, whole-class teaching. In one very good lesson, students were required to give examples of “macros” and asked particularly to identify what it was that would gain a few marks, more marks and top marks. Students responded with a clear understanding of these differences. They are also very well supported in individual work, where teachers make good use of their very good subject knowledge and understanding to offer one-to-one support to all students, helping and challenging them and enabling them to make rapid progress. Teachers were observed helping students to learn a new skill and then returning a few minutes later to check that those students had really grasped the idea and were implementing it for themselves.
105. Staff and students enjoy excellent relationships. Students have high regard for their teachers, feeling that they each have particular strengths. They feel well supported and work hard. They like the project nature of the course and very useful projects were seen with practical application for local businesses and organisations, for example setting up a database for a local car auction, or for a Thai food takeaway. Other examples included inventing a system to help the school's reception office find members of staff. The ability to select projects relevant to an organisation with which students are familiar, is greatly valued. This adds interest and motivation and helps students to produce coursework that is well above expectations.
106. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Since the head of department took up responsibility for the subject two years ago, great strides have been made in improving the subject, which is too new to have been reported on in the last inspection. Very good management ensures that staff are appropriately deployed. Student progress is monitored very

well and each teacher knows exactly what each student is doing through written records which are updated each week. The number and quality of computers has been greatly increased and a technician was appointed at the end of last year. However, older computers require upgrading, as does software. Information technology teaching at advanced level necessitates up-to-date technology, such as data projection and interactive whiteboards and improved accommodation to include these facilities. As the status of the subject has improved, so have the demands for computers and more computers are needed, including some in the sixth form study area, so that students can work outside lessons.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

The focus was on physical education (sports studies), but the weekly “entitlement” physical education lesson for all students was also sampled. Students worked enthusiastically on a carousel of team sports and fitness programmes. Good volleyball and table tennis sessions were seen, with enthusiastic participation backed by good coaching focus from supervising teachers.

### **Physical Education**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Well above average results and very good attitudes with students achieving very well.
- Excellent management gives the department a high profile.
- The use of a variety of very good teaching methods, and good linking of practical and theory to embed learning, results in very effective learning.
- Very good accommodation provides a very good learning environment.
- Very good extracurricular provision enhances the opportunities for learning.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Focus marking on examination grades to make lower attaining students fully aware of their attainment.
- Ensure that teaching is systematic.

107. In 2001, results in A-2 level physical education were well above the national average for the proportion of students obtaining a higher A/B grade pass and above the national average for the proportion obtaining at least an A - E pass. Students achieved very well. In 2002, results were not as good as the previous year because staffing and facilities were not fully in place to cope with the popularity of the course. This has been addressed with the completion of additional facilities and teachers working to their strengths to deliver the course. Students still achieved as well comparatively when previous attainment is taken into consideration. More boys than girls were entered for these examinations. In both 2001 and 2002, AS level grades were below predicted grades but in line with students’ performance at GCSE.
108. Inspection evidence shows that students currently in Years 12 and 13 are producing work of above average standard. Most students in Year 12 are achieving better than those in Year 13 because of the nature of the cohort and improved staffing and accommodation. The course is excellently led and is well-established and stable with well-qualified staff and very good accommodation. Year 13 students are able to connect practical and theory together as they link observation and analysis of performance in badminton with the learning process outlined in the psychology aspect of the course. The close proximity of theory and practical areas is a great advantage in such processes. Students in Year 12 convey their views very effectively, for example, when analysing sport in different societies. Students understood the effect of climate, politics and finance on sporting possibilities. In Year 12 and 13 theory work, students understand

first year undergraduate work and difficult concepts such as energy systems and mind maps because theory and practice are closely linked. Students were able to identify how colonial society adopted the norms and values of the colonial power and the effect on international events. Students use graphs and tables effectively to illustrate their work. They understand calculations on reaction time and the energy required in exercise. Higher attaining students produce very mature written work; correct terminology is used and work is accurately presented and structured. Lower attaining students do not present their work as well for revision and are not getting enough guidance from marking linked to examination grading and criteria. Teachers rarely give examination grades in A-2 level grades so that students may not be clear about their achievement.

109. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs progress well because they receive individual attention and consideration. Gifted and talented students are given opportunities to extend their knowledge in lessons by leading and demonstrating. They assist with training in extracurricular activities and in preparation for matches. The standard of student research and analytical thinking is very high for some gifted and talented students who produce work to undergraduate level. In a Year 12 lesson, students delivered their findings and worked out percentages involving fast and slow muscle fibre twitch in different activities and were required to answer a set question on this. Two students then delivered an excellent answer to the rest of the group for the others to grade their answers against.
110. Overall, the teaching of A-2 and AS level physical education is very good. Teachers plan and organise very well and have very good subject knowledge. As a result, students' learning is very good. Teachers question very well and have good pace to lessons that results in very effective learning. Most lessons include a variety of teaching methods; this reinforces learning as well as adding interest. In a Year 13 lesson, the teacher took students through the different phases of learning and related this to their practical performance so that students understood the process very well. Good links between theoretical principles and practical experience were made. Teaching is often linked to familiar situations or sports personalities so that students readily relate this to their learning. Tim Henman's skills were used, for example, in understanding tactics and strategy. Teaching and learning are not as effective when marking and assessment is not linked as well to target setting and grades to assist students and to enable them to identify quickly underachievement and, where necessary, to redirect their focus for improvement. Teaching is less successful when it is not systematic enough, for example, when the same factors affecting all societies and sport, such as politics and finance, are not applied in all comparisons of different societies. Students make satisfactory use of ICT in individual research.
111. Students are very responsible about their work. They have very good attitudes and confidence in their understanding of the requirements of the course. Good relationships enable teachers to deliver the course effectively and to include all students in discussion. Students work well together, for example in word searches and crosswords, to improve literacy and understanding of technical vocabulary relevant to the course. They enjoy the course and are fully committed to achieving well.
112. A level was not mentioned in the previous report; however considerable improvements have been made in management, staffing and accommodation. New specialist facilities have particularly benefited AS and A-2 level students because a specific teaching area is close to practical facilities. Improvement overall is good.
113. The sixth form course is excellently led. Great determination and commitment exist to improve and maintain high standards. Careful analysis of teaching, attainment and examination results

has taken place to ensure progress. Very good specialist teachers deliver the course. Teachers are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of students and know where improvements might be made. Opportunities for taking part in extracurricular activities are very good. Accommodation is very good; resources are good and the department's library is supplemented by good provision in the library. Computers and good software are available as well as a video library. The scheme of work ensures complete coverage of the syllabus. Teachers update their knowledge by attending courses and reading evaluations on examination courses.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

The focus was on art and media studies, but music and drama and theatre studies were also sampled. The small numbers of students in music have attained broadly above-average standards. In the lesson seen, students made good progress in composition in a well-planned and well-taught lesson, with clear objectives based on good review of previous learning. Students worked well together and showed very positive attitudes. The drama and theatre studies lesson in Year 12 was satisfactory. The teacher set clear objectives and students performed with enthusiasm, though their self-discipline and evaluation skills require further development because several of them were hampered by lack of GCSE background in the subject. In a good Year 13 lesson on *'The Government Inspector'* and the role of the director, good teaching focused students clearly on the requirements of the examination course. They showed high levels of motivation, very good attitudes and made good progress.

### **Art and Design**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teachers' expertise and knowledge of their subject are used very effectively to set challenging and stimulating work.
- Detailed records and monitoring of students' progress.
- Clearly identified areas for development are effectively steering management decisions and have led to improvements in the curriculum.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Provide opportunities for students to develop their oral skills when making critical and analytical references to their own and others' work.
- Increase the use of ICT.

114. In 2001, the results at A-2 and AS level were similar to the national average. A little under half of those entered gained the highest, A/B grades. In relation to their GCSE results, students did broadly as expected and achievement was satisfactory overall. In 2002, the results were lower. Fewer students attained the higher grades and several more than in previous years gained the lowest grades. These results were lower than had been expected. The overall trend up to 2002 showed that standards in art and design were being maintained and that the students' point scores were not significantly different from their performance in their other subjects. Few boys take the subject but those that do, generally do less well than the girls and account for a disproportionate number of the lower grades. Students who start the course generally complete it.
115. The standard of work of current students is broadly average and reflects higher standards than the unconfirmed results for 2002 indicate. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions and their GCSE results. An important factor in their good achievement is teachers' analysis of the previous year's results and some reorganisation and reassessment of the work. In the lessons seen, where the problem-solving element of the course was being taught, students responded very positively to the intellectually-demanding work that was set for them. Prompted

by the teachers' interventions, in one lesson students were able to argue more convincingly their reasons for pursuing one course of action in preference to another. As the lesson progressed and students became more aware of their decision-making, their paintings reflected these more informed decisions. The work showed students moving to a position where, whilst maintaining an expressive and spontaneous quality in their work, they were becoming increasingly able to reflect on what they had done and gained more insight into their own and other artists' work. Although the course is taught in one and two hour lessons, the short, one-hour lessons, severely limit the depth and scope of discussion and practical work. As a consequence, the impact of the teaching on students' learning is less than it might be. Teachers nevertheless work hard to maintain a rhythm for discussion, reflection and practical problem solving that bridges the lessons.

116. Students in Year 12, although still fairly new to the course, are making satisfactory progress overall in the development of their technical skills. Where question and answer were used skilfully to probe and extend students' understanding, the learning was good. Occasionally, however, teachers talked and students listened and the learning was less powerful than it could otherwise have been. Students are confident speakers but some are not given enough opportunity to practise using technical language and to make critical and analytical comments. Students are able to make thoughtful connections between their own and contemporary artists' work, but are less confident about making in-depth, cross-cultural references.
117. Teaching is good overall and students learn well. The strengths of the teaching lie in teachers' excellent subject knowledge, high expectations of students' examination performance and their analysis about how this can be achieved. In a lesson where learning was particularly effective, the teacher identified very clear objectives, thoughtfully evaluated the learning with students throughout the lesson and explained the plans for subsequent lessons. Students were involved throughout and could see for themselves how they were progressing and what had been achieved. This enabled them to make effective use of time outside of lessons and to work independently.
118. Teachers' assessments of work are very detailed and provide students with a very good structure to plan further work and improvements. Students have well-developed learning skills and they manage their time well. They read widely, visit galleries and use computers well to support their research. Work journals are highly creative and central to the working process for all students.
119. The subject is well led and managed. The curriculum is very good and the subject makes a very strong contribution to students' SMSC development. The life drawing classes held in a nearby college, visits to galleries and visits by practising artists, all make a very good contribution. The analysis of examination results carried out centrally is helpful in highlighting the strengths and areas where improvements are needed. The subject departmental plan squarely addresses these points for development. Changes to the examination requirements and marking criteria have been problematic in the past and teachers have adjusted their teaching to take account of these. Staff share a commitment to high standards and use their expertise well to plan work that challenges and stimulates the students. Opportunities for using technology - computers and digital media - to extend and support the creative work that already exists, are relatively underdeveloped. There are however plans to change this, resulting from teachers' recent professional development and the provision that exists in the lower school. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## Media Studies

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

### **Strengths**

- Students' attainment is above average and their achievement is very good.
- Students have very good attitudes, excellent relationships and the desire to do well.
- Teaching is very good, characterised by enthusiasm, good planning and marking.

### **Area for improvement**

- Provide more equipment and technical support to broaden the practical aspects of the course.

120. In 2001, results in A-2 level were well above average. All students passed and over one-third attained grades A or B. Grades were lower in 2002 but all students passed. A-2 level results have remained relatively stable although numbers of students have increased. By contrast, AS results in 2001 and 2002 were below average. The subject attracts more male than female students and there is no significant difference in their attainment. The subject was introduced in the sixth form at the time of the last inspection and numbers have increased each year since. The school currently caters for 65 students in Years 12 and 13. About two-thirds continue from AS to A2-level and a number of students pursue the subject further in higher education.
121. The standard of students' work is above average. It confirms the very good achievement made by those students who start the course with little media knowledge and average results at GCSE. Students quickly learn the vocabulary required for analysing different media and, by mid-way through Year 12, have a sound grasp of the concepts involved. The effort made editing and drafting essays results in well-developed, finished coursework and students learn the importance of accurate and attractive presentation. Students apply their knowledge well when planning and evaluating their own media productions. For many, the practical element of the course is its main attraction and they show competence and imagination, particularly in creating and using still images. More adventurous work, with film and animation, is limited by insufficient equipment in school, particularly the technology for producing and editing moving image work. Students use appropriate investigational techniques in carrying out their independent studies. The most articulate students speak enthusiastically about their projects and have a good grasp of the rationale of the course. Students with special educational needs make very good progress because of the sensitive way in which their particular needs are handled by teachers.
122. Students' attitudes are very good. Relationships and personal development are excellent. Students enjoy course topics, which draw on cultural and moral issues important to them. They are very well motivated and approach their class and homework seriously, though some of the lower attaining students find the demands of advanced study very challenging. The emphasis on group and pair work encourages good mutual support between students.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers know the students well, evident in the caring, personal guidance offered and the high quality marking, which identifies strengths and weaknesses in students' work. Students speak highly of the support they receive, which includes teachers monitoring their files and discussing plans for their independent studies. The importance attached to well-organised note taking and writing, enables higher attaining students to develop a style that is mature and personal and lower attaining students to improve their basic communication skills. The constant tracking of students' progress ensures they remain on task and underpins the very good retention rates. Internal assessments and examination results are analysed effectively in order to pinpoint weaknesses in the course.

124. Resources and technical support for practical work are insufficient in both range and quantity for the number of students involved. It is to the credit of teachers and students that these difficulties are overcome. The subject handbook is a useful document, though it currently omits much of the information given separately to students; book lists, essential subject vocabulary and useful web sites to explore. Currently the school has too few contacts with media institutions. The material studied offers very good opportunities for students to engage with spiritual and moral issues. In work on advertising and marketing, for example, students have a strong voice on manipulation, on the representation of women, violence and love. However, opportunities are missed to explore more issues of a multi-cultural nature.

125. Leadership and management are very good. Much hard work has gone into developing the subject and it is recognised that there is still much to do. There is a shared enthusiasm and commitment amongst the teaching staff. The introduction and rapid growth of media studies has been a considerable asset to the school. Improvement over the past few years has been good.

## HUMANITIES

The focus was on history and sociology, but geography, psychology and general studies were also sampled. Geography results in 2001 were in line with national averages but declined somewhat in 2002. In the lesson seen, good teacher input on the topic of sustainability and the impact of tourism, enabled students to accumulate essential knowledge steadily. Higher-achieving students, in particular, developed their ideas well on the complexity of rural economies. Results in psychology were above national averages in 2001 but declined in 2002. The Year 12 lesson seen included very good practical, paired work on the hemispheres of the brain. Good teaching featured high expectations, good use of technical vocabulary and very good highlighting of key points for learning. Students showed very good attitudes to the subject. Results in general studies have been consistently below national averages. In the lesson seen, a small group of students, including two from overseas, concluded a unit on the pros and cons of identity cards. Some good collaborative learning took place and the teacher's questioning enabled students to formulate and express their views. Overall, the lesson was satisfactory, though students lacked independence in their thinking and grasp of the subject.

### History

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

#### Strengths

- Above average results and good student achievement.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and assessment practice, which supports students' learning well.

#### Areas for improvement

- Ensure students have sufficient opportunities to develop independent learning skills, for example through learning out of school, and having additional text resources in the department and the library.

126. Results for A-2 level entries in 2001 were above the national average. Similarly, in 2002 results were above national expectations. Results over the last three years have been consistently above average. The standards attained in the 2001 AS level examination were above national expectations, showing a marked improvement over recent years. Students make good progress and achieve well in history, as the school's own data on prior attainment confirms.
127. Standards of work are currently above national expectations and throughout the inspection, boys and girls made equally good progress. Year 13 students were seen confidently drawing on their previous Year 12 study of fascism to inform their consideration of Mussolini's problems and policies. Given a series of statements about the building of the corporate state, higher attaining students were able confidently to point to contradictions between overall aims and actual policy. All students in this small group showed a good understanding of long-term challenges to Italy's development, and the issues facing Mussolini. Students in Year 12 made good progress and acquired a good knowledge of Hitler's intentions in a lesson on Nazi Germany's policy towards women. They perceptively discussed and evaluated how far policy outcomes actually matched the early rhetorical intentions. Higher attaining students could highlight the complexity of this exercise. They observed that some superficial contradictions were the result of competing policy

intentions. For example, in a discussion exercise, they noted that campaigns against the German Jews adversely affected targets for work and population. A solid foundation is being laid here.

128. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students make very good progress as a result, sustaining the gains made by the end of Year 11. Strong confidence in their subject and syllabus knowledge allows teachers to structure and vary learning activities to allow for good learning outcomes. For example, in a well-planned Year 12 lesson on women's suffrage, the teacher used ICT to provide several exercises that built progressively one upon the other to deepen students' knowledge and understanding of political pressures and perspectives in the debate on women and the vote. Through this exercise, all students came to observe that the range of different views was not easily categorised simply within party political bounds. Higher attaining students went on to account for this phenomenon.
129. Students' files are well organised and clearly guided by teachers to support structured learning outcomes and individual study skills. ICT supports and enriches teaching and learning in a variety of ways. However, there are too few text and library resources to support independent and wider reading and research by students and there have been few opportunities recently for students to continue their learning outside of school, for example at sixth form conferences.
130. The department is very well led and managed. The quality of teaching and learning is a direct result of teachers' very good subject knowledge, and their commitment to using effective methods to develop students' interest and enthusiasm. Teachers' comprehensive understanding of the demands of the examination syllabuses can be seen in the detailed constructive advice they provide through their assessment of students' work. Students' successes in recent examinations show teachers' ability to apply their expertise to the demands of the new courses. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## Sociology

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- Good awareness of examination demands.

### Areas for improvement

- Broaden teaching methods through small-scale research projects to develop students' basic skills, their ability to work independently and their understanding of issues.
- Include more enrichment opportunities, for example through library texts, the use of ICT and sixth form conferences.

131. The results of several small cohorts in recent years have fluctuated. The data held by the school shows that students' progress has been broadly in line with their prior attainment. Results of the A-2 level examinations in 2001 were well below the national average. They were better in 2002. AS level results were below expectations in 2002.
132. Standards of work of current students are below national expectations, reflecting the performance in the AS level examination in 2002. Students' achievement is satisfactory. Standards in Year 13 are higher than in Year 12. In the Year 13 lesson on ethnicity, most students showed good knowledge and understanding of social trends, such as the changes in occupational patterns over recent years. They demonstrated good awareness of the major features of such change. They distinguished broad ethnic groups and identified possible effects

on them of changes in the workplace. Higher attaining students went on to recognise the complexity of this analysis and a few observed that the ethnic categories were themselves divisible into further categories, so the exercise grew more challenging and productive. In the Year 12 lesson on aspects of race and ethnicity, all students had clearly understood the concept of the social structuring of identity but there were mixed responses to the challenge of identifying factors that shape and reinforce these social constructs. Higher attaining students exemplified and explained the different steps by which they are formed but in this group, very few were working at levels commensurate with national expectations.

133. From previous lessons, all clearly had understood the concept of the social structuring of identity but there were mixed responses to the challenge of identifying factors that shape and reinforce these social constructs.
134. Based on all the available evidence, including the samples of work provided, the quality of teaching and learning is judged to be satisfactory overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge but in some lessons, students are not involved enough in the learning activities. Teaching and learning were good in one lesson where the teacher structured the lesson around a clearly stated objective and students were required to be fully engaged at each successive stage. The teacher drew on the complex and ambiguous ethnic identity of the comedian Ali G to stimulate students' discussions and built successfully on this through the presentation of material from significant case studies. The subsequent questions and answers continued to draw the students into new understanding and analysis of the construction of ethnicity. However, a lesson that was only satisfactory, suffered from too much teacher talk and too little engagement of many in the class. Students were active for only a brief period at the end and the end task did not serve to consolidate all the ideas that had previously been presented by the teacher.
135. While students' files contained some pieces of work marked in detail by teachers, there was insufficient evidence of detailed evaluation of expected outcomes, for example relating class work and set pieces closely to the examination syllabus and its marking criteria. There is little evidence of first-hand independent research activity, to contribute to an understanding of sociological methodology and issues surrounding the presentation and analysis of research findings.
136. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department is very knowledgeable about his subject and its examination demands. Since the last inspection there has been uneven progress and improvement is satisfactory overall. There is still a predominance of teacher activity. Students make little use of ICT, or of the library. In recent years, students have not participated in outside events such as sixth form conferences.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English, French and German.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Students' achievement is very good. They show confidence and poise, particularly in oral work.
- Students have excellent attitudes and are motivated to do their best.
- Teaching is very good, characterised by commitment and very good subject knowledge.

#### Areas for improvement

- Encourage students to develop their wider reading.
- Share good practice in teaching and learning.

136. In 2001, results in A-2 level were well above average. All students passed and over 40 per cent attained the top two grades. Results were not so good in 2002 when the syllabus changed and the number of students taking English increased. In 2001, AS level results were average for literature, but below average for the joint language and literature course. A similar pattern of AS level results in 2002 led to the decision to focus on the literature course only for advanced studies in English. The current Year 13 is the last for the joint language and literature course. Results have varied considerably over the last five years as courses and staff have changed. However, A-2 level results have been average or well above average each year when compared to national results. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. These results indicate very good achievement for all students, particularly for the significant number of students who enter the course with average attainment at GCSE. Although far more girls than boys take English, there is relatively little difference in their results. The subject is popular. The numbers taking English have increased. The school currently caters for 67 English students in Years 12 and 13.
137. The standard of current students' work is above average though there is considerable variation. A common strength is the confidence displayed by students in their oral work in both formal and informal situations. All students demonstrate a good grasp of the vocabulary needed in literary criticism and in analysing language patterns. They benefit from regular practice in writing short essays. They edit and redraft, using skills learned in the school from Year 7 onwards and use computers well to help them with their work. All students ably structure a logical argument or response, selecting appropriate evidence to support their views. However, only the higher attaining students convey subtle and abstract ideas effectively in their work and read widely around a subject. It is this higher level of critical reading and writing that presents a considerable challenge to a number of students, both in the depth and in the standards of literacy required.
138. Students' attitudes are exemplary. They enjoy their work and are conscientious. They feel well supported and are especially appreciative of the time their teachers give them outside lessons. Working in pairs and groups, higher attaining students help to raise the standards of others. They seek and respect guidance, with the result that they are self-critical. Nevertheless, despite encouragement to read widely around a subject, not enough do so. Students develop a trust in each other when discussing ideas and this helps to develop team building skills and excellent relationships.

139. Teaching and learning are very good with many excellent features. A strength is teachers' very good subject knowledge that supports their in-depth questioning and helps students in their detailed annotation of texts. Teachers create good support materials for students, placing texts in a broader context as a means of extending learning. Teachers' good knowledge of the examination requirements means work is well timed, deadlines rigorously met, and coursework carefully organised. Prompt and constructive marking of work gives students a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses, allows teachers to offer appropriate individual challenge and praise. Teachers adopt a sensitive and helpful approach to students with special educational needs so that they, along with all students, make very good progress. Not enough analysis of AS level examination results is done at present with each student, to pinpoint with more clarity, exactly where individual effort could be made to improve a grade. Plans to involve the students in assessing the teaching and learning are at an embryonic stage.
140. English offers very good provision for developing spiritual awareness. A Year 13 class, for example, was clearly moved by the issues of life and death and displacement in the poetry of Philip Larkin. Social and moral awareness are built into the teaching and learning styles, which students encounter daily. There are many cultural opportunities available to students and the curriculum is enriched by frequent events outside school, including visits to high quality productions at the theatre. Students were commended for their contributions to a Times newspaper writing competition last year. However, multi-cultural provision is less developed with few opportunities in the content of the teaching to celebrate cultural diversity.
141. The department is very well led with commitment and energy. Courses are very well managed. Teachers adopt common procedures in their organisation. Monitoring of teaching tends to be on an informal basis and there is still room for good practice in teaching and learning to be shared. The main target is to improve further the high standards achieved by students. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## French

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

### Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide a supportive learning environment.
- Increasing numbers are taking the subject in Year 12.
- Work in books is well marked. Students know how good they are and what they need to do to improve.

### Areas for improvement

- Provide more opportunities for students to use French spontaneously.
- Improve planning to increase the pace and challenge of lessons.

142. Results in French at A level were above average in 2001. Over half of those entered attained the higher A/B grades. There were no entries for AS level. The numbers entered in 2002 were too small for valid comparison to be made but results were lower than in the previous year.
143. Standards in work seen were average and slightly better in Year 13 than in Year 12. Work in students' folders showed higher attaining Year 12 students using past, present and future tenses well when debating the pros and cons of smoking, whilst lower attainers completed the same work using past tenses with support. Year 13 students could debate the differences between nationality and national identity whilst lower attainers could analyse and substantiate the points, but had difficulties coming to a satisfactory conclusion. Students have good basic skills, but are

not being given enough opportunity to develop the sort of extended French required to operate fluently in the target language. They achieve appropriately for their ability.

144. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, and in one lesson they were good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They recap previously learnt work well, identify clear learning objectives and provide a supportive learning environment in which students feel comfortable to practise their French. Work in the books is well marked; students know how good they are and what they need to do to improve. In the best lesson, the creation of a supportive atmosphere and the teacher's constant use of French, encouraged students to take risks in using French for themselves. This was not always the case however, and in other lessons, too few opportunities were provided for the development of spontaneous language with the result that students' progress was limited. Some lessons lack detailed planning and opportunities were lost for developing all four language skills in the target language. Teachers do not always make best use of the classroom environment to create the sort of tutorial group that encourages speaking. Time was wasted reading aloud around the class when it could have been better spent discussing the issues raised in the text and extending their already well developed skills of analysis, synthesis and prioritisation.
145. Students have good attitudes towards their French. In discussion they said that they had had many opportunities to visit France. They were given good advice about the next stage of learning but would have appreciated more help when beginning the course to bridge the gap more successfully between GCSE and A level work. Very little evidence was seen of students using ICT in lessons although they sometimes use it for homework and research.
146. Management is satisfactory overall. The subject manager has good subject knowledge and knows the examination syllabus well. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Numbers taking the course, which had dropped to extremely low levels, are increasing.

## German

The quality of provision in German is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards are consistently above the national average.
- Students have very positive attitudes and achieve well.
- Teaching is consistently good and relationships are very good.

### Area for improvement

- Increase the use of ICT within the taught curriculum.

147. Groups, too small for valid statistical comparison to be made against national figures, attained the GCE A-2 level results in 2001, similar to 2000 and 2002. However, in each of these three years, at least half the students attained the highest A/B grades with none lower than C. Results overall have therefore been above the national average. About half the students who begin an AS course proceed to A-2 level. Recruitment in the current Year 12 has been good, with the likelihood that more than half the students will proceed to A-2 level. Students enter the course with good GCSE results and their performance in the sixth form reflects this aptitude for German.
148. Standards in the current Year 13 are above average. In work seen, the best examples featured substantial and sophisticated writing on literary texts and topics such as racism and press freedom. Other work on solar energy and women in work was of sound to good quality and showed good progress over time. In the lesson seen, students applied themselves diligently to

work on a Dürrenmatt play, exploring aspects of character and theme as well as nuances of vocabulary. Their overall gains in knowledge and understanding were good.

149. Students in Year 12 have quickly made the transition from GCSE to advanced study. Their writing explores a good range of social and cultural topics such as adults' views of young people, paternity, Mozart and descriptions of Hamburg based on their own experiences as visitors on the school exchange. In lessons, the speaking skills of the best students were of a high order – fluent, accurate and articulate on aspects of culture and very effective in role-plays of job interviews. All students worked enthusiastically and developed their powers of expression. Their overall level of attainment is above average. Boys perform as well as girls.
150. Teaching is of consistently good quality; in one lesson, it was very good. Teachers have a high level of expertise in both language and culture and often provide excellent models of spoken and written German. Students are actively involved in lessons through dialogue, presentation and role-play and their spoken and written work are constructively and sympathetically assessed to help them improve. Teaching is somewhat less effective when students are only expected to react to the input of knowledge and, although they undertake some independent research using the Internet, their curriculum would be enriched by more use of ICT in the classroom. Relationships with students are notably good.
151. Students have very positive attitudes in class and to the subject in general. They are focused and attentive and work well together. In one Year 12 lesson, they showed the capacity to respond to challenging oral work and made clear gains in knowledge and skills. They particularly appreciate the variety of topics in the course, its emphasis on German culture and the increased opportunities it gives them to develop and express personal opinions. They show a good capacity for independent work.
152. The department is a cohesive and enthusiastic team that promotes and maintains high standards. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum is well planned and features a rich range of moral, social and cultural themes. Good assessment systems encourage students to set themselves personal targets from the outset. Although numbers of students have been low, they have risen significantly since the introduction of Curriculum 2000. The department has made good progress since the last inspection and has the capacity to maintain this.