

INSPECTION REPORT

PEACEHAVEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Peacehaven

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 131601

Headteacher: Ms Fiona Wright

Lead inspector: Mrs Helen Hutchings

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 24th March 2004

Inspection number: 258727

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 14
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	539
School address:	Greenwich Way Peacehaven East Sussex
Postcode:	BN10 8RB
Telephone number:	(01273) 581 100
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Roger Creasy and Mr Gary Dove
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Peacehaven is a new school, opened in September 2001 to serve the local community. It opened with its first year group and, at present, has only three year groups, Years 7 to 9. Currently the school is much smaller than other secondary schools but the roll will increase over the next two years, as students continue into Years 10 and 11, to establish a school of a similar size to secondary schools nationally. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average, although the school is in an area with significant levels of social deprivation. The overall proportion of students joining and leaving the school at times other than the normal time of entry is lower than the national average. The number of students from ethnic minority backgrounds and the proportion speaking English as an additional language are low.

Students' attainment on entry is below average nationally. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs, including those with statutory statements, is above the national average. These are mainly students with dyslexia, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and other learning difficulties. The school has a special facility to support students with speech or communication difficulties and currently provides places for 14 students. The school has recently received a Sportsmark Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9563	Jeanette Reid	Lay inspector	
30091	Jenny Hastings	Team inspector	English
3643	Derek Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics
16786	Selwyn Hodge	Team inspector	Science
1782	Andrew Lyons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology
20533	David Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design
20719	Ann Fraser	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education
30743	Neil Cowell	Team inspector	Geography
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	History
11751	David Sutcliffe	Team inspector	French English as an additional language
2032	Christopher Polyblank	Team inspector	Music
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Peacehaven Community School is a new school which **provides a very good quality of education for its students** and gives very good value for money. Teaching takes students from varying stages of learning when they enter and develops them very well both socially and academically. Students have good attitudes to school and the very good teaching results in good achievement. This is achieved by the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the very high commitment of the staff and governing body.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher and governors have been innovative and very successful in their approach to setting up the school.
- Staff are highly dedicated and enthusiastic about the further development of the school.
- Students have good attitudes to school and a good understanding of their own learning which enables them to achieve well across their subjects; achievement in French is excellent.
- Attendance is very good; students enjoy their school and feel valued and included.
- The school community is very cohesive with a very strong sense of purpose.
- Students are given very good levels of support and guidance for their personal development.
- Teaching is very good and is outstanding in French.
- The curriculum is designed very well into cohesive modules of work which are explained well to students.
- New technologies are used very well to aid learning.
- Accommodation and resources are very good; there are some limitations in design and technology, physical education and the food hall.

The school has not been inspected previously. An exemplary start has been made over the three years since the school opened and it has been very successful in setting up a very good quality of education. A team of talented and enthusiastic staff have the capacity for sustained development to take the school forward successfully into its next phase.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Students make good progress during their time in the school in almost all their subjects. By Year 9, students' standards are generally in line with national expectations. Students have not yet taken any national tests in the school against which national comparisons can be measured. Students enter the school with levels of attainment which are generally below national averages. Those students in the current Year 9 had well below average standards on entry but have achieved well and are now working at levels close to national expectations. Standards remain below average in English but are in line with expectations in mathematics and science. Standards in French are well above average for those who have been studying the language for less than three years. The progress of students is monitored closely and all groups of students, including higher and lower attaining students, achieve well in relation to their prior attainment levels. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs, including those identified by the school and those with speech or communication difficulties, achieve well.

Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and most students develop a desire to learn and a real understanding of the outcomes of their actions. Their personal development is very good and the caring ethos of the school permeates all activities and contributes significantly to the development of very good relationships. Staff manage the disruptive tendencies of a minority of students very well. Attendance and punctuality to school are very good, but a minority of students are late to some lessons. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Teaching is very good overall, with some excellent examples of outstanding practice. This leads to very good learning. Teachers are knowledgeable and very enthusiastic, and engage students very well in lessons. Their progress is assessed very well, but marking of class work to correct basic errors is inconsistent across the school.

The curriculum is very good. The school uses national guidance well and provides a range of learning opportunities for students, including those with special educational needs. Planning for Years 10 and 11 is well advanced and students have already been offered a wide range of courses, designed to meet their needs well. The modular approach is well received by students and, together with the arrangements for independent studies, provides good support for students to become independent learners. There is very good support for learning beyond lessons, such as the help given in the library and information and communication technology rooms.

Students are given very good support and guidance and well-targeted advice in each subject. They enjoy very good relationships with one another and with staff. The school is good at seeking the views of students and values them.

The school makes great efforts to involve parents in their children's education and sends home very frequent and detailed information about the school and their children's progress and standards. The very good links with other schools and colleges significantly benefits the students' education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good across the school. The headteacher has shown exceptional leadership in setting up and guiding the school through its first years and is supported very well by everyone in the school. Staff are empowered to lead in their own areas and all have a strong commitment and genuine engagement with the development of practice and implementation of policy. Governance is very good. Financial management is based firmly on achieving best value for money.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are extremely appreciative of the school and think that it has very many strengths. A small minority say that the poor behaviour of some students disrupts some lessons and that there is some bullying, but they acknowledge that the school deals effectively and promptly with this. Most students are enthusiastic about their school and appreciate what it has to offer. They think they are taught well, expected to work hard, and have an adult to turn to if they have a problem.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no significant areas of weakness and the school is already addressing the following minor areas for improvement:

- Improving accommodation for design and technology, physical education and the food hall.
- Developing a more consistent approach to correcting basic errors in students' work.
- Extending the range of teaching and opportunities for higher-attaining students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Students make good progress during their time in the school and **achieve well** in almost all their subjects. By Year 9, students' **standards are generally in line with national expectations**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievements in French are excellent and standards are well above average.
- Achievement is good overall and is very good in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and music.
- Students with special educational needs achieve well.

Commentary

1. Peacehaven Community School currently only has students in Years 7 to 9. These students have not yet taken any national tests against which national comparisons can be measured. Students' attainment on entry, as measured by their performance in the tests taken at the end of Year 6, is generally below national averages. The current Year 9 group had attainment levels on entry which were well below national averages. During their time in the school, students have achieved well and their attainment is now in line with national expectations in most subjects. Attainment in mathematics and science is in line with national average performance. Although progress is at least satisfactory and sometimes good, standards remain below expectations in English, geography, history and citizenship but above expectations in music. Achievement is excellent in French; students' standards are now well above those of students of their age or who have been studying the language for three years and they have embarked on their General Certificate of Education (GCSE) course early.
2. The school has established a robust system for data collection and is monitoring the achievements of individuals closely to identify possible underachievement so that it can make appropriate interventions to bring performance levels back in line for all students to achieve well. Because the amount of data is still limited and there have been no external assessments, the school has not yet been able to benchmark the performance of different groups of students accurately. When students entered the school, the attainment of boys and girls was similar, with some minor variations from year to year. There are no significant differences in their performance currently.
3. A very small number of students have English as an additional language. Their achievement is very good. Those students who were interviewed spoke very highly of the support that they had received from both teachers and other students at the school. They agreed that the school could not have done better to provide for their needs.
4. The school has high aspirations for all students. The process of identifying the most able students has begun and the school is planning how additional provision can be made to meet their needs. In individual faculties, there are already examples of effective and significant challenges for the highest-attaining students in mainstream lessons. However, this is not consistent across all subjects.
5. The school has planned well to develop students' standards of basic literacy. Standards are satisfactory and are developed successfully in many subjects, although there are still some inaccuracies in written work and these are not always corrected in ongoing work, leaving misconceptions left unchecked until the end of the module of work. Students' mathematical skills are average and adequate to meet the needs of the other subjects they study. The very

effective use of ICT throughout the school means that students use and develop their skills in many different contexts.

6. Students with special educational needs, both within the main school and those admitted into the facility for students with speech or communication difficulties, enter the school with attainment that is well below average in the national tests and assessments at the end of Year 6 and they achieve at below national levels overall in Year 9. Their achievement is good, taking into account their particular learning difficulties. It is satisfactory in English and good in mathematics and science. Students' achievements are good because staff are committed to being creative in helping them to study the full curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Their attendance and punctuality are **very good**. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The caring ethos of the school permeates all activities and significantly contributes to the development of the students' very good relationships and good attitudes and personal development.
- Most students are developing a desire to learn and a real understanding of the outcomes of their actions.
- Staff manage the disruptive tendencies of a minority of students very well.
- Attendance and punctuality to school are very good, but a minority are late to some lessons.

Commentary

7. Students' attitudes, values and personal development are good. Most students are enthusiastic about their school and appreciate what it has to offer. This is reflected in the high level of student attendance. Students see learning as important and enjoyable. They understand that they are expected to do their best, and are confident and motivated learners. Many are developing independence in their learning as they move up the school. They know what they have to do to organise themselves and they have a pride in their achievements. Many students participate in all aspects of school life. Attendance at after-school homework clubs and extra-curricular activities is good. However, a minority of students are less well motivated to learn, and fail to work without close supervision. Students are provided with very good opportunities to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
8. The vast majority of students are well behaved, polite and courteous, and respond well to the caring ethos of the school. They respect each other and the school environment. The school has very high expectations for students' behaviour. Staff work extremely well together to consistently reinforce good behaviour. However, a small minority of students show unacceptable behaviour in lessons and around the school which, at times, disrupts the learning of others. There is a range of strategies to support these students, which are adapted to each individual. Time and care are taken to resolve problems and to help students develop an understanding of the outcomes of their actions. For example, the 'Work it Out' response makes students reflect on the consequences of their actions, and decide on a plan to prevent the recurrence of their disruptive behaviour. Students think the range of sanctions is effective and is used fairly. The students say bullying is very rare. Both parents and students say that incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Exclusions are at a similar rate to those in other schools in East Sussex.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	530	65	1
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

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

9. Students' relationships with adults and with each other are very good and have a positive impact on their learning. Students respond very well to the help provided and enjoy the praise often given. Most consider different points of view in a sensible manner. When given opportunities to work in groups, students work co-operatively, sharing resources and ideas. For example, in a Year 9 science lesson about forces causing changes in speed, students worked seriously, concentrated throughout and co-operated well together to gain a very good understanding of the topic. Students from different ethnic groups are well integrated into the school community.
10. The ethos of the learning support faculty promotes a positive approach to learning for its students. Students with speech or communication difficulties mix well and take part in lessons alongside their peers. The interest and involvement of staff across the whole school in both the personal and academic development of students with special educational needs are very good and, as a result, students with special educational needs have good attitudes to school. Students with a wide range of learning difficulties generally work well together and are supportive and sensitive to each other's needs. The silly behaviour of some students can disrupt lessons, but strategies are in place to deal with these effectively.

Attendance

11. Attendance is very good throughout the school, and well above the national average. The school telephones home the first day of absence if it does not know the reason. Nearly all students are punctual to school but a minority of students are late to some lessons.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-2003 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.8	School data	0.4
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Personal development

12. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is very good. Students are encouraged to care for themselves, their community and the wider world. The school

promotes an ethos where students are able to explore their concerns, celebrate their successes and provide support for their peers.

13. In assemblies and in activities such as Reflection and Planning and the Learning Team Meetings, students are taught to be reflective, to think beyond the material world and to show tolerance for all members of their community. The school provides very good opportunities for students to express themselves and to build confidence and self-esteem. Well-planned assemblies make a valuable contribution to students' spiritual and moral development. Opportunities for students to develop socially are evident in many aspects of school life; for example, lunch time in the food hall is a pleasant social occasion and students participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. There are regular opportunities for students to develop awareness and understanding of a range of cultural traditions represented in Great Britain. During the week of the inspection, for example, there was a vibrant display of Hindu artefacts in the school library.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall. The school has worked very successfully at developing teaching to meet the learning needs of all students. The assessment of students' work and progress is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Eight in ten lessons are good or better and some teaching is outstanding; there is no unsatisfactory teaching.
- Teachers are very knowledgeable and plan lessons very well.
- Teaching is very enthusiastic and engages students very well in lessons.
- Students respond effectively to the very good range of teaching methods used and achieve well.
- The level of teachers' expectation and challenge is very high in most lessons.
- Students' progress is assessed very well, but marking of class work is not always given enough early attention.

Commentary

14. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subjects and plan their lessons very effectively. They employ a very good variety of stimulating activities that encourage all students to be fully involved and enjoy what they are doing. In four out of ten lessons, teaching and learning are very good or excellent. Students respond well to teachers' very high expectations. Very enthusiastic and well-structured teaching makes students eager to learn. In a further four out of ten lessons, teaching and learning are good and students make good progress as a result of well thought-out and effectively delivered teaching. In the lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, students still make reasonable learning gains but work is not as well organised or the pace is slow, often resulting from the teachers' inexperience. Activities are then not so well matched to students' learning needs and fail to inspire them to work hard. This occasionally results in students losing interest and becoming disruptive. There is no unsatisfactory teaching or learning, which is testament to the commitment the school has to raising standards.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 79 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6 (8%)	23 (29%)	33 (42%)	17 (21%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

15. Teaching and learning are outstanding in French because teachers provide an excellent range of activities which move along at a fast pace. Students are given excellent opportunities to speak in the foreign language, resulting in very high levels of competence. They are very well supported by teachers' very clear explanations and superb language skills. Teaching and learning are very good in mathematics, science, art and design, music and physical education. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in art and design, religious education and French. A Year 7 religious education lesson stimulated lower-attaining students to think deeply about what Jesus looked like; they rose to the challenge very well and produced their own images based upon Biblical accounts. Year 9 students achieved excellent standards in an art and design lesson, where outstanding teaching enabled them to use the work of Henry Moore very successfully to improve the texture in their drawings.
16. Independent study is planned as an integral part of each teaching module and the arrangement of giving students their independent tasks for each half term ensures that expectations are clear and consistent across all subjects. This is helping students to manage their own learning very effectively.
17. Teaching promotes and develops students' skills in literacy well. Aspects of the National Strategy, such as key words, are used effectively to improve and consolidate vocabulary and language skills. However, in some lessons there is too little opportunity for students to express their ideas and to discuss these with others in group situations. Good help is provided for developing mathematical skills in subjects such as science and design and technology. Whilst extensive use is made of graphical methods, students' presentational skills in this area require further development.
18. ICT is used very effectively to improve teaching and learning in most subjects. Teachers make very good use of computer-generated presentations to explain and reinforce concepts. Students have very good computer skills which they use well to analyse information and to improve the presentation of their work. Teachers regularly set independent study tasks that require students to use and develop their ICT skills.
19. Students with special educational needs, including those identified by the school and those with speech or communication difficulties, make good progress and teaching and learning are good. Teachers and learning assistants provide very good support and encouragement, which helps students gain the confidence to improve their learning. However, a failure to take full account of individual needs occasionally reduces the effectiveness of the teaching. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent in the 'Access Groups', where lower-attaining students in each year group are taught together for most of their subjects. There were some good features in most of these lessons. In the best lessons, teachers presented materials matched well to the needs of individual students. These lessons had been planned very well and the evaluation of progress included individual students in the assessment of their own learning, using systems such as 'traffic lights' and target monitoring. In lessons where teaching was not consistently good, the pace was slow and the content lacked challenge for some students.
20. Target setting for students with special educational needs is well established and the mechanisms for monitoring them are in place, using the whole-school systems. However, assessments are sometimes insufficiently sensitive to the specific needs of individual students

with statements of special educational need and more sophisticated and specialised assessment tools need to be introduced in order to record and monitor progress within programmes of intervention.

Assessment

21. The assessment of students' work is a particularly good feature across the school, with very good practice in most subjects. Assessment is linked well to National Curriculum criteria. Students understand how they are assessed and usually know what they need to do to raise the standard of their work. Assessment opportunities are planned into units of work so that students have regular information on their progress. Whilst the assessment of units of work gives good information to students on their learning, much class work goes unmarked. Students receive good oral feedback about their lesson work but marking of their written work is inconsistent and too many errors in basic spelling, punctuation and numeracy go uncorrected.

The curriculum

The school curriculum offers a very good range of learning opportunities for students, including those with special educational needs. All statutory requirements are met. Planning for students as they move into Years 10 and 11 is well under way.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The modular approach to the delivery of the curriculum is highly innovative and well received by students.
- National strategies are embedded well.
- Students with special educational needs benefit from a curriculum that matches their needs.
- There is very good support for learning beyond subject-specific lessons.
- The development of transferable ICT skills is a strength of the provision.
- The modular GCSE curriculum for French breaks new ground for all students.
- There are shortcomings in the accommodation for eating, which impact on the delivery of the curriculum.

Commentary

22. Creative curriculum design and very good planning ensure access to a very wide range of learning opportunities for all students. The modular approach to the planning and teaching of the curriculum gives direction and rhythm to learning, which students respond to well, as they can see clearly where their learning is taking them. The integration of independent study and of 'Reflection and Planning' into the school day provides very good opportunities to encourage students to take responsibility for their own academic and personal development.
23. National strategies and innovative curriculum developments enhance the school's provision. These, alongside participation in new initiatives such as 'Science for the 21st Century' and the collaborative planning of work-related learning, are being used effectively to plan ahead for the next stage of the school's development. Students will have covered the modular GCSE course for French by the end of Year 10 and this is an area of excellence within the curriculum. Plans for links to opportunities for further language studies beyond GCSE and more widely in Years 10 and 11 are in hand. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is meticulously planned and offers significant opportunities for cross-curricular links. These links are also evident in ICT, which is very well used within and beyond the classroom.

Example of outstanding practice

The French Department

The first year group at Peacehaven Community School arrived with well below average attainment. Two and a half years later, all students have taken the first module of their GCSE with an A*-C success rate of 90 per cent.

Such excellent achievement can be linked to student enthusiasm for French, but at the heart of this success story is visionary planning of a modular course with excellent delivery in the classroom by the three members of the department. Hallmarks of their work are consistent use of fast spoken French, clear presentations making use of the interactive whiteboard and meeting the needs of both the highest-attaining students and those with special educational needs. The latter are particularly helped by the expert work of the learning support assistants who speak French well. All students are encouraged to be independent learners, with both computers and dictionaries easily available for students' use. As a result, students learn quickly to understand what they hear; they become fluent French speakers, using cue cards as prompts, although pronunciation is in many cases inexact. Their writing is extensive, fluent and generally accurate. The highest-attaining students use wide-ranging and advanced vocabulary. All this is helped by the outstanding accommodation, with excellent acoustics and resources, which are often produced in-house.

24. Extra-curricular provision is good. Students can participate in a wide range of sports, creative and other activities as individuals or as members of a team, to develop their interests, skills and abilities. Community participation in this area of the school's provision is increasing. The programme of sporting activities is very good and approximately half the students participate. Teams and clubs operate throughout the year and are available to all students. A programme of intra-school activities further enhances participation in sport and students are encouraged to join local sports clubs to further promote sport for life.
25. The school has begun to extend its provision for students who have been identified as very able, gifted or talented. There is an effective range of enrichment opportunities, extension classes and opportunities for early entry to GCSE. Students have also visited local universities in order to encourage them to aspire to higher education and explore subjects not taught in school. The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is very good, including those attached to the special facility for speech or communication difficulties. The 'Access Groups' for English, mathematics and humanities across Years 7, 8 and 9 offer more focused support on key skill areas and are highly effective in building up students' confidence in the wider mainstream curriculum. The flexible arrangements for small group sessions and the excellent quality of intervention from learning assistants in lessons ensure that additional support is well targeted and effective. The school's inclusive approach to planning and teaching requires faculties to take significant responsibilities in relation to special educational needs. Whilst there are some examples of very good practice, for example in mathematics and art and design, there are variations in practice across the school. There is insufficient specialist speech and language therapy input and this not only affects the quality of the specific programmes that students can access, but it imposes unreasonable pressure on teachers to ensure that the statutory requirements of statements are met.

Accommodation, resources and staffing

26. The school environment is very attractive and well maintained with clear signs to guide visitors. The site, which is free of litter and graffiti, is characterised by trees and shrubs that separate the subject blocks and on-site facilities which serve the wider community. Students benefit from purpose built, spacious, well lit and airy learning areas which have positive effects on their attitudes and the learning environment. The school is fully accessible and students are protected by a CCTV system. Resources are very good in all curriculum areas. Interactive whiteboards in all classrooms support the curriculum and enhance the learning environment. However, there are also limitations in accommodation. In design and technology, there is too little accommodation and some of the specialist accommodation is inappropriate. The limited on-site indoor accommodation for physical education, which is also used for examination and testing purposes, restricts development of a well-balanced curriculum. Dining facilities are

inadequate for the number of students in the school. These restrictions and shortcomings are currently impacting adversely on how the curriculum is organised and will be further exacerbated as the school roll increases.

27. Teachers are very well qualified and staffing is matched well to the needs of the curriculum. There is effective deployment of staff and the leadership team has made very good arrangements for the provision of good temporary teachers where it has not yet been possible to recruit suitably qualified and experienced staff. The quality of the learning assistants is outstanding and they have a range of experience and expertise that is well used to support students in their learning.

Care, guidance and support

The provision of support, advice and guidance to students is very good. Students enjoy very good relationships with staff. The welfare, health and safety of students are **satisfactory**. The school is **good** at seeking the views of students and values them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have a very good relationship with staff and most say there is an adult they can talk to if they have a problem.
- There are very good induction arrangements to help students settle in well.
- Students receive very well-targeted advice to support their progress in each subject.
- Teaching assistants give effective support to the students and contribute well to the ethos of the school.
- Not all staff have been up-dated in procedures for child protection.

Commentary

28. Staff take care to ensure students' welfare, health and safety. They carry out their duties diligently. The school is currently addressing all issues identified in the recent health and safety audit to tighten procedures yet further. A comprehensive health education programme is followed by students in all years through the PSHE programme. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place. However, not all staff have received up-to-date training.
29. Pastoral support for students is seen as a responsibility of all staff and a very committed and strong pastoral team has been created. Staff have a very good relationship with students and are proactive in engaging with them, for example by meeting and eating with them in the food hall. Teachers have a full picture of the strengths and weaknesses of each student. They assess students after each module in all aspects of their work, behaviour and personal development. These are discussed fully with the student and realistic targets are set. Teachers often meet with students after school to resolve difficulties. The arrangements whereby all students have a personal mentor are effective and all students meet with their mentor each week in small groups. These are well-structured sessions linked to the PSHE programme, organisational skills or personal issues. There are good links with parents so that staff and parents work together to support the students. Learning assistants play an important part. They liaise well with teachers, give effective support to students, and contribute well to the ethos of the school. A counsellor visits the school each week to help students with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The school nurse is available to give confidential advice in a drop-in surgery. The Student-2-Student scheme has already trained six Year 9 students as peer mentors.
30. Transfer from primary schools is very well organised. Students settle quickly into Year 7. Parents and students are both very positive about the induction arrangements. A particularly good feature is the involvement of the peer mentors and the counsellor. They provide support where it is needed.

31. The school listens to students' views by means of the school council, questionnaires and the mentor sessions. In addition, the Learning Team Meeting provides a weekly circle time experience. This gives an opportunity for peer support and also feeds students' views back to the school. Students on the Year 7 council believe that their ideas have improved the quality of life in the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's partnership with parents and carers, and with other schools and colleges, is very good. Its links with the community are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school makes great efforts to involve parents in their children's education and in the life of the school.
- The school sends home very frequent and detailed information about the school and student's progress and standards.
- All parents who responded to the questionnaire are comfortable about approaching the school.
- The very good links with other schools and colleges significantly benefit the students' education.

Commentary

32. The determination of the school to inform and involve parents in the education of their children is clear by the frequent communications with home and the accessibility to parents of the headteacher and her staff. General documentation, including the weekly well-presented newsletter, is of good quality and suitably informative. Students take home a Module Booklet every eight weeks, which contains details of the curriculum for each subject, the learning objectives and independent learning tasks. The annual reports to parents go home before the consultation evening. These contain great detail about students' personal development and progress in each subject, with assessment grades and end-of-year target levels. However, the information on progress is not very accessible to parents, and it is not easy for them to know if their children are underachieving or achieving in a satisfactory manner. Postcards are sent home when a child has done well. Teachers communicate with parents by telephone if they have concerns. Attendance at consultation evenings, major productions and events is good. Parents use e-mail to communicate with the school, and say they receive a prompt response. However, the attendance of parents at the various curriculum evenings is low. Attendance at the recent options evening for students in Year 9 was good. There is no parent/teacher association and not all parents appear to appreciate the value of education.
33. The school seeks the views of parents and values their opinions. It has sent out questionnaires, but few parents have responded, as was the case with the Ofsted questionnaire. A Parent Focus Group has been established, which discusses different aspects of school life at its meetings, such as independent study. The frequent telephone calls home are an effective way of ascertaining parents' and carers' opinions.
34. The parents who returned the questionnaire, including nearly all of those who attended the meeting and those spoken to during the inspection, are extremely appreciative of the school and its work. They think that it has very many strengths. However, they say that the poor behaviour of some students disrupts some lessons, and that there is some bullying, but that the school deals effectively and promptly with this. As only a small proportion of parents responded to the questionnaire, this represents the views of a small minority of parents. The inspection team agrees with these comments, but found that the frequency of incidents of poor behaviour and bullying is very small.

35. Links with the community and a wide range of visits and visitors provide good enrichment of the curriculum, especially in music and sports. They support students' personal and social development, as well as widening their experiences and giving them opportunities to learn about the needs of others.
36. The educational links with other schools and colleges are very good, and significantly benefit students' education. The school has a close and effective partnership with local primary schools. There are strong curriculum links, and the headteachers meet each half term to discuss specific issues. The school is working with two secondary schools in the 'Coastal Strip Partnership', to gain increasing flexibility in 14 to 19 provision. Higher attaining students have very good opportunities to read books and write reviews with pupils from local primary schools and students in the private sector. A gymnastic and dance evening was held for pupils from local primary schools and students from Peacehaven Community School. There are very good links with the University of Sussex. In particular, 40 students have taken part in a programme designed to enthuse them about higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance is very good. The headteacher has shown exceptional leadership in setting up and guiding the school through its first years and is supported very well by other leaders in the school. Leadership and management are **very good** across the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school's smooth running and development.
- The shared understanding and commitment of all staff are exceptional.
- The integration of pastoral management within faculties helps to ensure a consistent approach and strengthens school ethos.
- Governance is very strong and well informed about the school's strengths and necessary developments for the future.
- Financial management ensures best value for money.
- Systems for communication are excellent.

Commentary

37. The school has a very clear focus for all its work, encapsulated in its prospectus and expressed as a strong emphasis on learning and developing personal responsibility. Within the school there is a remarkable shared understanding of the school's focus and priorities. All staff, teaching and support staff, have a strong commitment to the school's purposes, an outstanding understanding of their role within the school's work and an enthusiasm to succeed. This is largely due to the success of the governing body in setting the future direction for the school before it opened and to the headteacher for her inspirational vision and design of new systems for managing schools for the 21st century. She and the deputy headteacher form a very strong team and have built an equally energetic team of staff who share the excitement of learning and of building a school to serve the future of the community.
38. The governing body is vigilant and hardworking. Members bring a valuable range of expertise to their work and an enthusiasm for the future of the school. They work within clear structures and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the next steps for development as the school continues its growth. Currently, the governing body is chaired by two co-chairs. This arrangement is effective and ensures a manageable workload as both co-chairmen have full-time commitments.
39. The management of the school is highly effective. Strategic management is outstanding and, as a result of the innovative management structure, a large team of strongly committed and

effective faculty leaders and advanced skills teachers rigorously monitor and evaluate the work of the school and ensure the consistent implementation of school priorities. The integration of pastoral management within faculties strengthens the consistency of approach and the reinforcement of the school ethos. Systems for communication are excellent. Self-evaluation is reflected at every level in the school and is recognised for its critical role in school improvement. All departments review and monitor their performance within a cycle of continuous self-improvement. Assessment data is used well to set targets and identify the underachievement of individual students. This is a current priority and electronic systems are now in place to record internal assessments and track students' progress across the curriculum and year groups.

Example of outstanding practice

The school has adopted an innovative approach to leadership and management, based on high quality teaching, learning and guidance for students and reflection, collegiality and collaboration for all staff.

The management structure takes into account the workforce remodelling agenda, which coincided with the establishment of the school. The curriculum structure is based on leadership by a faculty leader working alongside an advanced skills teacher, designed to overcome professional isolation and involving a responsibility to nurture and care for one another. Consultation groups consist of: a research and development team addressing curriculum issues; a management and development team addressing whole school issues; and the management, administration, clerical and technician team. The strategic leadership team consists of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher only. Leadership is a responsibility dispersed to and understood by all who work in the school; it embodies a spirit of service towards one another, the students and the school. Staff are empowered to carry out their roles with maximum effectiveness and minimum control and monitoring; this results in a high level of participation and commitment to the work of others. Faculty teams have their own identities and are encouraged to develop their own interests and focus but are bound together by a common purpose and shared values of caring and collaboration. This approach to leadership and management, linking theory and practice, is exemplified in the duty day where advanced skills teachers, head of learning support and development, headteacher or deputy headteacher observe the school at work, targeting support where agreed or need is identified. Formal analysis of this support and observation informs the development of policy and practice. The process has resulted in an exceptionally open atmosphere, where teachers and other staff genuinely enjoy their work being observed and the school is flexible in responding to the daily management of operational issues and strategic matters.

40. The school has been able to recruit high quality staff and constantly ensures this quality through a programme of professional development. Teachers are actively encouraged to observe each other's lessons and share good practice. Self-evaluation and peer appraisal are integral to performance management. Where temporary staffing difficulties occur, any impact on learning is mitigated by the strong management systems in place. Support staff are deployed very effectively to support students' learning. Newly qualified teachers are a strength of the school and their induction is very good. The school is closely linked to local universities and there is a high demand for training places. At present, postgraduate science students are based at the school.
41. The quality of support provided by the management, administrative, clerical and technician team is outstanding. Their work is integrated into the common purposes and goals of the school and their range of experience and expertise are used very effectively to support the whole school in focusing upon teaching and learning. Their appointment, management and leadership anticipated the workload agreement and remodelling of the teaching profession. The success of current arrangements and the capacity to develop further innovative practice is recognised by the local education authority and the school is being used as an example of good practice.
42. There is a very strong commitment to inclusion across the whole school and the inclusive ethos is known and appreciated by students, parents and staff alike. The learning support faculty has a clear collective vision and high aspirations to enable students with a wide range of special educational needs, both within and beyond the special facility, to achieve their

potential. This is a very good foundation for the continuing development of inclusive provision for special educational needs across the school. The faculty is well managed and there is effective deployment of staff. Staff have an appropriate range of expertise and experience to meet the needs of students. Partnership with parents is very good.

43. The school has a very good capacity to manage the curriculum changes necessary in the move to Key Stage 4 next year.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,688,705	Balance from previous year	82,036
Total expenditure	1,598,140	Balance carried forward to the next	172,601
Expenditure per pupil	4,439		

44. Financial planning and management procedures are exemplary. Since opening, the school has had the services of a well-qualified, full-time finance officer, who works closely with the headteacher and with a very supportive, very well-informed governors' finance committee. The school acted very quickly and positively to implement the small number of recommendations arising from the recent audit report. Very effective steps are taken to ensure that best value principles are consistently applied to all contracts for which the school is directly responsible.
45. The only concerns arise from issues related to the accommodation problems still unresolved since the school buildings were completed three years ago as a result of a Public Funding Initiative. The finance officer currently spends a significant proportion of her week trying to resolve these outstanding matters. As the additional building phase proposed when the school was opened has been cancelled, creative and flexible approaches will need to be found to overcome the existing accommodation problems and inadequacies for design and technology, physical education and the food hall.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because teaching is good and promotes positive attitudes to learning.
- Very good curriculum planning and assessment are helping to raise standards in English.
- When planning lessons, teachers do not always provide enough challenge for able students.
- Students do not always have enough opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills through collaborative work.

Commentary

46. Standards of attainment in Year 9 are below levels expected nationally, but this represents good achievement since the standards of this cohort on entry to the school were well below the national average in the tests taken at the end of Year 6. Attainment on entry in the current Year 7 is broadly in line with national expectations and students make good progress. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good as they are well supported in lessons and have the confidence to do well.
47. Students work independently and show good listening skills. Many respond confidently to questions and show a willingness to explore ideas in front of others. A particular strength is the way students initiate questions, showing higher level thinking skills and the ability and desire to reflect on their learning. Collaborative learning is less well developed, with many preferring to work independently when offered the opportunity to discuss with others. Students read aloud clearly and with confidence. They are able to analyse texts well and use their style guides effectively to support their writing. Standards in writing are lower in Year 9 than in the other years but written work shows care and effort.
48. The quality of teaching is good overall, ranging from very good to satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and know what students need to learn. Lessons are planned well and run at a brisk pace, with a range of activities that reflect different learning styles and encourage students to learn well. Most students achieve well because teaching and planning are focused on their learning needs and lessons are interesting and challenging. However, lesson planning does not always provide enough different tasks to meet the needs of higher-attaining students. As a consequence, they achieve less in lessons than they do in independent study.
49. Relationships are very good. Teachers set high levels of expectation for behaviour and attitudes and for students' readiness for learning. There is an emphasis on self-discipline and mature behaviour and students develop good learning habits because of this. Independent learning is well structured through modular units which provide guidance and timelines to ensure all students are supported in their work. These units provide a good level of challenge for able students.
50. Assessment and marking are used very effectively to raise standards. Marking is detailed and informative and clearly explains how work can be improved. Students are familiar with National Curriculum level criteria and receive regular feedback on their progress. They are encouraged to evaluate their own work and the work of others, set personal targets and take responsibility for their achievement. Regular end-of-unit tests allow teachers to record and monitor the

progress of their students and identify areas of weakness which then inform departmental medium- and long-term planning.

51. In Years 7 to 9, all students are taught one lesson of drama each week. Teaching in drama lessons is good and students achieve well. Well-planned schemes of work and high expectations of behaviour ensure that students are imaginatively engaged in lessons, enjoy their work and manage their own behaviour well. There is good use of ICT in lessons. Resources from the Internet stimulate and engage students in their learning. Interactive whiteboards enable sharply focused starter activities and students' active involvement in text annotation. Schemes of work and lesson plans routinely incorporate websites to enhance learning and support independent research. Students develop ICT skills when creating persuasive and information texts.
52. Leadership and management are very good. The new head of faculty provides clear vision and direction and is successfully building on the good practice already established by the advanced skills teacher. The department is committed to developing teaching and learning and consequently teachers work very effectively as a team on collaborative planning and self-review. Current staffing difficulties are well managed to ensure that students' learning is not interrupted. The department has a clear capacity for continued improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. Good strategies to promote literacy skills are found in many subjects. There is a whole-school focus on the development of literacy and language, with literacy objectives agreed for each module, displayed in subject areas and reinforced through schemes of work and lesson plans. Standards of literacy are satisfactory overall but there are weaknesses in the technical accuracy of written work.
54. Opportunities for speaking and listening are provided in many subjects, with good questioning being used to encourage exploratory thought and support extended answers. Paired work is used effectively for active engagement in learning, and in more formal situations students use appropriate language with confidence. Students in French achieve exceptionally high standards in speaking. In general, reading skills are supported well and students are confident and fluent when reading aloud. Reading is promoted through the library which is an effective reference and study centre. The school makes very good use of reading journals to sustain personal reading from Year 6 and the librarian promotes reading through a range of activities. Key words for subjects are displayed in many classrooms and are regularly revisited. Writing frames are used effectively in most subjects to structure and extend writing. In science, good standards are achieved in extended writing and templates are used effectively for recording results.
55. Proof reading habits are actively encouraged. Students use dictionaries routinely and receive feedback on spelling, word-processing errors, punctuation and sentence structure from module assessed work. However, technical errors are not a focus of day-to-day marking and students do not receive regular feedback on basic spelling and punctuation errors. The literacy objective of the last module was to focus on proof reading in every subject, but the impact of this is not yet evident in students' writing.

French

Provision in French is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are excellent.
- Leadership is visionary; management is excellent.

- Standards of attainment are well above average.
- Achievement is excellent. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as higher-attaining students.
- There is very effective use of ICT as a regular means of presenting lessons, coupled with students' use of ICT in much of their written work.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent.
- Assessment procedures are very good.

Commentary

56. Standards in French are well above average at the end of Year 9. Students' writing is fluent, and usually extensive; ideas are very mature and are expressed with an unusual richness of vocabulary and phrasing. For example, students learn early in Year 7 how to express an opinion, using expressions like 'à mon avis'. There is early development of the three main tenses, and students use a wide range of adjectives in their writing, which in most cases is accurate in both structure and spelling. In spoken French, students are able to talk fluently and accurately with the help of cue cards. Their GCSE work in Year 9 resulted in 90 per cent of students gaining an A*-C grade in the speaking module. Their pronunciation, however, is often imprecise, although it is usually understandable. They understand rapidly spoken French, both what they hear on tape and what their teachers say. Achievement is excellent over time, particularly as Year 9 students entered the school with well below average levels in their core subjects. Achievement is very good in all lessons, with students with special educational needs achieving as well as other students.
57. Students' learning is excellent. This is the direct result of the excellent teaching of all members of staff. The pace of lessons is fast; presentation is excellent, with a great deal of use of the interactive whiteboard; activities are wide-ranging with all four language skills being used in most lessons; and teachers use French for nearly all communication and make sure that students understand what they are saying. The needs of all students are met through the excellent use of different materials and activities matched to individual levels of attainment. In their work, students are supported by the excellent work of the learning support assistants, who speak French well and enable students with special educational needs to thrive. Assessment is very good, with evidence of peer and self-evaluation, as well as teacher assessment. The recording of students' progress is computerised, instantly accessible and very clear. Students' behaviour is excellent and attitudes are extremely positive.
58. The French curriculum is innovative, offering a modular course with targets which are attainable by students and available to parents as well. Students learn how to develop their language skills from the ordinary to the interesting, and the highest-attaining students in Year 9 do so at a near A-level standard. The decision to start the GCSE course for all students in Year 9 is both realistic and an example of the shared visionary leadership of the head of faculty and the advanced skills teacher. Day-to-day management is excellent, as are both the spacious accommodation and the resources of the department. Computers and dictionaries are easily available and enable the students to develop their independent learning.
59. The department has very good capacity to develop standards even further and to be seen by others as a centre of excellence in the teaching and learning of French.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, so students achieve very well.

- The use of resources, particularly of the computer-controlled screens, is very good, increasing students' learning by visual means.
- The National Numeracy Strategy is very effective; a strong feature in the very good planning of lessons that leads to the increase in standards seen in the inspection.
- The department's assessment procedures are fully in place, but the marking of students' work is not yet rigorous enough.

Commentary

60. Standards seen in the inspection in Year 9 are in line with national averages. Students' achievement is very good as their standard in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 was well below average. Higher-attaining students achieve very well, solving trigonometry problems in three dimensions with confidence. Average-attaining students also achieve very well; they draw accurate scale drawings, for example, and solve associated problems. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs achieve well, limited by the literacy difficulties they have in the comprehension of problems; however, they quickly forget what they have learnt and their numeracy skills are below expectations as a result. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys or girls.
61. Teaching is very good and students learn very well. There is no unsatisfactory teaching and very little that is only satisfactory. A particularly strong feature of teaching is the very good use of resources. The computer-controlled screens are used particularly well to enhance learning by visual means. Images on the screens are often moved, for example, to show the positions of an image of a reflected object. This gives students greater understanding of the mathematical processes involved and learning moves at a faster pace than might otherwise be the case. Another strong feature of the learning is the application of the National Numeracy Strategy, particularly effective in ensuring the very good planning of lessons that leads to the very good learning seen. Teachers use their very good subject expertise to ensure that explanations to students are clear and accurate, from which students learn. Teaching is stimulating, enthusiastic and consistently challenging, stemming from the innovative approach to learning by the department. Activities and demands are matched sensitively to students' needs. Assessment techniques are fully in place, but the marking of students' work needs to be more rigorous, offering students further written comments to help them improve, and in the setting out of their work, for example. The use of independent study is good, fostering independence, and supports the development of coursework very well.
62. Leadership and management are very good. A particular strength is the monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching, which are excellent. This is why teaching overall is very good. The leadership is very knowledgeable and innovative in its approach to the curriculum. A very good team approach to the department's work has been established, a particularly positive outcome as some of the teachers are newly qualified. Teachers have high aspirations for their students and communicate a very good sense of purpose to the work of students in lessons.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. Standards are average. The teaching of mathematics in science is good, with careful explanation of processes such as algebraic transformations and calculations. Graphical work is satisfactory. In physical education, standards are also average in calculations involving speed, distance and time. Standards are average in art and design; teaching uses perspective drawing, tessellations and pattern making to inform students' learning and understanding of three dimensions. Standards in design and technology are also average; weighing and measuring is good, and accurate, in food technology; students have limited experience of measuring length in resistant materials, but there are sound developments in space and shape. Opportunities to use mathematics in the teaching of geography are not sufficiently developed.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The outstanding leadership of the head of faculty is promoting very high expectations and a shared commitment to raising standards further.
- Very skilful and knowledgeable teaching is very successful in helping students improve their knowledge and understanding.
- Students respond enthusiastically to the variety of challenging activities in lessons and achieve very well as a result.
- The monitoring of students' progress is used very effectively to plan future learning.
- Very good use is made of ICT to extend students' understanding and interest.
- Because class work is not marked regularly, students' notes sometimes provide a poor basis for future revision.

Commentary

64. Standards in Year 9 are in line with the national average. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject, which they use confidently in unfamiliar situations. Most students in Year 9 entered the school with below average levels of attainment in the national tests in Year 6, and highly effective teaching is enabling them to achieve very well. Achievement is also very high in Years 7 and 8, with students learning at a very much faster rate than in most schools. Students concentrate well in lessons and are very responsive to the challenging and often exciting teaching that they encounter. Relationships are very good and the majority of students are eager to contribute. Because teachers assess students' progress very well and provide appropriate individual support, achievement is very good for the vast majority of students. Those with special educational needs benefit from the good individual support provided by learning assistants. Although a few students, particularly boys, do not listen well in lessons and make less progress as a result, teachers are very skilful at taking appropriate action and minimising any disruption.
65. Teaching is always at least good and is very good overall. Lessons are very well planned to provide a wide variety of stimulating and interesting activities. Teachers use their subject knowledge very well to explain scientific ideas and to develop students' understanding. Expectations are very high. The strong emphasis placed on scientific enquiry is helping to develop very proficient investigative skills. Because students are given very good encouragement to think ideas through for themselves, they are able to use independent study time very effectively. ICT is used very well to help students learn better. Computer assisted visual aids help to explain and develop concepts very clearly and students make very good use of computer programs to present assessed work and to collect and analyse information. As a result of the high quality teaching, students usually learn very effectively and are fully absorbed in their work. However, because of the emphasis on making the work exciting, the pace sometimes slows when students are given more routine tasks to do. Teachers assess students' progress very well and provide very clear indications of how they are achieving compared with national standards. Good advice is given on what students need to do to improve, but the marking of class work is inadequate. Uncorrected errors and poorly drawn diagrams sometimes reduce students' ability to recall earlier work.
66. The leadership of the science faculty is outstanding. Developments in the subject are forward looking and extremely dynamic. A very clear model of excellent science education exists, and is being put into practice very effectively. Excellent team working enables all the staff to contribute fully to the improvements taking place. Teachers focus consistently and very effectively on improving students' learning, while the work of the technician is outstanding in managing resources and maintaining a very high level of support for work in lessons. The management of the subject is very good. Very effective monitoring provides a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses. Teachers evaluate their practice very openly,

which allows ideas to be shared and implemented very effectively. The head of faculty is very well supported by the advanced skills teacher, and both provide excellent role models. Their very comprehensive knowledge of the science curriculum and of teaching and learning contribute greatly to the very good provision in the subject. As a result, the capacity for further improvement is very high. Very good consideration has been given to the next stages of development. Substantial research has been undertaken and very effective working arrangements established with other schools and organisations. A very clear structure now exists for the future management of the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of the good structure to their learning and the regular use that students make of computers, their progress and understanding of how to apply ICT is very good.
- The high quality facilities and the large numbers of computers available throughout the school mean that students use computers as a significant aid to their learning.
- Teachers' use of new technology, through the use of computers and interactive whiteboards, has a positive impact on students' learning.

Commentary

67. Attainment on entry is variable and broadly in line with national expectations, but the attainment of many students is below that level. The standards of most students by this stage of Year 9 are in line with national expectations; the standards of a fewer proportion of students than on entry are below average. Lower attainers and students with special educational needs make good, and often very good, progress, so that they too work at nationally expected levels.
68. Achievement in Year 7 is good and accelerates through the year. The school wisely concentrates on ensuring that all students can move forward at an appropriate pace, consolidating their knowledge and filling in the gaps, and then quickly moves into a wide range of activities which are interesting and can be readily applied in other subjects. In Years 8 and 9, progress continues to move forward so students achieve very well, although there are insufficiently complex tasks to take the higher attainers to the highest levels.
69. Teaching was satisfactory at the time of the inspection when a key member of staff was away. In consequence, the high quality of teaching which was identified in a survey of students' previous work was not seen in practice.
70. The school's Intranet, with focused curriculum materials, supports learning well. Students have a sound structure to their learning which enables them to succeed and they are constantly challenged. They learn to start work on their own tasks and use what they know well. Generally, students have very good attitudes to their learning and behave well. However, some take advantage of the comparative freedom of the lessons and on occasion do not work on their set tasks but engage in other activities on the computer. The school takes effective action to deal with this kind of behaviour.
71. The quality of curriculum leadership over time has been very good because systems have been put into place which are extremely effective. In the absence of the head of faculty at the time of the inspection, it continues to be satisfactory. There are good plans for further developing the work of the school and introducing appropriate examinations at GCSE level both in ICT and business studies. Currently, the senior team is giving sound leadership to the subject on a day-to-day basis, and there is hard work and commitment both by staff and managers to making ICT a basic skill for learning for every student.

72. Progress since the start of the school has been variable because of staffing shortages, but the current plans and appointments mean that the best of current practice is likely to further develop.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

73. There are systematic development plans and very good progress is being made in ensuring that students use computers in all of their subjects as required by the National Curriculum. The school Intranet allows students to get access to subject-based materials, using a wide range of different programs, prepared specifically by their teachers to aid their learning. All staff have received focused training to support the use of computers in their lessons and this is becoming more and more successfully applied.
74. Teachers use ICT very effectively to aid their teaching. It is regularly used in lessons for projecting images, working interactively with the computer and presenting information and tasks in an interesting manner that enables students to learn quickly and effectively. Computer systems are used for collecting information about students' attainment and this is stored centrally so that there are very good records. Technical support is very good, so that teachers can be confident that everything works when they need it to.
75. The ICT lessons allow students to be well prepared to use their knowledge and understanding of computer programs effectively in their other lessons. Students have become very adept at taking their learning about different programs and transferring this into new situations in other subjects. This is a strength of the provision.
76. Overall, the provision for ICT across the curriculum is very good and potentially excellent.

HUMANITIES

77. Humanities is taught in Years 7, 8 and 9 as an integrated course including history, geography and religious education. The school employs a two-week timetable and a modular arrangement for teaching different elements of these subjects during the three-year course. For these reasons, it was only possible to sample a few lessons and some students' work in history and geography during the inspection. Religious education was inspected in detail.
78. The humanities faculty is well led, with clear vision for the future. Courses are planned well to meet National Curriculum and locally agreed syllabus requirements. Teachers and learning assistants work well together as a supportive team sharing good practice and ensuring that all students, including those with special educational needs, have good access to the common curriculum. Policies and documentation are comprehensive and clear and are ensuring consistent approaches as the school grows. Management of the development of humanities is good.
79. Geography was sampled in two Year 9 lessons that covered elements of the National Curriculum programmes of study for geography. No teaching of geography was observed in Years 7 and 8. Teaching in the lessons observed was satisfactory but they covered only small amounts of the National Curriculum programmes of study. In samples of work by students in Years 7 to 9, standards are below the expectations of the National Curriculum. Year 9 students entered the school with standards well below national levels, so their current attainment represents satisfactory achievement. Students are not being taught enough geography within humanities to give them the sound geographical knowledge and the skills base needed for GCSE study in Years 10 and 11.
80. History was sampled in two Year 8 lessons that covered elements of the National Curriculum programmes of study for history. No teaching of history was seen in Years 7 and 9. Teaching in the lessons observed was good. One lesson seen involved a special educational needs access group where students showed some good recall of previous learning on the British

Empire. In samples of work by students in Years 7 to 9, standards are below the national average. Year 9 students entered the school with well below average standards in history, so their current attainment represents good achievement during their time in the school.

81. Planning in history is good and there are detailed and effective schemes of work and other documents. The department is beginning to make very good use of writing frames to help students improve their skills in extended and analytical writing. An example of this good practice is the writing frame on Oliver Cromwell, where students in Year 8 have to decide whether or not he was a war criminal. The writing standards of students in this piece of work were higher than in other work where students were not provided with this kind of support. The department is currently developing similar writing frames for other units of work and these will provide a good foundation for GCSE work.
82. History makes a good contribution to citizenship. The unit of work on suffragettes in Year 9, for example, begins with a couple of lessons that link the topic of women's votes at the beginning of the 20th century with work on the importance of voting today and the influences that may affect people's voting patterns in the modern world. These initial lessons, as well as setting the scene for women's suffrage, enable students to build up their knowledge and understanding of rights and responsibilities in a democratic society.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement.
- Good assessment of independent learning informs students of how they are doing.
- Very good leadership and management of the department is helping raise achievement.
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to use specialist vocabulary and discuss ideas with each other.
- The subject makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

83. The standards of work seen at Year 9 are broadly in line with the expectations of the East Sussex Agreed Syllabus. Only lessons in Year 7 were observed as religious education was not being taught in the other year groups during the inspection. Achievement is good, mainly because the work is matched to the capabilities of the students and there is a variety of activities. Students with special educational needs often receive extra help in class to help them succeed. Independent study is assessed and levelled and students know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. Most students behave well and come to lessons eager to learn, but a few behave inappropriately. The curriculum provides good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by providing time for reflection on the existence of God, the consideration of moral and social issues and through the study of aspects of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.
84. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a variety of approaches to make lessons interesting and challenging. There is a full scheme of work and lesson plans to ensure a consistent approach. Lessons are very well prepared, have a good pace and use all the time available. Lesson objectives are shared with the class and have starter, main and plenary activities. There is a balance of acquiring and applying knowledge and understanding that challenges students suitably. However, the opportunity to talk in pairs and small groups to test out ideas and to use specialist vocabulary is less well developed.

85. Leadership and management are very good. The department has a clear direction and is already preparing for Year 10 next year by considering the GCSE short course for everyone. The department works well together to share best practice. The very full scheme of work and exemplar lesson plans help to promote the consistent approach taken throughout the department. Management is supportive and encouraging. Teaching and learning are monitored carefully and appropriate strategies used to continually raise achievement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good; teachers are committed and are developing the subject effectively.
- Students make good progress and make products that they enjoy taking home.
- The previous unsettled staffing situation has been resolved and the leadership team is starting to impact positively on standards and provision.
- Good assessment enables students to know where they are and how to get better.
- The limited accommodation for making products in resistant materials restricts some students' progress.
- Tasks do not always have a specific focus on the needs of higher-attaining students.

Commentary

86. The provision for design and technology consists of lessons in design and lessons in food technology as two separate subjects. Students' attainment on entry is below average in design and technology and particularly in making food products.
87. The standards seen in Year 9 are at national averages in design and technology and in food technology. Their achievement in food contributes significantly to students' making and evaluation skills. Students have covered the whole of the National Curriculum programmes of study. All students are working at similar levels and boys and girls achieve equally well. Students with special educational needs are supported well, either by their learning assistant when they hold a statement of special educational need, or by their teacher when they have not. These students then achieve as well as the rest of the class. Technicians and learning assistants make notable contributions to the learning of students.
88. Achievement is good overall. Students spend similar time in the design area as they do in food technology, studying resistant materials of wood, metal and plastic as well as graphics. In addition, they study supporting areas of electronics, mechanisms and control in the design area, resulting in time pressures there. The school is planning to provide a composite design and technology attainment level to parents at the end of Year 9, using the high quality assessment systems in both areas.
89. Teachers have worked very hard to develop good quality lesson plans which are supported well by good learning resources. These are translated well into lessons which always have good and very good features. They have a crisp pace and allow the students to make good quality products. Teachers set high standards for both work and behaviour. Students respond very well, are enthusiastic and learn quickly and effectively. Students learn well and make good progress lesson by lesson, but the process of working in electronics or resistant materials takes longer than the work with food. The limited accommodation for making products in resistant materials needs urgent improvement as some students do not work with sufficient specialist equipment and this slows their progress and attainment. Teaching and learning are good, with some very good features, enabling students to make good quality work

with evident enjoyment. However, the areas of designing and planning are weaker, leading to an imbalance in learning. In addition, work is not sufficiently focused for higher-attaining students.

90. The leadership and management of both areas are good. Both leaders have real expertise and have worked hard, in a very short space of time, to prepare and develop their areas. This is having a considerable positive impact on students' learning. A more effective focus on integrating and sharing the coverage of the programmes of study and the assessment system is now required to make learning even more effective. Both areas have set themselves high standards and expectations for the quality of students' work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and results in very good learning.
- There are very high expectations of students who have very positive attitudes and behave very well.
- There are challenging and interesting tasks as well as other very well-planned learning opportunities.
- Standards in Year 9 are in line with the national expectations and this represents very good achievement over time.
- There are not sufficient planned opportunities to challenge gifted and talented students.
- There is insufficient provision in ICT.

Commentary

91. Students in Year 9 are achieving standards that are in line with national averages. These students entered school with levels of attainment that were well below average, and are achieving very well as the result of the very good teaching and the range of curriculum opportunities available. From the outset, teachers adopt a rigorous approach to the teaching of drawing skills and the use of colour. Because of this, students learn to draw well using a variety of materials, to mix and apply colour effectively and to manipulate clay with increasing confidence and ability. The good time allocation in art and design, coupled with very good teaching strategies, allows these skills to be consolidated and results in very good achievement.
92. Students also learn much about the characteristics and styles of famous artists and other cultures, which influences their work. The analytical and observational drawing skills developed in a variety of media by students in Year 9, and inspired by the works of Henry Moore, are an outstanding example. The drawing exercise on the translation of feeling into line and texture which Year 7 students began with eyes closed, whilst each holding a textured natural object, is another very good example of the ways in which the senses are stimulated and expectations are raised.
93. The subject also makes a good contribution to the development of literacy skills through the self-evaluation exercises, critical study work and the annotation of research work.
94. Teaching and learning are very good, and on occasions outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations of all students. Planning is very thorough. Teachers use ICT very effectively and very confidently to stimulate and enhance learning, but opportunities for students to use ICT within the art rooms are more limited. Assessment procedures are consistently and effectively

used to inform students of their progress, their National Curriculum levels, and ways to improve their work. Regular target setting reinforces expectations of improvement. Independent study is set to support or to extend classroom learning and is marked regularly. Data analysis is already assisting curriculum development and, as data is built up, can be used more effectively to identify any underachievement in different groups of students. Students with special educational needs are supported very well through a range of teaching strategies and make good progress. The programme for challenging those identified as gifted and talented still requires further development. Students in Year 9 are being very thoroughly prepared for GCSE work and its new demands. This is very well reflected in their well-developed approaches to research skills and experimentation.

95. Attitudes and relationships are very good. Students behave very well because they enjoy their lessons and respect their teachers' very good subject knowledge. Art makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It also contributes very well to the ethos of the school through the range of very good displays in art rooms and public areas.
96. Art and design is very well led and managed by a very experienced, highly enthusiastic and inspirational specialist who sets and maintains the highest standards. Organisation and planning are very good. Strategic planning for Key Stage 4 is very well advanced. There is a very good programme of additional learning opportunities. A very strong team spirit has been engendered with significant contributions from the technician. United under very strong leadership and management, the art and design team has established a very fertile and stimulating learning environment in which art education is flourishing.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching promotes high quality learning.
- Accommodation and resources for music are excellent.
- Standards in Years 7 and 8 are providing a good foundation for the next stage.

Commentary

97. Standards in music in Years 7 and 8 are above expectations, which represents very good achievement given the low attainment of most students when they enter the school. No classes were observed in Year 9 due to the absence through illness of the head of music but numbers for GCSE music in September are promising and show students' satisfaction and enthusiasm for the subject. In a very good lesson in Year 8, students showed real enthusiasm when they realised they were learning something of which they did not think themselves capable and made good gains in their learning, producing some high quality compositions based on 12 bar blues patterns. Commitment to learning in Years 7 and 8 is strong, and all students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. There are no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls.
98. Teaching and learning are very good overall. During the inspection, an able supply music teacher, assisted by an advanced skills teacher who works with the school regularly, undertook the teaching. There was one very clear example of charismatic teaching of a Year 8 class, where the vocal demonstration by the teacher of a blues tune, especially composed for the lesson, sparked off some very good composing activity by students. In Year 7, composing, listening and performing activities are developing well and appreciation of other students' efforts in music is a feature of lessons. Provision for ICT in lessons is good. The direction of the choir is skilful and on one occasion resulted in a moving performance of excerpts from a major new work. Instrumental learning is at an early stage of development.

99. Music is securely managed due to the determination of the leadership group to attract good temporary staff. The appointment of an advanced skills teacher for music in September should do much to consolidate the work of the department. Schemes of work indicate a good level of planning. Accommodation for music is outstanding and there are excellent resources, including a gamelan orchestra, which should open up some exciting possibilities for improving standards and achievement in the future.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching promotes very good learning and good achievement by the vast majority of students.
- A very good climate for learning develops very good attitudes in students.
- Very good leadership and management of the team are focused well on a commitment to very high standards.
- Good assessment procedures which are developing students' ability to self-assess and set targets for improvement.
- There are no specific areas requiring improvement, but very limited on-site indoor accommodation is hindering the future development of an otherwise well-balanced curriculum.

Commentary

100. Teachers' predicted assessment grades for students at the end of Year 9 in 2004 show that students are working broadly in line with national expectations. Boys and girls are achieving similar standards. Evidence from the inspection supports these assessments. During Years 7 to 9, students begin to apply skills with accuracy, precision and control. This was apparent in athletics, cricket and stool ball lessons. In Year 7, students begin to perform movement and skill with technical correctness. By Year 9, they are able to analyse, assess and evaluate movement with technical awareness and to perform skills with vigour and good technical and tactical acumen. In Years 7 to 9, they develop a good knowledge and understanding of how different types of exercise can contribute to their fitness and health. The vast majority of students are competent in performing warm-up and cool-down exercises and have a sound knowledge of anatomy and physiology.
101. Students' achievement in relation to their variable standards on entry is good. Some students work at levels in excess of those usual at their age. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good. The more gifted and talented students are given every opportunity to develop their advanced skills.
102. The department puts great emphasis on developing students' literacy skills. This underpins all learning. Staff continually emphasise key words and constantly encourage students to develop their knowledge and understanding of technical language and to use it in relation to their physical development.
103. The department has developed a very good climate for learning, where all students feel valued and included. Teaching is very good and promotes the students' good progress and success. Very good subject knowledge, very detailed planning linked to units of work, and very high expectations underpin all teaching and learning. Students' attitudes to physical education are very good and 100 per cent participation in lessons was recorded. In a few cases where the management of students is satisfactory rather than good, the concentration of a few students wanes and they do not consolidate skills as well as in other lessons. Otherwise, lessons are very high in productivity and pace.

104. Students reach high levels of attainment in physical education because the emphasis is placed on developing their understanding of the learning process. Teachers show their passion for, and commitment to, the subject through a learning environment which is challenging, encouraging and exploits a range of learning styles to meet students' needs. Most importantly, however, teachers ask students to take some responsibility for their own learning in order to become independent learners through reciprocal teaching in which students and teachers work together to advance learning. This is best exemplified in the very good use of the extended lesson when teachers and students work with each other through modules of generic games to develop understanding, observation and analysis, umpiring and officiating, and coaching and leadership.
105. Assessment procedures are good. Teachers' assessment and students' self-assessment are used for setting individual learning goals in order to improve students' understanding of National Curriculum levels and raise their own and others' levels of attainment. The curriculum is well balanced to match the needs of all students. There is good use of ICT across the curriculum. Students have opportunities to participate in clubs, team games and competitions. Some students gain local and district honours. Fifty per cent participation in sport is very commendable. However, limited on-site indoor accommodation plus demands on its use for examination purposes restricts the future delivery of the well-balanced curriculum.
106. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of faculty has formed a very strong and committed team who provide positive role models to students. Leadership ensures very clear educational direction. There is a strong sense of purpose and high aspirations for the development of the students. This is achieved through critical self-evaluation and a zealous commitment to high standards.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught in a timetabled lesson, as well as through cross-curricular themes in other subjects and in the weekly reflection and planning sessions. The school has a good understanding of where other subjects make a contribution to students' understanding of these areas. Only citizenship was inspected in detail but PSHE was sampled. Students are given good opportunities to reflect on the range of issues identified in national guidance. In Year 8, because of staffing difficulties in other subjects, students follow an additional lesson in citizenship.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A scheme of work shows clearly how the National Curriculum is being covered.
- The assessment policy is used well to inform learning.
- Developing arrangements enable all students to show skills of participation and responsibility.
- Opportunities are emerging to enable everyone to develop their skills of enquiry and communication.
- Other subjects contributing to citizenship units do not always ensure that the National Curriculum requirements are met fully and that students are aware that they are studying citizenship.

Commentary

107. The overall standard of work seen is below national expectations at Year 9. However, students' achievement during the three years is satisfactory. Students participate in the school and year councils and, in so doing, gain knowledge and understanding of the democratic system. They are slowly developing links between their knowledge and understanding in taught aspects of the course and their skills of communication, participation and responsibility. Year 8 have gained knowledge and understanding of local democracy in the context of regeneration projects. The taught aspects of the course are assessed with agreed criteria and levels and students know what they need to do to improve their work.
108. Lessons in citizenship only took place in Year 8 during the inspection and teaching and learning were satisfactory. The three units of assessed knowledge in other years are delivered mainly through humanities and English, but students do not always know that they are studying citizenship, as it is not made explicit to them. The additional timetabled unit for citizenship in Year 8 helps students to develop their skills of enquiry and communication. An 'activities week' provides good opportunities for active participation and for students to show responsibility.
109. Leadership is good. There is a clear direction for the subject and the school is clear how it is addressing the three strands of the curriculum. The provision for Year 10 is being addressed so that the course is ready for September. Management is satisfactory. More careful monitoring of the teaching and learning of the assessed units is needed to ensure that students know that they are studying citizenship.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection*	8
Value for money provided by the school	2

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7); * not applicable (8).*