

INSPECTION REPORT

THE SKINNERS' COMPANY SCHOOL

Royal Tunbridge Wells

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118890

Headteacher: Mr P Braggins

Reporting inspector: Mrs R Fox
4617

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th October 2002

Inspection number 249804

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

© Crown copyright 2002

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:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Male
School address:	St John's Road Tunbridge Wells Kent
Postcode:	TN4 9PG
Telephone number:	(01892) 520732
Fax number:	(01892) 549356
Appropriate authority:	The Governors of The Skinners' Company School
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Colin Harris
Date of previous inspection:	10 th – 14 th March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4617	Mrs R Fox	Registered inspector	French (Sixth form)	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught?
14756	Mr J Lovell	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20421	Mrs M E Raitt	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	
19528	Mr Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10160	Mr Roger Bagguley	Team Inspector	Science Physics (Sixth form)	
4791	Mr Martin Hinckley	Team Inspector	Art and design	
21825	Mrs Eileen Kelly	Team Inspector	Design and technology	
19530	Ms J Bray	Team inspector	Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15372	Mrs Patricia Walker	Team Inspector	History	
1723	Mr Michael Milton	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology	
13155	Mr John Dixon	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages	Sixth form coordinator
8360	Mr Frederick Peacock	Team Inspector	Music	
7070	Mrs Joan Greenfield	Team Inspector	Physical education Equal opportunities Special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?
4372	Mr Ralph Fordham	Team Inspector	Religious education	
10666	Mrs Patricia Wheeler	Team Inspector	Business education Economics, Citizenship	
1249	Mr Joseph Edge	Team inspector	Biology, Chemistry (Sixth form)	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
Bristol
BS1 5RW

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

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

REPORT CONTENTS	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	5 - 9
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	10 - 12
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	13 - 16
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	16 - 18
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	18 - 23
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	23 - 26
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS	26
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	31 - 32
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	32 - 38
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	39 - 61
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	62 - 77

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Skinners' Company school in the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells is a smaller than average grammar school for boys aged 11 to 18. It is about the same size as it was for the last inspection with 722 pupils, of whom 203 are in the sixth form. Just over a quarter of pupils come from a range of ethnic heritages, including Black African, Indian, Pakistani and Chinese. The proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language is low, with no pupils in the early stage of learning English. Pupils come from a wide area and from a large number of schools and are in about the top quarter of the ability range; their attainment on entry is above average. They come generally, but not exclusively, from socially and economically advantaged backgrounds and the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low in comparison with the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is much lower than the national average and, of these, 0.27 per cent (two pupils) have statements of special educational needs, which is well below the national average. The range of special needs includes visual impairment, physical disabilities, autism and behavioural difficulties.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a highly effective school, producing articulate, confident young adults who are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 were well above average, both for all schools and for similar, selective schools. Attendance rates are well above average and there is no unauthorised absence. Outstanding features such as the high quality of pupils' social development permeate the school and contribute significantly to their achievement and progress. Pupils' very positive attitudes to their work, the very good and often excellent relationships and the good and often very good quality of the teaching enable them to make good progress and achieve well. The inclusive nature of the school ensures that all pupils respond well and take full advantage of the opportunities provided. The school is led and managed well on a day-to-day basis, but there are weaknesses in strategic planning, in identifying priorities and in monitoring and evaluating the way in which school policies are implemented. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The role model provided by the headteacher and his influence in creating a school ethos that actively promotes respect and the highest standards of performance and behaviour.
- Well above average attainment, especially in mathematics, science, history, information and communications technology and religious education, which derives from the overall good teaching and from pupils' very positive attitudes and behaviour.
- The excellent provision for pupils' moral development and the outstanding provision for their social development across the school.
- Very good provision for extra curricular activities, including a good range of team games, a variety of music and drama activities and the largest voluntary cadet force of any maintained school in the country.
- The very good relationships and a strong sense of community and common purpose make a significant contribution to the high standards achieved.

What could be improved

- Strategic planning to further improve teaching and learning, particularly development planning at whole school and departmental levels and more effective monitoring and evaluation of practice to ensure that policies are consistently applied.
- Statutory requirements in relation to Key Stage 3 English, design and technology, citizenship, information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- Assessment procedures, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

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


HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in March 1997, the school has made satisfactory progress and has the capacity to improve further. Standards have remained broadly similar in the national tests at

the end of Year 9 and in GCSE and A-level examinations in relation to national averages – that is to say, consistently above national averages. Teaching has improved, with a much higher proportion of very good and good teaching. Satisfactory progress has been made in addressing most key issues, including the review and implementation of a new school day and meeting statutory requirements in religious education in Years 10 to 11 and in the sixth form. Senior and middle managers' responsibilities have been reviewed, but not enough has been done to strengthen the effectiveness of school management. The school development plan is not sufficiently structured, there are no departmental development plans and not enough has been done to monitor delegated responsibilities. Too little progress has been made in improving lesson planning and in monitoring and evaluating teaching and the school has not ensured a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E
Very low	E*

 NB: This was because pupils enter for 9 GCSEs, whilst many school enter their pupils for ten.

In the 2001 national tests at the age of 14, results were very high in English, mathematics and science, placing the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Standards have been high since 1998 and have improved at a slightly lower rate than the national trend. When compared with similar, selective schools, results were above average in mathematics, average in science and well below average in English. Although there are, as yet, no national figures against which they can be compared, results in English improved in 2002, whereas in mathematics and science they remained broadly the same. Teacher assessments undertaken at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 indicate that standards in all the foundation subjects are at least above average and, in many cases, well above. They are particularly high in history, geography, ICT, music and physical education.

In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the overall results were well above average, both for all schools and for similar, selective schools. They were very high for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* - C and were similar to the results of 2000. When comparing the average total points score, however, although the school's results were high when taking account of pupils' performance in relation to their earlier attainment in the national tests and well above those nationally, they were well below average in comparison with similar schools. This was because pupils enter for 9 GCSE's whilst many schools enter their pupils for ten. The school met its targets in 2002 both for the average points score and for five or more grades A* - C. In all subjects, the results at grades A and A* in 2001 were significantly above the national average and were well above the national average at the highest grades of A* and A. When compared with similar, selective schools, results were more variable, with considerable differences between subjects. Pupils performed particularly well in biology, chemistry, ICT and physics. They did less well in German and in English language for the A*/A grades. In 2002, results in German and in English improved, although pupils performed less well in English literature, art and French, ICT, economics and geography at the higher A*/A grades. Re-marks in some subjects have resulted in a number of higher grades being awarded.

A-level examination results were well above the national average in 2001 and were also in the top five per cent of maintained schools and other post 16 providers nationally. There has been steady improvement since 1998, with the school attaining the highest average points score for A-level examinations in Kent in 2001. Results were very high when compared with all schools, nationally, in English literature, physics and religious studies; they were well above average in biology, business studies, chemistry, economics, French, history and general studies and above average in computer

studies, geography and mathematics. Compared with similar, selective schools, A-level results were very high in English literature, French, German, music, physics, religious education and sociology; they were above average in art and design, biology, business studies and economics and average in computer studies, history and general studies. They were below average in chemistry. The results for 2002 rose significantly with almost two thirds of pupils gaining the highest A/B grades.

Work seen during the inspection confirms these high standards. By the age of 14, standards in English are above average and standards in mathematics and science are well above average. This supports the test results in mathematics and science for 2001 and 2002 and shows some improvement in English. In other subjects, with the exception of art and design and design and technology, where standards are in line with expectations, standards are equally high and are particularly high in history, ICT and religious education. In Years 10 and 11, current work broadly reflects the school's GCSE performance in 2002 and indicates that pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above the standards expected nationally in all subjects, apart from modern foreign languages and physical education where it is above average and art and design and design and technology where it is in line with national expectations. Standards across the sixth form are uniformly high and have risen steadily since the school was last inspected. Pupils achieve high standards because they are enthusiastic and willing learners and respond well to the high quality teaching they receive. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 11 in relation to their attainment on entry to the school and very well in the sixth form.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils' attitudes to work have remained a significant strength of the school since the last inspection and make a very positive contribution to pupils' attainment and learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour in lessons and around the school makes a positive contribution to the way in which the school operates as an orderly community that values the rights of all pupils to learn.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The very good relationships and a strong sense of community and common purpose contribute to the high standards achieved. Pupils and staff know each other well and pupils show the same respect and care for others, which are exemplified by the headteacher and his staff.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance rates are well above average for secondary schools and there is no unauthorised absence.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are a particular strength of the school; they contribute significantly to the high standards achieved. Boys have a clear understanding of their social and moral responsibilities and a sense of community and common purpose.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

There has been some improvement in teaching since the last inspection. Teaching is good, overall. A third of lessons were very good or excellent and over four fifths were good or better. Teaching is unsatisfactory in a very small number of lessons which were all in Years 10 and 11, although the percentage of excellent and very good teaching in this key stage was higher, overall, than in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is good in English and mathematics and very good in science. Outstanding teaching was seen in English, science, modern foreign languages and in religious education where the quality of teaching was uniformly high. A particular strength is teachers' subject expertise, resulting in very well planned lessons that challenge and extend these very able pupils. Teachers manage their pupils very well and, as a result, pupils maintain their interest and concentration and learn effectively.

Provision for the development of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The school meets the needs and aspirations of its pupils well. Subject knowledge and understanding are well developed within an ethos that enables them to develop into mature, enquiring individuals.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. All pupils have equal access to a good range of learning opportunities, but their personal and social education has not been planned in enough detail to ensure ongoing development of their skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs receive effective support, but not enough is done to monitor their progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Language attainment of pupils for whom English is an additional language is high for all but the few visitors from Japan and Germany; most make similar progress to their peers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Social development is outstanding; moral development excellent; spiritual development good and cultural development Satisfactory. Pupils need more time to explore their own cultural assumptions and appreciate life in a multi-faith, multi-cultural society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Pupils' personal development is effectively monitored, but there are weaknesses in the management of health and safety and the use of assessment information to guide curricular planning.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher sets the highest standards of performance and behaviour and is fully committed to providing equal opportunities for all pupils. There are weaknesses in strategic planning and in monitoring and evaluating the way in which school policies are implemented.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body undertakes its responsibilities well and has a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but has not ensured that all legal requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Priorities for the coming year are not structured enough to make them into a robust management tool. There is not enough information about who is to contribute to the various priorities, about how they will be monitored or how outcomes will be evaluated.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Available resources are used to good effect, but there are no costed development plans for departments and insufficient use is made of comparative data to analyse the school's effectiveness. Procedures to ensure that the school obtains best value for money are currently unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their sons like school • The school's high expectations • Standards of leadership and management • The school's help in enabling pupils to become mature and responsible • They feel comfortable approaching the school with questions and problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities provided outside lessons • Closer working relationships between the school and parents • The amount of homework provided • The amount of information they are given about their children's progress

Inspectors strongly agree with the positive points made by parents and recognise the influence exerted by the headteacher on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. However, the inspection shows that some aspects of leadership and management could be improved. The level and extent of homework was found to be appropriate; parents receive good information about their sons' progress, although, in some cases, it does not clearly identify what pupils need to do to move to the next stage of their learning. Both the school's partnership with parents and the range of extra-curricular activities are judged to be very effective.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Most students continue their studies into the sixth form, with 203 students currently on roll. A very small number of students follow sixth form courses elsewhere, but this number is balanced by students from other schools taking up places at the school. There are appropriate attainment criteria for entry to post-16 courses, but the school is flexible where students have done less well than expected in their GCSE examinations. Small numbers of students follow courses arranged jointly with a neighbouring girls' grammar school. Most students continue their studies at university on leaving the school or after a 'gap' year. The school welcomes visiting students from abroad: there are at present 3 German and 2 Japanese students following sixth form courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very effective. Students enter with high levels of prior attainment and make good progress. Standards of attainment are very high compared with the national average and above those of similar, selective schools. This is as a result of teachers' excellent subject knowledge and their dedication to their work. Students develop highly mature and responsible attitudes towards their studies and all but a few continue their studies in higher education.

Strengths

- Teaching is good and, often, very good; teachers have high expectations of their students.
- Attainment is very high compared with the national average and above that of similar, selective schools.
- Students' attitudes towards their work are very positive and help them to achieve well.
- Relationships at all levels in the sixth form are very good; the school places great trust in its senior students.
- Students' learning is well supported throughout the sixth form.

What could be improved

- Development planning and schemes of work.
- Accommodation and resources in some subjects.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. The department achieves very good results by clear, well-directed teaching and the very positive attitude of the high number of students who take mathematics in the sixth form.
Biology	Very good. Results are well above average. Achievement is good compared with that in other selective schools. Teaching and learning are both very good, overall, and sometimes excellent.
Chemistry	Good. Results are consistently well above average. Achievements are broadly in line with those expected in selective schools. The quality of teaching and learning are both very good.
Physics	Very good. Achievements at A-level are impressive. Very good teaching secures high attainment. Students are very able independent learners and their commitment is very high. Very good mathematical skills enable very good progress to be made.
Business studies	Good. Results at A-level are well above average. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Assessment is very good and promotes good learning.
Economics	Very good. A-level results are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Assessment is very good and promotes good learning.
Computing	Good. A-level results are above national averages for selective schools. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and teaching is good. Coursework is a particular strength.
Geography	Good. A-level results are above average and students' coursework is a strength. Teachers plan their work well and have very good subject knowledge.
History	Good. Standards achieved at A-level are well above average. The subject is well taught; teachers have very good subject knowledge and have high expectations of students.
Religious studies	Very good. Examination results are of a high standard, resulting from very good teaching, excellent student management and outstanding relationships, which enable students to make very good progress.
English	Good. A-level results are well above average. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and high expectations contribute very well to the good progress students make.
French	Good. Standards are above average, as a result of good teaching, particularly good subject knowledge and the very positive attitudes of students.
Physical education	Good. Standards are above average. Students make good progress, as a result of the good teaching and their very positive attitudes. Participation rates are very high.

Standards across the sixth form are uniformly high. They have risen steadily since the school was last inspected. Students achieve high standards because they are enthusiastic and willing learners and respond well to the high quality teaching they receive.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good guidance and support in their work. Marking is diagnostic and helpful: it makes clear to the student how he is progressing and what he should do to improve his work. Teachers willingly give up their time to advise and support students who need guidance or help.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is effectively led. The headteacher and governors have a clear vision and aims for the school's post-16 provision. Management is helpful and collaborative and students are well supported in their work. Subject areas are generally well managed, although development planning and schemes of work are not always as strong as they should be and there are some deficiencies in accommodation and resources. The sixth form is well staffed and teachers have very good subject knowledge. It is a policy decision made by governors and senior staff that the sixth form provision should be allocated more than its fair share of school resources and this results in large classes lower down the school.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school gives good advice and support to students, and helps them adjust to sixth form work. Teaching is good; students are challenged to do their best and teachers are available to give help where required. Students are encouraged to study and research topics independently; they are treated like responsible adults. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and would encourage others to join the sixth form at the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The range and quality of careers advice they receive. Information about their progress in relation to the courses they are studying.

Inspectors found, during the inspection, that the positive views of the students in their questionnaires were fully justified. Students' attitudes towards the school are extremely constructive. The quality of the teaching and the expectations that students will conduct themselves in an adult and civilised manner are primary features of the school. All students interviewed felt that they received good advice before entering the sixth form and prior to leaving; all felt that they had a clear idea of how well they were progressing.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards are high in all subjects, apart from art and design and design and technology, where they are in line with national averages. They are particularly high in mathematics, science, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. Standards in all subjects, apart from art and design and design and technology, are similarly high in pupils' current work; in the results of national tests at the age of 14; in the GCSE examinations for pupils aged 16 and in the A-level examinations for the end of Year 13. About the top quarter of the ability range enters this selective school and they make good progress and achieve well in relation to this high attainment. The results of the Key Stage 3 national tests for 2001 show that pupils' overall attainment is very high in relation to that in maintained schools nationally, but below average for similar, selective schools. Analysis of the standardised tests taken by pupils on entry to the school shows some differences in attainment from year to year, with the current Year 9, for example, containing a broader spread of more capable pupils and Years 7 and 8, a smaller proportion, with a few extremely able boys.
2. In the national tests in 2001 at the age of 14, when all pupils are taken into account, the results were very high in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. When compared with results in similar, selective schools, results were above average in mathematics, average in science, but well below average in English. Although there are, as yet, no national figures against which they can be compared, English results improved in 2002, whereas results in mathematics and science remained broadly the same, with slightly fewer pupils gaining the higher levels in science. Since the last inspection, the school's performance has improved at a slightly lower rate than nationally.
3. Assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 indicate that standards in all the foundation subjects are at least above average and in many cases well above average. They are particularly high in history, geography, ICT, music and physical education.
4. Work seen during the inspection, in books and in lessons, bears out these high standards. By the age of 14, standards in English are above average and in mathematics and science they are well above average. This confirms the test results in mathematics and science for 2001 and 2002 and shows some improvement in English. In all other subjects, with the exception of art and design and design and technology where standards are in line with expectations, standards are equally high. They are particularly high in history, ICT and religious education.
5. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, the overall results were well above average, both for all schools and for similar schools. They were very high for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* - C and were similar to the 2000 results. When measuring the average points score, however, although the school's results were high when taking account of pupils' performance in relation to their earlier attainment in the national tests and well above those nationally, in comparison with similar schools they were well below average. This can be explained by the fact that the school enters pupils for only nine subjects whereas many school enter pupils for ten. Following re-marks, the average points score was higher in 2002 and near the 2001 average for that in similar, selective schools. The school met its targets in 2002 both for the average points score and for five or more grades A* - C.
6. In all subjects, results at grades A and A* in 2001 were significantly above national averages. When compared with results in selective schools they were more variable, with considerable differences between subjects. Pupils performed particularly well in biology, chemistry, ICT and physics. They did less well in German and in English language for the A*/A grades. In 2002, results in German and in English improved, although pupils performed less well in English literature, art and French, ICT, economics and geography at the higher A*/A grades.

7. Current work broadly reflects the school's GCSE performance in 2002 and indicates that pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above the standards expected nationally in all subjects, apart from modern foreign languages and physical education, where it is above average and in art and design and design and technology, where it is in line with national expectations.
8. Provision for literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. In the school, as a whole, standards of speaking and listening are well above average and reading and writing skills are above average; pupils are highly numerate on entry to the school. In many subject areas, however, schemes of work do not identify opportunities for the development of the skills of literacy and numeracy and the promotion of these skills often happens informally and is not always common to all teachers in the department.
9. Staff have responded willingly to the school's recent literacy initiative and all subjects are now effectively teaching their own technical vocabulary. In religious education lessons, key words, technical language and good discussion work are useful aids to improving speaking and writing skills; in modern foreign languages, pupils display advanced listening skills and teachers constantly remind them of the nature of language. In geography, pupils write accurately when dealing with data analysis and careful attention is paid to spelling and grammar. Skills and standards in numeracy are better than in literacy and are well above average.
10. As yet, no whole school policy on the application of number skills has been produced and there is no evidence that an audit of skills across the curriculum has been undertaken, although several subjects contribute effectively to their development. Geography, for example, makes a good contribution to the teaching of numeracy; statistical data from a range of sources are interpreted accurately and presented through a range of charts, graphs and statistical tests.
11. The very small number of pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress throughout the school. They receive effective support from learning support assistants in lessons. Teachers are aware of their individual needs and make satisfactory provision, in the main. However, the lack of clear targets in individual education plans means that the work and levels of support are not always sharply focused and their progress in individual subjects is not monitored sufficiently. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 who have English as an additional language make as good progress as their age group in English and in their other subjects and attain well. None at present is at an early stage of learning English.

Sixth form

12. The attainment of sixth form students is very good. In 2001, the school's performance at A-level was very high, relative to that in other maintained schools and in all post-16 providers. Students' attainment was particularly high in English literature, physics and religious studies and well above average in biology, business studies, chemistry, economics, French, German, history and general studies. Attainment in design and technology was well below that in maintained schools.
13. When compared with similar, selective schools, students' results were very high in terms of the higher A/B grades in English literature, French, German, music, physics, religious studies and sociology. They were well above average in art and design, biology, business studies and economics and in line in with the average in computer studies, history and general studies. They were below selective schools in chemistry, in mathematics and geography and very low in design and technology.
14. In the current year (2002), results in the school rose markedly compared with the 2001 results. Almost two thirds of the entries produced grades A or B against just over half in 2001. The proportion of entries yielding grade A passes rose by almost ten per cent to over a third. Standards have risen steadily since the school was last inspected. Most students make good progress through the sixth form from the already high levels of achievement shown at GCSE. This is ensured through good teaching, characterised by very high expectations of students, good lesson planning and teachers' extremely secure subject knowledge. Inspectors saw work of very high quality in all subjects and standards of performance are rising in some. Students with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress and gifted and talented

students make good progress. Students in the sixth form who are visiting from other countries make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Pupils' attitudes to work, behaviour, relationships and personal development have remained a significant strength of the school since the last inspection and make a very positive contribution to pupils' attainment and learning.
16. Pupils' attitudes to learning are usually very good throughout the school and are often excellent and make an important contribution to their attainment and progress. Pupils are proud of their school and their distinctive uniform. They enjoy coming to school and value the many opportunities provided in the classroom, on the sports field, on visits and in participating in the life of the school. Pupils work at a very good pace, are clearly focused on achieving the set objectives and make effective use of their skills to develop their knowledge and understanding. They show keen interest, commitment and enthusiasm for their work, making effective oral contributions when called upon to do so and asking probing questions. Throughout lessons, they generally maintain very good concentration, listen attentively and persevere well when faced with challenging tasks. Work is undertaken with enjoyment and confidence. Collaborative work is very good; pupils share ideas and resources very well. Pupils provide thoughtful, constructive criticism and encouragement and work with a common sense of purpose as in a Year 10 ICT lesson where they designed a data capture form collaboratively. The high quality of much of the teamwork enabled pupils to develop and refine their work to a high standard, making very good use of available resources. Pupils are mutually supportive and encouraging and listen with care and sensitivity to each other and to their teachers. They show initiative in organising and planning their work and, as they progress throughout the school, their ability to work independently develops very well.
17. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is usually very good and makes a positive contribution to the way in which the school operates as an orderly community that values the rights of all pupils to learn. Parents are very positive about the high standards of behaviour in the school and are of the opinion that the school produces confident, interested, articulate young men. This is borne out by the inspection. Pupils with special educational needs share the positive attitudes and reflect the good behaviour evident amongst their peers. With the help of the specialist support they receive, they engage in all subjects and work with others as necessary. The inclusive nature of the school ensures that these pupils respond well and play a full part in the opportunities provided.
18. On the very few occasions when the pace and challenge offered are inappropriate, a minority of pupils behave in an unacceptable and sometimes immature manner. Staff usually deal with these instances very effectively. Pupils are very trustworthy and property and equipment are treated with great care; there is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti. They respond very well to the school's high expectations and ethos, which treats them as mature young men and makes them responsible for their own behaviour and actions. By involving them in activities such as the School Council, the school helps them to recognise their responsibility to each other and the community of the school. Pupils have a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others, respecting their feelings values and beliefs. Whilst there are a few incidents of bullying, these are usually identified very quickly and dealt with effectively. Pupils are confident that any concerns will be addressed promptly and are clear that sanctions will be applied in the rare case of any form of oppressive behaviour. Exclusion is used effectively as part of an overall strategy to promote very high standards of behaviour. During the previous year, there was one fixed-period exclusion and one permanent exclusion, involving two pupils.
19. Very good and often excellent relationships exist throughout the school and pupils and staff know each other well and act as a community. The excellent role models provided by the headteacher and his staff influence pupils positively. Pupils treat each other and adults with courtesy, respect and consideration. They work well together in identifying and supporting a range of local, national and international charities such as the Hospice in the Weald, Children in Need and the work of a village education programme which supports the development and running of schools in Tanzania's rural communities. In the latter example, a former pupil who

had been involved in the project during his gap year spent in Kilimanjaro, introduced pupils to the programme by speaking informatively about his experiences. Pupils undertake a wide range of extra-curricular activities with enthusiasm and commitment. Pupils respond very well to the good opportunities for personal and social development and this is enhanced by opportunities to become members of the School Council, sports captains, form directors who organise junior assemblies and parents' association representatives. These enable them to make positive contributions to the school's life and work, which include responsibility to each other, to the school community and to the wider community. Pupils, however, also use their own initiative to develop aspects of their personal development and contributions to society in the widest sense and this is particularly exemplified in their work for charities, many sporting activities, music, drama and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Pupils work effectively in teams and support each other in work and extra-curricular activities, showing initiative and taking responsibility.

20. Attendance rates have remained well above the national average since the time of the last inspection. During the last school year (2000/1) for which there are comparative figures, attendance of 94.1 per cent was recorded, with no unauthorised absence. These figures compare with national averages of 90.9 per cent and 1.1 per cent respectively. Attendance levels showed an increase to 95.3 per cent in 2001/2. The majority of authorised absences occur as a result of illness and medical visits. Lateness is properly recorded. Pupils move purposefully between lessons and staff and pupils arrive in classrooms punctually, with the result that lessons begin promptly. The very good levels of attendance have a positive effect on attainment and progress.

Sixth form

21. Students are able and enthusiastic learners, committed to attaining high standards in their work. When given the opportunity, they contribute well to lessons and are articulate and intelligent in debate. The school helps its sixth form students to develop into well-balanced, mature and agreeable young adults, well prepared to take their place in society and to continue their educational progress.
22. The focus of the school on good and respectful relationships and the creation of an environment based upon clear values and principles, influences every aspect of school life and students' personal development. Expectations of sixth form students are clear and opportunities for personal development and for taking responsibility occur in a number of areas, both within and outside the taught curriculum.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

23. There has been some improvement in teaching since the last inspection with a much higher proportion of good or better teaching. Teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good; a third of lessons were graded very good or excellent. Teaching is good or better in over four-fifths of lessons and very good or better in a third. Teaching is unsatisfactory in a small number of lessons that were all in Years 10 and 11, although the percentage of excellent and very good teaching was in fact much higher, overall, in this key stage than in Years 7 to 9. The quality of learning broadly matches the quality of teaching. Pupils' very positive attitudes and motivation greatly enhance their learning at both key stages.
24. Teaching is good in English and mathematics and very good in science. A particular strength is teachers' subject expertise, resulting in very well planned lessons that challenge and extend these very able pupils well. Teachers manage their pupils very well and, as a result, pupils maintain their interest and concentration and learn effectively. Excellent lessons are characterised by very clear learning-outcomes, opportunities for boys to negotiate and contribute to whole-class, group or pair discussion and excellent review sessions to consolidate the learning that has taken place. Explanations are clear and teachers use good open-ended questions to extend and challenge their pupils. In response, pupils concentrate hard and apply themselves well. They appreciate their teachers' efforts and throw themselves wholeheartedly into the task in hand.

25. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in all subjects, apart from design and technology, where it is satisfactory, and science, modern foreign languages and religious education, where it is very good. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good in English, science, modern foreign languages physical education and religious education, good in mathematics, art and design, history, geography and ICT and satisfactory in design and technology. There is good teaching in all subjects, including design and technology, with examples of excellent teaching in English, science, modern foreign languages and religious education. In modern foreign languages, for example, the ICT facility has enormous potential and is used especially well by the German teachers to enhance pupil achievement. In religious education, where the quality of teaching was uniformly high, the teacher's excellent use of religious language relating to a forgiving, loving, just and holy God meant that pupils understood the meaning of those terms very well. Excellent comparisons were drawn between religious concepts of God and human experience and between the Ten Commandments and measures of perfection in a moral context. As a result, pupils perfectly understood the links between keeping to the rules and salvation.
26. A very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed in Years 10 and 11 in science, ICT and geography. Where this was the case, the weaknesses resulted mainly from lack of understanding of the very able nature of these pupils, as in a Year 10 science lesson where the slow pace, lack of challenge or acknowledgement of work already covered, resulted in inappropriate progress.
27. In most subjects, the teaching of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory. The contribution of other subjects of the curriculum to pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing is satisfactory. Most subjects provide for a good deal of question and answer and class discussion. Religious education and geography encourage presentations and religious education pupils debate controversial issues. However, the range of oral activities is too limited, both within and across subjects, for pupils to practise communicating their knowledge in different ways for different purposes sufficiently. Across all subjects, pupils provide a large quantity of good quality formal writing. History, in particular, helps pupils plan and structure their long essays; in art, pupils write good critical studies and, in science, pupils regularly write technically accurate essays. Nevertheless, not enough writing for different purposes and audiences is done in subjects other than English in Years 7 to 9 or exploration of how to explain a thought or a concept, such as imaginative ways of communicating ideas. The library supports pupils' reading of fiction very well. In several subjects, classes use the library for research and, in many, good use is also made of the Internet to enhance learning.
28. Pupils' number skills are regularly reinforced in mathematics lessons where they are taught the efficient and effective use of a calculator and how to estimate and approximate. Their ability to form and solve equations is used to good effect in all science subjects where they use a range of graph drawing skills, but this was also seen throughout the school in subjects such as history and geography.
29. Planning is satisfactory, with examples of very good and less satisfactory practice. Planning in science is very good; lesson content is relevant to everyday situations, learning objectives are clearly understood by pupils and are most often achieved. In music, lessons are well planned with aims and objectives clearly set out at the beginning, so that pupils know what they have to do. Weaknesses in planning occur when teachers are not clear enough about what they want the pupils to learn in the lesson or unit of work and have not timed their activities. This was seen in English in Year 7 and Year 11 lessons, where the pace of the lessons slowed when teachers talked too much or allowed too long for one activity. In design and technology, the satisfactory lessons highlighted weaknesses in planning; pupils were not sufficiently challenged and, consequently, worked at a slower pace with less progression. Planning was identified as an area for development in the last inspection and, as yet, not enough has been done to improve lesson plans and to ensure that they form part of a cohesive scheme of work.
30. Most teachers use an appropriate range of teaching and learning approaches. In a Year 10 rugby session, the teacher provided a range of activities that enabled all boys to build their skills and understanding systematically. In Year 7 art, the teacher included pupils in learning about colour mixing with pencils, using a variety of open-ended questions that encouraged them to offer ideas and try out theories. Occasionally, teaching approaches are not as varied as they

could be, for example, in mathematics, where the main teaching style continues to be exposition followed by practice, with a range of well-chosen examples for pupils to use. Although this is effective, it does not fully involve pupils in their learning.

31. Overall, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Most teachers are aware of the needs of pupils' with special educational needs and in most subjects, pupils learn satisfactorily, where teachers plan for and use specific strategies to maintain the pupils' concentration and help them to remain on task, as, for example, in a Year 8 modern languages lesson and in a Year 9 geography lesson. Here they learn well and make good progress. Teachers generally manage these pupils, some of whom have considerable behavioural difficulties, well. Learning support staff provide effective help and support to pupils, not only to those for whom they are specifically allocated time but, also, to others who are also on the Code of Practice register.
32. There is no particular provision for the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Their language attainment is high on entry and most make similar progress to that of their peers. As with other pupils in the school who have specific language needs, there is, as yet, no system in place for alerting all teachers of pupils with English as an additional language to particular pupils' specific language needs and targets and to strategies for helping them consistently in all subjects. Like all other pupils they are learning appropriate vocabulary for each subject, but are not learning through as rich a range as they need of speaking, reading and writing tasks in all subjects.

Sixth form

33. Teaching is good in the sixth form and, in many cases, it is very good. Teachers have extremely good subject knowledge and this, combined with the excellent relationships that exist between teachers and students, together with teachers' very high expectations, are major factors in the high levels of attainment achieved in all subjects. These high expectations and good lesson planning ensure that students are faced with challenging work. Teachers' marking of students' work is thorough and gives clear feedback on progress and what is necessary to improve still further. In most lessons, the pace of learning is high and effective use is made of discussion and presentation of ideas, although there are a minority of lessons which are too teacher-directed and whose impact is, therefore, reduced. In some subjects, the work is closely linked to real situations in the outside world, which gives it immediacy and impact. Good learning and high standards in subjects such as mathematics, make a positive contribution to the progress that students make in other subjects, such as physics. Occasionally, the quality of learning could be improved by more consistent use of computers to aid research or to support more practical aspects of the work. Similarly, the impact of learning in some subjects would be enhanced by a planned programme of visits and contacts outside the confines of the school. More use of group work and discussion in English would help students develop and articulate their ideas.
34. The attitudes of students towards their learning represent another major factor in the high standards the school achieves. Students are enthusiastic learners and have an extremely mature attitude towards their work that stems from the trust the school places in them to be responsible for their own progress. They concentrate well and have very high expectations of themselves. In the majority of cases, students make positive contributions to lessons and participate well in discussion and debate.

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

35. The quality and range of learning opportunities at both key stages are good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to the curriculum. From September 2002 the school introduced a five-period day combined with a two-week timetable to bring it into line with other local schools and to facilitate the introduction of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Curriculum time at 25 hours per week is in line with that recommended for pupils in Years 10 to 11 and above that recommended for Years 7 to 9.

36. In Years 7 to 9 all National Curriculum subjects are offered and programmes of study have satisfactory breadth and balance. The introduction of one-hour periods has removed the difficulty of short lessons for practical science and the creative arts and corrected the shortfall in time for history and geography, noted at the last inspection. The Key Stage 3 Strategy has been introduced effectively in English, mathematics and science, with a positive effect on standards. The overall allocation for ICT has improved with one discrete lesson per fortnight in each of Years 7 to 9 and the time allowance for religious education is now in line with the local education authority agreed syllabus recommendations. All boys study two foreign languages with more time allocated than the national average.
37. Within this overall satisfactory provision, however, there are areas of weakness. Although all pupils follow technology courses, they do not have access to work with compliant materials. In English, ICT is not used enough to allow pupils to draft and edit texts and to present work in different ways. Drama activities are not varied or regular enough to ensure progress in a good range of drama skills. Large classes in Years 7 and 8 hinder efforts to cater for both the most and least capable pupils in several subjects, notably in science and in ICT. Links with primary schools, particularly to see Key Stage 2 Literacy in Action, are insufficiently developed. The time allocated within physical education to team games is at the expense of the development of individual skills and is exacerbated by the split site arrangements. Some departments, such as modern foreign languages, use ICT well in their teaching but others barely reach their subject entitlement. As a result, in Years 7 to 9, the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements.
38. Some, but not all, departmental schemes of work incorporate opportunities for activities related to literacy, numeracy, ICT and citizenship and identify possibilities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Little evidence was seen in lessons of the translation of policy into practice and this is an area for development. In history, for example, schemes of work offer little guidance to teachers with less experience or who are new to the school, with the result that some pupils in Year 8 and 9 cover work twice. Similarly, in design and technology, although new schemes of work have been devised, they require more vigour and flair to ensure that pupils become fully involved in their learning.
39. In Years 10 and 11 pupils study nine GCSE subjects within a traditional grammar school curriculum and the statutory curriculum is in place. The curriculum is enhanced by the option to study two modern foreign languages and three separate sciences. The time allocated to individual subjects is broadly in line with the national average. Although pupils have been disapplied from a compulsory course in technology, this is still available in the options programme. Religious education is now offered as an optional GCSE subject as well as a short course for pupils not taking three sciences and statutory requirements are met. Short enrichment courses are also now offered in general studies and ICT. Five sets are allocated in Years 10-11 for mathematics and modern foreign languages, but not for English and science. The imbalance between team games and individual skills remains in physical education.
40. A good range of enrichment activities supports the curriculum. Exchange visits and homestay arrangements in France and Germany are very popular. There are good opportunities for local or overseas fieldwork in biology, geography and history. Year 11 pupils undertake two weeks' work experience and most take the initiative to find their own placements. The commitment of the community service volunteers, working, for example, with the elderly and disabled, enriches their personal and social development. However, there are not enough opportunities in art for pupils to experience gallery visits and visiting artists. The quality and range of careers advice is good. There are good relationships with other secondary schools and with higher and further education establishments and satisfactory relationships with primary schools.
41. Extra-curricular provision is very good, overall, and is a strength of the school. There is a good range of team games and large numbers of staff and pupils are very highly committed to training sessions, weekend matches and tours. There is also a variety of music and drama activities of a high standard, including orchestra, choir, swing band, jazz group and barber shop. Good links have been forged with local grammar schools for large-scale productions and in both sport and music boys of all abilities are encouraged to participate as well as to excel. The school has the largest voluntary cadet force of any maintained school in the country, offering good opportunities

for senior boys to develop leadership skills and to train younger pupils. It is also a considerable strength of the school that senior pupils take responsibility for running a number of Junior Clubs.

42. The PSE programme provides very well in terms of specific curriculum aspects such as rights and responsibilities, healthy environment, sex and relationships which all make a powerful contribution to developing pupils' attitudes and fostering independent thinking and communication skills. The drugs education and sex and relationships aspects of the course won justified, recent local and national acclaim but the rest of the course has not been planned in sufficient detail to ensure progressive development of pupils' skills. As a result, the overall curriculum provision for pupils' personal and social education (PSE) is judged to be unsatisfactory. The weaker teaching seen in some lessons was partly due to this lack of skills planning, together with the fact that the content of the course has not yet been adjusted to take account of the new one-hour lessons. Whilst the time allocation for the subject is just adequate in Years 7 to 9, the five mornings allocated in total at Key Stage 4 are not enough either to cover adequately the content required at this stage or to continue developing and practising the understanding and skills associated with the subject. The co-ordinator is unable to make the necessary developments quickly enough because of the wide range of responsibilities she undertakes. In addition, there are no regular, formal meetings for the staff who teach the subject to create a coherent and consistent approach to the way it is taught. No monitoring or evaluation takes place of either the teaching or the pupils' progress.
43. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is broadly satisfactory and improving. The school's policy for special educational needs has not been updated to reflect the new Code of Practice, as the school was advised to await further guidance from the local education authority which has now been received. Teachers are aware of the new requirements and have undertaken training, with more planned for the coming year. Not all pupils have individual education plans and, consequently, do not have clear enough targets for their academic progress, for their personal and social development, or to help them in their next stage of learning. All pupils with special educational needs are treated equally, as part of the school's commitment to equal opportunities, and they have access to all the curricular opportunities available to their peers. The school offers booster classes in Years 7 to 9 for all pupils who require additional support with their literacy skills. English teachers are aware of the needs of pupils with English as an additional language, but their problems and how to deal with them are not sufficiently known by teachers in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 7 who enter the school with below average writing skills are now receiving effective weekly support in basic skills from an English teacher, whose efforts need to be re-inforced in other subjects.
44. The school, through its aims and practices, is fully committed to ensuring equality of access and opportunity for all pupils in every aspect of its life and work. In this respect, the school is making very good provision. Academic courses are well matched to the needs of nearly all pupils, although those who have studied French before entering the school have no special provision made for them. All pupils, irrespective of their backgrounds, have access to the full range of courses and to any associated visits and enrichment opportunities made available. Good opportunities are provided for large numbers of pupils to represent their school in extra-curricular sporting activities. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs are all treated equally within the main body of pupils. They receive very sensitive support and help from staff and in particular their peers, especially recent arrivals at the school who speak very little English. Many examples were seen where other pupils went out of their way to provide positive assistance, for example in a Year 11 rugby lesson and in a Year 12 geography lesson, successfully involving them in the group activities. The school has met the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act for 2001 and the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Race Equality Code of Practice, but does not, as yet, analyse and evaluate the examination performance of pupils from minority ethnic groups or pupils with special educational needs. The quality and range of careers advice is good and there are good relationships both with primary schools, with other secondary schools and with both higher and further education establishments.
45. Overall, the school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC). The school's focus on good and respectful relationships and the creation of an environment based upon clear values and principles influence every aspect of school life

and pupils' personal development. There are many references to these aspects of pupils' personal development in the school's documentation, especially with regard to behaviour, equal opportunities and bullying. Provision for moral and social development is excellent, provision for spiritual development is good and that for their cultural development is satisfactory. Provision for pupils', spiritual moral, social and cultural development is an integral part of the school's delivery of PSE opportunities and the religious education syllabus provides many very good opportunities in these areas. However, although heads of year make some contribution, this dimension of the curriculum is, currently, insufficiently coordinated. A fully planned and synchronised approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the school in terms of a shared policy for planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation is required.

46. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good, overall. The influence of the school's ethos and strong traditions enables pupils to demonstrate their values, attitudes and beliefs within a very supportive environment. Assemblies take place on a daily basis, some in year groups and some in form rooms. This is a valuable way to begin the day. Assemblies provide some opportunities for reflection, but these are inconsistent. One assembly, for example, led by a pupil enabled pupils to explore their values and feelings and to develop concern for others. Statutory requirements for collective worship are not met. Some evidence of planning for spiritual development can be seen in departments and religious education makes a very good contribution in this area. Pupils are encouraged to explore their attitudes and feelings and to consider their responses to the meaning and purpose of life. Several subjects contribute well to pupils' spiritual development. In English, for example, teachers' questioning enables pupils to widen their horizons and reflect on life issues through the study of various poems and literary texts. Teamwork in physical education enables pupils to understand a range of human thoughts, feelings and emotions. Pupils are clearly aware of the spiritual dimension in the life and traditions of the school. However, greater opportunities should be provided to further develop this aspect of pupils' personal development.
47. Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. This is a real strength in the school. Opportunities are targeted largely through the PSE programme and in religious education, but pupils' moral development is an essential part of the school's whole ethos. Topics such as the use of rules, moral relationships, crime and punishment and drugs education provide a sound basis for discussion and development. The school has clear expectations of pupils knowing right from wrong and they respond extremely well when corrected. The headteacher and staff are excellent role models for pupils and assemblies make a real contribution to this area. Several subjects provide good opportunities for moral development. In religious education, for example, pupils respond well to aspects of morality, using their knowledge of religious and ethical issues. In English, pupils have many opportunities to examine and challenge a range of issues that affect human relationships and conditions. In physical education, pupils demonstrate their ability to cope well with success and failure; they have a clear understanding of right and wrong actions in sports and a strong acceptance of the rules. Boys reflect on the school's values during tutor periods and in their daily activities and give good support to charities.
48. Provision for pupils' social development is outstanding. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to develop social understanding. For example, the school is committed to the cadet force and this opens up a vast array of opportunities for pupils to become involved in social activities. Pupils act as librarians, trained mentors, choir and orchestra leaders and many more. The PSE programme provides very well in this area by encouraging reflection on rights and responsibilities, healthy environment and sex and relationships. This makes a powerful contribution to developing mature attitudes and fostering independent thinking and communication skills. The house system enables pupils to develop a sense of identity and provides excellent opportunities for participation and competition. The prefect system is very strong and the School Council provides a very effective way for pupils to influence changes. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards it and it provides good opportunities for some to exercise their skills of persuasion. Assemblies make a significant contribution to social development; most form assemblies are taken by pupils and allow opportunities for classes to be actively involved in discussion and presentation. In almost all subjects, pupils collaborate very well with each other in discussion work. They demonstrate deep respect for and consideration of the views of others. This makes a significant contribution to their achievement and progress. The level of pupil interaction in English, religious education

and modern foreign languages is very high and their ability to use their negotiation skills is an important feature of the work in these subjects.

49. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. There are several opportunities for pupils to be involved in activities that extend their cultural development. Aspects of religious education make a significant contribution, especially in terms of the study of different religions and the cultures that support them, so assisting pupils to prepare for life in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society. However, planned opportunities in the school's curriculum for pupils to explore their own cultural assumptions and to appreciate the richness of life in multi-faith and multi-cultural Britain require further development and this was also the case at the last inspection. Some opportunities for pupils to appreciate their own local culture are provided through active participation in trips and visits. There are clubs and visits abroad, with all pupils fully integrated. Exchange visits in modern foreign languages also provide opportunities for widening the cultural horizons of pupils. In music, the wide range of opportunities such as junior choir, jazz group, string orchestra and joint productions and the summer drama festival with two neighbouring grammar schools involving all year groups, all enhance pupils' cultural awareness.
50. Since the last inspection, opportunities for moral and social development have been enhanced, and some gains have been made in provision for spiritual development. Despite sustained efforts, the provision for the daily act of collective worship has not been fully addressed.

Sixth form

51. The sixth form curriculum provides a suitable range of academic subjects for students to pursue, and, as far as can be managed within the constraints of the school day and the staffing available, every effort is made to enable all students to follow the courses which suit them best. The courses available match well the aspirations of students, most of whom follow four subject courses up to AS level. Where this is inappropriate in terms of students' capabilities and expectations, three subjects may be studied. In the second year of the sixth form, most students take three subjects to A-level. Over the two-week timetable cycle, all courses have an adequate amount of teaching time and students enjoy a suitable amount of free time to engage in private study and research. All but a few students take general studies at AS-level, but do not follow a formal teaching course leading to the examination. The Year 12 curriculum is supplemented by a civics course, which covers a range of topics, including career and higher education opportunities and a pre-driving course.
52. The school has recently adjusted its timetable and the timing of the school day in order to facilitate the sharing of courses and facilities with a neighbouring grammar school. A small number of students currently follow A-level courses in that school. The school provides no post-16 vocational courses, but the option is available to students to follow such courses in another nearby school. As yet, no students have indicated their wish to take up vocational courses.
53. Students' learning is held back in some subjects by the lack of computer facilities in the subject area and their dependence upon whole-school facilities to carry out research. This has a significant impact on learning in biology, mathematics, business studies and religious education. In modern languages, where ICT facilities have just been provided, teachers and students are developing very effective use of computers to support learning.
54. A striking feature of sixth form experiences is the wide range of opportunities for physical and sporting activity. A substantial amount of curriculum time each week is devoted to games and is expensive in terms of the staffing provided, which has the effect of making class sizes in the lower school considerably larger than average. This feature of the curriculum is strongly held to be important by the governors and management of the school, and for the most part is much appreciated by the students. Physical education, as opposed to games, is, however, not well represented in the curriculum, alternating with religious education on a fortnightly basis.
55. Provision for students' spiritual development is good. The influence of the school's ethos and strong traditions enables students to demonstrate their values and beliefs within a very supportive environment. Assemblies take place daily and provide some opportunities for

reflection. There is some evidence of planning in departments for spiritual development, especially in religious education, English, art and music, but this is inconsistent.

56. Provision for students' moral development is excellent. Sixth form students are excellent role models for all students. They respect one another and the environment, are polite and courteous and participate in a mature and civilised manner in discussion and debate.
57. Provision for students' social development is outstanding. The school provides a rich variety of opportunities for students to take responsibility and develop social understanding. The degree of involvement in a range of activities is very high. Research and study skills, decision making, lateral thinking, human rights' issues and refugees are all topics that enable students to exercise responsibility and develop an awareness of the needs of others, both locally and in the wider world. Students participate well and demonstrate their leadership qualities as prefects. The sixth form council enables students to develop their ability to discuss and negotiate effectively.
58. Provision for students' cultural development is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for students to take part in visits and exchanges abroad, but too few planned opportunities for them to develop an awareness of the variety of cultures and traditions existing in the United Kingdom.
59. A wide range of sporting, cultural and recreational extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum effectively. Students are deeply involved in the school's drama activities and take responsibility in many areas of school life, as prefects and in the smooth running of the school outside lesson times. Much of the academic sixth form curriculum is classroom based, however. There are few visits to places of historical relevance and theatrical or literary productions and there is less contact with local industry and commerce than might be expected. There are, however, good opportunities for students of languages to visit the countries where these languages are spoken.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

60. Pupils are very well known and very well supported by staff. The school is very effective in monitoring their personal development, providing very good support and guidance in this area, which contributes to raising pupils' level of achievement and ensures that all pupils benefit from the opportunities offered. There are however, weaknesses in the areas of the management of health and safety and the use of assessment information to guide curricular planning.

Assessment

61. A whole school policy outlines the assessment procedure to be used in the school. It identifies departmental responsibilities for assessing, recording and reporting and use. The application of this policy is inconsistent throughout the school, with practice ranging from good to unsatisfactory and there is no evidence to indicate that departmental assessment is monitored. Some monitoring of exercise books is undertaken by senior staff and in some subjects the head of department monitors marking. The procedures are in place across departments for assessing both attainment and progress and the school has a wealth of information on pupils. This includes Key Stage 2 levels, cognitive ability test scores (CATS) and school performance data. Assessment data is not used in many departments to inform future curriculum planning. There is little analysis of results of either internal tests or of national examinations to examine past teaching critically and to take the necessary steps to modify teaching to secure future improvements. Practice in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science is variable. In English, a good exchange of ideas in department meetings and informally has led to good assessment, including addressing weaknesses discovered from test and examination results. In mathematics, work is marked conscientiously and marking is encouraging, but little advice is given on how to improve further or how to extend learning and, in science, assessment of pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection, but the use of assessment to inform future planning and to meet the learning needs of all pupils has not significantly developed. There are other examples of good practice, for example in religious education, but in subjects such as design and technology, the overall use of assessment is unsatisfactory. It is a particular weakness in Years 7 to 9 where many departments do not use National Curriculum levels enough to inform pupils about their progress. In history, for example, Year 9 pupils do not know

their current National Curriculum levels, what level they should be aiming for or what they have to do to improve.

Advice, support and guidance

62. Pastoral support for pupils remains very good since the time of the previous inspection and makes a positive contribution to pupils' attitudes and to their progress. The headteacher, staff and sixth form pupils provide excellent role models. Pupils state very clearly that they are well supported. They speak highly of the head-teacher and the commitment and dedication of staff that give freely of their own time to provide support, guidance and encouragement and treat them as responsible, mature members of the school community. Very good relations between staff and pupils ensure that pupils are confident in approaching staff with problems. Outside agencies and institutions and specialist advisers provide good support and advice for pupils.
63. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good standards of behaviour. This is based upon very high expectations and making pupils aware of their individual responsibilities. The strategies employed seek to make pupils responsible for their own behaviour. Strategies for dealing with pupils whose behaviour is of concern involve them in assessing the impact of their behaviour on others and on their own learning. Parents are involved appropriately and are usually very supportive of the school. Staff promote a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong. The effectiveness of the procedures and strategies and the response of pupils, combined with the very good relationships within the school, have a very positive effect on both attainment and progress. Although bullying and other oppressive behaviour are not a significant problem, the school is rigorous in resolving problems and mediating in the case of difficulties that arise in relationships.
64. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are understood and identified correctly, although the regular tracking and recording of their progress is not as systematic as it should be to inform the writing of individual education plans and the setting of targets. Reviews of pupils with special educational needs take place, but arrangements are not firmly established with clear timescales. Records relating to these pupils are readily accessible, but give too little information on what action the school is taking to monitor progress and to ensure that the requirements of their statements are fully met. From the records it appears that the annual review of one pupil with a statement is overdue.
65. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. The school uses the local area protection committee's procedures, which comply with requirements. The headteacher is responsible for child protection and has undertaken appropriate training. Although he updates his knowledge by reading, he has not attended any training sessions in the last two years. Lines of responsibility and communication within the school are clear and all staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the case of any concerns. There is good liaison with external agencies to provide support in appropriate cases. The school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities and has an appropriate policy for the restraint of pupils.
66. Safe practice is promoted well in lessons. For example, a Year 7 science class was reminded of safety issues and good practice before entering a science laboratory for a practical lesson and, throughout the lesson, safety was emphasised very well. However, arrangements for the monitoring and co-ordination of health and safety are unsatisfactory. Except for visits, whole school risk assessments are generally not completed. Although regular health and safety audits are completed, not all physical risks are identified. In some cases, the risks and hazards identified are not addressed with sufficient urgency and there is no central monitoring by the school to ensure that risk assessments have been completed and acted upon. Several issues were identified and brought to the attention of the school during the inspection. Fire appliances and the fire alarm system are tested regularly and, although buildings are checked, procedures for verifying that the buildings are totally evacuated have weaknesses. Areas of the school have been used to accumulate rubbish; these present fire hazards.
67. Arrangements for first aid are generally satisfactory and accidents are reported appropriately. There are adequate numbers of trained staff to provide first aid cover across the site and at the

nearby playing fields used by the school, but, occasionally, staff engaged in practical activities with pupils have to leave their post to attend to an emergency; this is a weakness.

68. The school's arrangements for monitoring and improving attendance are very good and registers meet requirements. Registration takes place formally within classrooms, but the use of registration time is inconsistent. Whilst some sessions are excellent, a small minority fail to engage pupils in worthwhile activities. Although there is no evidence of internal truanting, registers are not taken consistently in lessons. Parents are strongly discouraged from withdrawing pupils during term time for holidays. The Education Welfare Officer provides good support in appropriate cases.

Sixth form

Assessment

69. Although individual students are not in the main set specific attainment targets during the sixth form course, teachers make it known whether students are achieving at an appropriate level and what they should do to improve through careful and explicit marking of their work and through oral feedback on work completed and class performance. Students interviewed were very clear about how well they were doing and had a good idea of what they were expected to achieve at the end of the course. In mathematics, for example, most students are aware of the specific grades they are expected to achieve.
70. Overall, students' attainment and progress are well supported throughout the sixth form. The two sixth form heads take responsibility along with the form tutors in tracking the progress of students and issuing praise and admonishment where appropriate. There are, however, disparities in assessment procedures across the sixth form. Whereas in religious education the assessment of students' work and progress is used effectively to plan the teaching and learning process, in computing, where there are global targets for the whole group to achieve, strategies for ensuring that the targets set for the whole group are met are not clear or detailed enough.
71. The use of assessment to deal with individual learning needs is good in several subjects. In subjects such as mathematics it is used to decide which modules students should study and it is well used in religious education to provide an effective course of study for students. Geography, history and ICT have weaknesses in the use of assessment to inform future planning.

Advice, support and guidance

72. Most students feel they are well prepared for life in the sixth form through the induction course and the advice they receive on the subjects to take. Although this was an area where a greater proportion of students had doubts about the quality of provision, most appreciate the help they are given with university and career opportunities, which is supported by a well-stocked careers library and sixth form tutors being constantly on hand for individual advice.
73. Students interviewed during the inspection indicated that in the vast majority of subject areas they feel that they receive extremely good support and guidance from teachers. Teachers are responsive to the needs of students and adjust their teaching accordingly. Students' work is well and promptly marked and indicates clearly where there are areas for development and what can be done to make the necessary improvements. Good examples of this type of support and guidance are to be found in the majority of subjects taught at sixth form level. All students felt confident and gave examples of teachers giving generously of their time to support those who had fallen behind or were finding the work difficult.
74. Students' learning is well supported. Strong features in students' learning experiences are the quality of relationships and the high expectations of teachers, both of which contribute significantly to the high levels of attainment. Opportunities for private study and recreation are satisfactory with a supervised study area as well as a developing sixth form careers library, which is not supervised. Students may use the school's ICT facilities for research in their free time, or relax in the sixth form common room. The school's high expectations and trust of

students mean that they have free choice about how they spend their non-taught time as long as they continue to make appropriate progress in their academic work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

75. Parents have very positive views of the school. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents have remained very good since the time of the previous inspection. The school is very successful in involving parents in its life and work for the benefit of pupils. The partnership between school and home is promoted well through good communications and information on pupils' learning.
76. Over a third of parents responded to the questionnaires. They have very positive views of the school and of the education provided and are particularly pleased with the school's high expectations and the quality of the leadership and management. Inspectors strongly agree with the positive points made by parents and recognise the excellent role model provided for pupils by the headteacher, but inspection evidence suggests that some aspects of leadership and management could be improved. Inspectors could not support the concerns of a minority of parents; they find the level and extent of homework to be appropriate and that parents receive good information about their sons' progress, although in some cases it did not clearly identify what pupils need to do to move to the next stage of their learning. Both the school's partnership with parents and the range of extra-curricular activities are judged to be very effective.
77. The school's very close and effective partnership with parents is promoted through good communications and shared information about the progress pupils are making. Regular newsletters are informative and provide useful information about the life and work of the school. Information about events such as 'Skinners' Day' is circulated in good time to allow parents who wish to attend to make the necessary arrangements. Parents receive two reports each year. The best reports tell parents what pupils know, understand and can do, exemplifying the progress which they have made and setting clear targets to move them to the next stage in their learning. However, reports are inconsistent and often fail to identify clear targets; sometimes they only detail the work that has been undertaken. Reports are supplemented by consultation evenings that are very well attended. Staff follow up those parents who do not attend and offer them alternative opportunities to discuss their sons' progress. Staff seek to ensure that parents are involved in their sons' learning and development and heads of year involve parents at an early stage in the event of any concerns being identified. The headteacher and staff are readily accessible to parents and frequently make themselves available to them at the end of the day.
78. Parents make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They encourage pupils in their work at school and at home and in their wider activities. This is demonstrated by the very good support provided by parents for pupils' homework and the high attendance at consultation evenings. Parents contribute to a school fund and this, combined with funds from the parents' association, provides very good support to the school. The hardworking and enthusiastic parents' association raises substantial sums of money and, during the last year, contributed towards the upgrade of information technology equipment, the decoration and furnishing of sixth form accommodation, the provision of books and equipping the new modern foreign languages block.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

79. The last inspection report noted that the headteacher 'combines intellectual rigour and integrity with a sensitive, thoughtful and perceptive approach to the leadership of the school'. This continues to be the case. His influence in setting and expecting the highest standards of performance and behaviour is reflected well in the school's success in public examinations, in pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and their response to the range of opportunities provided for their personal development. Pupils, parents and staff speak very highly of his qualities and the contribution he has made, and continues to make, to ensuring that the school remains an inclusive and caring school, committed to providing equality of opportunity for all. In this respect, the headteacher's contribution to the continuing success of the school is considerable. Through enabling pupils to achieve high academic standards, preparing them

well for the challenges of adult life and promoting a clear sense of community and co-operative endeavour, the school meets its aims well. This is also reflected in the commitment of staff to making the best possible provision for their pupils to develop and succeed.

80. In some other areas of leadership and management, particularly those provided by the senior management team and some middle managers, the picture is more variable, with some strengths and other areas where the school has not made enough progress in ironing out inconsistent practice and in implementing national initiatives. As a result, management in the school is judged to be satisfactory, overall.
81. Roles and responsibilities of senior staff that form the senior management team have been appropriately redefined in the past year and this has brought greater precision and focus to their work. They have clearly delegated areas of responsibility that they undertake effectively to ensure the smooth running of the school. Administrative staff are courteous and helpful and give good support to senior staff. As a result, the school runs well on a day-to-day basis. The leadership team meets frequently, although not every week. These meetings, which do not always have written agenda or records of decisions, are used to review progress appropriately and determine future action. The school's approach is to evolve its practice in a measured way rather than making sudden changes. This approach gains the commitment of most staff to revised ways of working, but also means that it takes longer than necessary to implement important initiatives and changes to current practice. The arrangements for supporting gifted and talented pupils, for example, and for the implementation of a programme of study for citizenship are not fully in place. Subject departments do not use ICT consistently to support teaching and learning and teachers do not use assessment data effectively enough to enable their planning to meet the needs of their learners and to set targets for their pupils.
82. The headteacher and some of his senior staff have a very good understanding of what needs to be done to move the school forward. However, the school's overall procedures for monitoring and evaluating its performance and taking effective action to secure improvements are not robust enough. Appropriate systems and procedures have been implemented to monitor and evaluate the work of subject departments, for example through annual departmental reviews which are part of the school's performance management arrangements. These arrangements, in which senior managers are linked with specific departments and other staff with management responsibilities, are generally working satisfactorily, although they are not always undertaken consistently or with the same degree of thoroughness. Line management arrangements are not secure, meetings are too infrequent and departments are not held sufficiently to account for their progress in implementing the school's policies and priorities. The lack of any requirement for departments to produce development plans setting out their intentions and priorities for the year is a particular weakness and makes it more difficult for senior managers to monitor their effectiveness and the progress they are making. The way in which heads of department monitor and evaluate the work in their areas of responsibility, including teaching and learning, is inconsistent. There are examples of very good practice in religious education, business education and economics and satisfactory practice in English, design and technology, history and modern foreign languages. The recently appointed head of music has not yet undertaken any formal monitoring of teaching at this early stage, nor have plans been formulated for performance management. In other subject departments, practice is unsatisfactory.
83. At senior management level, performance data are used well to look at trends, identify areas of weakness and set targets for improvement. These data include test and examination results, in addition to pupils' performance on standardised tests. Not all departments use them consistently or rigorously enough to set targets for pupils or to plan more effectively to meet the needs of their learners.
84. Relationships between the governors and the headteacher are particularly strong. Governors have a clear understanding of their role in the governance of the school and of the appropriate boundaries between governance and management. Governors are very supportive of the school and proud of its achievements and its distinctive ethos. Through their work in committees and the focused visits undertaken by selected governors each term, they monitor the school's performance appropriately and have a satisfactory understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The governing body undertakes its responsibilities well in the main, although

governors have not ensured that the provision for English, design and technology, citizenship, the use of ICT across the curriculum and acts of collective worship, fully meets statutory requirements. In addition, the Prospectus does not conform to statutory requirements. In conjunction with the headteacher, the governing body makes an effective contribution to shaping the future direction of the school, evident through the long-term planning framework which is included in the school development plan, especially in matters relating to improving the school's accommodation and facilities.

85. The school's priorities for the coming year are set out in summary form in the school development plan. These priorities relate to improving aspects of the curriculum, pastoral care and academic attainment, staffing, and land, buildings and resources, and are appropriate to the school's stage of development. Staff have the opportunity to comment on the plan during its formulation. The leadership team reviews the plan each month and provides termly progress reports to the governing body, through its education and development committee.
86. The plan includes a review of progress in the previous year, but is mainly descriptive rather than evaluative. It pays too little attention to the impact of actions taken in effecting improvement or the reasons why some priorities have not been fully implemented. The plan for the current year is not detailed or sharp enough to make it into a robust management tool; it does not include all the elements that would normally be found in such plans, such as specific timescales, success criteria, information on who is to be involved in contributing to the various priorities, details about how the plan is to be monitored and the effectiveness of the outcomes evaluated.
87. The role of heads of department in leading and managing their departments is broadly satisfactory, with a few examples of good and occasionally very good practice. Work in most departments reflects the aims of the school well and is particularly strong in art, physical education and religious education. Most staff share a common purpose and have taken steps to make their work more effective. Departmental documentation is very variable in quality and extent. In some instances, for example physical education, schemes of work do not always meet requirements and the assessment arrangements at Years 7 to 9 are not linked closely enough to the National Curriculum level descriptions. Not all subject managers are vigilant in monitoring the work of their departments to ensure a consistent approach in line with the school's policies and priorities or in using data to review their performance. The lack of detailed departmental development plans makes it difficult for heads of department to evaluate their effectiveness and to ensure that resources are used to best effect. Heads of year, who have been in post for a comparatively short period of time, are making an effective contribution to supporting the academic and personal progress of pupils and to effecting change in the school.
88. The provision for the small number of pupils with special educational needs is improving and is managed satisfactorily for the most part. The special needs co-ordinator has been in post for two years and combines this role with other responsibilities. She has ensured that she is fully up to date with the requirements of the revised Code of Practice. Appropriate procedures for the identification, support and review of pupils with special educational needs are being established, but, as yet, are not systematic or rigorous enough. A contributory factor is the small amount of management time that is allocated for the coordinator to undertake her role. Teachers have full details of pupils' specific needs, although not all pupils have individual education plans, with clearly identified targets, to ensure that the support is always targeted appropriately. Staff are given helpful guidance on the strategies that can be used in supporting individual pupils. Learning support staff provide effective support in lessons. Not enough is done to monitor the progress of pupils with special educational needs or the quality of support that they receive in lessons. Professional contacts with outside agencies are constructive and helpful. The additional funding for pupils with special needs is appropriately targeted.
89. Budgeting is sound; it appropriately supports the school's priorities for development. Governors maintain a strategic overview and bring a wide range of experience and expertise to discussions. They are committed to providing an ethos of caring and high achievement that successfully permeates the school. Much of governors' efforts have been directed at improving and extending the accommodation, expanding facilities to benefit teaching and learning, and providing a flourishing sixth form to enable pupils to develop personally as well as academically.

90. Financial planning is sound and appropriately targeted to support the school's educational priorities, but there is a weakness in that there are no costed departmental plans. Annual allocations are devolved to departments after consideration by the headteacher and the bursar. The school compounds a management weakness identified in the last inspection by continuing to fund French and German 'departments' separately. Priorities are clearly identified and correspond with the school's overall priorities, with a close link between educational and financial planning. However priorities are insufficiently related to raising standards of attainment in specific curriculum areas. Systems of financial control are good. The last external audit was completed in 1999 with no issues identified. Financial information is readily available and reports are carefully prepared and analysed by the bursar and regularly provided to the headteacher and presented to meetings of the governing body. Financial procedures and controls are operated with a high degree of efficiency.
91. Procedures to ensure that the school obtains best value for money are unsatisfactory. There are no costed departmental development plans and insufficient use is made of comparative data to analyse the effectiveness of the school or to review the impact of expenditure on pupils and on the standards they attain. Since the appointment of a new bursar earlier this year, some analysis has been carried out which has, for example, confirmed that Years 7 to 9 subsidise the sixth form. Funding for non-teaching support staff throughout the school is limited which means that teachers carry out tasks normally done by them, in areas such as ICT. The school carefully accounts for the additional funds and grants which it receives and they are used appropriately for the purposes designated, but the school's use of new technology is unsatisfactory: its application to support management and pupils' learning is underdeveloped.
92. The school makes satisfactory use of its staffing, accommodation and other resources, using its available resources to good effect to support pupils' learning. Day-to-day administration is unobtrusive and efficient and supports the work of the school well. Taking into consideration its level of expenditure, the high quality of education provided and the achievement of pupils in relation to their prior attainment, the school provides good value for money.
93. There are enough teachers to deliver the curriculum and in the main they are appropriately qualified in the subjects they teach. Teachers who are not formally qualified in these subjects teach a large number of physical education lessons and some religious education lessons, but this does not have a negative impact on the attainment of pupils. The recently appointed head of art has no qualification in this subject. Because of too few support staff in areas such as the library, special educational needs and ICT, teachers have to devote considerable time to a number of tasks that take them away from their teaching. The school's strategy for performance management is good. The school has completed its first cycle of performance management and has embarked on the second round. Teachers have all been given targets for their professional development and receive appropriate in service training. The induction and support for newly qualified teachers are good; teachers feel well supported and follow a regular programme of advice and training in many aspects of their duties. Staff new to the school are well integrated by their colleagues.

Resources

94. Resources are generally satisfactory, although, in some areas of the curriculum, there are too few suitable textbooks. In mathematics, science, religious education and business education the lack of computer facilities in the teaching area impedes the progress which pupils are able to make by limiting their independent learning facilities. The library supports pupils' reading of fiction very well. In history, modern languages, art and religious education, classes use the library effectively for research and in geography and business studies and economics they make good use of the Internet.
95. The accommodation is satisfactory for the delivery of the curriculum. Since the previous inspection, there have been significant improvements in aspects of the learning environment. Governors have continued their strategy of acquiring and developing additional accommodation to enhance the facilities available for learning and teaching. During the week of the inspection, contracts were exchanged for the adjacent Byng Hall, which is intended to provide improved accommodation for curriculum areas such as music and drama. There are, however, very

significant differences in the quality and suitability of accommodation throughout the school with some very good, new, purpose-built accommodation, such as that for modern languages, and some old, poor accommodation with difficult access, such as that in the attic used for music, which is inappropriate; accessed by 46 stairs it affords poor facilities for practice. The limited accommodation presents significant problems for teachers and the necessary movement of equipment. These problems are fully recognised by the school; it is intended that they will be addressed when Byng Hall is brought into use. Additional facilities are good and a playing field located close to the school supports the school's physical education curriculum well. Because of the age and construction of some of the buildings, full disabled access is not possible for pupils, staff, parents and visitors. Displays celebrate pupils' work and achievements appropriately.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

96. The headteacher and the governors of the school have a clear vision of what they wish the sixth form to be where expectations are high, students learn well, teaching is of high quality and where all students, without exception, are given full opportunities to develop academically, physically and socially. These aims are clearly seen in the work of the sixth form. The outcomes in terms of standards and the maturity of students justify the high cost of provision, which is reflected in higher than average size teaching groups in the lower school and relatively high expenditure per sixth form student.
97. The sixth form is managed on a day-to-day basis by two year heads who remain with their respective year group, one responsible for the induction of students, the other for their preparation for higher education. Good collaboration exists between them which enables the management of this part of the school to be consistent and secure and both are members of the school senior management team. Consequently, sixth form matters are well represented at the highest level. Overall management of sixth form provision at subject level is at least satisfactory and, in many cases good, although there are some areas that could be improved. In history, computing, religious studies and English, clear commitment to sustaining high standards and a clear sense of purpose and direction supports teachers in what they do. In business education and economics, good monitoring and evaluation of performance enables standards to be improved. Teachers in English collaborate well on assessment procedures where teaching groups are shared. Sciences are well managed: the leadership and management and helpful departmental documentation in physics make a strong contribution to the standards the department achieves.
98. Few departments have clear development plans for the subject at sixth form level and, consequently, are not in a good position to measure their progress against defined criteria. Some do not have clear schemes of work for sixth form work, with the result that, in history, for example, the learning experiences of students vary according to who is teaching them. Some departments, such as computing, do not use assessment data enough to plan their work, with the result that courses are occasionally not specifically geared to students' individual needs.

Resources

99. The sixth form is well staffed by well-qualified teachers with good subject knowledge who are committed to maintaining high standards of performance from students. As with the main school, the accommodation is satisfactory, overall, for delivery of the curriculum to sixth form students. Limitations in the accommodation are similar to those experienced throughout the school and the quality of the accommodation available for sixth form teaching is extremely variable. In some subjects, such as in economics, business studies, music, art and biology, it is unsatisfactory, whereas the new accommodation for modern foreign languages is excellent and provides an excellent range of learning facilities. Library facilities are cramped. The accommodation available to students in the sixth form for socialising and independent work is satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The school should:

- (i) improve the quality of strategic planning across the school by:
- establishing a well structured long-term plan for the school's development over the next three to five years to provide a context within which departmental plans may be formulated;
(paragraphs 82,87,90)
 - ensuring that all subject departments have well-structured development plans and useful schemes of work that are very clearly focused on raising standards and improving teaching and which take account of whole school priorities;
(paragraphs 8,29,38,82,87,90,91,106,113,120,125,147,161,179)
 - creating stronger systems of accountability to ensure greater consistency both across the school and within departments such as monitoring and evaluating practice, including teaching, to ensure that policies are consistently applied;
(paragraphs 61,80,81,82,87,113,120,125,147)
- (ii) improve the structure of the curriculum and meet statutory requirements by:
- fully implementing the programme of citizenship as required under the National Curriculum;
(paragraphs 38,81,84,126,127,128)
 - meeting statutory requirements for design and technology, by providing access to resistant materials and graphics; equal opportunities for pupils to study food technology and textiles and better facilities for control technology and computer-aided design and manufacture;
(paragraphs 37, 38,84,133,135)
 - developing schemes of work in English in Years 7 to 9 to meet National Curriculum requirements for progress in drama and media topics; [*paragraphs 37,84,106*]
 - improving the use of ICT in subjects such as English, science, design and technology, geography and history to support teaching and learning throughout the school;
(paragraphs 37,81,84,106,120,133,139,147,150)
- (iii) ensure that departments use the wealth of assessment data provided by the school more effectively by:
- drawing on the best practice already underway in the school in subjects such as English and religious education;
(paragraphs 61,178)
 - establishing the formal analysis within departments of internal tests and national examinations to examine past teaching critically and to take necessary steps to modify teaching and secure future improvements;
(paragraphs 61,82,133,134,172)

Sixth form

- (i) Improve departmental development planning and schemes of work, by:
- ensuring that all subject departments have a clearly-stated view of their development targets over the medium and long-term, so that resources can be appropriately allocated and performance can be measured against departments' goals;
(paragraphs 98, 197, 205, 208)
 - producing schemes of work which clearly state departmental policies for each subject, ensuring that teachers share expertise and that the department can review and develop its provision;
(paragraphs 98, 197,221, 237)
- (ii) improve accommodation and resources in some subjects by:
- continuing to address issues arising;
(paragraphs 99, 201,205, 213)

In addition to the above issues, the governors may wish to include the following in their action plan:

1. improve the provision for pupils' personal and social education by:
 - planning the programme content in sufficient detail to ensure progressive development of pupils' skills and to take account of the new one-hour lessons; extending the time available for personal and social education in Years 10 and 11;
 - appointing a dedicated coordinator with time to coordinate provision across the school;
 - establishing regular communication for staff involved in delivering the programme;
 - monitoring and evaluating the quality of that provision to guarantee high standards.
(paragraph 42)
2. Improve the management of health and safety and its monitoring by:
 - establishing clear responsibility for ensuring that risks are identified and acted upon and to ensure that risk assessments are completed.
(paragraph 60)
3. Ensure that the provision for a daily act of collective worship meets requirements.
(paragraph 50)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 -11	101
	Sixth form	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	10	22	53	13	3	0	0
Percentage	10	21.5	52.5	13	3	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	5	18	24	10	2	0	0
Percentage	8.5	30.5	40.5	17	3.5	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	519	203
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	7	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	31	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	19

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Years 7 to 9 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Years 7 to 9 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	106		

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	104	106	105
	Girls			
	Total	104	106	105
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	98 (97)	100 (99)	99 (99)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	80 (68)	100 (99)	95 (91)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	106	106	106
	Girls			
	Total	106	106	106
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	96 (84)	100 (100)	91 (95)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	108		108

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	102	103	103
	Girls			
	Total	102	103	103
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	99	100	100
	National	48.4	91	96.1

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	58.9
per pupil	National	39

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

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

Number of pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	89	N/a	89

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	27.6	N/a	27.6	N/a	N/a	N/a
National			17.4			

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
549	1	1
7	0	0
33	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
4	0	0
4	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
9	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
1	0	0
8	0	0
5	0	0
92	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	39,595
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

Education support staff: Y7– Y11

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	124

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.5
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7– Y11

Years 7 to 9	27
Key Stage 4	23

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year 2001	£
Total income	2262037
Total expenditure	2246091
Expenditure per pupil	3000.39
Balance brought forward from previous year	14640
Balance carried forward to next year	30586

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.7

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

723

Number of questionnaires returned

280

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	64	34	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	54	36	3	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	52	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	55	9	2	3
The teaching is good.	49	44	1	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	45	13	0	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	28	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	24	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	38	45	13	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	73	25	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	36	2	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	47	13	3	8

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, overall, very good in Years 10 to 11 and results in above average standards.
- Teachers promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.
- Pupils learn to think for themselves and to make connections between different areas of learning.
- Pupils enjoy English, particularly writing stories, poetry and reading.

Areas for improvement

- Results in the Year 9 tests are well below those in mathematics and science.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Schemes of work, particularly in Years 7 to 9 are not detailed enough to support teachers in helping all pupils to make good progress.
- Development planning is not precise enough to indicate a clear way forward.

100. By the age of 14, pupils' results in the statutory tests in 2001 at the end of Year 9 were very high in comparison with national averages, but well below the average for similar, selective schools. Those in mathematics and science regularly outshine English results. After a slight decline between 1997 and 2000, results have improved over the last two years.
101. In English and English literature at GCSE almost all pupils gain A* - C grades. A*/A grades and the average points score in English were above the national average in 2001. The average points score was similar to that of similar, selective schools, but the percentage of A* and A grades was below that level. Results vary from year to year with a much higher percentage of A* and A grades in 2002 than in 2001. In English literature in 2001, A* and A grades were well above the national average and above the average for selective schools. They were particularly high in 2000, but both the A* and A grades and the A* - C grades dropped markedly in 2002. Generally, pupils do better in mathematics and science than they do in English.
102. Pupils enter Year 7 with standards in English above average for their age. In the work seen in the inspection, all pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9 and make adequate progress. Standards by the age of 14 are above national expectations. Pupils speak readily and fluently, explain themselves well and contribute thoughtfully to discussion. The well-stocked library and teachers' encouragement to read a range of books mean that pupils widen their reading tastes beyond fiction, which they prefer. Many read a good deal, though only a few at a sophisticated level for their age. Highest attainers are quick to grasp an author's purpose and some stylistic devices; in the frequent group discussions, most pupils explain some of the effects of these. They bring their good general knowledge to interpreting unfamiliar texts, as when a Year 9 class looked at the rhetorical devices in Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech. All pupils enjoy writing stories. Year 8 pupils have learnt a good variety of strategies for planning, in preparation for writing letters, diary entries, descriptions and stories on an island theme. By Year 9, most pupils write in a lively manner, a few using sentences for effect. Less capable pupils, whose writing is below average, tend to write briefly and sometimes lose control of their sentence structure. Throughout the key stage, pupils compose a good deal of poetry, some of it heart-felt, some ingenious parody and much revealing a fascination for words and rhyme. Spelling is generally good; a noticeable minority of pupils have poorly formed handwriting, but their presentation of the final draft is usually good. In the very large Year 7 and 8 classes it is difficult for teachers to challenge the highest attainers enough, whilst providing the structured learning needed by most of the class. This and the inadequate schemes of work result in pupils at this key stage not making as much progress over time as they do in individual lessons.
103. In Year 10 to 11 pupils respond well to the challenge of work that extends beyond the confines of the examination syllabus. The result is good achievement and progress for all pupils and

standards that are well above average, overall. For instance, Year 10 pupils have chosen fiction by Sir Walter Scott, R L Stevenson and Thomas Hardy for individual study. Pupils frequently construct their own essay titles. Year 11 pupils are comfortable with Shakespeare's language. They study excerpts from plays that are not set texts, to explore Shakespeare's views of what upsets order in society. Frequent, well-focused group work enables pupils to amass ideas about texts and to gain confidence in their own responses. Through regular, varied oral activities, pupils become fluent, increasingly confident and sometimes appropriately humorous speakers. The most capable pupils write well about how an author's style affects the reader, but they do not always sustain their argument well throughout an essay. Most pupils write competent comparisons with apt examples and they are imaginative and reflective. Pupils of all levels of attainment continue to enjoy writing stories and poetry, voicing their opinions on controversial issues, as is evident in displays and in the creative writing magazine "Your Shout". Less capable pupils are less reflective in formal essays than in their personal writing and they have difficulty identifying and writing about the effects of language.

104. Pupils with English as an additional language make similar progress to that of their peers and pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at both key stages. English teachers are aware of their needs, but these problems and how to deal with them are not sufficiently known by teachers in other subjects. For example, pupils in Year 7 who enter the school with below average writing skills now receive effective weekly support in basic skills from an English teacher, whose efforts need to be re-inforced in other subjects.
105. Teaching and learning are good, overall, and very good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils learn well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, teachers share precise objectives with pupils and review them well at the end of the lesson. They include an interesting variety of activities and language skills, set tight deadlines within the lesson, stimulate pupils to think for themselves and strongly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers generally manage classes very well, engendering very good relationships and behaviour. They communicate their very good knowledge of literature and encourage pupils to make connections with other fields of learning, as when Year 10 compared a painting of wrecked aircraft with a poem inspired by the painting and reflected on the pity of war. Generally, teachers are adapting well to the new, longer lesson time and there was an excellent example of the literacy lesson. Teachers set regular homework, which they mark encouragingly and helpfully at both key stages. Weaknesses in the teaching occur when teachers are not clear enough about what they want the pupils to learn in the lesson or unit of work. Occasionally, teachers talk for too much of the lesson or allow too long for one activity, so that pupils lose interest or mark time. Sometimes, the teacher does not give clear instructions. Crisp starter activities related to the previous or the current lesson are general, but teachers are less successful at finishing lessons with enough time for them to review with pupils what has been learnt and to prepare for future work. For the few pupils at each key stage who have difficulty starting or structuring a writing task, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for them to collect ideas and plan their writing within the supportive framework of the lesson.
106. Leadership and management are sound, overall. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. High standards have been maintained, whilst the department adjusts to national developments in English at both key stages. The head of department and his well qualified, experienced, cohesive team, work hard to inspire all pupils to do their best. All are active in additional school activities, so that English contributes very well to the ethos of the school and is a popular subject. A good exchange of ideas in department meetings and informally has led to good assessment, including addressing weaknesses discovered from test and examination results. However, schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory in that they do not entirely meet the National Curriculum requirements for progress in drama, ICT and media topics. Nor are they full enough to merge the new government guidelines with what the department already does well, so that pupils build on what they have learnt in Key Stage 2 and so that all classes have an equally rich experience. The absence of a deputy to manage each key stage is a weakness as is development planning which does not indicate a clear way forward.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The very high results in external national test and examinations.
- The positive attitudes of all pupils to mathematics.
- The sound planning of lessons to sustain pace and rigour.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching strategies used, so as to involve pupils more in the learning process.
- The use of computers in lessons.

107. By the age of 14, results of the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 9 for these pupils were very high when compared to all schools and above average when compared to similar, selective schools. 2002 results are equally high, although national comparisons are not available. Although these results are high they have risen slowly over time.
108. In GCSE examinations for 2001 the results were very high with all but one pupil gaining a grade in the A*-C range. In 2002, all pupils gained a grade in this range with over half of the pupils gaining the highest grades of A* or A. When compared to results in similar, selective schools the results for A* and A grades are better than average and A*-C grades are about average. Mathematics performs well when compared to other subjects in the school.
109. These high standards are confirmed by observations of lessons and analysis of work during the inspection. Pupils' standards when they enter the school are above national averages for their age. Upon entry to the school, pupils are numerate and in the current Year 7 the previous results of all pupils indicate that they are above the expected level for pupils aged 11. Pupils use their number skills with confidence and this is built upon and extended, so that, by the age of 14, they know and understand how to solve linear equations, use Pythagoras' Rule and use the appropriate formulae for solving problems involving areas of a range of plane shapes. As a result, a very high proportion of pupils work at level 7 of the National Curriculum. The inspection took place close to the start of the school year and some of this work was not evident in lessons, but in other work seen. The rise in levels of attainment represents good progress and achievement from Years 7 to 9.
110. These very good results are built upon as pupils follow the GCSE mathematics course in Years 10 and 11. A majority of pupils follow the course at higher level, with only a few studying at intermediate level. In the past, one group has taken GCSE early. This practice has now changed and the most capable pupils now take GCSE examinations and the first module of the A2 level course at the end of Year 11. This is to enable even more pupils to gain the highest grade of A*. The highest attainers in Year 11 have already completed their GCSE course and are following the first A2 level module. They use their prior knowledge of algebra confidently to solve more involved equations and extend this to calculus. Others solve equations involving powers and roots, using fractional and negative indices. Less capable pupils, who follow the intermediate level course, are expected to achieve the highest grade available and can identify a range of graphs and successfully match these with their corresponding equations. When prior attainment is considered, these achievements still represent good progress. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make equally good progress, as they are not at an early stage of language acquisition; those with special educational needs also progress well.
111. Teaching is good and it is this good teaching that enables pupils to learn well and that produces these very good results. All lessons seen were judged good, but no lessons seen were very good or excellent. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and they use it to prepare lessons well. The main teaching style is exposition followed by practice with a range of well-chosen examples for pupils to use. Although this is effective, it does not fully involve pupils in their learning. This sort of involvement was seen in one particularly effective lesson and is a practice that could profitably be shared amongst the other teachers in the department. Teachers use well-structured, open style questions to encourage thought and at the end of one

Year 7 lesson, the homework set was more to encourage mathematical thinking and reasoning than reinforcement of skills. This is a good technique for developing the individual learning and discovery skills that are necessary when working investigations. In general, homework is used to reinforce or extend work covered in class; it is marked and returned promptly. Lessons start well. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented across Years 7 to 9, and teachers use the three-part lesson structure most of the time. Starters to lessons are effective and either practise mental arithmetic skills or review previous work. Plenary sessions are usually brief, but, in one instance, the plenary was very good as it included a short but thought provoking question and pupils were reluctant to leave until they had solved the problem. Work is marked conscientiously and marking is encouraging, but little advice is given on how to improve further or how to extend learning. Some good whole class feedback takes place if a teacher has found a common error whilst marking a particular piece of work; when this occurs, pupils correct or annotate their work effectively to ensure that errors are not repeated.

112. Pupils' response to this good teaching is positive. They arrive promptly, settle quickly and work hard throughout the lesson; the work in their exercise books is neat and well presented. They are polite, answer questions when asked and question their teachers to confirm their own understanding. They are mutually supportive in their work and discuss their answers with each other should the need arise. When they occasionally work on the board in front of the class they do so willingly, speak fluently and present reasons for their answers, explaining their reasoning clearly. Other pupils are attentive and make good comments in support of their peers. Pupils mark some of their own work either from the answers in the book or by the teacher reading them out and on these occasions there was no copying of answers or altering of answers seen. This atmosphere of openness and honesty reflects the positive atmosphere generated by the school.
113. The management of the department is satisfactory; it runs well on a day-to-day basis. The development plan was written to support the application for specialist school status and concentrates appropriately on strategies to improve attainment. It does not contain estimates of cost and, as such, cannot support departmental bids for funding. Comprehensive schemes of work, with good indications of the time allocated to each topic, sustain the pace of learning. The curriculum fulfils statutory requirements, being broad, balanced and inclusive. Pupils who have special educational needs are noted on lesson plans, but there are no mathematical components in their individual educational plans. All Attainment Targets are covered but more could be done to extend pupils by developing work from Attainment Target 1, Using and Applying Mathematics. Monitoring of teaching and learning is inconsistent and informal. A marking policy exists, but this is not applied consistently throughout the department. Assessment is not used to provide a pathway to improvement; it is mainly used to set pupils by ability at the end of Year 7 and to consider changes to the setting structure at other intervals. Examination results are tabulated, but formal analysis is not carried out and there is no subsequent departmental discussion of results to discern if changes to teaching need to be made for further improvement. The accommodation is satisfactory and, in some classrooms, attractive display of pupils' work enhances the atmosphere. Commercial posters supplement these displays and a range of mathematical vocabulary is on view in some rooms, but some are rather bare. Resources are satisfactory at present, but will need to expand to accommodate any changes to teaching styles. There are no computer facilities for use in individual classrooms and this limits the teaching strategies that can be used. A wide range of books has been provided in the library. Many are current and contain material that would broaden pupils' awareness of mathematics, but pupils rarely take them out to supplement their study of mathematics.
114. This is a mutually supportive department with much strength and the capacity to improve further. Examination results have improved since the last inspection and the scheme of work has expanded to include new initiatives.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average in lessons, national tests and GCSE examinations.
- Pupils' very good behaviour and attitudes enhance their learning significantly.
- The high quality of teaching, particularly teachers' subject knowledge and the very good support given to pupils helps secure these high standards.
- Very good technician support improves lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The attitudes of pupils studying their dual award at GCSE.
- Questioning techniques to encourage pupils to design and formulate hypotheses.
- Curriculum planning to support individual learning needs, the development of SMSC and the teaching of basic skills.
- The use made of assessment to plan and set targets.
- A detailed departmental development plan to secure progress.

115. By the age of 14, results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were very high and have been so over the last four years, compared with all schools nationally and in line with similar, selective schools. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels is above average when compared with selective schools nationally. In 2002, the levels attained were again very high and have improved year-on-year since 1997. Results in the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are very high for all of the sciences when compared with other schools, nationally. Results in the separate sciences in 2001 were well above average when compared with similar, selective schools and average for the dual science award. Significant to the results in all of the science examinations is the high number of pupils who gained the top three grades. At the end of Year 11, results in science are better than results in English and mathematics.
116. Pupils enter Year 7 with standards in science that are well above average for their age. By the age of 14, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and with English as an additional language, attain well above average standards, achieve very well and make very good progress. Standards are very high for the most capable and above average for other pupils. All pupils are on course to attain high results in national tests. Most pupils use numeracy and literacy skills to good effect and bring very good prior knowledge and understanding to new situations. They are confident learners and develop their ideas and understanding at a good pace. The more capable pupils ask searching questions, as in a Year 9 lesson, where pupils were confident in their understanding of what happens during a chemical reaction and developed their knowledge and understanding of chemical formulae and equations by learning chemical symbols and the valencies of elements well and combining elements accurately to form compounds. The most capable pupils are very quick to balance equations mathematically and extend this ability to balancing equations involving more complex compound structures. Others balance simple equations mathematically, whilst less capable pupils grasp the need to balance equations, but are less confident, applying the mathematics.
117. Standards are similarly high across Years 10 and 11; pupils achieve very well. By the age of 16 they have become very confident and competent learners and most make very good progress towards achieving high GCSE results. This is particularly true of pupils studying for the triple award in biology, chemistry and physics. Very good levels of literacy and numeracy are displayed and are significant to the pace of learning. Pupils bring good prior knowledge to new situations, predict the outcomes of experiments and form useful hypotheses. In most cases their level of practical skills is very good. They work safely, understanding the need to develop a good code of practice for working in a laboratory as seen in a Year 10 practical lesson, where pupils sought to determine the combining ratio of oxygen to magnesium in producing magnesium oxide. They addressed all of the safety precautions highlighted in a risk assessment and were very skilful in handling very hot equipment and in taking care not to lose any of the magnesium oxide as it formed in the reaction. Every boy understood the process and used a

balance to measure very small differences. In all lessons seen, pupils with special educational needs achieved well, whilst those with English as an additional language did very well.

118. The attitudes of pupils to their work are consistently very good at both key stages and very significant to the standards they achieve. They are well behaved and generally very well focused in lessons. They complete their homework and seek help from teachers to support their learning and to extend their understanding. They support each other well and take great care of laboratories and equipment. They are ambitious and hard working and take a pride in their work. They like their teachers, share very good relationships with them, enjoy their science lessons and are confident that they can achieve their ambitions at the school.
119. Teaching and learning in both key stages are very good. In just over a quarter of lessons observed it was excellent. Lessons are always very well planned, start promptly and proceed at a good pace. They are relevant to everyday situations. Learning objectives are clearly understood by pupils and are most often achieved. All teachers are very well qualified and enjoy teaching their subjects; they work well in teams and share their knowledge and experience of effective practice effectively. They know pupils well, have high expectations of them and support them well. As a result, pupils learn very well and acquire knowledge and skills quickly. In the best lessons, teachers are skilled at challenging pupils with perceptive questions that enhance the learning of all abilities, including the most capable. In Years 7 to 9, the National Strategy for teaching science is being developed with some success. The curriculum is clearly defined and opportunities to learn and develop skills are identified. Teaching strategies are highly successful in testing pupils' knowledge and understanding and in securing very good progress in their learning. This was evident in all lessons seen in Years 7 to 9 where the strategy was used. In a Year 9 lesson on pressure, excellent teaching resulted in excellent progress for all pupils. Similarly, in a very successful biology lesson in Year 10, set in a pathology laboratory, pupils tested samples of synthetic urine. They first played the role of scientist and then that of the specialist making diagnoses from the evidence. The teacher insisted on accurate scientific and medical language being used throughout and the excellent teaching enabled a very capable and competent group of pupils to achieve very high standards. Homework is set and marked by teachers regularly and pupils value it. They find the corrections and comments very useful for understanding how well they are doing, but are not, as yet, given short-term targets.
120. Leadership and management are good. A good handbook sets out clear policies and expectations with a sound structure and clear lines of communication within the department. Communication with senior managers is less clearly defined. The head of department co-ordinates the work of heads of subject and of the recently appointed Key Stage 3 co-ordinators. These people are able managers and work together as a team to promote high standards. The curriculum is very well organised and delivered via well-planned and resourced units of study. The teaching of both triple science and dual award science in Years 10 to 11 meets the needs and supports the ambitions of the pupils. Teachers stretch more capable pupils and support weaker pupils by giving them more time as they prepare for their external examinations. Targets set for the department are met. Teachers use ICT in their lessons effectively, but only in demonstrations, because there are too few computers in the department to support active learning. Pupils are encouraged to use school computers and are given advice on which sites to visit on the Internet. Three biology laboratories are old and their layout does not allow for the wide variety of teaching strategies so necessary for pupils to access the modern curriculum in science. Monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but the policy requirements in terms of the number of times teachers should be observed and the work of their classes monitored are not met. As a result, inconsistencies in teaching practice occur across the department. Very good data are kept on pupils' attainments at the end of each key stage. This is a recently completed exercise and little use has been made of it to assist in planning and in setting targets for pupils or to test the effectiveness of social inclusion strategies. Although a department development plan has been produced, it is not being used as an instrument of change.
121. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained and pupils' achievements have improved. Teachers employ the knowledge and abilities of pupils in lessons to good effect and pupils are now active learners. Time allocated to each stage of the curriculum is adequate. The department is well integrated, with teachers sharing a commitment to succeed. Assessment of pupils' progress has improved, but the use of assessment to inform

future planning and to meet the learning needs of all pupils has not significantly developed. Not enough has been done to design a multicultural curriculum that addresses pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes to the subject and their behaviour are very good.
- Teaching is good, particularly in relation to teachers' knowledge, expectations and management of pupils and, as a result, pupils make good progress.
- The leadership of the subject ensures clear educational direction in line with the school's aims and values.

Areas for improvement

- The formal planning of developments identified for improving the subject and monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance.
- Assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 and its use to inform future lesson planning and teaching.
- The cramped working conditions for pupils in Years 7 and 8 and inadequate storage facilities.

122. Attainment by the end of Years 9 and 11 is broadly in line with national averages. In Years 10 and 11 the numbers taking GCSE art have been too small to enable statistically reliable comparisons to be made with national data. However, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades for the past three years has been slightly above the national average for that year. There are also no nationally validated comparisons of individual candidates' attainments in art with their other subjects, but the school estimates that candidates attain around one grade less in art than their average grades. In the provisional teacher assessments for 2002, all pupils attained at least the standard expected of pupils of that age and some attained above it.

123. Observation of current Year 9 work confirms the range and spread of levels in the 2002 teacher assessments. The art work of many pupils at the start of Year 7 is below the standard expected nationally for the end of Key Stage 2, but they make good progress in Years 7 to 9, and reach the expected range of levels by the age of 14. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve well. By the end of Year 9, many pupils have improved their drawing and painting skills to the point where they create effective images of still life portraits and arrangements. They extend this into more abstract work, using screen-printing, showing a fairly expressive use of colour and shape and a satisfactory understanding of the symbolic purpose of art. They successfully use the library and ICT to research images and artistic styles on the Internet and scan and print out their finished work. Year 9 pupils have above-average knowledge of the key aspects of a wide range of artistic styles, mainly of the 20th century. They use an appropriate level of artistic vocabulary when explaining their work or when evaluating the work of other artists. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate their continuing good progress in critical study work that is well researched, carefully presented and articulately explained. They, too, achieve well. Their drawings and paintings show developing control of an appropriate range of techniques. For example, in depicting light, shade and depth, two-dimensionally or in the subtle blending of pastels and chalks and the use of colour to evoke atmosphere is well developed. Some Year 10 work, on the theme of 'self-image', was particularly successful in exploring their creators' inner world of the imagination through abstract images in pastels; this work showed a higher level of originality than much of the other work seen.

124. The quality of teaching is good, overall, and pupils respond well, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are expert in extending pupils' understanding through their challenging questions and well-focused injections of fresh knowledge with the whole class. Objectives for each lesson are well explained and high expectations are communicated. Individual discussions and demonstrations are helpful and timely, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Good attention is paid to extending pupils' literacy and ICT skills. Pupils

respond with very good behaviour, respecting each other's work, asking pertinent questions of their own and often working with great concentration. This is especially commendable considering the cramped conditions when whole classes are taught in Years 7 and 8. There are some missed opportunities to extend pupils' learning further by sharing learning points and pupils' work with the class as a whole and teachers do not always consolidate what their pupils have learnt by reflecting with them on this at the ends of lessons. Thorough and helpful marking and assessment of work in Years 10 and 11, leads to well-targeted, individual support during lessons, but marking in Years 7 to 9 is usually too brief to enable this to take place.

125. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new head of department's long experience and senior position in the school in other capacities have enabled him to establish himself quickly in his new role. He has rightly identified that too little attention has been paid in the past to developing pupils' imagination and originality in art and has started revising the scheme of work, partly to address this. Although it is still only in outline form, it is clear that National Curriculum requirements are being met. He has also secured agreement for the creation of a sixth form art studio later this year that would help alleviate pressure on space in the current accommodation as well as improve the motivation of pupils in Years 10 and 11 to continue their art studies in the sixth form. However, it is not clear how these and the other potential developments that have been identified will be carried out, because they have not yet been formally planned. Also, not enough formal monitoring of results and teaching takes place in the subject to support further raising of attainment. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There have been many staffing changes since then, including this most recent change in leadership and management. Standards on entry are now much higher, with a completely different picture of achievement and progress. The lack of curriculum time in Year 8 has been remedied through the introduction of a five period day, ensuring an hour per week of art throughout Years 7 to 9.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The school is committed to its delivery.
- An audit has been carried out to make explicit the contribution of citizenship to subjects and to other areas of the life of the school.

Areas for improvement

- There is a reliance on incidental contributions from subjects which means that provision is inconsistent and does not meet National Curriculum requirements.
- Schemes of work are not yet in place.
- There are no plans for how the subject will be monitored, coordinated or assessed when delivered across the curriculum.
- No clearly designated subject coordinator has been identified.

126. The school is at a very early stage of teaching citizenship. It has carried out an audit of subjects where a contribution could be made to the delivery of citizenship within its existing curriculum programme and has identified several areas where this is already happening. The PSE programme, for example, plans to deliver topics such as the electoral system and the key characteristics of government in Britain in Year 8. In Years 10 and 11, those pupils who opt for GCSE religious education also study citizenship as a discrete subject area. The existing provisions for the School Council allow pupil participation in the decision making process.
127. As a result of this approach, during the week of inspection there was not enough evidence to judge standards of attainment or teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. The quality of teaching and learning in the very small sample of lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 was very good. Teachers provide good opportunities for discussion to which pupils respond very well. Evidence of this was seen in a Year 10 lesson on the judicial system and in a Year 11 religious education lesson on human rights. Lessons were well planned and prepared and teachers have very good

subject knowledge. The School Council meeting of Year 9 pupils with the headteacher contributed effectively to developing pupils' skills of negotiation and participation.

128. Management of this area is unsatisfactory. The school is committed to the delivery of citizenship. Senior management have had a clear involvement in the initial planning. However, responsibility for the co-ordination, monitoring of teaching and learning and assessment of citizenship has not been specifically identified. Teaching arrangements for some parts of the citizenship curriculum are not clear. Although the audit identified subject areas that make incidental contributions, these have not been clearly identified within subject schemes of work, nor have specific learning objectives been targeted. Planned provision is patchy, since it relies heavily on this incidental contribution, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and does not meet National Curriculum requirements.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Good teacher / pupil relationships and supportive teaching.
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge and their good question and answer techniques.
- Pupils' good recall of factual knowledge.

Areas for improvement

- Curriculum provision to meet statutory requirements.
- The development of strategies to raise standards, such as the implementation of an assessment programme and its monitoring across all areas.
- A three-year development plan linking with the whole school development plan and clearly identifying departmental priorities.

129. Standards in Year 9 in 2001 were in line with national averages. The improvement over the past three years was below the national trend. Standards at GCSE were also in line with the national average for all grades and below average for similar, selective schools. The proportion of A*-C grades in 2001 compared with the national average was well below national averages although results were better in 2002, when comparing them with unconfirmed data.
130. By the end of Year 9, standards of attainment from work seen and lessons observed are in line with national averages, but below average for similar, selective schools. Although most pupils achieve appropriately, a number of pupils in Years 7- 9 are not making any significant progress and are not achieving as well as they should. One of the reasons for this is that, in some areas, they are not sufficiently challenged. The most capable pupils have a sound knowledge of basic skills but are not given the freedom to develop their own ideas and to become less reliant on teacher reassurance, especially in Year 9. In Years 7 and 8, pupils use small tools and machinery safely, but, too frequently, the practical work involves them producing identical products and there is little scope for them to advance their design skills and technological capability.
131. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils attain standards that are in line with national averages, whilst Year 10 pupils attain slightly below the national average. All pupils achieve appropriately and make satisfactory progress. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and of those with English as an additional language is satisfactory at both key stages. They cope well along side others, considering there is little support. A few of these pupils are making good progress in the practical aspects of the subject.
132. The quality of the teaching ranges from satisfactory to good, but is satisfactory, overall, and results in satisfactory learning. Pupils are articulate and keen to learn. Good lessons are well planned and organised, with clear learning objectives, and the oral responses given by all pupils to questions posed by the teacher indicate clearly that factual recall is a real strength. Resources used are well chosen to suit the tasks set and the majority of pupils handle small tools and machinery competently. Teachers ensure that pupils have equal access to equipment,

as in a Year 9 orthographical design lesson, using design view software, where pupils used computers and worked at their own pace following the worksheets given. All pupils completed the work, demonstrating good design and ICT skills. The teaching in these lessons motivated and enthused the pupils with a positive impact on their learning. There was good recap of previous work supported by effective question and answer techniques that aided the reinforcement of their knowledge. The satisfactory lessons highlighted some weaknesses in the planning. Pupils were not sufficiently challenged and, consequently, worked at a slower pace with less progression. At Key Stage 4, the department has reverted to more didactic teaching in an attempt to enhance the knowledge and grades at GCSE. Recent improvements in grades could be an endorsement of this. Homework is regularly set and pupils are often required to carry out "in depth" research to extend their knowledge of the topic of work being studied. Some pupils in Year 8 have produced quite comprehensive studies of steel, linked to their practical work of a multi-purpose tool.

133. The lack of departmental assessment records hinders teachers' planning, because assessment information is not used to influence the next stages of pupils' learning. Only basic teacher assessment is carried out. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have little understanding of how well they are doing in technology. All work is marked, but pupils are not given enough detail about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The school has disappplied design and technology for the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 and numbers opting for GCSE are low. This has had a knock on effect on numbers in the sixth form and has resulted in the suspension of A- level design and technology. The school does not fulfil statutory requirements for technology. Currently, pupils have only access to resistant materials and graphics. Pupils do not have equal opportunities to study food technology (compliant materials), textiles and CAD CAM. Facilities are inadequate for control technology, computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD CAM), with a negative impact on pupils' work, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where pupils are required to apply a range of ICT skills to their GCSE coursework.
134. Leadership and management are satisfactory, overall. Although the head of department is committed to improving the standards in the department, progress is slow. Departmental relationships are good; both teachers are very supportive of each other and their subject knowledge is secure. To enable the department to make any significant improvement, a three-year development plan is required which links to the whole school plan. A more effective assessment programme is needed to assist in the overall planning and target setting.
135. Since the last inspection, improvement has been unsatisfactory. In most areas, the picture is static, rather than positively moving forward, building on past experience and achievement. Attainment at the last inspection was well above national expectations across all key stages and the quality of teaching was good, which is in stark contrast to the current situation. Although new schemes of work have been introduced, they require more flair and vigour to ensure that pupils become fully involved in their learning. There are too few opportunities provided for collaborative work and large-scale work. The approach in Years 7 and 8 is too directional and has insufficient relevance to pupils' experiences outside school. The department recognises the importance of provision for the gifted and talented, but there is little evidence of any differentiated work for either these or pupils with special educational needs. There is still no technician support and support for pupils with special educational needs in only one lesson. In the main, accommodation is adequate for what is currently being delivered, but there is no room for expansion. The addition of Cad Cam and a milling machine would enhance the delivery of the subject greatly, especially in Years 10 and 11.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The good and improving standards reached by the end of Year 9, the very good standard of attainment at GCSE level and the very good GCSE coursework.
- The enthusiasm and very positive attitudes of pupils.
- The very good contribution made by the subject to pupils' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of the quality of planning and teaching and improved use of assessment to develop pupils' self- evaluation and target setting.
- Production of a departmental plan which reflects the school improvement plan and identifies spending priorities, such as subject-specific software in order to meet the ICT entitlement.
- Consistent use of Individual Education Plans in lesson planning and teaching.

136. Standards reached by pupils by the age of 14 at the end of Year 9 were above average in 2001, as reported in the statutory teacher assessments. Over half the pupils attained the higher levels 7 and 8. The provisional teacher assessments for 2002 indicate that standards were not quite as high, with less than half the numbers of boys attaining the higher levels. GCSE results were well above national averages for all schools and in line with those for similar, selective schools. Ninety per cent of grades were at A*-B, reflecting the very high standard of coursework. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 to 11. No significant difference is evident in the standards attained by specific minority groups; pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language.

137. Pupils are of above average ability on entry to the school and make good progress between the ages of 11 and 14. All acquire a broad geographical vocabulary and use technical terms accurately. Basic map work skills are well understood in Year 7. Pupils describe geographical features in detail and explain the underlying processes. In Year 8, they describe the main features of a composite volcano and the sequence of processes following a volcanic eruption. In written work, they balance the impact of physical and economic factors on the environment, as in the lessons learnt from the Kobe earthquake and techniques for preventing landslides.

138. Pupils accelerate their achievement and make very good progress between the ages of 14 and 16. Their very positive attitudes to learning help them to achieve very well. They understand the impact of economic changes on the physical landscape and on the social and cultural life of an area. Year 11 pupils explain the changing location of the iron and steel industry in South Wales and the consequences for local communities. In the introduction to a new unit on agriculture, pupils show good understanding of cross-theme approaches in geography, as well as trends towards globalisation. Their GCSE coursework in Tunbridge Wells shows that they can set an objective, conduct their own surveys and evaluate their methodology effectively. Pupils with special educational needs made good progress in a Year 9 lesson where the teacher used the strategies in their individual education plans to keep them interested and focused. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher wore a radio microphone to ensure that a deaf pupil made good progress. However, individual education plans are not yet used consistently to guide curriculum planning and not all pupils make the progress, of which they are capable. Gifted and talented pupils, as identified by the department, make satisfactory progress, but would benefit from more regular enrichment work beyond the challenge of discussion activities.

139. Geography makes a good contribution to the teaching of numeracy. Statistical data from a variety of sources are interpreted accurately and presented through a range of charts, graphs and statistical tests. All GCSE coursework is word-processed. The skills of literacy are also good. Pupils write accurately in data response situations and careful attention is paid to spelling and grammar. The most capable pupils support an argument with carefully selected evidence in their extended writing. Pupils participate with enthusiasm in questioning and discussion activities. The ICT entitlement is broadly met through examination coursework, but there is little evidence of subject-specific software being used in each year group.

140. Teaching is good, overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and planning is very good, both in content and in the use of a wide range of interesting resources. Explanations of new concepts are very clear and concise, so pupils make rapid gains in knowledge and understanding. Teachers' enthusiasm for geography is shared with pupils, who are highly motivated and sustain concentration well. Homework is regularly set and marked, although the positive comments do not always tell pupils clearly how to make improvements, set targets and evaluate their work. The department contributes very well to pupils' cultural development through a wide range of global and contrasting case studies, which encourage them to develop a sense of place through the eyes of local people. There are good fieldwork opportunities in the local area, such as on Crowborough Common, to develop the skills of geographical enquiry and evidence of individual research, sometimes in the library and use of the Internet. In good lessons, expectations are high and lesson objectives are clearly stated from the outset, with a brisk pace throughout and a range of challenging activities. Year 8 pupils responded very well to the opportunity to construct a 3-D volcano, for example. Pupils, also, participate with enthusiasm in pair or group work, where they both challenge and support each other, as seen in a Year 9 lesson on factors affecting changes in birth and death rates. In lessons lacking momentum, planning was not detailed enough and the time allocated did not allow activities to be completed, with the result that pupils became restless.
141. Management is good; the department is well and conscientiously led. Comprehensive schemes of work have been written since the last inspection and include useful information on websites and references to ICT, literacy and numeracy. There has been progress in monitoring teaching, although it has not led directly to agreed strategies for improving pupils' learning. Teachers are not familiar enough with National Curriculum levels to ensure that they are assessing accurately; departmental planning lacks rigour and reflects neither the overall aims of the school improvement plan nor links the professional development of staff to agreed targets.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and teachers have particularly good subject knowledge, which enables pupils to acquire knowledge and skills well and attain high standards.
- Pupils have good opportunities to learn through discussion.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work are imprecise and do not offer guidance to teachers or promote continuity.
- There are too few visits to places of historical interest to promote pupils' cultural development.
- Assessment procedures are not used to keep pupils informed of their own progress.

142. Pupils' attainment by the age of 14 at the end of Year 9 in 2001, based on assessments carried out by teachers, was very high in comparison with the national average. All pupils attained above the national average and well over half attained one of the two higher National Curriculum levels. In the provisional teacher assessments for 2002, all pupils attained at least the standard expected of pupils of that age and nearly all attained above it. A substantial majority attained the higher curriculum levels.
143. The percentage of pupils who attained grades A*-C in their GCSE examinations in 2001 was well above both the national average and the average for similar selective schools. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection, which judged attainment to match similar schools. All pupils attained at least a grade C. The percentage attaining grades A* and A was well above the national average and in line with that in similar selective schools. The provisional results for 2002 show that the percentage attaining A*-C was well above the national average for 2001, the latest year for which comparative results are available and close to that for selective schools. Although the percentage attaining A* and A decreased, it remained above the national average for 2001. Over the last three years, the percentage attaining both A - C and A* and A has remained steady, overall.

144. Attainment on entry to the school is above the national expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with attainment in English, a subject using literacy skills very similar to those used in history, which is above the national average and with very varied experience of the study of history. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well by Year 9. A full range of evidence seen during the course of the inspection indicates that the attainment of pupils who are still several months away from the end of Year 9 is currently well above the national average. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection when attainment was reported to be above the national average. Pupils develop a wide historical vocabulary, enabling them to express their ideas, both orally and in writing, with clarity and precision. They make particularly good progress in acquiring and interpreting a wide range of historical knowledge and understanding and in developing a variety of historical skills, including the use of demanding source material. They learn to use their knowledge and understanding to analyse and explain the causes and consequences of historical situations and also make good progress developing the skills of recording and note making upon which future progress in the subject will depend. Year 9 pupils, for example, use their skills in numeracy very well to draw charts and graphs to record statistical information relating to the Industrial Revolution.
145. In Years 10 and 11, the attainment of pupils, including those who are still several months away from their examinations, is also well above the national average. Pupils start the Year 10 course with attainment that is well above the national average. They achieve well to attain GCSE results that are similarly high. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils make particularly good progress in their recall, understanding and interpretation of a considerable volume of historical knowledge and in using a full range of historical detail to illustrate and justify their opinions. They develop their examination skills, such as note-making, effectively and organise these to form a useful basis for revision. They learn to plan and structure their written work carefully in order to meet the requirements of examination questions.
146. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, when some teaching was unsatisfactory, and is now good, resulting in good learning. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory; a significant majority were good, with some very good lessons. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and experience and use them to give clear, well-illustrated explanations. They use questioning very well, both to assess pupils' understanding, to probe their thinking and to challenge them to formulate and clarify their ideas. The use of discussion is a strength of the department and pupils respond very positively by putting thought into their contributions and by listening and responding to the ideas of others. This has also improved since the previous inspection when it was reported that pupils' contributions were sometimes insufficiently valued. In successful lessons, teachers plan a range of learning activities to meet the identified needs of pupils and pupils respond particularly well by working hard and by making good progress. Year 8 pupils, for example, made good progress in their understanding of the order of events of Henry VIII's break from Rome, by tracing these on a spreadsheet and cross-referencing them with the events leading to the king's divorce and remarriage. Good use is made in examination classes of timed questions and pupils receive both the necessary examination practice and instant feedback on their answers, thus enabling them to make good progress in their examination skills. In less successful lessons, learning objectives are imprecise, the lesson lacks clear focus and pupils do not know what is expected of them. Although pupils progress in lessons that are heavily teacher dominated, this progress is not maximised because some pupils lose concentration and motivation. No evidence was seen of different tasks being set to meet the needs of pupils at different levels of attainment, although teachers know which pupils need additional support and offer it skilfully. Marking is regular and generally supportive, but seldom includes advice as to what pupils need to do to improve. Pupils are generally hard working and interested in their progress, but they do not have enough information about their current performance or targets so that they can take active responsibility for their progress. Year 9 pupils do not know their current National Curriculum level, what level they should be aiming for or what they should do to improve.
147. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Although leadership is good, with clear emphasis on high attainment and intellectual rigour, management is less secure. The head of the department analyses examination performance and identifies areas where pupils require additional support. Pupils with areas of weakness or those who might be underachieving are offered individual

support on an informal basis. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are satisfactory and are carried out consistently. These procedures, however, offer limited guidance to pupils, because pupils do not contribute to them themselves and assessment is seldom related to National Curriculum levels. Schemes of work are imprecise and offer little guidance to teachers, particularly those with less experience or new to the school. This results in some lack of continuity between Year 8 and Year 9, with some pupils covering some of the work twice. The schemes do not identify opportunities for the promotion of the skills of numeracy, literacy, citizenship or ICT and when these skills are promoted it happens informally and is not common to all teachers in the department. Although the head of department monitors the teaching, both in the classroom and through pupils' work, the lack of regular analysis and debate amongst departmental members means that good practice is not shared. Few opportunities for pupils' spiritual development were seen and such opportunities are not identified in schemes of work or in teachers' planning. Too little use is made of trips to places of historical interest to enhance pupils' learning opportunities and cultural development. A satisfactory selection of books has been included in the library with a good range of books in the department for pupils, especially the older ones, to borrow on an informal basis.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good and the marking of GCSE coursework ensures that pupils know how well they are doing and what needs to be done to improve standards.
- GCSE results are well above national averages and above average for similar, selective schools.
- In almost all lessons, pupils behave very well and are keen to learn.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment of pupils' work in Years 7 to 9.
- The use of ICT by certain other subjects.

148. The results of the teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 are high, with almost all pupils attaining beyond the expected level by the age of 14. In 2001, the GCSE results for ICT were well above the national average for all schools and above average for similar, selective schools. The 2002 results were similar for the proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C, but the proportion gaining the A* grade was significantly lower.

149. Work seen during the inspection confirms these high results. Pupils' good behaviour and attitudes enhance their achievement. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above national expectations. Average and more capable pupils integrate different computer applications and combine graphics and text to create promotional leaflets, targeted at a particular audience. Less capable pupils have a satisfactory grasp of the software, but do not use their initiative enough to make the best use of programs for particular purposes. Pupils' achievement during Years 7 to 9 is good, including those with special educational needs. The standards of current Year 11 pupils are well above national averages. Pupils' coursework is very well structured and thorough as they apply the use of particular pieces of software to solve practical problems linked to applications in organisations and businesses. They produce clear flowcharts for the systems they design, following systematic analyses of the problems being addressed. Pupils' ICT skills are developing well as, for example, they apply the ideas of validation and verification to database projects. During the GCSE course, pupils achieve well, including those pupils with special educational needs. In a lesson where pupils' achievement was unsatisfactory, only a minority completed the task; most pupils completed work from the previous lesson.

150. Teaching and learning are good. Classes are well managed and teaching secures a very good response from pupils who are keen to learn and to apply their knowledge and skills. Almost all teachers have very good levels of ICT expertise and teaching about key ideas is clear and well exemplified. Teachers give pupils lucid, step-by-step introductions to software and they make rapid progress in using it during lessons. Teachers ensure that all pupils are fully involved in lessons and monitor the learning of individual pupils very effectively. This both identifies errors

and provides individuals with advice about how to improve their work. Relevant homework is set and assessment is used effectively to identify aspects of the work that require additional whole-class teaching. In the best lessons, tasks challenge and motivate pupils to apply their ICT skills effectively and plenary sessions are used effectively to draw together any key principles from the learning during the lesson. Learning objectives, however, are sometimes too general to support activities such as the end-of-lesson reviews of pupils' learning. In a few lessons, teachers do not secure the attention of all pupils during whole-class teaching or the concluding plenary session, so not all pupils learn effectively.

151. Since last year, the curriculum has improved and each class in Years 7 to 9 now has an ICT lesson each fortnight. The planning on which lessons in Years 7 to 11 are based is satisfactory, although it does not show what pupils of differing levels of capability should achieve. The department's literacy policy has been satisfactorily implemented, although the development of a policy for numeracy is less advanced. Gifted and talented pupils are not formally identified, but some more capable pupils are achieving very high standards.
152. The use of ICT by other subjects is unsatisfactory. Although some subjects such as French and German use ICT effectively in their teaching with presentation software and ensure that pupils develop their ICT skills, some subjects do not use ICT as required by the National Curriculum. ICT skills learnt by pupils in other subjects are not assessed, which is unsatisfactory. For those pupils not taking a GCSE course in ICT, no planned programme of work is in place to ensure that they cover the ICT required by the National Curriculum. CD-ROMs are not available in the library and, during the inspection, some computers were not working.
153. For pupils' taking GCSE courses, assessment is satisfactory; they are given clear feedback on their progress and strengths and areas for improvement are identified. However, assessment is unsatisfactory for Years 7 to 9. Not enough use is made of assessment to inform future planning and there is no system to track pupils' progress and to identify their next steps of learning. Additionally, no portfolio of pupils' work has been compiled to demonstrate the school's interpretation of National Curriculum standards.
154. The leadership and management of ICT as a subject are satisfactory and the teaching team has a clear commitment to high standards. Lessons have been observed and followed by discussions but a formal system is needed to improve the quality of teaching. An ICT subject development plan is in place and there is an appropriate target setting plan that focuses on raising standards. Although these plans have helped to secure improvements, they lack detail about the steps to be taken to raise standards and could usefully be combined. Two of the specialist teachers have responsibilities for network management, as well as for improving aspects of teaching and learning. It will be important to ensure that these responsibilities do not conflict with each other. National ICT training for teachers is underway, but has not been as effective as the school expected, because of the limited support that teachers have received. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection.
155. There is a lack of clarity about leadership and management in the use of ICT by other subjects; it is unsatisfactory. Provision has not been systematically monitored and no action has been taken to address any weaknesses. Progress since the previous inspection in the use of ICT by other subjects is unsatisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Pupils attain very high standards throughout the school, as a result of very good and often outstanding teaching.
- This high attainment is enhanced by pupils' extremely positive attitudes at all levels.
- The teaching environment makes a very positive contribution to learning.
- The department is beginning to make very effective use of technology.

Areas for improvement

- Schemes of work do not provide a suitable basis for the planning of work and the future development of the department.
- Arrangements for pupils joining the school in Years 7 and 9 do not ensure progression.

156. In the Year 9 teacher assessments for pupils at age 14 in 2001 and 2002, well over half attained above the national requirement and a small proportion were attaining well above it. A very small proportion failed to attain the nationally required standard. The standards attained by pupils in GCSE examinations are consistently very high compared with the average nationally, and above average when compared with that in similar, selective schools. In 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining passes at grades A* to C in French was very high compared with that in schools nationally and above average for selective schools; the proportion attaining the highest grades, A* or A, was above the average for selective schools. In German, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades was well above the national average in 2001, but below the average for selective schools, as was the proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades. The performance of pupils taking French at GCSE was on a par with their performance in other subjects, consequently significantly better than boys' performance in their other subjects nationally. In German, pupils' performance was well below their performance in other subjects, further below than is the national picture. The proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grades in French fell in 2002, but there was a marked rise in the proportion of pupils attaining grades A* to C in German. All groups, including the small number of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve well in modern languages.

157. In work seen during the inspection, similarly high standards are sustained at each level. The ablest pupils in French in Year 7 write extended pieces and, by age 14, all pupils, irrespective of prior attainment, attain standards, which are often above and, in the case of the highest attainers, well above the national expectation. They write at length and with accuracy and manipulate the perfect tense in all its forms with confidence. All pupils have good recall of vocabulary and most speak with good accents. Composition homeworks produced by Year 9 pupils, mostly illustrated and expertly word-processed at home, are of a particularly high quality. Less capable pupils and those whose attainment is average for the school make at least satisfactory progress and some make good progress. The more capable pupils make uniformly good progress. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress up to age 16 and a high proportion make good progress. Higher and average attaining pupils produce extended writing that is accurate, uses a range of tenses and is well presented, often word-processed. Understanding of the language is of a high order and pupils deal with increasingly complex and open-ended tasks in the language. Less capable pupils progress well and produce some extended work with increasing accuracy. The progress of all pupils is greatly enhanced by pupils' very positive attitudes and behaviour.

158. Pupils' standards at age 14 in German are not as high as in French since they have had a year less learning the language. Consequently, even the most capable pupils produce less-extended work. Progress of the ablest pupils and the average attainers is nonetheless good. Less capable pupils do not make satisfactory progress as they approach the end of Year 9 because they begin the course again alongside new 13+ entrants who arrive not having studied German previously. From Year 10 onwards, improvement in the standard of work seen is substantial

The ablest pupils aim for the highest GCSE grades, producing work of a very high standard, and average and less capable pupils produce work which is above average for their age.

159. Teaching is very good, overall. It is never less than good, often very good and occasionally outstanding. It is as a direct result of the quality of teaching, together with pupils' very positive attitudes and behaviour, that pupils' learn very well and attain high standards in most classes. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that enables them to conduct their lessons principally in the target language, most especially in a way that makes it seem quite natural that the language of the lesson should be the target language itself. The very good teaching is marked by excellent relationships between teachers and taught and in the most successful lessons, teachers not only use the target language as a matter of course, but also use skilful and inventive strategies to inject pace, variety and challenge into their lessons. Pupils respond uniformly well to these challenges and their attainment is significantly raised as a result. In a Year 11 French lesson, work based on the teacher's Power Point presentation on Paris was used as a prompt for pupils to solve a number of open-ended problems, using authentic brochures and written information. In another lesson, very effective use was made of individual whiteboards to rehearse the formation of the past tense in French and, in yet another, Year 9 German pupils used computers to research and write an account of a world tour, importing pictures and a range of scripts.
160. The school curriculum provides well for modern languages. All pupils do two languages through Years 8 and 9, with a strong take-up of two languages in Years 10 and 11. However, teaching schemes do not take enough account of the high proportion of pupils who have already learned some French before they come to the school, and provision for less capable pupils in Year 9 is unsatisfactory. A wide range of well-supported visits, homestays and exchanges to both France and Germany, complements the curriculum and the library is used well for research. Language learning makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
161. Leadership and management of modern languages are satisfactory, overall. Since the last inspection, the school has attempted to unify the French and German departments under a head of modern languages, but the two subjects continue to operate as two separate entities. The department has been brought together in a splendid new building and there are the beginnings of collaborative working, but these are not planned or co-ordinated, as yet. A major weakness of the modern languages department is the lack of cohesive policies and shared long-term planning. Schemes of work are not helpful and do not provide a suitable basis for the planning of work and the future development of the department. The department contains an exceptional range of quality and expertise, which if distilled into shared and corporate planning, would be helpful to all, including teachers new to the school. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.
162. Accommodation is excellent and in itself makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning, especially in those teaching rooms where display enhances a sense of standards and quality. The ICT facility has enormous potential and is well used, especially by the German teachers, and should be a priority for development, not only in terms of the acquisition of software but also in the development of effective teaching and learning strategies. Other resources are mainly satisfactory, although some textbooks in the middle school are in a poor state. A limited, but appropriate library book stock is available for pupils of all ages, but there is not enough CD-ROM material to enable them to practice their language skills outside lessons.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and planning resulting in very good examination results.
- Very good working relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves.

Areas for improvement

- Revision of scheme of work to include support for aspects such as more detailed assessment systems and ICT across the curriculum.
- A more substantial development plan linked to the whole school plan and clearly identifying priorities and needs in terms of resources required.

163. The 2001 teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the age of 14 were above average. For the past three years, GCSE results for pupils aged 16 have been well above the national expectations for similar, selective schools, with all pupils gaining the higher grades. All groups, including the small number of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve well. The 2002 results show this trend being maintained, with the nine candidates gaining high grades. One pupil was a prize-winner because his marks came within the top five results in the country, which shows excellent achievement and progress over time. The numbers of pupils taking examination music have increased dramatically in Year 10; this is a good improvement on the previous inspection. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work support these results.

164. By the time pupils reach 14, standards are above average. This represents good achievement since pupils enter Year 7 with varying musical attainment from many different primary schools. Year 9 pupils quickly grasp the idea of variation form. They reinforce their understanding by discussing ways in which themes are transformed by adding notes, altering rhythms and playing in the minor key. Standards of work for pupils aged 16 are well above average with good achievement and progress due to inspirational teaching and high levels of commitment by pupils. In the work observed, all pupils have equal opportunity to access the music curriculum and their learning is enhanced by their very positive attitudes and behaviour. Year 10 pupils talk knowledgeably about mood, instrumentation and harmonic changes in comparing the original and cover versions of the song 'Can't help falling in love'. They recognise changes in musical conventions when listening to taped examples because of their wide bank of knowledge built up over time.

165. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned with aims and objectives clearly set out at the beginning, so that pupils know what they have to do. In the most successful lessons, varied activities and confident teaching ensure that pupils keep on task and remain interested. Because of the teacher's careful explanation of musical objectives, Year 7 pupils explore timbre, texture and dynamics well, and devise graphic scores from which they perform their compositions on keyboards. Average and more capable pupils perform successfully because they concentrate well and plan their rehearsals carefully. Less capable learners need more time to get it right because of inconsistencies in reading their graphic scores and a lack of coordination. Pupils' learning improves, due to emphasis on co-operation, good speaking skills and attentive listening and this is particularly noticeable in the regular pupil appraisal that takes place in all lessons. Listening to taped examples of Year 8 compositions using primary triads, ground bass and matching words to music, the good teaching has a positive effect in helping pupils build up their knowledge of musical conventions. The scheme of work for next term covers world music from India, China and the Caribbean. Although no singing was heard in lessons observed, both senior and junior choirs are popular and rehearse every week. All abilities, including talented pupils, pupils with special needs and those with English as an additional language, are well catered for and achieve well, thus reinforcing the inclusive nature of the work taking place. Effective planning and management of pupils' encourages positive relationships to be developed. Homework is set to reinforce work already done in lessons.

166. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good which is an improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection. This is due to the teacher's very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm leading to sustained learning by all pupils. Inspired teaching of a Year 11 class encouraged pupils to reflect on the themes from Britten's War Requiem. A valuable contribution was made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education in the way they were able to empathise and discuss how the musical motifs were influenced by the realities of the situation in both world wars. There is a rich diet of musical experiences being developed, with pupils improving their knowledge and skills and testing them out by working through past examination papers. Pupils work out their compositions, using a wide selection of instruments and realise them on the computer, using the cubase software. The inclusive nature of the subject was apparent when a pupil with special educational needs attained high standards by composing a piece of music for the death of an unknown soldier. He talked through his ideas and demonstrated their effects on the piano showing that much learning had taken place because of the sensitivity of the teaching. Marking is, however, an area for development and is not always done regularly. Work is assessed and discussed with each pupil and marks are recorded in teachers' mark books, which are available for pupil consultation, but the system is not formal enough to allow pupils to learn from comments made on earlier work.
167. The school is very proud of its musical tradition in taught lessons, in the wide range of concerts taking place and in the extra-curricular music groups that have been developed over the past few years. More than 80 pupils have instrumental and vocal lessons in school; others have lessons privately and at the Kent music centres. This contributes to a very rich musical diet.
168. A recently appointed head of music, whose priority is the continued promotion of high standards and inclusiveness, appropriately leads the department. Very good working relationships have already been established, both in lessons and in the many extra-curricular activities. At this early stage, formal monitoring of teaching has not yet taken place, nor have plans been formulated for performance management. Schemes of work and development plans are under review. Further use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades will help pupils to understand better how their work is progressing in relation to national criteria and help to raise standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9. With the increase in numbers of pupils taking examination music since the last inspection, it is inappropriate for the department to have only one computer. A substantial increase in hardware and software would enable all pupils, including those in Years 7 to 9, to develop and improve their composing and arranging skills. Departmental staffing is adequate, as are teaching resources and books in the library. Although the accommodation is poor, the department is expected to move into the new premises very shortly and the head of department is contributing effectively to plans for the proposed new accommodation.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The systematic development of skills, especially in the highly effective teaching of games, enables pupils to attain high standards.
- The subject makes a powerful contribution to pupils' personal development, especially their moral and social awareness.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes and their enthusiasm enable them to learn well.
- The department's commitment to attaining high standards as well as providing opportunities for large numbers of pupils to participate in competitive activities.

Areas for improvement

- Strengthening of departmental practices and updating of documentation to meet more explicitly the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- More opportunities for pupils to plan and evaluate their own and the work of others.
- Tightening of the organisation and structure of the curriculum, especially in Years 7 – 9, to ensure that pupils' skills are developed more consistently.

169. By the age of 14, pupils reach above average standards, achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment. On entry to the school in Year 7, their skills in physical education are broadly average, although a significant minority attain higher standards than this. Between Years 7 and 9, they make good progress in developing their spatial awareness, co-ordination and performance skills. This good progress results from the structured teaching and the high expectations staff have of them. Only a narrow range of activities was seen during the inspection, mainly basketball, which is played in the single lesson, and rugby, which is played during the double lessons. By the end of Year 9, pupils select and combine skills and techniques in games activities and apply them, most doing so with accuracy and fluency. Most pupils understand the need to warm up before undertaking vigorous activity, although not all can explain clearly its effects on the body. Pupils' performance skills are more developed than their skills of planning and evaluation because some of the work is too directed and controlled by the teacher, thus giving them insufficient scope to discuss and evaluate their own work and that of others. This is an area of weakness in the otherwise good standards of teaching.
170. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is also above average. Throughout the key stage they make satisfactory progress and achieve appropriately in relation to their earlier attainment. Better progress is hindered in their single physical education lesson because of the two-week gap between one lesson and the next. This makes the systematic development of their knowledge, skills and understanding more difficult and consequently less effective. In rugby, however, which is taught for a double lesson each week, pupils make good progress, both in lessons and over a longer period of time. As a result, they attain standards that are much higher than average and achieve well in this area in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. Pupils combine advanced skills, techniques and strategies well and use them effectively in the game. The ball-handling skills of many are impressively high, especially those of the most capable performers. Average and less physically capable pupils attain at least average standards in their practical skills and a significant minority reach even higher standards. Pupils with special educational needs and the small number of pupils who have recently arrived from abroad with no knowledge of rugby participate well, make good progress in both key stages and receive sensitive and effective support from their peers. This was seen to good effect in a Year 10 rugby lesson. Pupils from minority ethnic heritages play a full part in lessons and make the same sort of progress as their peers.
171. Teaching is good, overall, varying from satisfactory to excellent; it is particularly good in Years 10 and 11. In addition to two full-time and one part-time teacher in the department, many other staff contribute very effectively to the teaching of the games programme. Subject knowledge is generally good with examples of high levels of expertise in some team games. This ensures that pupils are provided with a range of activities that systematically and rigorously develop their skills and understanding. Their very positive attitudes, generally mature behaviour and responsiveness and the excellent relationships forged between the pupils themselves and their teachers, ensure that they make good gains in learning by the age of 14 and very good gains by the age of 16. Staff manage pupils well and have high expectations of their response and levels of performance. Lesson time is used effectively; most lessons include a good variety of demanding activities to challenge pupils. Teachers give pupils good praise and encouragement and, for the most part, give pupils pertinent teaching points to help them improve their practical skills. They do not always help them to develop their skills of evaluating their own performance and that of others enough. Provision for pupils who do not take part in lessons, either because of ill health or injury, is unsatisfactory. They are not always involved enough in lessons and too often waste considerable amounts of time, especially in double lessons.
172. Over the past year, the head of department has been absent through ill health. This has affected some aspects of departmental leadership and management, particularly the need to update schemes of work and develop other areas such as the assessment and recording of pupils' performance and the use of ICT to support teaching and learning to meet National Curriculum requirements. In these respects, departmental practice is unsatisfactory. The department also lacks a development plan. There are weaknesses in the overall balance of the curriculum, particularly in Years 7 to 9, with a disproportionately high emphasis on the games element of the programme of study at the expense of other important areas of activity. There are also weaknesses in its organisation in Years 8 to 11. The two-week gap between the single lessons is too great to ensure the effective development of pupils' skills. Nevertheless, in spite

of these weaknesses, the department attains high standards, especially in team games. Pupils participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular, mainly sporting, activities. The school also achieves good levels of success in competitions against other schools and, over the years, a considerable number of boys have played at County and representative levels. The department has maintained high standards since the last inspection and made satisfactory improvement.

173. Some elements of the accommodation available for physical education are unsatisfactory. Although light and airy, the gymnasium is small and restricts the range of activities that can be provided. The fixed and portable gymnastic equipment is old and narrow in range, and some of the gymnastic mats are in poor condition and need to be replaced. The playing fields are extensive and in good condition, but the hard play area is unsatisfactory, having an uneven and loose surface. The outdoor swimming pool is currently out of use.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is always very good and occasionally excellent and, as a result, pupils learn very well, are managed particularly well and results at GCSE are very good.
- Departmental management are very good.
- The curriculum at both key stages is very good.
- Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment of pupils' attitudinal development.

174. Results of the teachers' assessments were well above expectation for 14 year olds for 2001 and 2002 in relation to the Kent local education authority Agreed Syllabus. In the 2001 GCSE examinations, pupils attained standards which were well above the national average for all schools and for similar, selective schools. These high standards were maintained in 2002.

175. In work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 7 to 9 is much higher than expected levels. By the age of 14, all groups, including the small number of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve well and attain standards, which are well above average. There are many very good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. In one lesson, Year 7 pupils built a comprehensive picture of life in the time of Abraham, as a result of the teacher's very good question and answer session, and understood how places of worship have particular significance for different groups of believers. In another, Year 9 pupils understood the importance of moral standpoints through a well-directed discussion on the rights and wrongs of smacking children, which enabled them to begin to examine their own attitudes and feelings perceptively and provided useful links with the Christian view of morality.

176. In lessons and work seen in Years 10 and 11, attainment is higher than national expectations. In Year 10 GCSE classes, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well; their attainment is well above national expectations. They show very good understanding of issues such as salvation and pacifism. Through an excellent teacher-directed discussion and exercise pupils produced profound and well-balanced arguments from the standpoint of a conscientious objector. They showed a deep respect for the views of others which enabled all of them to express their views in an open and honest way. By the end of the key stage, Year 11 pupils develop a very good understanding of Christian teaching on world poverty.

177. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They behave extremely well, are very well motivated and apply themselves diligently to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and pupils is excellent, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupils' behaviour makes an excellent contribution to their achievement and progress.

178. Teaching is always very good with many excellent features and, as a result, learning, for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils of different ethnic background, is also very good. Planning is very good and lesson aims are shared with pupils in all cases. Teachers make very good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles that enable pupils to learn from as well as learn about religion. This assists pupils in maintaining their interest and in developing understanding of religious principles and concepts. Teachers manage pupil behaviour exceptionally well, contributing to an excellent climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on information gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed; these are very effective in contributing to pupil achievement. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work are useful aids in improving speaking and writing skills. Teachers' use of a variety of approaches to biblical material enables them to explore and use reason to support their views and judgements and, as a result, pupils demonstrate very good skills of critical analysis and the ability to present balanced arguments. Assessment of pupils' work is generally good and very helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures provide a very good basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. Assessment informs the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work. The assessment of pupils' attitudinal development is an area for further development.
179. The department is managed very well with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Pupils are provided with a rich diet of religious education in all year groups. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment; planning is very good. The departmental development plan addresses some priorities, but lacks information in terms of time and costs. Display, celebrating pupils' achievement, is of a very high standard. Curriculum resources are generally good, but will require updating as the department grows.
180. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils by providing opportunities for them to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs.
181. Since the last inspection, improvements in teaching styles and the provision of a full curriculum for all pupils have had a good impact on pupil attainment, achievement and progress.

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

In the inspection, thirteen 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	5	100	62	80	15	4.00	1.51
Sciences	4	100	88	75	33	4.25	2.27
Computer studies	3	100	73	100	13	5.00	1.75

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	37	92	87	40	42	7.17	5.80
Biology	13	93	88	69	34	6.58	5.25
Chemistry	10	100	90	50	43	7.19	5.90
Physics	23	100	88	82	41	7.37	5.67
Business studies	24	100	93	59	33	5.70	5.50
Economics	11	100	89	63	38	7.58	5.52
Computing	33	94	86	33	23	5.58	4.62
Geography	40	97	93	31	38	6.27	5.74
History	26	100	89	50	36	7.19	5.45
Religious studies	7	100	93	100	38	6.20	5.84
English	18	94	92	84	30	7.96	5.91
French	9	100	89	89	39	8.22	5.59

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics and all three sciences were the focus of the inspection. Electronics at AS level was also sampled and one lesson was observed. Electronics is a popular option for pupils in the school and numbers are increasing. Examination results are above average. In the lesson observed, teaching, learning and attainment were good and the students' attitudes to their learning were significant contributors to the good progress they were making.

Mathematics

The overall provision for mathematics is **very good**.

Strengths

- The good results achieved in A-level examinations.
- The very good relationships between teachers and their students.
- The large proportion of boys following A-level courses.

What could be improved

- The use of computers in lessons to further enhance learning.

182. A wide range of sixth form courses is available for students to study including pure maths, mechanics, statistics, decision mathematics, and for the most able students, further mathematics. Mathematics is a very popular subject with relatively large numbers of students choosing it. Some students study mathematics only to AS level because they are using the subject to support other courses of study. The mathematics department does very well for the students who follow the courses offered. The 2001 A2 level results indicate a slight drop from the previous year and were only above average, but the results for 2002 show that this was a temporary decline and they are now very high when compared to results in similar, selective schools. AS level results are also good when compared to national standards. Only the occasional student achieves a grade D at GCSE level with no regular re-sit course offered.

183. The standards of work seen in lessons and students' workbooks confirm these high standards. The overall quality of written and oral work is good and many students play an active part in their lessons by initiating discussions on different problems. At the start of each topic a brief review of previous work is undertaken before moving forward and students show a very confident understanding of work covered at GCSE level. Students develop their algebraic skills in order to use calculus to solve problems. Their trigonometry is developed so that they can solve involved questions in shape and space. Those students who study the mechanics modules resolve forces and apply Newton's Laws to calculate forces on moving objects. Work is very challenging for all students, but they express confidence in the support of their teachers in order to secure improvement. Progress is good as, in 2002, almost three quarters of students entered gained the highest grades of A or B.

184. The high standards are a result of good teaching and the range of modules that students can study. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use their knowledge to prepare lessons well, so that they are delivered at a challenging pace. The teaching style is mainly didactic with a balance of exposition, discussion and practice common to most lessons. Teachers are very responsive to the needs of their students and vary lessons to suit the needs of those in their group. Less capable students are provided with more teacher input and direction than higher attaining students. Homework is marked well and students appreciate the feedback given and advice on how to improve their solutions to problems set. Considerable discussion takes place during lessons about different questions and students are encouraged to widen their module choice by following some individually. The response of students reflects the more mature approach and relationships that teachers adopt. There are high expectations of success and students work hard in a mutually supportive atmosphere that develops respect and self-esteem. Work is completed to an agreed timescale.

185. Management of sixth form mathematics is sound. The range of modules on offer is well suited to students' needs and the overall plan for the course is mapped out for staff and students alike. Most students are aware of their potential grades and module tests are used to confirm these. Teachers are well matched to the modules taught and this is effective in encouraging students to work hard throughout the course. Resources are satisfactory, but there are now too few textbooks because of the popularity of the subject and the frequent changes in syllabus. There are not enough computers for use in the classroom. Students are encouraged to use the computer facilities of the school to widen their skills and deepen their understanding.

Biology

The overall quality of provision for biology is **very good**.

Strengths

- High standards of attainment.
- Very good and excellent teaching and learning.
- Excellent assessment, both systems and their use.
- Very effective introduction of AS and A2 level courses.

Areas for improvement

- The unsatisfactory laboratory.
- Provision for ICT.

186. Results in recent years, including 2001, are well above the national average, though with a dip in 1999. They were well above the standards in other selective schools. The unconfirmed results for 2002 are also very strong. Achievement of students is good: for example, recent results exceed the results of other selective schools in Kent by a significant margin. The numbers choosing A-level biology are high and a high proportion move on from AS level in Year 1 to A2 level. The completion rate for biology courses is very high. Recent standards maintain the high attainment reported after the previous inspection in 1997.

187. Current work is in line with recent standards. The work of students at the start of the AS course is very thorough. Essays and test papers show secure understanding and a wide and detailed knowledge of the topics. Broader social and moral issues are dealt with well. This is also true of the most recent work of the students at the start of their A2 level course, but some of their earlier work, such as the coursework after a field trip, is inconsistent and ranges from unsatisfactory to very good. All students undertake substantial work to consolidate the central concepts that underpin each section of work. Attainment is secure and the progress of students is good and very good.

188. The qualities of teaching and learning are both very good, including much that is excellent. Mostly, teachers plan very well so as to target the highest standards and then check very well that students are attaining as expected. The excellent teaching then demands even more. Students relish the challenge. Exceptional gains are made in these lessons, in terms of knowledge and understanding. Excellent teaching was observed for both the AS and A2 courses. Teachers are very expert. Students meet well the very demanding homework and coursework regime set by teachers and show a strong commitment to achievement.

189. Leadership and management of biology, within science, are both good. For example, AS and A2 courses have been introduced very effectively. The support for students for whom English is an additional language is very effective. There is no ICT for lesson use in the biology block. One laboratory is too small for effective provision, a situation unchanged since this was reported in 1997. Recent innovations have led to important new strengths. The new assessment practices give teachers excellent measures of progress. Students know the data and use them intelligently to see how to improve. They get weekly feedback from the marking of their essays, in fine detail and with no punches pulled. They value knowing the extent of progress across time, related directly to likely examination outcomes.

Chemistry

The overall provision for chemistry is **good**.

Strengths

- Successful teaching, resulting in high standards.
- The effective introduction of the new A-levels.
- An emphasis on meeting the needs of gifted students.

Areas for improvement

- Provision for ICT.

190. Results in recent years, including 2001, are consistently well above national averages and only slightly below average for similar, selective schools. The most recent results for 2002, though unconfirmed, show better outcomes. Achievement during the course has been and is satisfactorily high in the light of the above average standards of students when they join. Results in A-Level in 2001 were just below the results for similar, selective schools and just above the standards in other boys' grammar schools in Kent. Especially gifted students attain the Advanced Extension Award. All who join the course go through to completion, year by year. A satisfactory proportion of students progresses from Year 1 AS level to A2 level.
191. Current standards are in line with recent results. All work is sufficiently detailed and advanced. Students understand the topics well and are making consistent improvement. For example, Year 12 students early in their AS course have already gained a good introductory understanding about atoms. They then, quickly, understood how atoms in a compound inter-act to define the shape of molecules, with an accurate grasp of advanced technical terms. Year 13 students have a wide and detailed knowledge from last year's AS course. They understand the new work on A2 level, securely and confidently. For example, they had readily grasped how to interpret infrared spectroscopy charts, during a very well taught introductory lesson. Next lesson they looked at case studies. The key strength to the very good progress and attainment was that they were not confused by tricky cases. They synthesised a wide range of previous knowledge and then applied their new understanding of spectroscopy. They did so mostly independently and with admirable confidence and speed for all.
192. The quality of teaching and learning are both very good. Teachers' methods and their assessments of students' progress provide a strong basis for a productive pace of learning and for substantial gains in knowledge and understanding. The introductory lesson about spectroscopy included very sharp questioning by the teacher to check that students understood the new work. Students' responses were very astute - for example one student immediately questioned how similar bonds might respond in different chemicals, quoting the bonds in alkenes, versus those in substances like benzene. The teacher had plenty of further work ready with which to broaden understanding for the higher attaining students, including ample homework. Teaching is very expert and teachers expect a lot from students. Students respond very well. They think hard during lessons. They organise their folders with great care, including a very good amount of correction and consolidation of their work.
193. The chemistry section of the science department is well managed. The new AS/A2 curriculum has been effectively introduced with a good emphasis on the needs of the gifted, highest-attaining students, including a planned programme of targeted activities. Standards have been maintained well at the high standards of 1997, as reported after the previous inspection, despite a period of staff turnover. ICT is an area for improvement.

Physics

The overall provision in physics is **very good**.

Strengths

- Students achieve high standards and have very good attitudes to their work.
- Teaching is very good and expectations are high.
- Students' mathematical skills and independent learning are very good.
- Management of the subject is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Questioning to encourage students to design and to form hypotheses.
- Curriculum planning and use of assessment to set targets.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Development planning.

194. Physics is a popular subject. Currently there are two groups of students in each year. Retention of students at the end of Year 12 is excellent: most of them carry on and complete the full A2 level course. Standards are high: results in the AS and A-level examinations in 2001 were very high when compared with those in all maintained schools and in similar, selective schools. The percentage of students achieving the top two grades at A2 level was more than twice the average for all schools. In 2002, these results continue the year-on-year improvement in A2 level attainment dating back to 1998. Over this period, results have been consistently above the average for all subjects in the school and consistently high when compared with the national average for all maintained schools.
195. The standards of work seen in lessons and in the students' notebooks reflect very well the pattern of results achieved in the external examinations. Students bring to new situations prior knowledge and understanding. They are able mathematicians and communicators. This is very significant to the very good progress they make. In Year 12, students had good recall of previously learned work on refractive index; they were very confident as they extended their knowledge to express Snell's Law in terms of the speed of light in different media. In Year 13, students' concentration and depth of thought is very marked. This was apparent when they extended their knowledge and understanding of the force on a conductor in a magnetic field. In response to challenging teaching students' progress is impressive. Throughout, all listen well to the teacher and to other students and respond well when questioned or when required to make a contribution. Students in both years are skilled at keeping very good records of their work. They use computers at school and at home to assist their research and are very competent independent learners. Attitudes to learning are very good. Students are ambitious for both themselves and for other group members. They support each other well and respect each other's differences. They are very confident about their own abilities and feel strongly that their ambitions will be met at the school.
196. Teaching is very good and, as a result, learning is very good for the majority of the students at AS level and for all students at A-level. Lessons are very well planned and organised. Very good use is made of learning resources, including the ICT and audio-visual equipment. Lessons start on time and proceed at a good pace; expectations are high. Teachers are well qualified and their experience of external examination work is significant to the high standards achieved; the examination syllabus is accurately interpreted in the units of study and work is focused on to what students need to know to achieve the highest grades. Students are very confident about seeking support for their learning and value the hard work and dedication of their teachers. These are significant factors in the very good progress they make. The most capable make best progress when in active learning situations, particularly in discussion work supported by good presentation. Teachers sometimes miss the opportunity to involve students in design and in forming hypotheses. Students are well aware of their achievements and progress. The quality of marking of homework and other independent studies assists them well, but marking does not set targets and students are not involved in self-assessment in a structured way.

197. Leadership and management are very good and contribute to the high standards achieved. Clear direction is given to the department's work with shared commitment to improve students' achievements further. Targets set are met. Specialist teachers are well deployed; the level and use of resources enable the curriculum to be taught effectively and accommodation is good. The management and work of laboratory technicians is significant to the quality of teaching and learning. Whilst good use is made of ICT via quality demonstrations, there are not enough computers to support the full range of curriculum requirements for ICT. The department handbook supports high standards and contains useful information to assist all teachers. Records of meetings show that high standards are pursued but the lack of an up-to-date development plan means that the management of change is not systematic. A good system is in place for self-review of both the department and of students, but teaching and learning are not monitored enough by the head of department through lesson observation to check that agreed policies and procedures are followed. This was the case at the last inspection.

BUSINESS

Business studies and economics formed the focus of the inspection. In both subjects, teaching is good or very good and students attain high standards, although improvements could be made through curriculum enrichment and improvements to the accommodation.

Business Studies

The overall provision in Business Studies is **good**.

Strengths

- 2001 exam results were well above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are good. Students apply what they have learnt to business organisations in the real economy.
- Assessment is regular and thorough and promotes learning well.

Areas for improvement

- Further enrichment of the curriculum through links with local business, field trips or work experience.
- Upgraded accommodation with a base room suitably equipped with ICT.

198. Results in A-level business education in 2001 were well above the national average, with the number of boys attaining the highest A/B grades almost double the percentage for boys nationally and above average for similar, selective schools. These results show an improvement over the last three years, though provisional results for 2002 are down on previous years. They are still in line with national averages, but well below the average for similar, selective schools. The subject is popular and the number of students entering for the A-level exam has remained high and retention rates are high. Twenty-seven students followed the AS course last year. Provisional results indicate that seventy percent obtained A or B grades, well above national averages. All but four of these students have elected to continue their studies to A2 level.

199. Observations of lessons and a scrutiny of samples of students' work confirm these high standards and achievement is good amongst current sixth form business education students. In Year 12, students have made a good beginning to the AS course. They already have some understanding of business finance, demonstrated in a lesson where they carried out break-even analysis and have completed a case study about Levi jeans, using the Internet for research. Year 13 students have a very good understanding of business concepts, which they apply with critical understanding to problems and issues arising in business and finance in the real economy, for example, the failure of Marconi. They know that firms have to be aware of ethical, social and environmental issues in today's economy. They have developed very good skills in numerical manipulation and they have very good presentation skills, as was seen in a lesson on marketing where students presented their marketing plans to their peers. They have developed very good enquiry and research skills and use the Internet competently to investigate the business world. Students do not, however, interact enough with the local business community and would benefit from enrichment of the curriculum through links with the local firms, field trips or work experience. All write well analytically, using appropriate business vocabulary. Higher

attainers write fluently, using evidence to justify conclusions. Clear progression occurs in both learning and thinking.

200. Teaching is good, overall, with some very good features and students learn well, as a result. Very good subject knowledge is used to motivate and inform students. Effective lesson planning provides good opportunities for learning. Students' work is assessed on a regular basis with some detailed and helpful comments designed to indicate how they might improve. Individual students feel well supported and receive regular feedback on their progress. Relationships are very good. Expectations are high and challenging tasks are set which fully involve students in their own learning. However, some lessons are too teacher-dominated with limited opportunities for boys to take part in oral discussion and with too much spoon-feeding of information.
201. The good achievement, teaching and learning are due to an experienced head of department, assisted by very experienced specialist teachers. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance are very good and are improving standards. Documentation on the other hand is weak; the departmental development plan, setting out the subject's priorities and targets, is not properly costed. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory; students require a base-room, equipped with ICT facilities, so that learning can be further enhanced.

Economics

The overall provision in Economics is **very good**.

Strengths

- 2001 exam results were well above the national average.
- Teaching and learning are very good. Students apply what they have learned to case studies, actual organisations and the real economy.
- Assessment is regular and thorough and promotes learning.
- ICT is used as a resource to provide on line up-to-date information and support materials for students.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation needs to be upgraded so that students have a suitable base room equipped with ICT.
- Students would benefit from a fuller enrichment curriculum through educational visits, visiting speakers and participation in competitions run by financial institutions, for example.

202. Results in A-level economics in 2001 were well above average both in terms of boys attaining the higher A/B grades and in terms of average points scored. Results have been consistently well above the national average for the past four years with an unbroken one hundred per cent pass rate and above the average for similar, selective schools. Standards were similarly high in 2002 with provisional results confirming attainment at previous levels. In the past 2 years, numbers electing to follow the A-level course in economics have fallen. However, numbers in Year 12, this year, have risen to previous levels. Currently, five of the six students who followed the AS course last year have continued to A2 level, half of these having obtained an A grade.

203. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards remain well above average and that the achievement of current sixth form economics students is good. Year 12 students have a very good knowledge and understanding of economic theory in relation to the market economy, as seen in a lesson on demand and supply analysis. They also have a good understanding of the links between theoretical economics and the real economy and have made a very good beginning to their AS course. Year 13 students have developed the higher order skills of evaluation and analysis and write essays, using appropriate economic market or mathematical models to illustrate them, with clear progression in both learning and thinking. They use the Internet for research and have good oral presentation skills. Students have a very good knowledge and understanding of the topics they have studied. They understand, for instance, the key goals of government policy and the policies that can be used in the management of the economy. They use a range of economic vocabulary which shows a clear understanding of

economic concepts and apply what they have learnt to case studies, actual organisations and the real economy.

204. Teaching and learning are very good. Effective lesson planning provides very good opportunities for learning; very good subject expertise motivates and informs students. Expectations are high and challenging tasks are set, as was seen in a Year 13 lesson where students were required to use their knowledge of theoretical concepts to explain and analyse alternative policies available to the regulators of privatised industries. Students' work is assessed on a regular basis with detailed comments designed to indicate how they might improve. Students feel well supported and receive regular feedback on how well they are doing. Relationships are very good.
205. The very good teaching and learning and students' good achievement are due to good departmental management by an experienced teacher assisted by very experienced specialists. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance are very good and are improving standards. However, accommodation is unsatisfactory for economics with no properly-equipped base-room. Teachers have to move from room to room carrying resources with them. Documentation is also unsatisfactory with no formal departmental development plan. Economics was not identified in the last inspection report, but standards have remained well above average since that time. However, students would benefit from a fuller enrichment curriculum through educational visits, visiting speakers and participation in events such as competitions run by financial institutions.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Computing formed the focus for the inspection. Students achieve high standards as a result of good teaching. The quality of students' coursework is particularly high.

Computing

The overall provision for computing is **good**.

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their teaching is clear and thorough.
- A-level results are above national averages for similar, selective schools.
- Marking provides students with clear feedback on the quality of their work and how it can be improved.
- Students are committed and hard working.

Areas for improvement

- Lesson planning, so as to provide students with more opportunities for active learning during whole-class teaching.
- Planning to enable the department to meet its targets for improvement in A-level results.

206. In 2001, A-level results for computing at the end of Years 12 and 13 were well above national averages for all schools and above average for similar, selective schools. The results for 2002 were similar to those in 2001. Students have good levels of knowledge and understanding about critical path analysis and the key features of different network operating systems. Their coursework projects are of a high standard as they apply their ICT knowledge and skills to solve practical problems, some of which are for specific voluntary, public and commercial organisations. The projects are very well structured and include, for example, user documentation and thoughtful evaluations.
207. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lessons are clearly linked to everyday applications in business. Teachers' demonstrations of software are lucid and practical as with the use of Visual Basics to program an automatic teller machine. Whole-class teaching is thorough and clear, with effective support for students when they work individually, to check their understanding and to help them solve problems about topics such as critical path analysis. As a result, students learn well and make good progress.

Ongoing assessment is used effectively as is whole-class teaching about aspects, which assessment shows most students find difficult. In one lesson, for example, the concluding plenary session was based on an exercise that many students found hard during the lesson. Students' very good behaviour and positive attitudes to computing contribute to their good achievement. Students' learning slows when whole-class teaching is too long and does not sufficiently engage them so that a significant minority lose their concentration.

208. Assessment of students' work is satisfactory and is particularly good for projects and coursework. An adequate scheme of work is used by teachers as the basis for lesson planning, but assessment information is not used enough to improve the scheme. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with clear commitment to high standards by the team of specialist teachers. A target-setting plan includes the improvement of A-level standards with targets for overall A-level grades, but these are not based on target grades for individual students and do not contain enough detail about what needs to be done for students to achieve them.
209. Since the last inspection, satisfactory progress has been made with computing. The high standards have been maintained and students continue to make good progress. Teaching is still good, but learning objectives are now regularly identified. Teaching approaches are now consistent because the two main ICT specialists mostly teach the course.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was physical education, which, although there is no course leading to external examination qualifications, forms an integral part of every student's sixth form experience. Standards were found to be high, especially in rugby.

Physical education

The overall provision in physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- The very positive attitudes and the commitment of students to working hard and doing their best.
- The good quality of the teaching, overall, which helps students to make good progress and achieve well.
- The contribution made by the sixth form programme to students' personal development.

Areas for improvement

- The recreational programme which is not sufficiently structured to enable students to get the most benefit from the activities.
- More staff to teach the school-based fitness programme.

210. The school's aims include a commitment to providing a stimulating and stable environment in which students develop their sporting interests. As a result, the school's provision for students' physical development is good. Students in Years 12 and 13 are expected to participate in a double lesson (two hours) of games or other activities each week and are also timetabled for an additional recreational period every other week. This is well above the level of activity found in many secondary schools. Participation rates are very high and the vast majority of students respond enthusiastically to the school's expectations. This was confirmed in discussions with students, who commented very favourably on the opportunities available to them. For their double lessons, students select courses from a range of activities, some of which they have to pay for themselves. The opportunities include: rugby, hockey, badminton, basketball, judo, squash, tennis, rock climbing, cross-country, shooting, soccer and fitness. In the single lesson, students are able to use the multi-gym under staff supervision or play basketball in the gymnasium. A number of activities were observed during the inspection.
211. By the end of Year 13, students attain above average standards, overall. A considerable proportion of students attain well above average standards in rugby. Here, students capitalise on the skills they have learned earlier in the school and show good and often very good

awareness of advanced strategies and tactics, applying and adapting them with proficiency and, in some cases, with flair, in playing the game. Most students have very good levels of fitness and are able to sustain a high work rate for extended periods of time. In hockey, students' skills in controlling and passing the ball are mostly above average. They have developed a range of techniques, which they use to good effect in small games and in the full game. In basketball, they are able to combine skills well and their passing is accurate. In tennis and squash, skills are developing well and students are attaining above average standards. In judo, where there is a wide range of expertise and experience, most students attain average standards. In fitness, the large number of students involved and the cramped conditions make it more difficult for them to develop their skills and raise their fitness levels effectively and safely. In all these activities, however, students display high standards of commitment and interest and very good sporting attitudes. As a result, they make good gains in their learning and achieve well.

212. The quality of teaching, overall, is good and ranges from satisfactory to excellent. The very best teaching, seen in the coaching of the rugby squad, involved the students in high levels of intensive activity on various aspects of the game and included precise and pertinent teaching points to improve their performance. What was impressive about this session was the ability of the students to organise their own practices, review their strengths and weaknesses in a positive and analytical way and to maintain high levels of activity when they were not directly supervised. In other lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge and considerable expertise to plan appropriate activities to develop students' skills systematically and to challenge them. Activities are well organised for the most part and other than in the fitness session, staffing levels are generous, especially in the teaching of the major games. In the fitness sessions based at the school, there are too many students for the one member of staff to supervise adequately. The arrangements for the use of the multi-gym during the recreational period are not sufficiently tight and too many students wander from station to station without a clear sense of purpose or a focused programme of development. Lessons proceed at a good pace and staff have high expectations of their students' response. Students themselves are positive about these opportunities and comment that they bring considerable benefit to them in terms of developing team work, contributing to their personal development as well as giving them interests and skills which will be useful in their future lives and careers.

213. As with the main school, the programme is constrained by the unsatisfactory accommodation for physical education available on the school site. Students taking the judo course, for example, have to move the dining room furniture, sweep the floor, and carry judo mats down two flights of steps before the sessions can begin. In spite of this, students are committed to their choice of activity and participate with considerable enthusiasm. The staffing costs of maintaining this level of provision are high, but, in terms of its outcomes, reflected in students' personal development and in the high standards they attain, it provides good value for money.

HUMANITIES

Geography, history and religious studies formed the focus for the inspection. These are three of the most popular subjects at sixth form level, and students respond to good teaching by producing high standards of attainment.

Geography

The overall provision for geography is **good**.

Strengths

- The very good standard of coursework.
- The very good subject knowledge and planning of the teachers.
- The independent learning by the students.
- The enthusiasm and very positive attitudes of the students.

Areas for improvement

- The pace and challenge of some lessons.

214. Geography is a popular subject in the sixth form and has a good retention rate in the school from Year 11. It consistently has at least two sets in each of Years 12 and 13. In 2001 the A-level results were above the national average for all maintained schools and the provisional results for 2002 show a further improvement, reflecting the very good standard of coursework. They are well below the average for similar, selective schools.
215. Students make good progress in the sixth form. The department allows several of its own students each year to proceed with AS level courses without prior GCSE experience and they achieve well. It also welcomes visiting students, for whom English is an additional language, and they, too, make good progress. Students have a very good knowledge of advanced technical vocabulary and of the processes, which interact to determine physical and economic landscapes, as in the pattern of Anglo-Saxon settlement in southeast England. They have a good understanding of the complex relationship between natural hazards and economic development, as in a Year 12 lesson on the devastation caused by hurricanes in India and Florida. Both their coursework and residential fieldwork show an ability to test hypotheses through a range of statistical techniques.
216. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers are enthusiastic, have very good subject knowledge and plan well. They prepare students very thoroughly in the examination techniques required by Curriculum 2000. Students show a very positive attitude and co-operate well with each other and with their teachers. They respond particularly well when they are given opportunities for role-play and decision-making exercises, as in a Year 13 class on the redevelopment of the central area of a local town. They challenge each other's arguments well and make clear and well reasoned presentations. An injection of pace into some lessons, backed by wider reading, would enable the most capable to develop further their skills of extended essay writing.
217. The subject is well led with good teamwork and a strong commitment to the maintenance and further improvement of the standards attained by all students.

History

The overall provision in history is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Attainment, which is high, is rising.
- Students are provided with good advice and resources for additional reading.

Areas for development

- There is no scheme of work, leading to some disparity in experience between students.
- The range of teaching strategies and learning experiences is too limited.

218. Attainment in history at A-level in 2001 was well above the national average for the percentage of students attaining grades A and B and also for grades A to E. No student attained a grade lower than D. The percentage of students attaining A to E was higher than that in similar, selective schools while the percentage of A and B grades was very similar. Provisional results for 2002 show an improvement over the high standards of the previous year. No student attained a grade lower than C and there was a considerable increase in the percentage of A and B grades. These results were well above the national average for 2001, the most recent year for which national comparative results are available and also well above the attainment of similar, selective schools. There has been an overall considerable improvement in A2 level attainment over the last four years, both in terms of the rising percentage attaining grades A and B and also the reduction in the percentage of students attaining the lowest grades. The provisional A/S level grades for 2002 indicate that these students are well on course to at least maintain the high standards of the 2002 results. A full range of inspection evidence indicates that the attainment of students, who are still several months away from their examinations, is well above the national average. There has been good progress since the previous inspection.

219. Students embark upon their A2 level course with attainment, which is, in general, above the national average. The history department has a broad entry policy and there is a wide range of prior attainment in A2 level groups. Students achieve well to reach standards well above the national average. They make particularly good progress in planning and structuring essays, in developing an authoritative tone and in the use of reading from a wide range of respected historians in order to enhance the quality and depth of their responses.
220. Teaching is at least good, with a small proportion of very good teaching. The high standards of teaching have been maintained since the previous inspection. Teachers have very good, extensive subject knowledge, which they use well to enhance the quality of group discussions. They offer good opportunities for discussion, which forms a valuable learning tool for all students. They offer a high level of challenge to students and have high expectations that they will form and justify their own interpretations. Students make good use of their additional reading in order to present balanced, well-informed arguments. Teachers are aware of those students who require additional support and offer this in a number of ways, including additional questioning to check understanding. Students feel well supported and are very appreciative of the approachability of their teachers and their willingness to offer advice. Marking is regular and extensive, offering clear advice about what students need to do in order to improve their work. Particular attention is paid in marking not only to the content, but also to the structure of essays to meet the requirements of the question. The range of learning activities seen in lessons, however, was limited. Most lessons consist of teacher led discussions, which, although very instructive, do not give students enough opportunities to play a more active role in their learning.
221. Leadership of the subject is good, with clear commitment to high standards, continued raising of attainment and an emphasis on intellectual rigour. Some aspects of the management of the subject are less secure and the overall judgement of leadership and management is that it is satisfactory. No scheme of work is in place for A2 level and the subject specifications provided by the examination board do not in themselves provide enough guidance to teachers on the way in which the varying requirements of the course should be taught. Because of this lack of guidance, teaching groups do not all benefit from the same learning opportunities. Students receive very clear information, in the form of marking and oral feedback, on what they need to do to improve, but they are not given target grades which means that they are not absolutely clear about what their teachers feel they are capable of achieving. Sixth form resources are good. There are enough up-to-date books for all students and a very good selection of additional reading and information sheets provided by teachers for casual borrowing. Although there are no trips to places of historical interest, in other ways students' cultural development is well provided for. They become familiar with the work of a range of respected historians and they also have the opportunity to attend history study conferences in London.

Religious studies

The overall provision in religious education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards at AS and A2 level are very high.
- Teaching is always very good and occasionally excellent with excellent student management.
- Departmental management is very good.
- Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment of students' attitudinal development.

222. Standards in both 2001 and 2002 were well above the national average for similar, selective schools in both the AS and A-level courses. Results have shown an upward trend over the last three years.

223. In lessons and work seen, Year 12 students demonstrate very good understanding of philosophical, moral and religious concepts and produce well-structured and balanced

arguments. Teachers challenge students to analyse material and form judgments about views expressed from several philosophical and ethical standpoints. In one lesson, students explored the views of different philosophical arguments about miracles, using the views of David Hume. A very good exercise demonstrated that they were developing their analytical and evaluative skills well. The teacher's very good use of discussion and high expectations contributed very well to the students' ability to think independently. In Year 13, students demonstrate their ability to use ethical language. Through the teacher's challenging and enabling approach, they use their skills of analysis to draw out ideas and to make distinctions between opinions, beliefs and facts. Paired discussion enables them to deepen their learning and respect the views of others. Excellent teacher intervention enables students to challenge the traditional wisdom and expand their understanding of topics such as free will, freedom of choice and determinism. Teachers have very high expectations of students and, as a consequence, they have equally high expectations of themselves. They achieve well and make very good progress. They use their skills in ICT for research purposes effectively. Greater availability of ICT facilities would enable them to develop this facility and raise standards even further.

224. All students have access to a well-planned course in religious education. This enables them to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the religious implications of world issues. An excellent talk from an aid worker provided powerful insights for students into life in Afghanistan after September 11th. Students demonstrated a clear understanding of life and culture from a very different perspective.
225. Students' attitudes to learning are excellent. They behave extremely well, are very well motivated and apply themselves to the work conscientiously; they collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent; teachers support individuals both personally and academically. Student behaviour makes an excellent contribution to their achievement and progress.
226. Teaching is always very good and occasionally excellent. It is of high quality and has a significant impact on student achievement. Learning is very good. Teachers use questioning very well to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles that enable students to learn from as well as learn about religion. This assists students to maintain their interest and to develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Teachers manage student behaviour exceptionally well, contributing to an excellent climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to very good effect in allowing students to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have very high expectations of students and challenge them to succeed. This is very effective in contributing to their achievement. Assessment of students' work is generally very good, with very helpful comments written on their work. These procedures provide a good basis for assessing what students know and understand and inform the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work. The department does not set specific targets, but students are aware of what they need to do to improve. Assessment of students' attitudinal development requires review. At present, the assessment does not identify what students know and what they need to do to improve further.
227. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, providing opportunities for them to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages students to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues. The department is managed very well with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Students are provided with a very rich diet of religious education. The head of department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment and is supported extremely well in this by another member of staff. Since the last inspection, standards have continued to rise. The number of students now taking religious studies at AS/A2 level has risen considerably. The specialist teachers have had the benefit of well-targeted in-service development and this has had a significant impact on the progress made by students. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were selected as the focus of the inspection, but theatre studies and German were also sampled. Two lessons were observed in theatre studies. Teaching and learning were good. The teacher's relaxed style encouraged students to share ideas and suggest a range of perceptive observations and conclusions as they discussed the benefits and drawbacks of wearing masks. Two lessons were seen in German. Students are becoming confident linguists and achieving high standards. Teaching is good.

English

The overall provision for English is **good**.

Strengths

- Students attain results in English literature at A-level which are well above average.
- The good teaching contributes very well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students continue to think for themselves and to make connections with other areas of learning.
- Students assume responsibility effectively for projects involving younger students.

Areas for improvement

- In some lessons, some students are not sufficiently active learners.
- A-level results in years with larger numbers of students are not as high as in other years.
- Some students do not make notes that are full enough to support subsequent writing and revision.

228. In the first two years of AS level English literature more than half of the students have gained grades A and B. In 2001 this was well above the national average and broadly in line with the average for similar, selective schools. Nearly all students continued into the A2 level course. In 2001, which was the last year of the old course, results at A-level were very high compared with both the national average and the average for similar, selective schools. With the much larger entry in 2002, results at grades A and B dropped, though they were still well above the national average and above the selective school average for 2001.

229. In work seen during the inspection, students, who have entered the sixth form with quite a wide range of grades at GCSE, achieve well and reach standards that are above average for this stage of their course. Students on both the AS and A2 level courses have made a good start to the year. They have sound knowledge of their texts and of the historical and social contexts of their set books. They use their general knowledge to help them interpret their English texts. In spite of other commitments, students keep up their personal reading. Their articulate oral responses are perceptive, but only rarely are they penetrating. By Year 13, students readily exchange views and questions and sometimes challenge each other and the teacher. Year 13 students preparing to read English at university extracted meaning from a difficult allusive modern poem. In their written work in both years, students readily support their observations with examples and quotations, which the most capable students achieve seamlessly in their writing. Most students do this increasingly in discussion in Year 13, although some students' written style is too long winded. Students make best progress in lessons when they are active participants, such as in a Year 13 lesson when in groups students defended a character from Chaucer's *The Merchant's Tale* whilst others questioned them. However, students' notes are often not full enough to support subsequent writing or revision. There are some strange gaps in their vocabulary and a few inappropriate lapses into colloquialisms.

230. This is a popular course. As in earlier years in the school, students enjoy the subject and relationships are very good. Sixth form students run junior drama clubs and direct plays for the annual drama festival. They also help run the creative writing magazine, "Your Shout".

231. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which makes the subject stimulating and contributes very well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was seen in competent essays comparing American poems and a lesson on *Our Country's Good* in which students gave presentations on themes of freedom and love and

the teacher encouraged students to make connections with other texts they knew. Teachers' expectations of students' understanding and application are high - for example when introducing Year 12 students to the value of literary criticism. Teachers mark work thoroughly, often prompting students to search more deeply. Teaching is less successful when some students are allowed to be passive learners. Teachers do not consistently use group-work in which all students can amass ideas and test their thinking in readiness for writing, even though this is so successful in earlier key stages. The result is that some students have difficulty starting their essays and some less capable students write too briefly.

232. The management of sixth form English is good, with teachers collaborating over shared teaching groups and assessment procedures. This has contributed well to the successful start on the new A2 level courses. Although the department provides opportunities for several extra-curricular activities in school, it has not accompanied English students to literary or theatrical events in the recent past.

French

The overall provision in French is **good**.

Strengths

- A-level results in recent years have been well above national averages.
- Attainment in lessons is similarly high. Students have well developed listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
- Students have very positive attitudes, which greatly enhance their learning.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which enables students to learn well.

Areas for Improvement

- Students would benefit from even more opportunities to use the French they are being taught.
- There are some missed opportunities for open-ended questioning to enable students to draw on the full breadth of their knowledge.

233. In the first two years of AS level French, in 2001 and 2002, well over half of the students gained grades A and B. This was well above the national average and broadly in line with the average for similar, selective schools. About two thirds of the students continued into the A2 course. Results in A-level In 2001 were very high when compared with national figures and with the results for boys nationally and well above average for similar, selective schools. With a larger entry in 2002, the percentage of A/B grades dropped slightly, though they were still well above the national average and above the selective school average for 2001.

234. Results in French at A-level have been consistently well above the national average and above those of similar, selective schools in recent years. This represents good achievement for these able students.

235. The standard of work seen in lessons was well above average and confirms these high results. Year 12 students take down the gist of a French radio news programme, identify key words from a tape played at normal speaking pace and discuss the fate of the less fortunate members of our society maturely. In Year 13 they make perceptive comments about their set Maupassant text and identify, analyse and discuss a range of issues at a very advanced level. Students are very good at organising their work and their keenness to work independently both at home and at school greatly enhances their standards. They have well-developed computing skills and use dictionaries effectively to support their work. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are promoted particularly well in French with a wide variety of topics covered in the course of their work, such as the meaning of wealth and poverty, unemployment and the trials of war. A wide range of visits to France and homestays help them to develop confidence and understanding in the language.

236. Teaching is good, overall, ranging from satisfactory to very good and results in good learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to extend their students' ability to use French. Lessons are well planned and prepared and in the best lessons, teachers use

French extensively to extend and challenge the students. Boys deepen their knowledge and improve their skills effectively. They work at a fast pace and their learning is greatly enhanced by their very positive attitudes and high motivation to do well.

237. Management of the subject is satisfactory. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to getting the best from their students, but the teaching would benefit from a more consistent approach, particularly in the use of the target language and in requiring students to use it for themselves. Schemes of work are adequate, but do not contain enough direction for teachers, particularly to support new and inexperienced teachers in their task.