

INSPECTION REPORT

THE FOLKESTONE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Folkestone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118909

Headteacher: Mrs S Mullett

Lead inspector: Brian Evans

Dates of inspection: 9-12 February 2004

Inspection number: 259142

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

© Crown copyright 2004

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Female
Number on roll:	959

School address:	Coolinge Lane Folkestone Kent
Postcode:	CT20 3RB

Telephone number:	01303 251125
Fax number:	01303 248651

Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Jane Jones

Date of previous inspection:	26 January 1998
------------------------------	-----------------

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Folkestone School for Girls became a specialist mathematics and computing college in September 2003. As a Beacon school in the Shepway Excellence Cluster it works closely with the wider community in Folkestone and its surrounding area. Specific funds are provided to develop work for gifted and talented students as well as learning mentors. It is a training school, has the Artsmark silver and Sportsmark awards and has Investors in People accreditation. As a selective school, attainment on entry to the school is higher than average in comparison with all schools but significantly below the average for most grammar schools. The school is popular and over-subscribed. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Most students are White British; one in forty students are from ethnic minority groups including some from Asian backgrounds and a few Black students. There are no students who speak English as an additional language. Both the number of students with a Statement of Educational Needs and the number of students identified with special educational needs are well below the national average. The range of special educational needs covers hearing impairment, visual impairment, dyspraxia (co-ordination and organisation problems), dyslexia, Aspergers syndrome and medical problems. There are very small numbers of each of these. Ten per cent of the girls are identified as gifted or talented and many others are very able. There are very small numbers of looked-after children, two refugees and no travellers. Pupil mobility is low.

The school liaises closely with the local boys' grammar school in offering students in both schools a wide range of advanced sixth form subjects and courses. Most sixth form students continue on from the main school. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is above average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1049	Brian Evans	Lead inspector	
12682	Jim Griffin	Lay inspector	
20229	John Bryson	Team inspector	English Post 16 English
23528	Andrew Bird	Team inspector	Mathematics Post 16 mathematics
8361	Malcolm Burley	Team inspector	Science Post 16 chemistry
22341	Tristram Shepard	Team inspector	Post 16 design and technology
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology
27666	John Dockrell	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
1085	John Laver	Team inspector	History Post 16 History
30743	Neil Cowell	Team inspector	Geography
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art Citizenship
31673	John Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music Post 16 performing arts
32225	Christine Hough	Team inspector	Physical education Post 16 sports studies
10761	Pat Willan	Team inspector	Religious education
20622	Ann Sydney	Team inspector	Special educational needs
23891	Peter Slape	Team inspector	Design and technology

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA
Herringston Barn
Herringston
Dorchester
Dorset
DT2 9PU

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from the Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	21
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	23
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	49

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Folkestone School for Girls is a very good school.

Students reach well above average standards and achieve very well because, as well as the strong teaching, there is a very positive environment for learning and personal development. Teaching and learning are good, and often very good or excellent, in all years. Leadership and management are very good and students respond well by striving to fulfil their academic potential. Strong links are maintained with the local and wider communities, which are a major contributory factor in developing awareness and maturity among all students. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students have excellent attitudes to school and they are very good learners.
- The innovative leadership of the headteacher, supported by a strong team of senior managers, is excellent.
- Governors provide very good support in strategic and financial planning.
- The excellent links with local schools and colleges make an important contribution to students' opportunities and experiences.
- Half of teaching and learning is very good or excellent, although the pace of students' learning in a small minority of lessons is too slow.
- Assessment procedures are very good but not all students are aware of what they must do to improve their work.

The school's improvement since the last inspection has been good. The senior leadership team has been strengthened and there is now rigorous internal evaluation and monitoring. Tracking of student performance, a greater focus on student progress and the creation of an internal learning support unit have raised students' standards across all ability levels. Careers education has improved significantly and continues to be a priority for further development.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A	A	B	

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Students' achievement is very good. They reach well above average standards at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13. Although the school's results do not look so good compared to similar schools, the grading compares them to many schools whose pupils did much better at the end of Year 9. Other analyses show that students made very good progress. Students achieve very well in English because much of the teaching is very good or excellent. Achievement in modern foreign languages is below that in other subjects and standards are average, but improved leadership and management are already strengthening learning in these subjects. Achievement in mathematics, science, history, business education, citizenship and music is good, and it is very good in information and communication technology (ICT), geography, religious education and art. The small number of students from ethnic minority groups achieve as well as other groups, but a few pupils with special educational needs do not achieve as well as others. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good overall.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Students' attitudes to school are excellent and behaviour is very good. They are happy in school. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good.

Lessons seen included a very high proportion of very good or excellent teaching. Most teachers are adept at ensuring that students think for themselves and work independently. However, teacher input dominates a small number of lessons and this slows students' learning. In a very few cases lessons are unsatisfactory for this reason. Students' work is assessed very well although a minority of students are not sure as to how they can improve their work.

The curriculum is very good throughout the school, and there are good links with the community and excellent links with other schools. Learning resources are good and accommodation is satisfactory overall. Students have access to a very good range of enrichment activities. Students are very well cared for and guided. Assessment procedures and systems for sharing information within the school about students' progress are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership. The leadership of other key staff is very good and management overall is very good. The work of the governors is very good. Statutory requirements are not met because the race equality policy is not formally monitored and reported to the governing body. This omission is not having a detrimental effect on students' achievement.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents and pupils have positive views of the school. There are mixed views on homework and a few parents and students expressed their irritation when homework is not marked promptly. Students feel trusted and participate in large numbers in the wide range of extra-curricular activities available to them in all years. Students are happy, like school and enjoy very good relationships with their peers and with teachers.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- ensure that the very good practice that exists in teaching and learning is shared throughout the school through its monitoring and evaluation procedures, thereby improving the small amount of teaching that is less than good;
- ensure that all departments make students aware of how well they are working towards their learning targets;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure that the school's race equality policy is formally monitored and reported to governors.

THE SIXTH FORM AT FOLKESTONE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective sixth form which is very cost-effective.

A-level results are well above average and have been maintained at a high level since the last inspection. Students achieve very well because of very good leadership and management and teaching. Every effort is made to meet the needs of all students. Course retention rates are very high.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students are highly motivated with a high level of independent learning and achieve very well.
- There is much very good or excellent teaching.
- Students are very mature and contribute extensively to activities in school and in the wider community.
- Curriculum provision is innovative and strengthened by the wide range of courses and subjects that are shared with the neighbouring boys' school.
- Access to new technology in a few subjects is limited.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Very good in English literature . Very good teaching and strong leadership and management motivate students to achieve very highly.
Mathematics	Very good in mathematics . Teachers have high expectations and very good subject knowledge. ICT is not used enough as a resource.
Science	Good in chemistry . Students have good independent learning skills. Students' files are not monitored on a regular basis.
Humanities	Very good in history . Excellent leadership and management successfully encourage innovative approaches to learning. Teaching is very good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Very good in design and technology . Students work well independently with effective teacher support. ICT resources are limited.
Visual and performing arts and media	Very good in art and design . Very good teaching and students' commitment to learning lead to high achievement. Resources for digital art are limited.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Very good in physical education . Teaching and learning are very good. Students participate eagerly in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive very good advice, guidance and support. Assessment procedures and the way assessment is used to monitor and support students are very good. Personal support is very good for students, highlighting particular strengths and weaknesses.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are very good.

The head of sixth and sixth form tutors work well as a team to meet the needs of individual students. Monitoring of teaching is very good. Financial arrangements are very good. The wide range of enrichment activities is effective in developing students' social and academic skills. The school is already addressing effectively the need for better ICT resources in a few subjects.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students report very positively on their work and feel they have been able to follow appropriate courses and career patterns. A particular strength is the easy access that the students have to teachers if they experience difficulties or need to talk through an issue that concerns them. A high proportion of students believe that the sixth form is well run and that they are consulted across a range of whole-school issues.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Students achieve very well throughout the school. Standards are well above average at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' literacy and numeracy skills are well above average.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress.
- A-level standards are well above average.

Commentary

1. Standardised tests show that students' attainment on entry in Year 7 is lower than for most grammar schools and intakes include a much smaller proportion of students gaining the highest levels in tests at the end of Year 6 at primary school. As the school is grouped with schools with the very highest intakes for the purpose of comparison of Year 9 with Year 6 results, this comparison with similar schools is unreliable. However, pupils' performance is in the highest five percent of schools nationally even though it is below other schools with very high attaining intakes. In addition, results are improving. Though English results fell back slightly, the overall trend in test results in Year 9 has been a faster improvement than that nationally.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	40.6 (44.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	43.5 (43.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	40.4 (38.6)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 139 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Since the last inspection the proportion of students who achieve five or more GCSE A* to C grades has been at least well above the national average. In 2003 it was very high. A comparison with all schools nationally of the "value added" for pupils between Year 9 and 2003 GCSE results indicates students' achievement was very good. Though GCSE results were below average in comparison with similar schools, these gradings are again unreliable because the school is being compared to others whose pupils did significantly better in Year 9. In 2003 the school achieved its GCSE targets agreed with the local education authority. The school is on course to meet its targets in the current school year.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	96 (91)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	50.9 (47.3)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 152 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Priorities in the school development plan confirm the school's determination to raise standards further in Years 7 to 9. Inspection evidence shows that its strategies are being successful in improving students' achievement. In Years 7 to 9, very good teaching, excellent attitudes to learning and very good leadership and management underpin students' current very good progress. Achievement remains very good in Years 10 to 11. Achievement is very good in English because teaching is of a high quality and teachers have successfully adapted elements of the National Literacy Strategy to students' needs. Students achieve well in mathematics and science and teaching in both subjects is good. Achievement in French and German has been below that in other subjects until recently because there was not enough use of the foreign language in the classroom. Inspection evidence shows that the teachers are addressing this weakness and that achievement in both subjects is satisfactory. Students achieve very well overall in ICT, geography, design and technology, art and design and physical education. In these subjects teaching is generally very good and enables students to become independent learners. Achievement in history, business education, citizenship and music is good.
4. Pupils from ethnic minority groups achieve as well as their peers, but there are some minor differences in the achievement of pupils of different abilities. The progress of students with special educational needs is good. They achieve well, not just in academic terms but also in increased confidence, self-esteem and poise. Achievement is best in English, geography, information and communications technology and art. There is some underachievement by dyspraxic students, who find organisation and sustained handwriting difficult. Gifted and talented students' achievement is good but varies across subjects. It is excellent in English, and very good in religious education and geography. The progress of gifted and talented students is satisfactory in mathematics.
5. The school's status as a specialist mathematics and computing college has enhanced achievement. The staff development programme has raised teachers' awareness in all subjects on how to extend students' application of number and introduced a much wider range of ICT activities into the classroom. In addition, related programmes funded from its Beacon school role within the local cluster of schools has further complemented its specialist work in mathematics and ICT through teachers supporting and meeting the needs of students and teachers from other schools. The overall impact has been to strengthen teachers' awareness of how students learn and to raise performance levels in all years.

Sixth form

6. Students' average points scores in A-level examinations in recent years have fluctuated. In 2003 they were above average, but in the two years before were well above average compared with the national average and above average compared with selective schools. Overall, in spite of variations from year to year, the results have been above average since the last inspection. Many A-level groups include a small number of boys from the neighbouring grammar school, although their results are not included in the school's analysis of results.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	96.2 (92.3)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	41.6 (43.0)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	280.8 (293.6)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 88 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- Standards for the current Year 13 are well above average or higher in most subjects and sixth form students are achieving very well. Students are highly motivated to achieve very well and the management of their learning by teachers is very good. Relationships are very good. Students are articulate and develop good reasoning and thinking skills. They are very supportive of one another in lessons and this factor also helps them to perform well. The relatively few students from ethnic minorities achieve as well as other students.
- The A-level subjects inspected in depth all show students to have a very positive attitude to learning and a high proportion achieve very well. Standards are particularly high in English and physical education. Students have very good skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes towards school and their behaviour are excellent. Attendance and punctuality levels are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' behaviour is underpinned by excellent relationships.
- Students' personal qualities are very well developed.
- Sixth form students make an impressive contribution to the life of the school.

Commentary

- Students are proud of their school. They are particularly positive about the encouragement teachers provide and their willingness to help and support them either in relation to lessons or with any other concerns. The computer facilities and clubs also contribute significantly to students' outstandingly positive attitudes towards school.
- Behaviour is excellent. The behaviour of nearly all students is a very important element in the prevailing very positive atmosphere for learning. A strikingly calm social atmosphere prevails in the dining hall and throughout the site during lunchtime and breaktimes. As a result, staff trust students to socialise unsupervised in classrooms and social areas during breaktime. There is little or no anti-social behaviour. Parents' survey responses support this very positive picture, with nearly all parents positive about students' behaviour and the effective way in which bullying incidents are resolved. Students confirm there is some bullying, mostly verbal. Incidents are effectively resolved by staff.

Exclusions

- There were no permanent exclusions in the previous school year whilst the level of fixed term exclusions is well below that found nationally. Some use is made of internal exclusion and alternative curriculum provision, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The table below shows students' ethnic background and the exclusions data for the previous year.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	801	5	0
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – Any other white background	25	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	13	0	0
Parent/student preferred not to say	92	0	0

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

12. The learning support unit has made an impact on the attendance of school refusers and is successful in gradually returning them to mainstream classes. Learning mentors have had a positive effect on achievement in school and both staff and students value their work.
13. A clear set of values and principles pervades all aspects of the school's life. Students have high personal standards and show respect for others. They create an environment which is physically pleasant, calm, and supportive of learning. Teachers offer a good rôle model in relationships. Sixth form students contribute to the life of the school by their personal example and as 'listeners' to whom younger students can speak if they have any concerns. Teaching encourages students to formulate their own opinions on a range of social and moral issues and on their beliefs. In English there are planned opportunities to discuss the issues arising from the texts studied. A study of *Romeo and Juliet* was used to discuss morality and relationships. In religious education tasks are set which demand individual thinking on issues of faith.
14. School assemblies often ask students to reflect on social and moral issues. Many assemblies are led well by students and sixth form students. In lessons and in interviews students show themselves as socially competent and good communicators. Students work well together in group activities and show sensitivity in discussion. Several subjects develop natural cultural links so that the subjects are seen in a fuller context. In history music is used to match the theme of the lesson, whilst in technology it provides a background to the students' work. Music and drama performance enables many students to express their strengths. Art, foreign languages and music all add a cultural dimension to their work. There is planned provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the school's aims and in the schemes of work in subject areas but the real strength of the provision is that it can be seen in practice in the daily operation of the school.
15. Attendance in Years 7 to 11 is consistently above the national average. Unauthorised absence is consistently below the national average. The table below provides attendance and absence data for the latest complete reporting year, when the attendance was above the national average at 92.8 per cent.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	7.0
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.2
National data:	1.1

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

16. Measures to combat absence, including first day contact, are good. Parents contact school in the event of absence and this results in the low level of unauthorised absence. Students' punctuality is good. Nearly all students routinely arrive on time and get promptly to their lessons throughout the school day despite the large distances between some classrooms.

Sixth form

17. Sixth form students are proud of their school. Teachers are friendly and helpful in relation to problems or queries in subjects or other matters. The subject enthusiasm shown by most teachers raises students' interest and encourages them to do as well as they can. Most students consider they are treated like young adults. This is reflected in the fact that their views are taken on board by adults. Good computer facilities and the friendships with other students also contribute significantly to students' extremely positive attitudes towards school and their studies. Some students would appreciate more space in which to relax and more contact with the senior management team. In nearly all lessons, students listen very well and show very good levels of interest, concentration and determination to complete set tasks. Students' behaviour is excellent in the sixth form. Relationships between staff and students and among students are excellent.
18. Students' personal development is very good. When questioned as individuals and groups, their responses are strikingly articulate, thoughtful and clear. Independent learning and responsibility are very effectively encouraged and taken on board by students. This benefits not only the sixth formers but the rest of the school, other schools and the local community through voluntary work. For example, there are a number of sixth form committees that organise charitable fundraising, help at parents' evenings, sports days, prizes days and Year 6 open day. They also organise the end of Year 13 ball with the local boys' grammar school. Sixth formers, particularly in Year 12, participate in links with other schools, such as helping primary students with reading and organising a Christmas party for students from a special school. Sixth formers undertake a large amount of voluntary work in the local community.
19. Sixth formers' attendance and punctuality are good. The attendance and punctuality of individual students is very effectively measured for each of their subjects. The head of sixth form recognises that some additional follow-up is needed for a minority of students to ensure that their attendance does not limit their achievements.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is very good. Teaching is very good in Years 7 to 11 and very good in the sixth form. The curriculum is very good with a wide range of opportunities. Resources for learning, including new technology, are good. Accommodation is satisfactory overall with a mixture of old and new buildings that are well maintained. Advice, support and guidance are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good. Assessment procedures are very good but there are variations between subjects in how assessment data are used to benefit students' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Half of all teaching is very good or excellent.
- Most teachers enable students to become independent learners, but in a small minority of lessons the pace of learning is slow because the teacher does too much of the work.
- A small proportion of students are not sure as to how they can improve their work.
- Teachers often have excellent knowledge of their subjects and are excellent role models for learning.

Commentary

20. The high proportion of very good and excellent teaching and learning springs in part from effective monitoring and support of teachers by senior staff. This strategy is based on giving teachers secure whole school support systems, including staff development, to work within. Students recognise that all teachers have very good expectations of them and they have responded by having positive attitudes to their learning. In a small minority of lessons the teacher worked harder than students and dominated the lesson. As a result the pace of learning was sometimes slow, students were passive and did not all contribute to their learning. In the two unsatisfactory lessons this weakness meant that too little learning took place.
21. Most teachers are excellent role models and create a relaxed but effective learning environment. They ensure that all students are involved in lessons. Teachers have very good and often excellent knowledge of their subjects. They explain their subject matter clearly and respond skilfully to students' questions. Lessons are planned well and build on students' prior knowledge and basic numeracy and literacy skills. New technology is integrated well into most programmes of study but there are weaknesses in the use of ICT in mathematics, French and art and design. Most lessons move at a brisk pace and students respond well by making very good gains in knowledge and understanding. Students contribute a great deal to the success of many lessons, as they arrive ready to work and concentrate very hard. They are attentive, interested and are eager learners.
22. Teaching and learning are very good overall in English, religious education, geography, physical education and design and technology because tasks are matched to students' attainment levels and encourage higher order thinking skills. They are good overall in all other subjects and within some of these subjects teaching is very good in some year groups. . Teaching and support staff effectively implement strategies for supporting students' literacy and numeracy skills. Harmonious relationships among students, irrespective of background or learning competency level, are a very positive feature of lessons. Nearly all teachers value students' work and effectively praise effort and good work. As a result, in lessons students are confidently expressing their views and asking questions of their teachers when they are unsure or do not understand. This assists students' direct learning. More widely, it reassures students that their peers are keen to learn and that a keen interest in learning is valued by staff and students. Their enthusiasm for practical activities is clearly evident in design and technology, art and design, drama, physical education and music lessons. Practical activities are very well used in some subjects such as science, to introduce abstract ideas, such as creating an experimental plan with independent, dependent and controlled variables.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 135 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
14 (10%)	54 (40%)	52 (39 %)	13 (10 %)	2 (1%)	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.

23. In English, marking which shows students how to improve their work is not as well developed as other aspects of supporting students' achievement. In nearly all subjects, data are carefully

used to monitor students' progress and to identify relative weaknesses in achievement. Use of assessment procedures, data analysis and involvement of students in self-evaluation are outstanding in mathematics. The school is reviewing its procedures for target setting. Not all students are clear as to what they need to do to improve their work. In geography, assessment procedures are also excellent and guide students well towards their targets. In some other subjects, although assessment is at least good, it is not used as effectively to support learning through target setting. In modern foreign languages not enough use is made of data to monitor student progress.

24. Many students with special educational needs benefit from spelling and phonics teaching which takes place outside lesson times during assembly, tutor period and lunchtimes. Learning mentors give very good support and a small number of students attend the learning support unit. There is good support in class for students with Statements of Special Educational Needs. Support for most students with special educational needs is given in mainstream classes. Work is very well matched to their needs in English and geography through a wide variety of learning styles. This very good teaching also challenges the gifted and talented as, for example, in an English Year 11 lesson where they were used as group leaders to analyse text then report back to another group. Work is less well matched to individual students in mathematics and music. For some students with special educational needs in mathematics, extension work can mean more work rather than more challenge. In history, non-specialist teachers do not have the depth of subject knowledge to extend students' learning. Individual education plans are of good quality. Subject teachers review them termly and this good practice helps to make students' targets relevant.

Sixth form

25. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons observed included a high proportion of very good or excellent lessons. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent. Most students display considerable maturity in their approach to A-level work and appreciate the easy access to teacher support.
26. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which inspires confidence in students. Students' work is carefully and sensitively monitored both by subject teachers and by senior sixth form tutors. Teachers' current priorities in helping students to know how to study independently and encouraging learning as a two-way process are enabling Year 12 students become more effective learners. Students are aware that key skills and effective study skills play an important part in successful learning. A particular feature of most sixth form lessons is the willingness with which articulate students contribute to discussion and their mature debate and ability to learn from each other.
27. Assessment in the sixth form is very good. The above average A-level results are helped by the way students receive very good feedback and know what they have to do to improve their work and reach their targets. Students are closely monitored and are kept to deadlines for tasks and assignments.

The curriculum

The school provides a very good curriculum. A strong feature of the curriculum is the opportunity given to all students to complement their learning with a range of very good enrichment activities which help them develop as mature and responsible individuals. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent links with other schools and colleges enrich the learning experiences of students.
- All students have access to a wide range of extracurricular activities.
- Some subjects in the sixth form do not have the full range of ICT resources.
- There is an innovative approach to curriculum development.

Commentary

28. The quality of the curriculum is very good overall. There is very good curriculum provision in several subject areas. For example, in geography and history the curriculum is very well planned and resourced. The school's specialist status has contributed to the effective use of technology such as '*smart boards*', computers and video to enhance learning. Drama is a popular option for older students. In modern foreign languages all students do two languages to the end of Year 9. In English, there is a strong emphasis on exploring opportunities to develop areas of citizenship, spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision.
29. Provision for students with special educational needs is good. Individual education plans are used effectively. There are an adequate number of learning mentors and support staff. The quality of learning mentors' work is assured by good induction and appraisal systems. However, accommodation for special needs is unsatisfactory. There is no lift, despite parts of the school covering six floors. A wheelchair user would not have access to practical rooms if given a timetable restricted to the ground floor. Learning resources for special educational needs are satisfactory but ICT is not used enough around the school to meet the needs of the small numbers of dyslexic and dyspraxic students.
30. A particular strength of the curriculum is the school's innovative approach to extending the learning opportunities of students outside the usual classroom environment. There are excellent curriculum links with local schools and colleges and students are encouraged to share their own expertise with students in these schools as, for example, in art and drama. Within ICT, younger students are being given the opportunity to study a more advanced, vocationally based course which is in tune with the school's specialist computing college status. These opportunities have a very positive effect on the personal and social development of students, and they are highly valued along with the wide range of extracurricular activities in areas such as sport and music. These activities have a high take up. Strengths identified in the previous inspection have been maintained, and there have been some improvements - for example, in the quality of careers education. Assemblies observed during the inspection made a strong contribution towards the students' moral and social development.
31. The school makes very good use of the wide range of old and new accommodation. Moves since the previous inspection to locate departments where possible in suites of rooms has enhanced the efficiency, ethos and quality of provision in most subjects. Students move around the building in a considerate and purposeful manner and conduct themselves very well when negotiating very narrow corridors and stairways found in both older and newer houses. Not enough has been done to make buildings accessible to students with disabilities.
32. The school has done a great deal to provide stimulating, well-organised and satisfactorily maintained accommodation including a new building for design and technology, mathematics and geography. All indoor subjects and courses are properly and safely accommodated using rooms generally adequate for the purpose. Indoor facilities for physical education are inadequate and necessitate coach journeys for all Years 10 and 11 to a sports centre. Plans are in hand for a further new building to replace the least satisfactory classrooms. Overall, accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Sixth Form

33. The sixth form curriculum is very good, providing a wide range of opportunities for students. For example, the physical education curriculum provides opportunities in dance and the community sports leadership award. In subjects such as art, English and geography there is a good range of activities. There is a strong emphasis on developing students' independent learning skills, for example by developing research expertise in subjects like history. The curriculum is broadened by shared courses with the nearby boys' school. The school's innovative approach is also exemplified by the provision of a video conferencing link that enables students to study A-level law as a distance learning option. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, many shared with the lower school, and the students take full advantage of them. Learning outside school includes theatre visits and foreign travel opportunities, speaking in public and participating in university research; the range is wide. Participation in sport is encouraged by arrangements for choice of sports centre activities and in a thriving traditional range of team sports. There is excellent opportunity for learning and playing instrumental music and lots of involvement with dramatic productions including *'Smile for the Camera'* and *'Songs of Innocence and Experience'*. Overall, accommodation and resources in the sixth form are satisfactory. However, in mathematics, art and design and in design and technology access to ICT is limited so not enough opportunity is given to students to apply subject-specific ICT skills in their studies.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares very well for its students. It gives them very good support, advice and guidance. There are very good measures to involve students in the school's work and development, through seeking and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are given very good support, advice and guidance.
- The school regards the views of students as important to all aspects of its work.

Commentary

34. The formal policies and practices relating to health and safety and child protection are well considered and properly carried out. Form tutors and other staff know the students well and recognise their needs. They act quickly if a student is unhappy or under pressure and are careful to make sure new arrivals are helped to settle in. As a result, based on survey returns, nearly all students have a good and trusting relationship with at least one adult. Induction arrangements are very good. Year 7 students, who had recently joined, told inspectors how well supported they felt and it was evident that this made them want to do their best.
35. The needs of the small minority of students with a range of special educational needs are carefully considered and effectively addressed. Support staff and mentors give exemplary care to students with special needs, promoting academic achievement as well as providing emotional support. Relationships between students and staff are excellent, based on trust and respect. Students with special educational needs state that they are given good support by teachers and support staff. The Intranet is used effectively to spread information about special needs.
36. Support for students' achievement through monitoring is frequent and generally shared well with them. Updates are provided through interim reports, target-setting days and parents' evenings to which students are invited. On the target-setting day, all students and parents have a meeting with their form tutor to set improvement targets. This important work is underpinned by good assessment of students' achievements. Where there are concerns based on termly tracking data, form tutors and other staff work very well with students and their parents to identify how the concerns can be overcome. The only minor weakness in advice and guidance to students

lies in a few subject departments where targets or feedback are not used effectively enough to show students exactly where they should improve. The advice and guidance given about future courses is very good in Year 11. It includes a subject 'fair', led by Year 12 students and a range of speakers from outside organisations, including the armed forces.

37. The school's involvement of students in its work is impressive. A survey similar to that used by inspectors has been in use for some time to keep staff informed of any significant issues of concern to students. Students' views are sought about issues central to learning. Their views form an important part of the information created in advance of departmental reviews led by senior managers. In turn their views are incorporated, where appropriate, into the departmental improvement plans.

Sixth form

38. There is a strong emphasis on providing very good impartial advice and guidance to students prior to entering the sixth form. During Year 11, students are made clearly aware of the entry requirements and all have an interview with the '*Connexions*' adviser. The primary aim of the interview is to clarify whether their best option is joining the sixth form, moving to a college or pursuing work based learning opportunities. Sixth form induction is comprehensive and very effective. For example, students take 'taster AS-level' lessons after the GCSE examinations and students sample subjects before coming to a final decision, if necessary. As a result, students choices are considered and realistic and the drop-out rate during the sixth form is very low. Progress reviews are frequent, with an important emphasis on getting students to identify and work on key improvement areas. Guidance on the next stage of education or career, after sixth form, is also very good. The range of outside speakers from universities and other organisations is a strong feature, which is highly valued by students. There is a strong emphasis on completing set tasks, such as the preparation of personal statements, as early as possible in order to allow the maximum of time for study in Year 13.
39. Sixth formers make a highly significant contribution to the life of the school. The school council is very effectively run by sixth form students and is trusted with a budget to spend on items agreed by the council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a good partnership with parents, which makes a significant contribution to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved. Links with other schools and colleges are excellent.. Links with the local community make a good contribution to students' personal development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent links with other schools and colleges make a highly significant contribution to students' opportunities and experiences.
- The school works hard to consult and respond well to parents.
- The school draws on the community well but also acts as a good resource for it.

Commentary

40. School regularly seeks the views of its parents. As a result, it is well informed about the things they like and would like to see improved. School has worked hard to respond to the request of a significant minority of parents for more information on their students' progress. Some parents disliked the parents' evening arrangements because they considered there was insufficient time for a high quality discussion on their students' progress. As a result, parents are now also invited to the target setting days with students and form tutors. Plans are well advanced to allow parents secure Internet access to information on their children's progress. Parents respond in significant numbers to the school's surveys of their views. Through the *Friends'* group, parents

organise a range of successful fundraising events. These events also contribute to students' personal development and the good sense of community that prevails, as staff, parents and students are involved in many of these events. The overall success of the parental links is reflected in the positive parental survey.

41. Parents are well informed about special educational needs generally through the prospectus and governors' annual report. Parents of students with individual education plans are generally well informed about their daughter's progress, receiving reports each term. Learning mentors and support staff have developed good relationships with parents where appropriate.
42. The excellent links with local schools and colleges confirm the school's innovative approach as a Beacon school in the wider educational community. The links between the school and its many feeder primary schools are very well developed. This also helps to provide a smooth transition in students' learning between primary and secondary school. As part of its specialist status in mathematics and computing, the school takes a leadership position in establishing and maintaining links with its partner primaries and secondary school. For example, more able Year 6 mathematicians in primary schools benefit from accelerated learning as well as insights into some '*fun and magic*' features of mathematics. They will also be taught to update their schools' websites. Aided by Excellence Cluster and Leadership Incentive Grant funding, a wide variety of work is going on with a range of secondary schools. In addition, work in mathematics and computing is shared with a partner secondary school. As part of the practical elements of their drama course, Year 10 and 11 students put on performances for primary pupils. Similarly, Year 10 and 11 students in physical education help at primary school sports' days. Year 10 art students help organise master classes in art for Year 4 primary students. School has a *Compact* agreement with the Canterbury Christchurch University College students take part of their teaching practice at the school and the university provides speakers for the sixth form guidance programme.
43. The school is a resource for the local community. The sports facilities and the hall are used for team games, music and drama by a range of local groups. Links with a local travel company provide business mentors, experience in interview techniques for Year 12 students and contribute to staff training. Currently these links are contributing to the development of a website design course for local hoteliers, to allow on-line holiday booking. Personnel from police, fire and health services enrich the curriculum with contributions on personal safety and healthy living. Most subject departments have good community links, whilst the art department has forged very good links with a community arts group. For example, the ICT department is currently teaching a computer course for the wives of Gurkha soldiers in a nearby primary school.

Sixth form

44. Parents' views on the sixth form are positive. In the main, sixth form students are positive about what school offers them. Most students confirm that they are given very good opportunities to take responsibility and are treated as young adults.
45. Sixth formers, particularly in Year 12, are very effectively encouraged to actively participate in links with other schools and colleges. For example, they help organise and host a Christmas Party for students from a local special primary school. They also visit the primary schools that they previously attended to do guided reading. There is a well-developed shared sixth form provision with the local boys' grammar school.
46. Links with *Millennium Volunteers* help set up of wide variety of voluntary work placements. This is an important improvement, since the previous inspection. Charitable fundraising is an important part of the activities in which sixth formers play a key part. Each year, around 12 students take the community sports leadership award and organise a range of sporting events for other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. Leadership of other key staff is very good and a close-knit senior leadership team supports the headteacher's clear vision for the school. The governance of the school is very good. One minor statutory requirement is not met – though the school implements its race equality policy well, it is not yet formally monitored and the results reported to governors.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher is providing strong innovative leadership that is continuing to raise standards.
- Leadership and management of the Excellence Cluster programme are very good.
- The governors support the school well and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Teaching and learning are monitored very well in most subjects, but in a few departments, more rigorous monitoring could be carried out.
- Financial planning is used well to support curriculum development and improve facilities.

Commentary

47. The headteacher gives the school excellent reflective leadership and clear short, medium and long-term strategic planning. Her vision of a high achieving school that meets the needs of all students is shared by governors, staff and parents. A well-constructed school improvement plan is giving staff at all levels of responsibility the opportunity to improve their management skills and further raise standards. The school's status as a mathematics and computing school and its role as Beacon school within the Excellence Cluster has had a positive impact on both teachers and students. Systems for reaching decisions, devolving responsibility and ensuring good communication are very good. The senior management group work well as a team and ensure that school policies are implemented. Roles and responsibilities of teaching and support staff have been remodelled to ensure that teachers do not have to spend time on administrative tasks. Support and administrative staff play a very important part in the success of the school.
48. There is an appropriate range of policies that underpin the work of the school. The consistent implementation of these policies contributes to the smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis. The race equality policy is a well-thought out document but the impact of its implementation is not yet formally monitored. However, this is not affecting the quality of provision for pupils from ethnic minorities. There are thorough procedures for analysing performance data and monitoring the work of the staff through lesson observations and the scrutiny of students' work. As a result, the senior team has a good grasp of the strengths and key areas for development. These are confirmed by inspection evidence. The actions taken to secure improvement have been carefully prioritised and are being carried out skilfully. The staff development and induction programmes are integrated well alongside the school development plan.
49. The governing body provides effective challenge and support to the school. Governors take an active rôle in determining the future of the school and have a detailed knowledge and understanding of its current strengths and areas for development. They make a good contribution to the shaping of the school improvement plan. The experience of the governors is put to good use within the committee structures. The chair of governors has regular contact with the headteacher and there is an open and transparent approach to discussions about the work of the school. Finances are well managed on a day-to-day basis and there are very good links between the planned expenditure and the school priorities, which are based firmly on the principles of best value.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,455,100
Total expenditure	3,488,783
Expenditure per student	3,680

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	141,331
Balance carried forward to the next	107,648

50. Leadership by key staff is very good overall and departmental development plans have priorities that reflect those of the school. Middle managers fulfil their rôles as lead professionals and the leadership of teaching and the curriculum is a strength, focusing on aspects that will improve standards and achievement.
51. Management throughout the different departments is also very good. Many departments have developed their own internal profiling systems and performance data is used consistently well to inform their planning for teaching and target setting. Senior managers promote self-evaluation amongst departments that results in an action plan outlining departmental priorities. However, in some instances, teaching and learning are not yet monitored rigorously, and this is why in a few cases teaching is not consistently good.
52. Leadership and management of special educational needs in the school are good. The coordinator for special educational needs leads and manages provision well. Governors have planned well for improved accessibility in the school, meeting the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. A start has been made on improving access but there is much still to do.
53. Leadership and management of the Excellence Cluster programme are very good. It has had a positive impact on attendance and achievement. Policies are clear, rôles are well structured and the team of staff are given good opportunities for developing their skills. Students' progress is well monitored. However, excellent practice on extension work in mathematics and ICT is not disseminated across all subjects.

Sixth form

54. The quality of leadership and management of the sixth form by the senior manager in charge of the sixth form is very good. There is a very good relationship between the sixth form and the main school. Overall, the leadership and management provided by subject leaders are effective. All sixth form funding is strictly allocated for its purpose.
55. The sixth form is very cost-effective and does not draw resources from the main school. Course provision is determined by the students' choices, balanced by the stringent annual costing of individual courses to ensure that all are financially viable. The principles of best value are strictly applied in relation to all expenditure in accordance with practice in the school as a whole, with a particular emphasis on the close analysis of students' performance in external examinations in comparison with that in other schools.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English, French and German are reported in full below.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' GCSE English literature results are very high.
- Standards in Year 9 national test results are consistently very high.
- By the end of Year 11 students' writing demonstrates an assured control of a range of styles.
- There is scope for more formal monitoring of teaching and learning

Commentary

56. The Year 9 national test results in 2003 were very high, but below the average for selective schools. This reflects a context in which the attainment profile for students admitted in Year 7 is below the average for a typical grammar school. GCSE results in English and English literature were very high in 2003. Three out of every five students gained A* or A grades in English. In English literature students' performance was even better and seven out of ten students gained A* or A grades.
57. In work seen, standards are very high by the end of Year 9, better than in 2003, and achievement is very good. By the end of Year 11 standards are also very high and achievement remains very good. The progress of gifted and talented and ethnic minority students is well matched to their abilities. In Year 9 students speak with a high degree of fluency and respond thoughtfully to what they hear. Their evaluations of their classmates' presentations are articulate and objective, yet expressed with courtesy and empathy. When reading, they identify stylistic features of literature and analyse with very great insight. For example, one class were highly perceptive in their identification of ways in which Shakespeare uses the witches in Macbeth to increase dramatic tension. Their writing is confident, very well developed, highly organised and very accurate. In Years 10 and 11, students contribute fluently to speaking and listening tasks. They use vocabulary precisely to suit specific purposes. Their coursework includes excellent discursive and analytical writing. Their response to literature is outstanding in its detail and evaluation. Most students employ ambitious vocabulary. Their writing demonstrates an assured control of a range of styles. Only a small number of students is unable to match style and form to purpose and audience.
58. Teaching and learning are very good throughout Years 7 to 11 and occasionally excellent. Teachers use their specialist knowledge to give students a particularly good understanding of texts and of the features that make writing more effective. Activities are well matched to lesson objectives and motivate students very well. Teachers create numerous opportunities for students to present ideas to and receive criticism from their classmates. The marking of formal assessment tasks encourages students by recognising their strengths and setting out clear targets for improvement. Most of the marking in exercise books is also of this high standard but some is less informative. Teachers' high expectations are demonstrated in the demanding texts chosen for study and the written tasks, very well designed to stimulate students. Homework is very challenging, requiring students to apply independently the skills and knowledge they acquire in lessons. The department has successfully rebuilt its schemes of

work around the National Literacy Strategy. Lesson plans incorporate features such as sharing lesson objectives and reviewing learning both during and at the end of lessons.

59. Leadership is very good and the department is very well managed. The team of teachers respond well to the head of department's enthusiasm and commitment. Teamwork is very good. Teachers make good use of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades to assess and track students' progress. Standards are better than they were at the previous inspection; teaching and learning are now very good, representing good improvement.

Example of outstanding practice

Challenge, encouragement and inspiration promote very good learning opportunities.

A teacher's planning for, and management of, an excellent Year 11 poetry lesson enabled all students to make a personal response and consider alternative ideas through the three-phase exploration of a poem. The structure of the lesson and the tasks involved stemmed from an expert knowledge of the curriculum and how to teach it. The class was organised into five groups, each with its own leader responsible for managing the discussion. The initial fast-paced analysis allowed each group to gain an insight into different interpretations of the text, appreciate layers of meaning and respond critically and sensitively. The second phase required each leader to present her group's analysis to another group. This group interviewed its new leader to clarify specific points and enlarge upon areas of particular interest. In the final phase, each student was able to use her group's analysis to draft an informed personal response.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. Standards of literacy are very high and enable students to achieve well. Students are fluent speakers and thoroughly enjoy discussions. They read fluently, with very good comprehension. They make effective use of higher order reading skills such as skimming and scanning. They communicate their knowledge of subjects very clearly in writing. Most subjects make very good provision for the development of literacy skills. Teachers consistently place a strong emphasis on the use of technical vocabulary and hence students are accurate in its use. In religious education, for example, teachers strongly emphasise the value of complex language for discussing religious ideas. Most subjects incorporate structured discussion in pairs, groups or the whole class. Teachers have been trained effectively and subject leaders are required to include literacy issues when writing schemes of work. Clear and sensible policies give good guidance on the main aspects of literacy and on how to deal with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good planning to raise the expectations of higher attaining students.
- French is consistently used as the sole means of communication.
- Planning does not consistently create enough opportunities for speaking.
- Not all students make regular use of ICT.

Commentary

61. Results in the 2003 GCSE were above the national average for girls, but below these students' performance in their other examination subjects. Teacher assessments for Year 9 at the end of 2003 showed them to be above average. The current Year 9 shows good achievement to reach above average standards. The work of higher attaining students is well above the levels expected for their age in both writing and speaking. By the end of Year 11 standards are average but below those expected in a selective school. Achievement is satisfactory because these students reached only average standards in Year 9. The newly appointed head of department has been perceptive in identifying the common features required to raise standards

in both languages. There is much good practice in the teaching. However, new initiatives in teaching and learning have yet to feed through to higher standards in GCSE examinations. Standards of writing benefit from the teachers' guidance on the criteria for good GCSE grades. Speaking skills are weaker because much teaching in earlier years was in English.

62. Teaching and learning are good in all years. They are more frequently very good or excellent in Years 7 to 9. The sustained use of French in teaching improves students' listening and speaking skills. There is some excellent teaching where tasks are matched to different levels. In these lessons students develop skills of independent learning. In one Year 9 group higher attaining students are working at good GCSE levels, because the teacher insists on extended writing with a richer vocabulary. ICT is used, but this needs to be extended to be part of the programme for all students. Teachers set and mark homework regularly. Some marking is exemplary in the guidance for improvement. Teachers do not make sufficient use of the attainment data on individual students to monitor their progress.
63. French and German function as a single department. The department is well led and managed. The department offers extensive opportunities for European links to add relevance and motivation to language studies. There is now a team in place with the commitment and capacity to raise the standards and status of modern languages. Good improvement has been made recently since the appointment of the new head of department although overall improvement since the last inspection has only been satisfactory.

German

Provision in German is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons do not consistently engage all students in speaking German, so that their progress is not as good as it should be..
- Most teachers teach almost exclusively in German, which develops well students' listening skills.
- The subject is developing a good resource bank of materials on the school's Intranet.

Commentary

64. In the 2003 GCSE in German, students' performance was above average, but generally below their grades in other examination subjects. In work seen, standards are above the levels expected nationally by the end of Year 9. Students achieve well and standards are rising. They have a sound understanding of grammar, which supports good writing skills. Listening skills are good and benefit from most of the teaching being in German. Speaking is the weakest skill. By the end of Year 11 achievement is satisfactory. Students lack confidence in listening and speaking tasks. Standards are broadly average because the impact of new initiatives have yet to be reflected in the achievement of the current Year 11 students. Until relatively recently many lessons included an over-emphasis on English with much less German spoken by students. Currently, teachers' expertise in preparing students for the GCSE examination is improving their written work to above average standards.
65. Teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their clear explanation of grammar supports all the language skills. Almost all teaching is in German. Students quickly become accustomed to the pace and can follow the teaching easily. Where planning regularly engages them in speaking activities their spoken German is good. In Years 7 to 9 teachers plan activities that make learning fun. Paired work and class questioning add variety to speaking tasks. In some groups students are passive learners, because questions are not directed to individual students and there is limited planning for speaking activities. As a result some students become very dependent on teacher support and the use of English for explanations. There is some creative use of ICT, which is enabling some quieter students to work well

independently. It is also increasing the interest in German for some students who were losing their motivation. Teachers regularly assess students' work but do not always use this information to give students a fuller understanding of the standards expected. The Key Stage 3 strategy is used well to share lesson objectives with the students.

66. The benefits of shared leadership with French enable both languages to benefit from joint developments. As an experienced teacher and a German national, the head of department brings additional specialist strengths to the teaching of German. Overall, the subject is currently well led and managed although improvement since the last inspection has been only satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good; teachers are aware of the next steps in students' learning.
- Use of assessment procedures, data analysis and involvement of students in self-evaluation are outstanding.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good, encouraging effective learning.
- Accelerated learning opportunities and other school partnerships are adding value to students' achievements.
- ICT as an aid to teaching and learning is underdeveloped.
- Displays to support and enrich learning, stimulate interest and celebrate success are limited.

Commentary

67. There has been a steady improvement in standards since the last inspection, above the national trend. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average with all students achieving a grade D or better. Results compare well overall with other subjects in the school. The achievement of these students was very good based on their prior attainment in Year 9. An increased proportion of students obtained GCSE grades A* to B than in previous years. The number of students achieving the highest grade is significant because the proportion is over four times that achieved nationally. In work seen, standards are high compared to national averages and students' achievement is overall good. Standards in the current Year 10 are very high because work is accurate, detailed and well presented.
68. Students' overall attainment on entry to the school is significantly lower than average for grammar schools. The standard of work seen by students in the current Year 9 is very high compared to national standards and students' achievement overall in Years 7 to 9 is good; this includes higher attainers and those with special educational needs. The good rate of progress is reflected in the fact that two-thirds of students gained Level 7 or better in 2003.
69. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning are good. Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subject and consider the needs of all students in their lesson plans. Teachers have high expectations of the students and there is a good balance between theory and practice. For example, Year 9 students plotted graphs of linear functions identifying patterns between their equations and the lines drawn. Students benefit from the mental starter to lessons often linked to the main learning objective as part of the National Strategy. The end of lesson review to give students some idea of how well they are progressing is not as well developed. Relationships between teacher and student are very good and students respond well to directed questions in lessons sustaining a brisk pace. However, the recording and display of key words and formulae that would support learning and secure understanding, particularly for the weaker students, are often overlooked. Homework is set regularly, though planned opportunities to extend the gifted

and talented students further are limited. Marking is up to date though supportive annotations about ways to improve are inconsistent.

70. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11. Students make good use of previously taught skills when completing new modules of work; for example, Year 11 students, reviewing the properties of the sine curve when sketching graph transformations. Much work set by teachers is intellectually challenging, deepening understanding. Students' ability to study independently is strong, though a lack of variety in teaching methods sometimes frustrates students' learning. The use of ICT is not developed enough as a resource for learning and there is an over-reliance on textbooks.
71. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the future to raise standards. Monitoring and evaluation within the department needs to be more rigorous in order to address the uneven quality of teaching. The quality of assessment procedures, analysis and involvement of students is a strength of the department. The accelerated learning initiative and other school partnerships are adding value to students' learning. ICT resources are very good but not used enough; mathematical equipment and library books are insufficient. Displays that support and enrich learning, celebrate success and past achievements are not a strong feature and reflect on the limited vision of the subject beyond the textbook. Little is done to promote the links between topics and their relationship with the 'real' world. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well in mathematics lessons and other departments have systematically planned for the development of numeracy in a specialist mathematics school. In geography, science, physical education, art and design, design and technology and ICT, schemes of work identify what students are likely to know, understand and can do in mathematical terms. There are particular strengths in handling data, shape, space and measurement and use of calculations. Overall, the contribution of mathematics across the curriculum in this specialist school is good. Numeracy is included in the school development plan and discussion continues following whole staff training to raise awareness. An audit of existing practice across the curriculum has been completed and a school policy is in place, though ongoing monitoring and evaluation of current practice is not established. Currently, students' standards in numeracy are well above average and skills are developed sufficiently in departments to ensure all have full access to the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good. Lessons are well prepared and taught with a high level of expectation that students will succeed.
- Teaching and support staff work well together under the good leadership of the head of department and are raising standards.
- The marking of students work often fails to tell them what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve.
- Students work hard and have a desire to succeed.

Commentary

73. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, attainment was well above the national average for all schools. A lower number of students than expected attained the higher grades and as a consequence attainment was below average when compared with schools with a similar level of prior attainment. Results were much higher than the previous year and similar to those in

2001. Students' overall attainment on entry to the school is significantly lower than average for grammar schools. They are now achieving well and by the time they reach Year 9 standards of work seen are well above the national average. Students in Year 7 have a sound understanding of basic principles in science. Year 8 students are familiar with the features of a good scientific investigation. Students in Year 9 demonstrate through practical and theoretical work that they have an understanding of the way in which electricity is produced by cells.

74. Standards in Year 11 are well above the national average and students are achieving well. In the 2003 GCSE examination (double award) the proportion of students awarded grades A* to C as well as the proportion awarded A* and A was well above the national average. Just under a quarter of the candidates entered examinations in the separate sciences, physics, chemistry and biology. All were awarded grades A* to C. In biology and chemistry well over two thirds were awarded A* or A. These results were better than those of the previous year and achievement was good. Current students have very good skills in ICT, which were put to good use in a Year 11 lesson on gravity. A laptop computer program allowed them to explore well the effect of factors affecting the orbit of satellites. A Year 10 class studying for the GVNQ certificate demonstrated above average skills when performing a titration in an investigation to determine yield in the manufacture of a fertiliser. In both of these lessons progress was good and high standards were reached. Lower attaining students including those with special educational needs make good progress.
75. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have an extremely good knowledge of their subject. Lessons are prepared carefully with clear objectives and with a variety of activities to maintain interest. Teachers' expectations are very high and students are continually challenged. Students are enthusiastic and have a desire to learn. They respond well to opportunities to work independently. Progress is good because of the high quality of teaching and the positive attitudes of the students. In a well-prepared lesson with a Year 10 class students discussed the rôle of genes in the synthesis of protein. They then constructed models of *DNA* from beads and string, enhancing their understanding of the rôle of bases. A well thought out recapitulation ensured that knowledge was secure and that all students made progress. Some classes contain students with a wide range of ability but teachers do not always adapt their teaching to provide sufficient challenge for the highest attainers.
76. Teaching and support staff work very well together under the good leadership of the head of department. This is a key strength. Management and procedures for assessment are good but the quality and quantity of marking varies across the department. There is a lack of consensus and marking, although regular, often fails to tell students what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve. The wide-ranging needs of Years 10 and 11 students are now well met by the revised curriculum although schemes of work are not yet fully revised. The curriculum is enhanced through a wide range of extra-curricular visits and activities. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Good use is now made of ICT. The three separate subjects have been brought together as one department and accommodation has much improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is very good.
- Students' attitudes and relationships are very good, leading to good learning.
- The introduction of the GNVQ course needs further planning to make it more effective.
- Leadership is effective.

Commentary

77. Standards on entry to the school are variable but broadly in line with the national average overall. In 2003, teacher assessments for Year 9 were well above the national average. In work seen, current standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average and achievement is very good. Students with special educational needs participate fully in lessons and with extra support most make the same progress as other students. Individual assignments enable gifted and talented students to make appropriate progress. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is very good and sometimes excellent. All teachers have a very sound knowledge of the subject and plan lessons very well. They motivate students well by asking them questions as lessons progress and give very good help and advice during practical activities. As a result, students are normally engrossed in their work and behave very well. By the end of Year 9 students become independent users of ICT.
78. Innovative changes have been made to the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 in order to accelerate learning. The normal scheme of work has been discontinued and replaced by the GNVQ at intermediate level. The three-year course started simultaneously in Years 7 to 9 at the beginning of this academic year. The school aims to combine the learning of basic ICT skills with the applications needed for the GNVQ. The curriculum time allocated to the GNVQ is too short to enable the new curriculum to be taught effectively and the introduction of the new course needs to be planned further.
79. All students currently take the subject in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, when three out of ten students took the subject, the GCSE examination results were well above the national average with nearly all students obtaining A* to C grades; three out of every ten of those examined obtained either A* or A grades. Current standards are well above the national average and students are achieving well.
80. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is good, sometimes very good. There is very good emphasis on improving work by redrafting to show development. Some of the work is well within the capability of the more able students and does not always challenge them sufficiently. In less successful lessons, teachers do not always gain the full interest of students in the work.
81. The leadership of the subject is effective and the department is managed well. The head of the curriculum area is well supported by four colleagues and all are keen to improve the curriculum and standards. However, there have been changes in staff and some teachers have been absent due to illness; both have affected the development of the new GNVQ. Standards and achievement have been maintained satisfactorily since the last inspection. The computing facilities have been much improved. Improvement overall is therefore satisfactory.

ICT across the Curriculum

82. Overall, students have satisfactory opportunities to apply ICT in other subjects and enjoy using it when opportunities occur. Applications are good in humanities, physical education and religious education. They are also good in Years 10 and 11 in design and technology and science. The use of ICT is strong in business studies and other vocational courses. Applications are satisfactory in English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. They need further development in art, mathematics, citizenship and music. All curriculum areas have most of the appropriate software but access to the computer network has been a problem. The network has recently been enlarged and the school has effective strategies for further improving ICT provision.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision for geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are very skilful, experienced, knowledgeable and often infectious and enthusiastic.
- Challenging teaching enables students to take responsibility for their learning and to develop thinking skills.
- Very well planned curriculum materials and very good use of ICT raise student achievement.
- Management and leadership are excellent.

Commentary

83. Standards on entry are above average. Very good strategies to promote geographical understanding, skills and knowledge, ensure that all, including those with special educational needs, attain well above national expectations by the end of Year 9. Year 9 students studying Ghana confidently explain how human actions like war or commercial exploitation of resources have unintended environmental consequences. They can describe how physical and human processes create geographical patterns and lead to changes in places like the ski resort of Chamonix. Gifted and talented students demonstrate very high levels of National Curriculum attainment by the end of Year 9. All students achieve well.
84. Results in GCSE examinations are consistently very high. All students attain the higher grades, mostly A or A*. In work seen in Years 10 and 11 standards are very high and students achieve very well. Students and teachers are zealous in ensuring a good basis for GCSE examination. Numeracy use is good in ranking development indicators, calculating dependency ratios and constructing population pyramids. Issues of morality, culture, beliefs and government feature strongly and are well addressed. Fieldwork in all years results in very high standards for coursework in Years 10 and 11.
85. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 where all work is very demanding. A number of excellent lessons were seen in which intellectual challenge was such that students had to hang on by their fingertips to keep contact with the pace of learning. Very varied strategies ensure motivation, interest and rigour thus raising standards. Teaching is strongly focused on examination criteria; this greatly improves attainment. Marking is good, checking detail and accuracy whilst encouraging and appreciating effort. Assessment and progress monitoring are excellent because they ensure very clear targets for improvement directly related to national curriculum or GCSE criteria. Students are so well informed on ways to raise their attainment that they routinely suggest their own targets for improved and this is very good. Students have very good opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and engage in interactive activities that enhance key skills and development thinking. Very good use is made of modern technologies. All lessons are characterised by very good relationships, and joy in learning.
86. Leadership and management are excellent. Literacy and numeracy development is very well integrated in all topics. Citizenship opportunities are identified. There are excellent opportunities for students to develop fieldwork techniques. Information and communications technology is well and frequently incorporated in work. Assessment is excellent and monitoring of students work across the department is good. Teachers' effectiveness is regularly reviewed.
87. Since the previous report high standards in Years 7 to 9 have been maintained and a twenty per cent improvement has been achieved in higher-grade GCSE examination results. Progress of the highest attaining students has been improved. Students now have very good opportunities to show initiative and independence and participate in decision-making. Lesson planning now has very good emphasis on strategies to promote learning. Objectives are made explicit in all lessons. National Curriculum levels are now routinely used in monitoring of students' progress in Years 7 to 9. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well in response to good teaching.
- Standards are well above average.
- The department is very well led and managed.
- The most able students do not achieve to the same extent when they are taught by non-specialist teachers.
- Students have very good attitudes, which contribute to good learning.

Commentary

88. Standards are well above average at all levels in all areas of history, including knowledge and understanding, the ability to analyse and evaluate evidence, and the ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing. These standards reflect the teacher assessments of students in Year 9 in 2003, and also of the GCSE results in that year. Both sets of results demonstrated a percentage of higher levels and grades well above the national average, and were consistent with the trend of recent years. Students join the school with above average standards in history, and achieve well overall. However, the most able students, including the gifted and talented, achieve less well than others, even though they make good progress. This is because some of the non - specialist teaching is less effective in challenging these students to the fullest extent.
89. Teaching overall is good, with many very good features. This, along with the very positive attitudes that the students have towards learning, accounts for the good progress made. A particular strength of the teaching is the emphasis upon students learning actively, whether operating independently or collaboratively. This was very evident, for example, in a Year 11 lesson on the culture of Weimar Germany: students enjoyed developing rôle plays to improve their understanding of popular attitudes towards culture. This, combined with the imaginative use of resources such as music, enabled these students to acquire a high level of empathetic understanding. The best teaching is characterised by high expectations and very good subject knowledge, reflected in the quality of questioning and also a strong emphasis on good examination technique. In a minority of lessons the activities are too teacher-led, and opportunities are missed to encourage the most able students to develop their ideas more fully. This is partly the result of the less secure subject knowledge and confidence of non-specialist teachers.
90. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There has been good progress in the development of active teaching and learning strategies, and in the quality of innovative leadership. The department works well as a team, despite the fact that accommodation is spread out. There is extensive monitoring and support to develop the skills of teachers in a department which has two part - time, non - specialist teachers. Considerable strides have been made in developing the use of ICT, which students use confidently, for example as a research tool. Assessment is used well to set challenging targets for students to further their achievement.
91. Strengths such as high standards and good progress identified in 1998 have been maintained. Therefore, overall, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students entered for GCSE achieve well above average results.
- The experienced teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise.
- Very good relationships with students contribute to very good learning.
- Teachers do not seek enough opportunities to involve students more in their own learning.

Commentary

92. The proportion of students gaining higher grades in the full course GCSE in 2003 was well above the national average, and shows an improvement on the previous year. By the end of Year 9 students show very good achievement and standards are very high.
93. On entry to the school, students have varied experiences of Christian and other faiths. In Year 9, students display a secure knowledge and understanding of the main faith groups and of issues that concern them. For example, Year 9 students wrote articulately about the complex moral predicaments present throughout the Holocaust. Many were able to relate this experience to groups in our society who might similarly attract prejudiced attitudes. Higher and middle attaining students demonstrated sophisticated levels of reflection as, for example, on how the Holocaust might affect people's belief in their God, or on the muddled logic of anti-Semitism.
94. Standards of students in Years 10 and 11 studying the GCSE short course are well above average and students achieve very well. For example, in their work on the existence of God, all students could clearly articulate the traditional arguments they had studied. Higher and average attaining students went beyond this, effectively analysing and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses. Over time, as seen in their class and course work, all students show an ability to draw upon their studies of different faiths and contribute this to discussions of contemporary issues such as euthanasia, marriage and divorce.
95. Teaching and learning are very good and have improved since the last inspection. The experienced and knowledgeable team of teachers provide a varied range of interesting activities in lessons. They support all students well through regular marking and encouragement and develop very good relationships. Students are presented with good opportunities for research, with outstanding outcomes from students identified by the department as having great potential in the subject. Lessons have clear objectives and time and resources are sensibly planned to very good effect. Most students are fully involved in their work and reach high levels of understanding. In a Year 10 discussion on stereotypes, many students moved beyond simple description to consider the implications of stereotyping, including examples from potentially vulnerable groups in our society.
96. Leadership and management of religious education are very good. All students now study religious education throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers have identified appropriate areas for development, including drawing on the good practice of the Key Stage 3 Strategy to engage students more in their own learning. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- There are no opportunities for students to learn food technology.
- Students enjoy the subject and, as a result, attitudes are very good.

Commentary

97. Standards on entry to the school are broadly in line with the national average. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average with all students reaching at least the expected standard. Students with special educational needs fully participate in lessons and with extra support in lessons make very good progress. Individualised 'design and make' projects enable gifted and talented students to make appropriate progress. Achievement is very good. One-third of the students currently opt to take the subject in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, when less than two out of ten students took the subject, the GCSE examinations results were high compared with the national average. All students obtained GCSE A* to C grades and half of students achieved A* and A grades. Candidates performed particularly well in resistant materials. In work seen, standards were well above average and achievement was good.
98. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are very good and sometimes excellent. All products are made from resistant materials and plastics. Students have good opportunities to learn simple control, mechanisms, structures and electronics. They are also taught design and graphics well although there is more scope to develop students' ability to sketch and annotate design ideas by the end of Year 9. Teachers have very secure knowledge of the subject and plan lessons very well. Teaching builds students' knowledge and understanding through effective use of course materials, ICT based graphics and physical models. Students receive effective help and guidance during practical activities and relationships are very good. Teachers have high expectations. As a result, the accuracy and finish of the products and designs produced are good. Advanced concepts are used to illustrate topics although these are sometimes too challenging for a minority of students.
99. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Students take courses in resistant materials or graphic products. The quality of the students' folders and products is high. In resistant materials, projects typically involve toys and furniture for children and portable containers. In graphic products, projects include movie posters, promotional materials and packaging. Students choose most projects themselves. They enjoy the subject and, as a result, attitudes are very good. The course in home economics has been discontinued and so overall provision for design and technology is good rather than very good.
100. Leadership and management are very good. The head of the curriculum area is well supported by two colleagues and a well-qualified technician. Assessment procedures are good and used well to inform learning. The new computing facilities and accommodation are very good and promote high standards. Power machines for making resistant materials products are limited. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The quality of teaching and achievement has improved.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design, and music were inspected in detail and drama was sampled.

101. One Year 8 drama lesson was observed. All students in the class had enthusiastically taken on roles as actors, technicians, props managers in preparing for an after-school performance for their parents. The quality of their teamwork and sustained concentration was high. Teaching and learning were very good throughout.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching enables good learning to take place.
- Students' positive attitudes and very good behaviour create a positive learning ethos in classrooms.
- Good, clear and purposeful leadership ensures high standards.
- High levels of research and annotation standards are evident in students' sketchbooks and journals.
- Insufficient use is made of the limited resources available in the department for computer art.

Commentary

102. In 2003 all students achieved GCSE A* to C grades, which is well above the national average. This is an improvement on previous years and reflects the current good standard of teaching and learning. Standards on entry in Year 7 overall are above average with a few Year 7 students displaying a natural and well developed talent for observational drawing. By the end of Year 9 standards are well above average. Sketchbooks in Years 7 to 9 and the journals of students in Years 10 and 11 show a high standard of research and annotation. This builds up from Year 7 note-taking and self-evaluation, towards interesting, well informed and sustained critical studies of the work of famous artists chosen by the students on the GCSE course. Students achieve very well in all years.
103. The quality of teaching is good and students learn well. Students are expected to develop as independent learners and the very good critical sessions in lessons support this development well. Teachers have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their subject area and most are successful practitioners in their own right. They teach with enthusiasm and a love of the subject, which motivates students and ensures that they learn and work well. Students respond with very positive attitudes to work and their very good behaviour ensures that lessons are productive and enjoyable, enabling all students, including the more talented and the lower attaining students, to make very good progress in developing their art knowledge and skills.
104. The department team benefits from good leadership and this leads to high expectations of students' behaviour and work. Teachers have worked well together to maintain high standards since the last inspection and to develop the work of the department as ideas and resources improve. Improvement has been good. At present the development of computer art is at an early stage and this powerful resource is only now coming on stream. Teachers are well qualified in digital art and are keen to exploit the exciting potential of this field of art but inadequate computer facilities constrain teaching and learning in this area.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' secure subject knowledge leads to good achievement.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities supports high standards.
- A high number of students learn an instrument and participate in enrichment activities.
- The use of ICT to support learning is underdeveloped.
- Planning does not always reflect the ability range of all students.

Commentary

105. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average and they are well above average at the end of Year 11. Students achieve well in all years. The proportion of students achieving GCSE A*-C grades is well above average as is the proportion who achieve the very highest grades. In Year

7, students quickly learn songs by rote and show a good understanding of musical terms and instruments. Year 9 students learned '*I dreamed a dream*' out of *Les Miserables* very quickly and showed secure knowledge of chords and melody writing when composing over ground basses.

106. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. The use of the '*tune of the week*' is a very effective way of developing students' knowledge and understanding in a range of different contexts. The tailoring of work to suit students of all abilities needs developing so that work is carefully matched in all tasks to cater for the musically able and less able. In a minority of lessons work is not always focussed on musical experiences for students. The use of ICT at all levels is underdeveloped in the department to extend and support student work. Assessment is good and provides a secure base on which to judge student attainment at the end of Year 9. Students' self-assessment and peer assessments of on-going and final performances are still to be fully developed.
107. Leadership and management are good. Schemes of work provide students with a broad and balanced curriculum and contribute well to their cultural development. Extra-curricular activities are a particular strength. The department has a varied choice of musical activities on offer and many students perform to a very high standard. Students have many opportunities to perform in concerts and participate in musical activities both at home and abroad. They contribute significantly to widening students' creative and aesthetic development.
108. The department's accommodation is spacious but a difficult environment for class teaching since it inhibits student activity and movement. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The GCSE results in physical education and dance are high and reflect very good teaching.
- The time allocated to physical education in Year 9 is less than that recommended nationally; despite this, students reach standards that are above average.
- The quality of leadership and management is very good and there is a clear focus on priorities for development.
- There is a high level of participation in extra-curricular activities and this complements the teaching in lessons and contributes to students' progress.

Commentary

109. Students join the school with standards that are below average. By the end of Year 9, they can evaluate their own and others' work successfully and are able to develop and refine movement ideas in dance. The shortfall in time allocated to Year 9 physical education hinders students' progress at times, which means that some students cannot perform the basic netball skills with consistent precision and fluency. Despite this, students achieve well. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above national expectations.
110. Students in Years 10 and 11 have the option to participate in a wide range of activities for their core physical education lessons, which take place at the local sports centre. This provides them with varied, new learning experiences but the extent of students' progress is restricted by the shortness of time allocated to physical education in the timetable. Standards at the end of Year 11 in core physical education are above the national average. The results for physical education and dance at GCSE are well above the national average. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good and very good in the GCSE courses.

111. In GCSE physical education groups, students are able to define and explain the components of health and skill related fitness and to distinguish between the levels of cardio-vascular fitness required for different activities. The quality of written work seen in GCSE dance folders is very high. There is evidence of very detailed, contextual analysis and students are encouraged to use basic Laban notation, all of which reflects levels of learning that go well beyond the basic requirements of the course.
112. The quality of teaching and learning across Years 7 to 9 is good and, at times, very good. Lessons are consistently well planned and there is a clear focus on learning outcomes. Tasks are structured to enable students to develop their own ideas and performances according to their abilities. In a very good dance lesson seen, the teacher skilfully guided students towards an understanding of dynamics and the more able used adventurous lifts and supported balances to provide dynamic contrast in height and speed. Students created exciting and vivid developments to their original movements and this enhanced the expressive qualities of their dances, because the movements more closely matched their themes. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are very good in the examination courses and good in course that all students take. In a Year 11 core physical education squash lesson, students applied techniques and skills successfully in response to the changing pace of a rally, after only two lessons.
113. Leadership and management are very good. Staff work very effectively as a team and are delegated responsibilities that allow them to work to their strengths. The improvement plan focuses clearly on developments that will reinforce standards and strengthen further the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers provide good rôle models for students and student-teacher relationships are warm and respectful.
114. The high standards seen at the last inspection have been maintained and the GCSE examination results have been consistently high. Improvement has been good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- Students are enthusiastic learners.
- The quality of leadership and management is good.

Commentary

115. Three out of ten students opt to take business studies in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, the GCSE examination results were well above average. All students examined obtained A* to C grades and over eight out of every ten students achieved A* and A grades. These standards are being maintained by current students. Students achieve well.
116. Teaching and learning are good. Students effectively research the Internet to learn about the recruitment of personnel and to learn some key human resources terms. In Year 11, students work in groups well in learning about problems of change and growth. For example, students considered the problems a haulage and storage company faced in changing to a coach hire and touring company. Students enjoy the subject and attitudes to learning are positive. The subject is popular with an increasing number of students on the GCSE course.
117. Leadership and management are good. The subject is well organised, popular and well taught, resulting in good achievement. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in full and is reported below. Personal, social and health education was sampled.

118. Personal, social and health education is taught across the school by form tutors led by experienced pastoral staff. No teaching of personal, social and health education occurred during the inspection. The syllabus follows the national non-statutory guidelines for Years 7 to 11 and so fully meets requirements to include sex and relationships education, and give attention to alcohol and drugs misuse. Provision is overseen by the citizenship co-ordinator where the curriculum links to work in discrete citizenship lessons. These are taught by form tutors as part of the personal, social and health education timetable. Difficult topics, such as death and bereavement, are taught sensitively in religious education and these are clearly identified. Students learn about belief and to respect the differences between people. Input from a number of outside agencies supports the teaching of a number of topics including health, contraception, careers and rail safety.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have excellent opportunities to engage in active citizenship.
- The teaching of the short examination course in Year 11 is very good and sometimes excellent.
- The leadership of the department is good.
- Not all subjects include an appropriate citizenship element in their teaching.

Commentary

119. Standards are above average and students achieve well. The school has worked hard to establish citizenship on the curriculum and in many areas it is very good. An outstanding strength is the programme of active citizenship that enables older students to engage in meaningful activities of community support. Students in Years 10 and 11 are instrumental in organising sports days at local primary schools; they give drama performances based on citizenship themes to those schools and support the teaching of art master classes to Year 4 students. Years 10 and 11 students raise money for several charities through their forms and teach first aid to the local sea cadets and netball. They have also organised a questionnaire on mentoring in the school, and produced a report from their findings. Year 8 students are in the process of forming political parties and organising an election, based on local issues and concerns.
120. Teaching and learning are good in all years. Teachers have an excellent command of the subject and teach the GCSE short course with enthusiasm and commitment, which motivates students to learn and take an active interest in the school, local and wider national community. This new course has attracted a large number of students and their progress is tracked effectively along course guidelines.
121. A recently appointed co-ordinator is in the process of taking on the management from an experienced and well-qualified deputy head teacher who managed the recent development of the subject in the interim period. Leadership and management are good. The English, history, geography and religious education departments are given the responsibility for teaching substantive elements of the citizenship curriculum, whilst a course of eight discrete weekly lessons of citizenship is taught to all year groups within the personal social and health education programme. The English, geography and religious education departments are providing for citizenship very well in lessons. The history department has yet to carry through its

planning for citizenship in a rigorous, practical way. Other subjects are aware of their responsibility for teaching citizenship through their varied curricula, but they are at various stages of implementation of their long term and lesson planning. Good examples of interactive learning, in which students took a responsible and informed critical approach to each other's work, were found in art, drama and physical education.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	13	84.6	83.5	15.4	36.1	26.9	34.6
Business Studies	5	80.0	89.7	0.0	33.3	22.0	36.0
Chemistry	6	83.3	87.5	33.3	39.9	31.7	36.9
Communication studies	11	90.9	95.1	27.3	39.7	37.3	39.8
English/English language	16	81.3	93.0	0.0	31.5	26.3	36.5
History	7	85.7	92.0	28.6	38.9	34.3	38.4
Mathematics	8	75.0	78.0	50.0	37.3	35	33.3
Other social studies	5	60.0	85.2	0.0	35.5	24.0	35.1
Physics	7	57.1	87.7	0.0	42.8	15.7	38.1
Sociology	7	85.7	85.3	28.6	36.3	32.9	35.1
Sports/PE studies	5	100	91.4	0	37.3	36.0	37.8

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	5	100	96.1	60.0	48.7	88.0	85.1
Biology	17	94.1	91.6	17.6	36.3	68.2	74.1
Business Studies	10	100	96.4	50.0	32.8	94.0	76.5
Chemistry	10	90.0	94.0	30.0	45.9	64.0	81.1
Classical Studies	6	100	98.5	83.3	52.0	106.7	88.0
Communication Studies	20	100	98.3	75.0	36.8	100.0	81.1
Dance	5	100	95.1	100	50.3	112.0	85.8
Drama	10	100	98.1	100	41.5	112.0	82.9

English/English Language	14	100	98.3	57.1	36.5	94.3	80.1
English Literature	11	100	98.5	90.9	43.7	101.8	84.3
Design and Technology	6	100	95.3	50.0	35.5	90.0	76.5
Geography	15	100	97.1	60.0	40.5	90.7	80.9
History	21	100	89.1	66.7	41.0	94.3	81.2
Information Technology	11	100	89.1	45.5	22.4	80.0	64.1
Mathematics	14	100	93.3	35.7	52.2	81.4	84.7
Other Social Studies	9	100	94.3	44.4	38.9	82.2	77.7
Physics	8	75.0	92.8	37.5	42.8	57.5	78.0
Sociology	16	100	95.4	43.8	39.6	85.0	79.1
Sports/PE Studies	6	100	95.4	50.0	29.5	93.3	73.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature was inspected, and English language and literature, French and German were sampled.

122. Results in A-level **English language and literature** have been well above average but declined in 2003, although students' progress from GCSE was as expected. In 2003, two out of five students gained the higher grades of A and B. One Year 13 lesson was observed which was very good. Students presented to the rest of the class their analyses of different scenes from *Othello*, including the social context and the linguistic structure. The teacher set very high expectations for the precise use of language and skilfully drew out learning points from the discussion. Students used technical language with accuracy and ease. The excellent relationship between teacher and class encouraged the students to see themselves as fellow scholars exploring the text together.
123. Standards in the 2003 GCE A-level in **French** were above average, but numbers were too few in **German** for valid national comparison. Lessons in both languages were taught by native speakers and were very good. In German, the teacher succeeds in creating a challenging and stimulating lesson environment, where the student is actively engaged. In French, where the topic was collaboration in the Second World War, the intensity of the use of French and the active engagement of all the students resulted in very good learning. Questioning techniques encouraged independent thinking and exemplary marking offered clear guidance on the features required for the highest grades in written work.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and achievement is very good.
- A large proportion of students gained higher grades in GCE A-level last year.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The subject is very strongly led and managed.

Commentary

124. A-level results were very high in 2003. Three out of five students gained grades A and B. All of the students entered gained grades A to C. This represents very good achievement for these students in relation to their prior GCSE performances. It is the result of very good teaching, the positive attitudes of the students and their exemplary behaviour.
125. Standards in Year 13 are well above average with many students working at the very highest grades. Most students' writing is consistently evaluative and analytical. Students have a detailed knowledge of the themes and narrative structure of texts. They evaluate very well the contemporary values that influence authors and comment astutely on how interpretations of texts change over time. Most write accurately and persuasively. Their writing reflects the delight and independence with which they approach their lessons. In one lesson, for example, students exchanged strongly argued positions on the impact of the opening chapter of *Howard's End*. In another lesson, students confidently explored John Betjeman's sense of place, creating meticulous textual analyses and provoking challenge from their peers. The written work of less highly attaining students shows some flaws in expression and accuracy and their analysis of the author's use of language lacks detail. In Year 12, students make very good progress in developing analytical skills in lessons and are beginning to transfer these skills to their written work.
126. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very experienced and are well read in terms of both texts and critics. As a result, students make excellent progress in improving their analysis and their argumentative writing. Challenge and high expectations are features in all lessons. Learning is highly interactive, with many opportunities for whole class and group discussion. Students are expected to work independently through researching contextual background and delivering presentations, as well as through their note-taking and written assignments. The variety of learning activities encourages and motivates students. Students of all abilities carry out their essay work with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Marking is very good. Teachers use written and spoken comments to clarify what each student needs to do to improve.
127. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers monitor students' progress very closely. Target setting is effective. The sharing of assessment objectives clarifies for students what they have to improve to achieve their goals. In a Year 13 lesson, for example, students were encouraged to consider how they might meet assessment objectives and gain higher grades.
128. Teachers have very high aspirations for their students. Their enthusiasm for literature is outstanding and provides an excellent example. The quality of provision is monitored very well and improvement has been good since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and students achieve very well.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- ICT is underused as a resource for learning.
- Teachers' written comments on homework are not linked to students' target grades.

Commentary

129. In 2002, AS-level mathematics results were well above average and students' achievement in relation to their GCSE performance was good. In 2003, results were high and student achievement was very good. In 2002, GCE A-level results were overall broadly average and

achievement was satisfactory. In 2003, GCE A-level results were very high with a significant proportion achieving the highest grades A and B and students' achievement was very good overall. All students who started the courses were entered for examination and achieved a pass grade or better. Current standards are well above average and students are achieving very well. Most files are well organised and provide a good record for revision. Year 12 students make good use of their past GCSE work to move in to new areas. For example, in a mechanics lesson, a review of simple trigonometric ratios provided a sound basis for resolving forces in two directions to find the resultant. In Year 13, students recall knowledge well and apply it confidently in class and in their written work. In one pure mathematics lesson, for example, students confidently demonstrated their ability to integrate a variety of algebraic functions before continuing their learning on how to integrate using identities.

130. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan lessons well and use their knowledge of the subject effectively, though too little use is made of ICT to extend students' learning further. Students work hard and relationships with teachers are good. In some lessons students contribute a great deal, demonstrating their knowledge and understanding well. However, examples of lessons being strongly teacher driven without engaging the students sufficiently were also evident. Homework is set and marked regularly, but the brief teacher annotation offers little guidance to students about how to achieve their target grades.
131. Leadership and management are good. Improvement since the last inspections has been good and issues raised then have been addressed well. Planning is effective and the needs of the higher-attaining students are being met. There is a commitment to maintaining very high standards though student numbers remain stubbornly low. Current opportunities to widen the breadth of vision of the subject for the students beyond the text book are limited. Teachers are approachable and prepared to use their time outside lessons to provide extra support.

SCIENCE

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and expectations are high.
- Teachers work well together and are committed to raising standards.
- Students are eager to learn although sometimes reluctant to initiate discussion or challenge concepts.
- Tests and formal pieces of work are marked effectively but students' files are not monitored on a regular basis.

Commentary

132. Results of the 2003 A-level examination were very much better than those in 2002 and better than those of the two previous years. Half the candidates were awarded the higher grades. This is well above the national average for all schools. Performance was slightly higher than that predicted by prior attainment and achievement was good. The lower than average results in 2002 occurred during a period when the department was experiencing staffing difficulties. Standards in the current Year 12 and Year 13 are above average and students achieve well. Students in Year 12 have already settled down well to their studies and are working in a mature way. They have, for example, a sound understanding of the concept of equilibrium and can recall and discuss a wide range of properties and reactions of the halogens. Year 13 students demonstrate in lessons and in their written work a good understanding of the topics they have been taught. Students approach practical assignments in an informed way and their skills of

evaluation are commendable. They can demonstrate in theory and through practical work a sound understanding of the use of buffers in relation to chemical indicators.

133. The quality of teaching and learning in both years is good. Students are motivated and have a positive approach to learning. They are able to work independently and approach practical work with confidence. They respond thoughtfully when questioned directly but are sometimes reluctant to initiate discussion or challenge concepts. Lessons are very well prepared. Relationships are very good and teachers endeavour to ensure that students enjoy their learning. Some parts of lessons would benefit from improved pace. In a well-prepared Year 12 lesson the teacher gauged the attainment levels of the students well and introduced the topic of dynamic equilibrium in a way that was understood by all. Two well-conducted experiments and a good summary at the end ensured that students at all levels made good progress.
134. The subject is very well led and managed. Three staff teach the course but frequent informal meetings enable them to work together effectively. There is a strong commitment to raising standards. Students encounter tests and exercises on a regular basis to reinforce their knowledge and understanding and give students valuable feedback. However, teachers do not monitor students' files regularly to check for errors and offer advice on presentation. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and achievement remains good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

135. Students' application of ICT in the sixth form is good overall. Students in all subjects have good ICT skills and are encouraged to use these in and out of the classroom. As a result, there are many very good examples of the application of ICT to coursework.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history but government and politics, classical civilisation, travel and tourism, religious studies, geography and psychology were also sampled.

136. In the one **government and politics** lesson observed, well-motivated students debated feminist issues vigorously and in consequence made good gains in learning.
137. In the one **classical civilisation** lesson observed, knowledgeable teaching succeeded in developing students' knowledge and understanding of Greek tragedy, and in involving all students in at least some debate.
138. One Year 12 AS lesson in **religious studies** was sampled. Teaching and learning were very good. Enthusiastic students engaged in groups in a range of productive research activities on challenges to belief in God, effectively guided and supported by their teacher.
139. In **geography**, AS-level and A-level results have greatly improved over the last two years, particularly for the higher grades which are now above national averages. Students make good progress from their GCSE results. One Year 13 lesson was observed in which excellent lively and very challenging teaching resulted in rapid and enjoyable learning about the processes and landforms at tectonic plate boundaries. Extremely sophisticated employment of modern technologies greatly enhanced interest, pace and understanding. Year 12 students with their teacher were undertaking fieldwork in Devon during the inspection. Analysis of a sample of their work also showed very high standards. Retention rates are very high.
140. In a good **psychology** lesson, lively student discussion on the media influences in television showed a strong interest and awareness of issues in the media and how frequent portrayals of violence reduce viewers' sensitivity.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in response to very good teaching.
- There is a successful emphasis upon encouraging students to be active, independent learners.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Students' very positive attitudes contribute to very good learning and achievement.

Commentary

141. Examination results at A-level in 2003 and previous years have been well above average, with the great majority of students attaining the highest grades. These standards are reflected in the evidence of the inspection: standards are well above average in the key areas of knowledge, understanding and the ability of students to critically evaluate and use evidence. For example, students produce high-quality individual projects on chosen areas of study, ranging from the causes of the English Civil War to feminism in an historical context. Particularly impressive is the students' ability to discuss different interpretations when examining complex topics such as the origins of the Cold War. Students of all levels of ability, including the gifted and talented, achieve very well, mainly because of the emphasis on personal development, independent learning and the high quality of the teaching generally.
142. Teaching is very good, and students respond well to this and learn very well. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which is used not to dictate to students, but to draw out their understanding through challenging exercises, debate and research activities. This was evident, for example, in a Year 12 exercise which involved students examining the cultural revolution in Bolshevik Russia. This lesson also included the imaginative use of music to personalise the issues involved. The teaching is imaginative, building upon the very good working relationships between teachers and students, who enjoy the responsibility which they are given.
143. Leadership and management are excellent. The department works very well as a unit, reviewing its progress, looking for innovative approaches to developing the subject, assessing students' work well and making very good use of new technology to help students develop as independent learners. These strengths, along with the maintenance of high standards and a high quality of teaching, mean that there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are well above national averages.
- Standards have risen significantly over the last few years.
- The high level of student independence and effective teacher support.
- Participation in Leonardo da Vinci project to encourage students to take technological courses at university level.
- Further non-ICT support resources are needed to enhance provision for independent learning.

Commentary

144. A-level results in 2003 were high in relation to national averages and well above the average for these students in relation to their other subjects. At AS-level over three-quarters of students achieved an A grade, with the remainder achieving B grades. Students made better progress

than would be expected from their GCSE results and achievement is good. Results have improved significantly over the past two years.

145. The standards observed of current Year 13 students are well above average and achievement is very good. They have a mature attitude to their work, which they clearly enjoy, and they make substantial progress during the year with projects that they have a good sense of ownership of. Students' products are developed independently with real clients and include learning aids for the visually handicapped, electronic musical instruments and seating devices. Research and development work is comprehensive and thorough. Nearly half of the students have gained provisional places on courses such as Product Design, Architecture and Graphics.
146. Current Year 12 students demonstrate a good grasp of the processes of designing and making, and an increasing fluency in communication skills. Students' projects include jewellery boxes and test rigs. Product analysis work of items such as disposable razors, hair brushes and confectionary packaging includes perceptive discussion of the cultural, social moral and environmental dimensions of design.
147. Teaching and learning are always good, with some very good features. Students are expected and encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and staff provide a strong supportive framework that facilitates effective personalised learning, though further non-ICT resources, for example, reference books and self-study materials, would enhance provision further. Teachers have sound specialist knowledge and explain theoretical work clearly and accurately. They are careful to ensure that Year 12 students are all brought up to a good standard on constructional work and basic materials theory. Students have good opportunities to use computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture, in two and three dimensions.
148. Leadership and management are good. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards, teaching and accommodation have all improved significantly. The department is participating in the European Union funded Leonardo da Vinci project to encourage students to take technological courses at university level. This will potentially involve working with international industries, including work-placement opportunities.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus was on art and design but drama, music and media studies were also sampled.

149. One **drama** lesson was observed which was very good. As part of their critical evaluation work, a group of Year 13 students performed their own devised piece 'Smile for the Camera'. This piece explored family relationships through the Davies family and how things may not be as straightforward as we first realised between each member of that family. By using a narrator, nursery rhymes and surrealism it powerfully explored complex themes in a very convincing way.
150. Standards in A-level **music** for 2003 were high although with small numbers. During the inspection, one lesson was seen with Year 12 where students showed very good prior knowledge of musical terms and genres when exploring the relationship between the music of John Cage and his historical precedents. The level of discussion was of a very high standard.
151. Two Year 13 **media studies** lessons were sampled during the inspection. Teaching was consistently good and work very well planned; students demonstrated a clear understanding of the rôle of censorship in relation to the British film industry.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good and sometimes excellent teaching enables students to achieve high standards.
- Students have a high level of commitment to their work.
- Very good leadership and a strong teaching team ensure that high standards are maintained.
- Opportunities to develop digital art are limited by the lack of appropriate resources.

Commentary

152. Current numbers entered for the AS examination are a considerable improvement on recent years; their GCSE grades in art and design were all in the GCSE A* to B grade range. In work seen, standards are well above average. A-level standards are well above average and students achieve very well. The standard of drawing and painting skills is particularly high.
153. Teaching and learning are very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers have an excellent command of their subject and teach with enthusiasm and commitment to the majority of students, who have very positive attitudes to work and whose behaviour is exemplary. Those students take full responsibility for their learning and research their chosen artists very well, annotating their studies fully, showing a well developed understanding of the fine art influences on their work. Written work in journals is re-drafted before presentation, although marking of this work is not as rigorous as it could be. Opportunities to study life drawing are particularly helpful in developing the general art skills of the students.
154. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The school has secured the Artsmark silver award and the department is working to gain the coveted gold award. The department has made good improvement since the previous inspection. The work of the department is monitored very well and leads to high student achievement. Limited technician support adversely affects the development of three-dimensional studies and routine resource management. Students appreciate the use of a dedicated sixth form studio, and they use it well in their free study time. There is insufficient use of computers for digital art, although the department plans to improve this area of work are in hand.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was inspected in depth. Travel and tourism was sampled.

Travel and tourism, introduced this year, has a high take-up of students in Year 12 and they are covering the syllabus in a systematic way despite disruptions occasioned by staff absences. One lesson was observed where students made satisfactory progress working on tourism development. Some tasks repeated work covered in earlier years and were too easy to extend most students. However, good well-guided opportunities in which students took responsibility for their own Internet research for a case study about Antiguan tourism showed skilful quick use of computers and effective study skills. Students are very satisfied with their choice of course.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to the well above average examination results in sports studies and dance.
- Students participate enthusiastically in extra-curricular activities.
- The Community Sports Leadership Award is popular and students enjoy the opportunities to work with students in primary schools.

Commentary

155. Standards in A-level sport studies and dance were well above average, and standards in work seen are very high. Students achieve very well and build on their success in Year 11 GCSE examinations. This is the result of very good, and often excellent, teaching that challenges and extends students' learning, often beyond their own expectations. Teachers use highly effective strategies to harness students' different learning styles and put an emphasis on encouraging them to solve their problems through making deductions from what they already know.
156. In an excellent Year 12 sports studies physiology lesson, students experienced learning through several different teaching methods that included guided discovery – using coloured cones to represent gaseous exchange in the body, the physical use of peak flow monitors and the rewording of technical definitions as triggers for the memory. This range of practical and investigative teaching methods challenged students to recall and build on their skills as they applied the new concepts to answering written tasks. This was evident when they all independently sketched and labelled a graph that interpreted a spirometer trace. Probing questions encouraged students to make deductions using their existing knowledge, which enabled them to articulate their own answers to problems. A substantial amount of work was completed in the lesson and a less able student was able to achieve the same high rate of progress. A Year 13 sports studies group were observed giving individual presentations for their global studies module. This was also an excellent lesson and the range and extent of discussion that arose was impressive. The teacher skilfully prompted both presenters and observers to question and reflect on significant points for discussion and these ranged from the rôle of the women's movement, funding for the disabled and the contrast in cultures across the world. This led to a considerable enrichment of students' contextual knowledge and understanding about relevant issues.
157. The community sports leadership award in Year 12 is popular and students are enthusiastic about developing their rôles as leaders and coaches. This strengthens further the existing links between the school local primary schools and has inspired several students to become more involved in voluntary work in the community. Students are enthusiastic supporters of the flourishing extra curricular programme and participate in school teams and run clubs after school. A small number of students also help with physical education lessons for the younger year groups and assist a member of staff with dance lessons at the nearby boys' grammar school.
158. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers are very good rôle models and inspire students to the higher levels of attainment; this year several students have chosen sport related courses for their higher education. There is clear evidence of the sharing of best practice and values across teaching and learning and there is a commitment to the support of students who visit the school on initial teacher training placements. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

BUSINESS

A business education course is offered by the school but did not run because of low student recruitment.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care was sampled.

159. One very good lesson on **health and social care** was observed. Advice on portfolio development was linked very well to students' learning. Teaching and learning were supported by good textual and ICT resources.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No general courses are offered.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	2	2
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2
Overall standards achieved		2
Students' achievement	2	2
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	1	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well students learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	2	2
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1	1
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7)