

INSPECTION REPORT

ST ANSELM'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Canterbury

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118918

Headteacher: Mr Philip Wicker

Lead inspector: Mr Anthony Shield

Dates of inspection: 8 – 11 March 2004

Inspection number: 259143

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1064

School address:	Old Dover Road Canterbury Kent
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Postcode:	CT1 3EN
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Telephone number:	01227 826200
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
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Name of chair of governors:	Mr Peter Nash
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Date of previous inspection:	November 1997
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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Anselm's Catholic School is a mixed voluntary aided secondary school for pupils aged 11 – 18, situated in Canterbury, Kent. Pupils are drawn from Canterbury and more widely from Ashford, Herne Bay, Whitstable and Folkestone, and their surrounding villages. The school operates within a selective authority and around one quarter of pupils in the catchment area attend grammar schools. This has significant implications for the ability profile of pupils on entry, which is below average overall, although pupils of all abilities are present in the school. The socio-economic background from which the pupils are drawn is average. There are currently 1064 pupils on roll, with 144 in the sixth form. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is average, with 180 pupils having identified needs. Most have learning difficulties, but the school also has a 14 place unit for pupils with a physical disability. These pupils are largely integrated into mainstream classes. Forty-two pupils have statements of special educational needs. This is above average. Pupils are mostly white British, but with small numbers from a range of other ethnic heritages. There are five pupils with English as an additional language. The school collaborates with a neighbouring school over some aspects of its sixth form provision.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3569	Anthony Shield	Lead inspector	
19727	Eric Langford	Lay inspector	
3643	Derek Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics
22393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English, English as an additional language
22360	Barry Wright	Team inspector	Science, Biology in the sixth form
18638	Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
31695	Val Girling	Team inspector	Art and design
2971	Kathy Hooper	Team inspector	Design and technology
30743	Neil Cowell	Team inspector	Geography
8672	Mike Roberts	Team inspector	History
30136	Dennis Johnson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education, Citizenship
10807	Paul Quest	Team inspector	Vocational courses
3731	Bill Robson	Team inspector	Special educational needs
27407	Bill Stoneham	Team inspector	Business studies

The inspection contractor was:

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	15
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	23
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	54

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This is a **good and improving school** with some very good features. It provides good value for money. The principled and determined leadership of the headteacher is ensuring a strong commitment to the school's mission statement and to further improvement. Standards are average and improving. Pupils' achievements are good as a result of good teaching.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The good leadership of the governors, headteacher and key staff is providing a strong sense of common purpose and direction.
- Good teaching and the positive attitudes of pupils ensure that most achieve well.
- Standards of literacy and English in Years 7-9 are not high enough.
- Monitoring and self-evaluation procedures need further consistency at subject level to ensure that they are fully effective.
- Very good relationships, the good quality of pastoral care and strong sense of community combine to ensure all pupils feel valued and supported.
- Pupils' personal development is good and encouraged by an extensive range of opportunities to exercise responsibility and take part in enrichment activities.
- Productive and increasingly effective links with parents, partner schools and the wider community help to promote achievement.
- Citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is not fully planned and implemented.

Overall, the school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in 1997. Improvement immediately following the previous inspection stalled. However, since the appointment of the headteacher, improvements have been rapid. He has created a strong leadership team and established management systems which are leading to good improvements in provision. Standards overall in Year 9 tests have improved, except in English. In GCSE examinations results have been improving broadly in line with the national average, and improved sharply in 2003. A-level performance has been more mixed and has varied with different groups of students. Key issues at the time of the last inspection have been tackled effectively. The work of governors in particular is now much more effective.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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 pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement is good overall, given the pupils' attainment on entry in Year 7, but does vary from subject to subject. Although results for A*-C grades are below those of similar schools and relatively few pupils gain A* and A grades, this reflects the nature of the intake. Results for A*-G grades are well above those of similar schools. This good achievement is confirmed by inspection evidence in which standards seen in both Years 9 and 11 were broadly in line with the national average, although standards in Year 13 were below average. Standards in English are below average in Year 9, but improve during Years 10 and 11, where they are average. In mathematics standards are average in both Years 9 and 11, while in science standards are above average in Year 9 and average in Year 11. However, overall achievements in English, mathematics and science are good. In Years 9 and 11, pupils' achievements are very good in information and communication technology (ICT) and drama and good in history, geography, technology and physical education. Pupils' achievements in music in Year 9 have been unsatisfactory because of staffing problems, but this has now been

resolved and pupils are now achieving much better. In other subjects in Years 7-11, achievement is satisfactory.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good overall.

Pupils' personal development is good. Their positive attitudes, particularly in the sixth form where attitudes are very good, make a strong contribution to their achievement. Behaviour is good, and most pupils, particularly as they move through the school, are thoughtful and considerate of others. The school provides a very strong moral and social framework for pupils' development, and they respond with increasing maturity and sense of responsibility.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education** provided by the school is **good**. **Teaching is good** overall, although its quality varies from subject to subject. Teachers have a strong commitment to improving learning. They are confident in their subject knowledge, and plan lessons and activities carefully so as to involve the pupils. Pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve. As a result, learning is good in most lessons. The curriculum is satisfactory, preparing pupils appropriately for their future. It is enriched by a very good range of out of school clubs and activities. The school has good plans to develop its vocational curriculum. The school's procedures for the care, guidance and support of pupils are very good. Tutors know their pupils well and are committed to their personal and academic development. Extensive links with the community and partner schools make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good. Effective leadership by the headteacher has inspired others and gained their respect. He is well supported by his deputy and senior team. The work of the governors is good. They offer an experienced and committed overview of the school's work, and are astute and confident in their role. Statutory requirements are met, except in relation to the full implementation of the programme for citizenship. **Management is satisfactory.** The school is thoughtful and reflective in its approach, and management procedures for the monitoring and review of its work are in place. However not all systems are implemented with consistent rigour at subject level.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school's partnership with its parents is very good. Parents are very supportive of the school and by and large, the school has their confidence. In particular they are pleased that their children are expected to do their best, that they make good progress as a result of good teaching, and that their children like school. A minority of parents are critical of the information they receive about progress. Pupils are very loyal and express considerable support for the school. They enjoy the challenge of the teaching and participate in all activities with enthusiasm. The vast majority thinks the school is good. Whilst many pupils are critical of the behaviour of a minority, they feel that any bullying is dealt with quickly and effectively.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve standards of achievement in English, and literacy overall, in Years 7 – 9.
- Ensure a more consistent approach to the monitoring, evaluation, review and improvement of the quality of provision.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Implement fully the programme of study for citizenship in Years 10 and 11.

THE SIXTH FORM AT ST ANSELM'S SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form centre is providing a **good** education for its students, and is improving. Although standards in 2003 were well below average overall, standards vary from year to year and achievement, given the students' prior attainment at GCSE is good. Teaching and learning are good. There is a clear sense of direction, and leadership and management are good. The sixth form is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Although overall results at A-level were well below average in 2003, students' achievements were good, given their performance at GCSE on entry to the sixth form.
- Teaching is good and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Students are overwhelmingly supportive and enjoy being part of the sixth form.
- Teachers are committed to the progress of individual students, and systems for assessing and monitoring their progress are good.
- The curriculum provides an increasingly good range of academic subjects through its collaborative arrangements.
- Unsatisfactory provision in art and design has not yet been fully tackled.

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
Mathematics	Mathematics - Unsatisfactory. Standards are well below average. Students underachieve because of significant staffing difficulties in the recent past. Teaching is currently satisfactory. Students' level of independent study has yet to reach satisfactory levels.
Science	Biology – Good. Although current standards are average, A-level results have varied. Numbers are often small, but students achieve well, given their GCSE starting point. Teaching is good.
Business	Business Studies - Good. Students are achieving well, because the teaching offered is challenging and is encouraging independent and collaborative work.
ICT	Good. The teaching is very good and leads to good achievement, even though students begin the course with well below average knowledge and experience of ICT.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Leisure and Recreation – Satisfactory. Students' standards are average but vary. Their achievement is good as a result of good teaching.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design – Unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory co-ordination of shared teaching adversely affects achievement. Students' attitudes are good and contribute to their learning
Humanities	History – Very good. Standards are above average and students are achieving very well as a result of some very good and occasionally outstanding teaching.

English, languages and communication

English – Good. Students attain above average standards and their levels of achievement are good, because of effective teaching and their own positive attitudes to the subject.

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

The quality of personal support and guidance that students receive is good. Tutors know their students very well and are sensitive to their needs.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form is good and management satisfactory. There is a clear rationale for the sixth form and considerable attention has been given to raising standards and the overall quality of provision. Management systems are well organised and thorough, but have not yet had sufficient impact in improving art and design.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being part of the sixth form and all surveyed considered that the teaching is challenging. They particularly appreciate the helpfulness and accessibility of the teachers. Most consider that they are treated fairly and with respect. Some were critical of the range of enrichment courses available to them and the level of careers advice.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards of work seen overall during the inspection are average in Years 9 and 11 and below average in Year 13. Pupils' achievements are good throughout the school. Although girls tend to do better than boys, the difference is not significant and in most subjects is no greater than that found nationally. Boys' performance at GCSE improved markedly in 2003.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are good in all years.
- Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in English have been declining in recent years and are below average.
- Value added analysis of pupils' results between Year 9 and GCSE examinations indicates an above average and improving performance.
- Results at A-level vary from year to year, although students' achievements are consistently good.

Commentary

1. Although pupils of all abilities are represented in the school, there are more pupils of average ability and average prior attainment than is found in most schools. This is a reflection of the fact that Canterbury is within a selective local education authority, where around one quarter of pupils attend grammar schools. Consequently, there are fewer high attaining pupils in the school than would be found in a typical comprehensive school. As measured by the average points score of attainment in national tests taken at the end of their primary schools, the overall attainment on entry in Year 7 was below average in 2003. Cognitive ability tests taken by pupils on entry also reflect this below average attainment. There is little variation in ability and attainment on entry in each year.
2. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the pupils' performance in English was below average. In mathematics and science it was average. In comparison with similar schools i.e. those with pupils who achieved similarly in Year 6 national tests, performance in English was average, while in mathematics and science, it was well above average. Overall, performance in the three subjects was average, while in comparison with similar schools, it was well above average. This good overall progress made by pupils during Years 7 – 9 was confirmed by inspectors' observations. However, while results in both mathematics and science have been improving in recent years, English results have not improved to the same extent. The relatively poor performance in English at this level has been acknowledged by the school, and an action plan to ensure improvement is being implemented. Inspectors' observations confirm that standards of achievement in English in Years 7-9 are not high enough. This is largely a reflection of less effective teaching, particularly of pupils' writing, and more so than in Years 10 and 11.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	32.5 (31.7)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	35.6 (34.2)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.0 (33.2)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 189 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. Although girls did better than boys in all three subjects in 2003, boys had outperformed girls in both mathematics and science in previous years. However, when compared with boys' and girls' achievements nationally, the difference was not significant. Able pupils and those identified as gifted and talented achieve well through Years 7 – 9. For example, the proportion of pupils attaining higher levels in mathematics in 2003 was above average and for some pupils represented very good achievement.
4. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C grades in 2003 was 50 per cent, in line with the national average and below the average for similar schools. The average total GCSE points score per pupil in 2003 was 41, which was also in line with the national average and below the average of schools which performed similarly in Year 9 tests in 2001.
5. However, GCSE results reflect the ability profile of the pupils on entry, with a concentration in the middle grades. Consequently the more significant measure is the proportion of pupils who achieved five or more A*-G grades, which at 95 per cent was well above both the national and similar schools' averages. This is reflected in the overall value added analysis of pupils' results between Year 9 and GCSE examinations, which shows that pupils achieved well during the course.
6. GCSE results have been improving broadly in line with the national average, although they improved more sharply in 2003. In particular, boys' performance improved significantly in 2003 and was, for the first time, above the average for boys nationally.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	50 (49)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (93)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	35.6 (34.2)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 167 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. In 2003, most subjects achieved results at around the national average, although in geography, the proportion achieving A*-C grades was significantly better than average. In English, results in 2003, at 57 per cent achieving A*-C grades, were in line with the national average, and ground lost during Years 7-9 was made up. Some subjects, drama, French and home economics achieved a higher than average percentage of A and A* grades. Pupils in art, mathematics and physical education also performed creditably, achieving a good proportion of the highest grades.
8. Pupils' achievement, that is, how high standards are in relation to their ability and prior attainment, is generally good throughout Years 7 – 11. In work seen during the inspection in both Years 9 and 11, standards were average, in line with recent test and examination results. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. This is due to well-focused support from the learning support department and well-planned support in lessons. The pupils with physical disabilities make good progress in all years. Teachers and teaching assistants are very aware of their needs. They support them sensitively and effectively, so that they achieve well in all subjects. There are very few pupils with English as an additional language, and their achievements are similar to those of other pupils.
9. In work seen in English during the inspection, standards were below average in Year 9 and average in Year 11. Given their attainment on entry, pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 7-9

and well in Years 10 and 11. Standards of writing in particular are below average in Years 7-9, although they improve in Years 10 and 11.

10. In work seen in mathematics, standards were average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and pupils' achievements were good overall. Standards of numeracy are average. Most pupils accurately use and apply numeracy skills in different contexts, and are reasonably confident in performing mental calculations.
11. Standards in science are above average in Year 9 and average in Year 11. Pupils' achievements are good in Years 7-9. They are, however, only satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, where curriculum time for the subject is not enough to sustain good achievement by all pupils. However, most pupils have a good grasp of scientific principles and are learning to apply them in a range of contexts.
12. In Years 7-9, pupils' achievements are very good in information and communication technology (ICT) and drama, good in technology, history, geography and physical education and satisfactory in French, art and citizenship. Their achievements are unsatisfactory in music, but this is because of staffing problems which have now been overcome. Current pupils in Year 7 are achieving well in music. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievements continue to be very good in ICT and drama, good in design and technology, history, geography and physical education, and satisfactory in art, French and music.

Sixth Form

13. In 2003, students' results in A-level examinations were well below average. Both boys and girls achieved similarly. Results in 2003 dipped following a particularly good year in 2002, when the performance of boys was especially good. Results in recent years have varied, as has the performance in different subjects. This variation is the consequence of relatively small year groups in the sixth form.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	69.9 (88.5)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	14.7 (24.7)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	164.0 (243.8)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 42 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

14. Although overall results were well below average, most students achieved or exceeded their predicted grades. Students enter the sixth form with relatively modest GCSE grades. The average GCSE points score for the current Year 12, for example is 4.8, leading to the equivalent of one D and two E grades at A level. Despite this, some students do considerably better and the school's provision is good for those students who have the potential to do well at A level. In 2003, students performed well in history, theatre studies and film studies. In most other subjects, standards were below average, although comparisons are not statistically valid in most cases due to the small number of students taking the examination. Because numbers taking some subjects have been relatively small, results have inevitably varied from year to year. ICT results in 2002, for example, were above average, but dipped badly in 2003.
15. Inspectors' observations confirmed the school's view that standards overall in the sixth form are improving. They judged that standards overall are below average but that the achievements of most students are good, given their modest GCSE performance. Standards are improving as a consequence of increasingly effective teaching, which offers better levels of challenge and independent learning. Retention rates through courses are reasonably good, with most students successfully completing the course.

16. A few students in the sixth form have special educational needs or physical disabilities. They are able to take responsibility for their own learning and seek further support when they require it. Teachers are also aware of their needs and ensure that they take them into account when planning lessons and marking students' work. As a result, these students achieve well.
17. In vocational courses, students on the AVCE courses in leisure and recreation achieved above average results, though results in health and social care dipped in 2003 following several years of above average results.
18. Not all subjects were inspected in detail during the inspection. In those that were, students' achievements, given their attainment at GCSE, were good in English, ICT and business studies. They were judged to be very good in history, satisfactory in biology, leisure and recreation and unsatisfactory in mathematics and art. The causes of the underachievement in mathematics have now been addressed by the school, but more remains to be done in art. Standards in all the subjects inspected in detail varied. They were above average for this stage in the course in English and history. Standards are below average in all other subjects except leisure and recreation where they are average, and in mathematics where they are well below average. In subjects sampled, some good work was seen in film studies, theatre studies/drama, chemistry, and in psychology.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. In the sixth form they are very good. Pupils' personal development is good and their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is promoted well by the school. Attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships are very good at all levels and contribute to the positive ethos of respect and care within the school.
- The good behaviour and attitudes to learning, especially in the sixth form, have a positive impact on the standards achieved by the pupils.
- The school provides good opportunities to help pupils build confidence, raise their self-esteem and develop a sense of personal responsibility.
- Good attendance and very good punctuality in school have a positive impact on the pupils' learning.

Commentary

19. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and most display good attitudes. They listen well, demonstrate high levels of commitment to their work and show themselves to be self-motivated and keen to learn. This positive approach to learning is seen in the high levels of involvement of pupils in extra-curricular activities. High levels of commitment were, for example, observed in a meeting of Year 8 and Year 12 students involved in planning a Youth Action Group presentation to the school on the issue of whaling in the Faroe Islands.
20. Pupils concentrate well and collaborate effectively with each other in both group and paired activities. In the majority of lessons pupils were seen to share ideas sensibly and to celebrate the achievements of their peers. Pupils with physical disabilities also have very positive attitudes to their work. They have very good relationships with teachers, assistants and other pupils. As a result, their personal development is very good and they play a full part in the life of the school.
21. The great majority of pupils display good standards of behaviour in and around the school, reflecting the very good relationships that characterise the community of St Anselm's. Most pupils are committed to the school ethos of respecting others. Pupils work together constructively, form good friendships and settle their differences amicably. They think teachers

are fair, listen to their ideas and are very approachable. In a few lessons, a minority of less motivated pupils distracts the attention of others and this has a negative impact on learning. Although pupils acknowledge that bullying occurs, the school deals quickly and effectively with any reported instances.

22. Levels of exclusion are low. During this academic year there have been no permanent and fewer fixed term exclusions than in the last school year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	970	71	1
White – Irish	6	0	0
White – any other White background	36	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	7	2	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – African	9	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	11	0	0

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

23. The very good relationships within the school are a notable strength, contributing to the ethos of care and respect that pervades the school. Inspectors were impressed by the courteous and polite manner in which the great majority of pupils responded to them during the inspection week. Pupils were often seen offering to help others, holding open doors and heard saying “please” and “thank you”. Noticeably, pupils display high levels of care for those of their peers with physical disabilities.
24. Pupils’ attendance is good and punctuality in school is very good. Unauthorised absence is very low and the low level of late arrival to school by pupils is mainly due to transport delays. The school’s values help to promote good attendance.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.7	School data:	0.4
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

25. Overall the school provides a good number of personal development opportunities for pupils. The school is firmly committed to ensuring that the provision for spiritual development is given a high priority. Whilst the overall provision for spiritual development is good, there are some areas where it is relatively weak. Not all subjects have mapped out what contribution their subject can make to spiritual development, with the result that opportunities for reflection and an exploration of the spiritual dimension to life are missed. The school provides a very good moral framework that places a strong emphasis on valuing each individual. Pupils respond well, developing a mature and thoughtful appreciation of moral values. School staff provide very good role models, seeking to create a positive environment in which all members of the school community are treated with respect. Pupils' relationships reflect this with a growing maturity and sensitivity. A number of subjects provide opportunities for pupils to examine the moral issues that confront our society. For example, science lessons deal with environmental issues, whilst both history and geography tackle important moral issues well.
26. The promotion of social development is also very good. There is a very strong emphasis on being involved in the community. Such things as an active school council reinforce social development. There is a very strong involvement with a number of charities, and during the visit a group of sixth form pupils were actively involved with raising money for Amnesty International. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to develop their own self-confidence. The provision for pupils' cultural development is good. A number of subjects such as art, music and history draw material from a range of cultural sources. However there are fewer opportunities to help pupils fully appreciate the wide diversity of cultural traditions that are found in contemporary British society.

Sixth Form

27. In the sixth form, attendance is good. Punctuality to lessons is very good. Attitudes and behaviour are generally very good and sometimes excellent. Students are enthusiastic and positive about school life. They feel that they are treated as adults and enjoy the freedom and trust placed in them, in particular being able to work in their private study time and use the sixth form facilities unsupervised.
28. Most students considered they are well advised and have made an active choice to come into the sixth form. Year 13 students are offered a wide range of opportunities to become involved in the running of the school and in supporting the younger pupils. These include mentoring the Year 7 pupils and helping with the development of their reading and writing skills, acting as transport monitors, planning events such as assemblies and running many of the extra-curricular clubs. The head girl and head boy are particularly impressive in the way they carry out their role, including the chairing of the school council.
29. Sixth formers take pride in the school. In discussion they talked in a mature way about their plans when they leave school and they were clearly thinking sensibly about their future. Most are polite and friendly; they engage readily in conversation with visitors and enter into discussions in lessons. Relationships are very positive. There are a few who are more reticent in lessons, but they are still keen to learn and to make the most of their time at the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. In particular, the quality of teaching is good, and the use of assessment is satisfactory. The very good quality of advice and guidance given by tutors and pastoral staff and the very effective links with partner schools and the community, are also ensuring that most pupils' achievements are at least good. The curriculum overall is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory and marking is used well. Assessment data are not being consistently used to identify underachievement or to evaluate the effectiveness of subject departments.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Much teaching is characterised by high expectations and levels of challenge.
- Relationships are very good, so as a result pupils grow in confidence.
- Marking is conscientious in most subjects and teachers provide helpful verbal feedback in lessons. As a result, students understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- The challenge for the most able pupils is not consistently good.
- The commitment of teachers is valued by the pupils

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 162 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (2.5%)	38 (23.5%)	52 (32.1%)	56 (34.6%)	12 (7.4%)	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.

Commentary

30. Around 94 per cent of pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire consider that they are well taught, reflecting the views of their parents, who also consider that the teaching is good. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching in most subjects, including in English, mathematics and science to be good. It is judged to be very good in drama, ICT and history. Teaching is satisfactory in modern foreign languages, art and music.
31. The school has focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning in recent years. The school's teaching and learning group has been instrumental in encouraging different approaches to learning, including taking into account pupils' preferred learning styles. The implementation of the Key Stage 3 national strategy has effectively ensured a common approach to the setting of learning objectives and a summary review of learning at the end of each lesson. As a consequence, teachers have an increasingly good understanding of how individual pupils learn and how to plan their teaching effectively. This focus on how to ensure equally effective learning is having a positive impact. However, inconsistencies of approach remain, so the school still has to ensure that best practice is more widely shared and embedded in all teachers' planning.
32. Where teaching is most effective, it is led by the teachers with enthusiasm and commitment. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which enables them to interest and engage the pupils in relevant, interesting activities. Very good relationships between pupils and teachers create a purposeful working atmosphere. Many teachers are particularly good at offering encouragement and building pupils' confidence in their own ability to learn. Above all, it is the high levels of challenge that ensure good progress is made. At its best, as in a Year 10 history lesson on the civil rights movement in the USA, the teaching is inspirational. Excellent relationships with the pupils were used to build confidence and encourage active participation. Humour and emotional stimuli were used to captivate the pupils' imagination and interest. The teacher very effectively transferred the pupils' understanding of failure to an understanding of the feelings of black people who failed to get the vote by not being able to answer questions. As a consequence, pupils made excellent progress.

33. In an equally inspirational and effective ICT lesson in Year 10, pupils made very good progress in using databases and producing user guides. The pupils were very clear about what to do, because they were fully involved in planning the criteria for the task. Pupils were keen to do well and the teacher had successfully built their confidence and ability to solve problems independently.
34. Where lessons are less effective, it is usually because the pace of learning is not sustained, or because the learning objectives are not shared at the beginning or reviewed at the end. The use of ICT to support learning is good in some subjects but is not used enough in mathematics, design and technology, geography or in physical education.
35. Planning of lessons is usually effective in meeting the needs of all pupils. While work has gone into considering the different learning styles of pupils, this has yet to be fully embedded in the planning of all teachers. In most lessons work is suitably pitched to the different levels of individual pupils, ensuring appropriate levels of challenge. The school, through the teaching and learning group, is working to ensure that all departments provide effectively for gifted and talented pupils. During lessons in English, history and ICT, very good provision is made, either as a result of the setting arrangements or the level of challenge and extension work provided. However, this is an issue still to be addressed by some teachers in design and technology, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages, where the challenge for high attaining pupils is not consistently good.
36. Overall, good teaching of pupils with special educational needs enables them to learn and achieve well. Specialist teachers work very effectively with small groups of pupils or individuals who have more severe learning difficulties. They base their teaching on an accurate prior assessment of the pupils' needs and plan a very good variety of activities that they teach with enthusiasm and pace. Teachers' high expectations and pupils' positive attitudes result in very good achievement in these lessons. Teaching assistants provide additional support for pupils in most subjects. They frequently enable pupils with special needs to learn as well as their peers, by providing them with sensitive individual support. In the best lessons, subject teachers involve assistants in their planning, enabling them to work more effectively. This was most effective in history and physical education. However, some teachers rely too much on the teaching assistants taking responsibility for these pupils' learning. Although teachers are aware of each pupil's Individual Education Plan, they do not all make enough use of the methods for supporting pupils which the plans advise.
37. Assessment procedures for pupils with Statements of Special Needs are carried out efficiently. Individual Education Plans identify very specific targets for students and provide very good advice for subject teachers about how to meet their needs. However, the school does not review progress towards targets frequently enough. Pupils and subject teachers are not sufficiently involved in these reviews.
38. Teachers and teaching assistants enable pupils with physical disabilities to learn well. Teachers are aware of their needs and ensure that they participate fully in lessons. Teaching assistants provide good, sensitive support when necessary but avoid the danger of making pupils too dependent on their support.
39. The quality of marking in subjects is good overall and teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously in line with a clear school policy. They give pupils a good indication of their attainment and effort but make inconsistent use of National Curriculum levels or examination grades in their marking. The school has successfully followed the national *Assessment for Learning* guidelines. For example, teachers generally give pupils helpful feedback, verbally in class or in writing, suggesting the next steps to be taken to improve the quality of their work. There is particularly good practice in English, science and ICT. Pupils indicated in discussions and in surveys of their views that teachers give them a good understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve. Subjects have developed a number of ways to make pupils even more aware of what they need to do to succeed. In mathematics and physical education,

for instance, pupils formally assess their own achievement; in history, exemplars of work are displayed illustrating the standards required to reach certain National Curriculum levels. Pupils have little idea of how well they are doing in art, however.

Sixth Form

40. As in the main school, teaching in the sixth form is good and students make good progress. The vast majority of students, when questioned, felt that the teaching is both challenging and demanding. They particularly value the willingness of teachers to give time and help them if they have difficulties. The very good relationships between teachers and students are the basis for the successful teaching at this level as well as for students' good progress in their work. Of the subjects inspected in detail, teaching in English, biology, leisure and recreation and business studies is good; in ICT and history it is very good. In mathematics, it is satisfactory and it is unsatisfactory in art and design.
41. Lessons are characterised by very good relationships between staff and students, together with an atmosphere of mutual respect. This encourages students to respond confidently and to be prepared to take risks in their answers and with their learning overall. Much teaching is imaginatively planned to excite and make the learning relevant. Typical of this approach was a Year 13 psychology lesson on Piaget. The teacher confidently facilitated a good discussion among the students. Their understanding of complex theories was enhanced by the strong emphasis on independent learning. Good support was given when necessary and explanations were clear. One of the great strengths of teaching in all subjects is the teachers' subject knowledge. This ensures that teachers have a confident approach and are able to ask questions which challenge students' thinking and deepen their understanding.
42. Much of the most effective teaching, as seen in this psychology lesson, is inspiring students to develop more independent, self reliant approaches to their learning. This was especially the case in design and technology, film studies, leisure and recreation and in business studies. Other subjects, however, do not develop these skills so systematically. In mathematics and biology in particular, this is a hindrance to better progress. Lessons are often characterised by a range of varied activities. Direct input by the teacher, collaborative working and some independent learning ensure that students focus strongly on their learning. Although some students lack confidence in their learning, most adopt a positive and mature attitude to their studies. They are keen to do well and this has a very positive impact on the progress they make.
43. Students' learning skills develop well through the sixth form. Most students take care with the presentation of their work. Their files and notes are usually well organised and can be used effectively for revision. Key skills of communication are satisfactorily developed through written work, well-managed discussions and group work. Students are encouraged to complete research tasks and discuss their findings in most subjects. Numeracy and ICT are also developed across most subjects.
44. Assessment in the sixth form is good. Students' work is well marked and they are also given a clear verbal indication in lessons of the progress they are making. The newly established Sixth Form Portfolios of Achievement enable teachers and students in every subject to reflect regularly and systematically on current academic performance and to agree targets for improvement. Form tutors provide good support and check that appropriate progress is being made. Good use is made of prior attainment data, provided by the local education authority, to predict A-level performance on the basis of GCSE point scores. Sixth form staff now need to develop procedures for analysing in more detail the progress data of individuals and of groups of students.

The curriculum

The school provides satisfactory learning opportunities across Years 7-13. The curriculum is broad and balanced throughout, although vocational opportunities are limited. The extensive range of extra-

curricular opportunities is a very strong feature. Sixth form provision is also satisfactory. There is a good range of A-level courses, some of which are offered in conjunction with a neighbouring school. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are satisfactory. The match of staff to the curriculum is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is not fully planned or implemented.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- The very good range of extra-curricular opportunities is helping to raise standards and to contribute strongly to students' social and personal development.
- There are few vocational courses offered in the sixth form or in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

45. The curriculum in Years 7-9 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, and has reasonable breadth and balance. It is enhanced by the introduction of drama as a separate subject in Year 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are offered a wide range of GCSE courses. A well-planned work related learning programme, offered in conjunction with Canterbury College, provides a vocational curriculum for a modest number of pupils. Alongside a collaborative programme catering currently for just one pupil, this is the only alternative curriculum offered, although an applied science course will be taught next year.
46. ICT is taught in all Years 7-9, which enables pupils to use their skills satisfactorily in other subjects of the curriculum. This also qualifies them very well to take either discrete information technology or business education with ICT in Years 10 and 11. The school is sensibly planning to introduce a short GCSE course for all pupils to be taken in Year 9. Although pupils are offered a choice of French or German from Year 7, they are unable to study both languages, which limits their opportunities in Years 10 to 13. Some infelicities in the timetabling of lessons adversely affect provision. In design and technology there is an uneven distribution of lessons across the two-week timetable; some German classes are taught by three different teachers and curriculum time for science in Years 10 and 11 is insufficient.
47. There is a well planned programme for personal, social and health education which includes modules on drug abuse, health and sex education. The programme is not co-ordinated with related subjects, and the teaching by form tutors is not consistently good. Although careers is not introduced until Year 10, the level of pupils' preparation for further education or employment is good. It is supplemented strongly by a well-organised work experience programme for pupils in Year 10. The curriculum for citizenship is taught satisfactorily in Years 7-9 but not in Years 10 and 11, where provision is not fully planned and implemented. Equality of access to the curriculum is good for all pupils.
48. The school provides very good opportunities beyond the taught curriculum that are helping to raise standards and contribute strongly to pupils' social and personal development. They are supported very well by the pupils, particularly the sporting activities. Most take place at lunch times and after school but a considerable number occur during out-of-school hours. The range includes a substantial number of sporting and arts activities and there are annual drama and musical performances. Every year in July there is an activities week, during which around 50 pupils go on an adventure holiday to the Ardèche in France, whilst almost all of Year 7 pupils spend the week under canvas at the Kingsdown campsite. There are numerous cultural visits to museums, theatres and sites of historical and geographical interest, including a residential visit to the First World War battlefields. Support for pupils outside the school day through homework clubs, subject clubs and revision classes is very strong. This is appreciated by pupils and clearly has a very positive influence on their attitudes.
49. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory, although the school is working to ensure greater consistency in its provision across all subjects. In ICT, history and physical

education, teachers' good provision and planning ensure that able pupils are given challenging work which stretches them intellectually.

50. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There is a suitable mix of support in lessons and individual or small group teaching. This is supplemented by valuable extra help for pupils with reading difficulties at lunchtime, from teachers and sixth form students. However, arrangements for teaching literacy progress units in Year 7 are not entirely satisfactory. The one hour lessons are too long for the units that are taught and the regular withdrawal from German lessons restricts pupils' progress in this subject.
51. Support for the very small number of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory.
52. The school provides well for pupils with physical disabilities and meets the requirements outlined in their Statements of Special Educational Need. Good support from teaching assistants ensures that pupils participate fully and safely in practical subjects such as physical education, design and technology and science. The school provides physiotherapy for pupils who require it and ensures that this causes as little disruption to their studies as possible. Ramps and a lift provide pupils with access to all areas of the building.
53. Sporting provision is good overall. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have two and a half hours of formal timetabled provision per week and in Years 10 and 11 they have one and a half hours. This is complimented by very good extra-curricular provision throughout the year that includes both recreational and competitive opportunities. Effective links with local community sporting organisations provide further opportunities for pupils. The physical education department is part of a local sports co-ordinator scheme that provides links with local primary feeder schools.
54. The match of staff to the curriculum is good, with very good levels of staffing for the special needs department. Performance management procedures are used effectively to support both school and professional development that clearly reflects the needs of staff, either individually or collectively. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers is comprehensive and there are good procedures for teachers new to the school. The school has strong links with local teacher training institutions and regularly receives trainee teachers.
55. Accommodation to meet the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. A building programme is being implemented, which includes changing facilities for boys, new arts accommodation and refurbishment of science laboratories. The premises manager and his staff work tirelessly to minimise the disruption caused by new building and to ensure the safety of the site. Accommodation for drama is poor, as the subject is taught in a demountable building, which is too small for the number of pupils taking the subject. Pupils studying business education are taught in cramped rooms where ventilation is often inadequate for the numbers in them.
56. Resources for the curriculum are satisfactory. The ratio of computers to students is slightly below average; however there are some issues regarding ICT in those subjects that have difficulty in gaining access when needed. This limits the work that can be undertaken. There is a shortage of modern foreign language and history textbooks for pupils in Years 7-9, and in business and physical education for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The music department has insufficient tuned and untuned percussion instruments and there is a lack of computer-aided design and manufacture equipment in design and technology. Library resources are adequate.

Sixth Form

57. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory in the sixth form. Following the previous inspection, the school has extended the curriculum by including general studies in the options available to students. A recreational physical education is not timetabled and as a result, sixth form students cannot participate fully in local competitive games fixtures. Religious education is timetabled for all students and incorporates key skills, a course newly introduced

this year. Although there is no clear personal and social education programme, the key skills has a strong element of career guidance, so the level of students' preparation for further education or employment is good. It is supplemented by a well-organised programme of work experience in Year 12.

58. There is a good range of A level courses, some of which are offered in conjunction with a local school. The blocked timetable arrangements enable students to study a wider range of courses including dance, law, film studies and music. Vocational options are, however, more limited. Just two courses are offered, health and social care at GNVQ (intermediate) level and leisure and tourism at AVCE level.
59. The school provides very good opportunities beyond the taught curriculum that are helping to raise standards. There are subject specific visits, such as the historical conferences in London for Years 12 and 13. For geography students there are residential fieldwork courses. There is also a variety of opportunities for students to take an active part in events which contribute strongly to their social, moral and personal development. These include the Amnesty Group, the Youth Action Group, the annual ski trip to Austria, mentoring work with younger students and the retreats which take place every year at Kintbury. Students also have opportunities to become involved in fund raising events for charity, such as talents shows and the recent 'slave auction' which raised £600.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures pupil's care and welfare very well. It provides them with good support and guidance and makes very good provision for their involvement in all aspects of the school's work and development. Pupils' views are respected and listened to.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality child protection and related procedures ensure pupils' best interests are met.
- Very effective involvement of pupils has led to significant school improvements.
- Pastoral support is of a good quality and pupils feel valued by staff.

Commentary

60. Very good child protection and care procedures are in place. Staff have received training in child protection. They are aware of, and familiar with, the need for vigilance in monitoring the well-being and welfare of the pupils in their care. Risk assessment techniques are well-embedded into school routines and very good health and safety procedures embrace the whole spectrum of the pupils' time in the school. Governors are fully involved on a regular basis in the school's health and safety audit and monitoring processes.
61. Teachers know their pupils well and provide them with good levels of pastoral support. They are sensitive to their needs. A number of pupils gain significant personal support and benefit from the school counsellor employed on a part time basis by the school. The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and value highly the advice and guidance they receive from staff. However, there are no systematic procedures for recording and reporting on pupils' personal development. Academic support and guidance is inconsistent and while some teachers make good use of assessment data to track pupils' progress and set targets, it is inconsistent elsewhere. Careers guidance is good, although the careers library is not always accessible for use by pupils during the school day.
62. The school provides very good care, guidance and support for students with physical disabilities. Welfare support and physiotherapy are carefully planned and provided with sensitivity to ensure that students can participate fully in all aspects of school life.

63. Very good and effective induction procedures ensure new pupils and parents are quickly introduced to the routines of school life. As part of their induction, pupils are visited in their primary schools and make phased visits to St Anselm's, all of which prepare them and their parents well for life in secondary education. The close collaborative working between Year 7 pupils and sixth form students attached to the Year 7 form groups has a significant benefit for how well the younger pupils are introduced to a whole range of secondary school experiences.
64. Pupils' views are respected and valued. Consultation is well developed through the school council and a number of its good ideas have been implemented by the school. Examples include extending the range and presentation of healthy eating choices, changes to the school uniform and strategies to reduce the amount of litter in the school. The school is right to celebrate the positive influence of the council on improving the school facilities and the pupils' learning environment.

Sixth Form

65. Students' value the good quality support provided and readily approach subject teachers to discuss concerns and receive advice. Teachers are generous with their time in helping with any problems or worries, so students feel well supported and grow in confidence. Sixth formers are given good guidance when selecting their courses and the retention rate on the courses is high.
66. There is very good practice in self-assessment amongst the sixth form students, with targets being agreed and reviewed with their tutors on a regular basis. The very good work carried out by careers staff ensures that students in Year 13 are offered appropriate information about progression to higher education and the world of work.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents are very supportive of the school and the school's partnership with them is very good. The school has developed very good community and business links. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. This represents an area of improvement since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good community links are of great benefit to pupils and the wider community at large.
- Very good liaison with other educational partners enriches the pupils' learning opportunities.
- Parents are supportive and have confidence in the work of the school.
- The good level of information keeps parents up to date with school activities and pupils' successes.

Commentary

67. The school is popular and is over-subscribed. The school's good relationship with parents is demonstrated by the many positive views expressed in the parents' questionnaire and at the parents' meeting prior to the inspection. Most parents consider staff very approachable and responsive and are pleased with the school's high expectations for behaviour and their children's good progress. Discussions with staff and pupils show there are good arrangements for regular contact opportunities with parents, in particular relating to underachieving pupils.
68. Most parents value the pupils' day book planner system as a means of monitoring how their child is progressing at school and many make use of this to communicate with teachers about their child. However, a number of parents expressed concern at the inconsistency amongst teachers in the signing and making of comments in their child's daybook. Inspectors agree with this concern.

69. Parents are provided with regular newsletters on a monthly basis and the prospectus and Internet web site provide a range of useful, informative data about the school. End-of-year progress reports on pupils are well detailed, easy to read and provide parents with appropriate levels of information about what their children know and areas for improvement. The special needs co-ordinator meets parents regularly and keeps them fully informed about the work that their children are doing. However, there are inconsistencies between subject teachers in the level of detail provided and in setting out realistic, measurable targets for pupils. Annual consultation meetings are arranged to provide parents with information on pupils' progress. A number of parents would prefer more regular opportunities to monitor their child's progress with teachers and the inspection team supports this view.
70. The school actively seeks parents' views on important issues through the monthly newsletter and, in a more informal way, through the parish network links. Parents are heavily involved, and contribute to the work of the school via the governors, The Friends of St Anselm's Association and the St Anselm's Integrated Educational Trust. During the inspection, many examples were provided of teachers and parents working together as partners. This was evident in the development of strategies to help improve pupils' attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning in the home and school environment.
71. The very good partnerships with a number of other local schools enrich pupils' learning and provide them with quality social links through a wide range of shared learning and sporting activities. Links with the community are very good. They are well exemplified by the number of pupils who receive awards from a local newspaper for the successes they have achieved in helping out in their local community. Older pupils gain significant benefits from the very good links and work experience opportunities organised by the school.
72. The very close working relationships developed with the Kent Adult Education Service, local NHS trusts and major local business partners are beginning to impact positively on the further development of the pupils' learning environment.

Students' views

73. Sixth form students' attitudes are mostly positive. They feel they are well supported, that teaching is good, and that their tutors are helpful and supportive. Many, however, would like more extra-curricular opportunities to take part in sport and other recreational activities. Others feel they are not given sufficient advice and guidance to make informed decisions about what to do after leaving school. Inspectors judge the overall quality of guidance to be satisfactory, and the school has now amended its timetables to ensure that well informed advice is provided in the future.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are good. Determined and clear sighted leadership by the headteacher ensures that his vision for the school's future is shared by the whole community. He is well supported by his deputy and senior team, who work effectively alongside governors and team leaders at all levels. Management is satisfactory and increasingly effective. The work of governors is good, but statutory requirements for the provision of citizenship in Years 10-11 are not yet met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership of the headteacher inspires the confidence of the whole school.
- The leadership group is providing a strong focus for improvement.
- Management and self-evaluation procedures need greater consistency at subject level to ensure they are fully effective.
- The school does not yet use assessment data systematically to identify the underachievement of individuals and groups, or to evaluate the effectiveness of departments.

- The work of governors has improved and they are now offering effective support and challenge to the senior team.
- Budget constraints have been a significant barrier to more rapid school improvement

Commentary

74. The headteacher is providing good leadership. His vision is clearly articulated and the school's mission statement is reflected in the school's work. He is well respected by the whole school community. He has made secure improvements in provision since his appointment, despite significant budget problems that have impeded the school's ability to affect change more rapidly. He has the committed support of governors, staff and parents and his vision and values are widely shared. All staff are now clear about the direction of the school and understand the contribution they can make. The school is ambitious for further development and its application for specialist science college status demonstrates its strong commitment to improvement.
75. The deputy headteacher and two assistant headteachers provide committed and astute support to the headteacher, working confidently in their areas of responsibility. The leadership team is small, reflecting the constraints of the budget, and has only recently been created in its current form. As a result, many of its initiatives have yet to bear fruit. However, there is a strong focus on school improvement. Current priorities, which include developing the 14-19 curriculum, improving literacy across the curriculum and the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment are appropriate. All members of the leadership group are playing significant roles in these developments.
76. There is a strong commitment to consultation and the involvement of the governors and the whole staff in developments. The teaching and learning group in particular, led by the deputy headteacher and including teaching staff across the school, is beginning to make an impact on the quality of teaching. All middle managers have adopted the national standards for subject leadership and many subject and pastoral team leaders are providing effective leadership of their teams. The inspirational work of the head of ICT is a model of good practice in this respect. However, inconsistencies in standards remain. While subject leaders are all conscientious and increasingly effective in reviewing the work of their teams, they are not always fully effective in ensuring that action taken to secure improvements is followed through robustly.
77. Management at all levels is satisfactory. The school's systems for line management are in place and there are reasonable systems for monitoring and self evaluation. Appropriate links are made between continuing professional development and school improvement planning. As yet, however, self-review procedures are not fully embedded in practice at subject level. The effectiveness with which teaching and learning is monitored and good practice shared is not consistent. While there are strengths in some departments – mathematics, science, geography and history - even in these subjects monitoring processes are not always systematically implemented. In other subjects, notably English, art and design and technology, management is less effective in ensuring consistency.
78. The use of assessment at a whole school level to inform planning is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. The significant development of the roles of the directors of student studies has led to good procedures for the identification of underachieving pupils in each year group and the setting of targets for improvement. The school has now rightly set a high priority on the development of the use of assessment data at whole-school and at subject level to raise standards. Currently there is little systematic use of data to measure the current performance of individuals and groups against their target levels and grades. Many teachers make insufficient reference to pupils' prior attainment in assessing their progress and setting them targets. The school now has the expertise to make successful use of the planned data management arrangements. The new computerised system is designed to enable the necessary monitoring of pupil performance data and the evaluation of the effectiveness of subjects.
79. Provision for pupils with physical disabilities is managed very well. The special needs co-ordinator ensures that all teachers are aware of pupils' needs and deploys teaching and welfare assistants efficiently. Since the last inspection, access for pupils using wheelchairs has

improved. Leadership and management of provision for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. The school has recently allocated teaching assistants to work in subject departments and planning between subject teachers and assistants is improving as a result. However, this has led to uncertainty over responsibilities for managing support staff and insufficient monitoring of their work. Priorities for developing provision for pupils with special needs have not been identified in the school's improvement plan. The recently revised policy for special educational needs provision identifies criteria for evaluating its success. However, the school does not use available data to enable such evaluation.

80. The school improvement plan is a one-year plan and is detailed and comprehensive, with targets for each key stage. It has a clear focus on teaching and learning and assessment for learning. Senior managers and governors carefully monitor the progress being made towards meeting identified priorities. The improvement planning process provides a good framework for improving standards, and issues identified by the inspection team have already been largely identified in the school in the improvement plan.
81. Governors are very ably led by the chair of governors. They are an experienced team and bring a wide range of expertise to the school. Their involvement in both strategic planning and monitoring is now based on a good knowledge of the school, since the criticisms of their work made at the time of the last inspection have been rigorously tackled. Governors are kept well informed and detailed performance and financial reports are provided for them to make informed judgements and decisions. They are consulted on school improvement planning, and are confident in their monitoring role. Statutory requirements are met, except in relation to the full implementation of citizenship. However, governors are aware of this and their decision to implement citizenship on a phased basis is justified and is not impeding pupils' personal development.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,779,028	Balance from previous year	-257,685
Total expenditure	3,723,523	Balance carried forward to the next	-202,180
Expenditure per pupil	3,496		

82. The school's budget is well managed. For some years the school has had to make significant reductions in its spending in order to balance its books. Only when the headteacher was appointed was this problem addressed, and brought fully under control within a plan agreed with the local education authority. This has been a significant barrier to improvement, particularly in the school's ability to invest in staff and resources. The school is now committed to clearing the deficit by March 2006 with help from the local education authority. The school's careful management of its finances and ability to raise additional funding has nevertheless enabled some improvements to be made, for instance in the new sports hall. As a result of this prudent financial management, the school is likely to be in surplus again in the near future, allowing a more rapid improvement in overall resources. The bursar has a tight control of spending and alongside the governors has a very good overview of the budget. Governors are regularly updated with clear monitoring statements. The school applies best value principles and regularly evaluates the cost effectiveness of service providers. The most recent financial audit indicated that financial systems and controls were satisfactory. Designated funds, including those for special educational needs and staff training, are used well.

Sixth Form

83. The leadership of the sixth form is good and is based on an inclusive vision that is very much in tune with the school's broader ethos of respect and care. There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities through the sixth form entry policy; and to meeting the individual needs of

students through the recently developed student profiles. There is also a clear determination to improve the curriculum offered in the sixth form and to collaborate with other providers to expand opportunities for students.

84. The management of the work of the sixth form is satisfactory. Self-evaluation procedures are sound and include detailed questionnaires for staff and students on the quality of provision. The monitoring of students' performance is effective and a range of measures is used to address underachievement. These include an increase in supervised study time, the provision of external mentors at the nearby university and the introduction of lessons in study skills. Procedures now need to be developed to follow up in more detail issues raised in the monitoring of students through portfolios. The planning of sixth form developments is well integrated into the overall school improvement plan. The management of most subjects is at least satisfactory, except in art where there is a lack of co-ordination between the teachers. The sixth form is cost-effective and the school responds well to requests for enhancement of learning resources, evidenced by the recently improved access to computers for sixth form students.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English and French are reported in full and German lessons were sampled. Standards in the two foreign languages are similar. GCSE results in German were below average in 2003 but had been in line with national averages in the two previous years. Some teachers teach both languages and many of the comments made about provision in French apply to both French and German.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement for pupils in Years 7-9 could be better, particularly that of higher attaining pupils.
- Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good and they reach average standards in GCSE examinations.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well because of good teaching.
- Pupils' extended writing in Years 7-9 is not well organised and they fail to use complex sentences effectively.

Commentary

85. The proportion of pupils attaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2003 GCSE English language examinations was average and achievement was good. Boys did better than girls when their performance is measured against that of boys and girls nationally. Pupils with special educational needs achieved well in the examinations, but few pupils obtained the highest grades. Results were similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' performance in English literature examinations was similar to that in English language.
86. Results overall in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were below the national average, although in line with the average for similar schools. Girls' performance was close to that of girls nationally but boys lagged well behind. The proportion of pupils gaining the level expected for their age was average, but few pupils attained at higher levels. Results were below those obtained at the time of the last inspection, when results were well above average. They were also below those attained in mathematics and science. Achievement is satisfactory, however, when account is taken of pupils' below average standards on entry to the school.
87. The standard of written work seen in Years 10 and 11 is average and achievement is good. This is because pupils have developed their analytical skills. They write critically about the books they read, using textual references to support and illustrate the points they make and explaining their significance clearly. Boys and girls with special educational needs make good progress in their writing but there remain errors in spelling and punctuation in the work of the least competent pupils. Good use is made of computers by all pupils, for drafting and improving their writing and presenting it in various forms. Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average, because pupils' extended writing is not well organised and they are not using paragraphs appropriately. Writing often lacks fluency, because pupils make grammatical errors when attempting to use complex sentences. A good range of writing is attempted, however, and pupils are adapting their style for different purposes.
88. Standards of reading, speaking and listening meet national expectations and achievement in these skills is good. Students read a wide range of increasingly difficult texts as they move through the school and the issues they explore in their reading contribute significantly to their

moral and social awareness. Most pupils read aloud fluently with suitable expression. All speak well when working in groups and many have the confidence to give presentations to the whole class. The conventions of formal English are understood and pupils know when to use them. Discussion skills are not so well developed, so pupils are not exploring ideas and learning through debate.

89. Teaching and learning are good overall, although only satisfactory in Years 7, 8 and 9. All teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons to take account of pupils' different learning styles. They have established good working relationships in classrooms and employ a range of teaching techniques to raise standards by the end of Year 9. Some of the lessons seen lacked pace and a sense of urgency. In other lessons insufficient opportunities were provided for pupils to reflect on their learning and to discuss and evaluate their own and others' work. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good, because of higher expectations and the use of rigorous questioning, which challenges thinking as well as testing understanding.
90. The leadership of the subject is good and management is satisfactory. There is a sense of common purpose and teachers work in a mutually supportive way. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There have been improvements in evaluating pupils' progress and in eliminating poor teaching. The head of department has provided for and led on a range of professional development activities for her colleagues. However, weaknesses persist in monitoring provision and ensuring agreed policies are implemented. There is, for example, no systematic approach, consistently applied by all teachers, to the teaching of writing among pupils in Years 7 to 9. This is a barrier to further improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

91. Most pupils have weak English language and literacy skills on entry to the school and standards remain below average in Years 7, 8 and 9. This is because pupils are not adapting their writing to the various demands of the curriculum and are failing to present it fluently in a logical structure. There are also a number of younger pupils who need one-to-one support with their reading.
92. Older pupils make better progress in developing language and literacy skills and reach expected levels of competency by the end of Year 11. Reading standards are in line with national expectations and pupils are able to understand a range of specialist subject texts. Discussion and listening skills are sufficient to enable most pupils to benefit from small group and paired work and to share ideas, using the correct terminology of their subject disciplines.
93. The recently appointed co-ordinator has reviewed the school's approach to raising standards of literacy across the curriculum and is now working closely with her colleagues to improve teaching methods, particularly with the younger pupils. She is building on the good practice which already exists in subjects such as history, where the department's own comprehensive literacy policy is implemented consistently. Pupils are taught, for example, to use frameworks to structure their writing and are provided with glossaries to help them to extend their specialist vocabulary. Provision in geography is also good, because it is written into the schemes of work. This enables teachers to guide pupils on adapting their writing to the needs of the subject and to promote discussion skills.
94. This good practice is not, however, being applied consistently across the school, so there are subjects where pupils' weak literacy skills are a barrier to their learning. The co-ordinator is addressing this through the school's teaching and learning working group and is focusing on improving the monitoring and implementation of provision.

French

Provision in **French** is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' thorough marking of pupils' work and helpful verbal feedback ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory in speaking in Years 10 and 11, because teachers do not provide enough opportunities to practise this skill.
- Schemes of work do not provide detailed guidance on teaching methods and on meeting the needs of different groups of pupils.
- Teachers encourage pupils well through their own enthusiasm and interest in languages.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have generally positive attitudes to the subject.

Commentary

95. From work seen in the inspection, the attainment of both boys and girls by the end of Year 9 is below national averages. They understand classroom instructions in the foreign language and read short sentences from the textbook, but lack confidence when speaking. In 2003, GCSE results at grades A*-C were below the national average but the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades A* and A was average. GCSE results dipped in 2003, as increased numbers of pupils took the subject. In the two previous years, results were comparable with, or above, national averages. Those pupils who have chosen to continue with languages in Years 10 and 11 are able to read longer texts and understand the gist of taped speech at near natural pace. Higher attainers write at some length, for example describing a holiday, but make some basic mistakes in spelling and grammar.
96. The achievement of pupils overall is satisfactory. It is better in Years 7-9 where most pupils have positive attitudes and make sound progress, including those with special educational needs, who receive effective support from teaching assistants. In work seen in the inspection, however, higher attaining pupils in this age range were insufficiently challenged. The achievement of older pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory, but there are weaknesses in their speaking skills and some are held back by their patchy understanding of grammar and by lack of vocabulary. The development of speaking skills is limited by the lack of opportunity to practise in lessons. Girls have a more positive attitude to the subject than boys in Years 10 and 11 and generally make better progress.
97. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers mark work conscientiously and in lessons give pupils good feedback on their performance. As a result, pupils have good understanding of how well they are doing in the subject and how they can improve. The over-use of textbooks reported at the last inspection is less marked and teachers encourage pupils through language games and ICT to develop their language skills. The lack of appropriate learning materials for French in Years 7 to 9, however, prevents pupils from making better progress. The enthusiasm of teachers, combined with an imaginative approach to the subject, is highly motivating for the pupils. For example, in one Year 10 lesson, pupils successfully took on the role of television game-show hosts and contestants, with a live microphone, to ask and answer questions in the foreign language about recent films. The learning of all pupils would be greatly improved if teachers provided pupils with more opportunities to practise speaking in lessons. Learning is less effective, and pupils' attitudes are noticeably worse, in lessons where expectations are not clear and where the teaching lacks pace and challenge. Behaviour is better in classes where an alternating boy/girl seating arrangement is enforced. Homework is set regularly, but is often insufficiently challenging.
98. Leadership and management are satisfactory, but need to focus on the collaborative development of consistently effective teaching and learning styles, so as to raise pupils' attainment. Schemes of work do not currently meet the different needs of pupils or provide teachers with clear guidance on teaching methods. There has been satisfactory improvement

since the last inspection, but the school needs to address the lack of appropriate learning resources for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, so pupils achieve well.
- Leadership and management are good, having established an effective team of teachers.
- The use of assessment is good, encouraging pupils to improve.
- Computers are not used well enough in teaching, reducing some aspects of visual learning.

Commentary

99. In the 2003 tests at the end of Year 9 performance was average compared to all schools nationally, and well above the average of similar schools. Performance is rising in line with national trends, similar to science, and better than English. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls. In the 2003 GCSE at the end of Year 11 standards were average for the proportion of pupils with grades A*-C, and average in relation to other subjects in the school. This was a creditable performance, because of the relatively large proportion of higher grades. Boys' performance was better than that of the girls.
100. Standards seen in the inspection were average and reflected recent examination results. Attainment on entry to the school is below average, so pupils' achievement is good overall. This is because the teaching is thorough and effective. Assessment is used well in support of pupils' progress. Pupils are required to think through their work and write about what they have learnt as well as what they find difficult to do, which is good practice. Any underachieving pupils are seen privately. ICT is underused in the mathematics department. Pupils with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils. The overall rise in standards has been enhanced by revision lessons arranged outside the normal timetable.
101. Teaching and learning are good overall. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good, and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. The strength of the teaching lies in the subject expertise of the teachers, the planning of lessons and the engagement of pupils in their learning. The structure of lessons in Years 7-9 is particularly strong, showing good outcomes from recent staff training in the National Numeracy Strategy. Lessons focus at the start on areas of weakness identified, for example, through the good use of assessment. However the wide range of attainment in Year 7 classes means that teachers do not always plan for challenging the highest attaining pupils. The teaching of the curriculum in Year 7-9 does not always prepare pupils well enough for the difficulties that lie ahead; mental skills in algebra, for example, are not developed sufficiently well. Computers are not used well enough in teaching. This weakness restricts the visual stimulus of pupils and slows down the rate of learning in some areas of the curriculum, such as graph work. Learning is very good when difficult ideas are taught in an inspiring way, as was seen in the introduction of column vectors.
102. Leadership and management are good overall. The new leadership has established a good team of teachers following a period of difficulty. Day-to-day management of the department is good, but monitoring of provision is underdeveloped. Teaching arrangements inhibit long term planning, because they change from year to year. This is because some classes are taught by more than one teacher, Year 7 classes are arranged differently from those in Year 8 and 9 and there is a difference in time for the teaching of mathematics in Years 10 and 11. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, as issues raised then have been addressed.

Mathematics across the curriculum

103. Opportunities for using and applying mathematics across the curriculum are identified. This is helping to develop pupils' mathematical skills and is effective in contributing to the quality of learning in other subjects. In science, formulae are used well in calculations; graphs are accurately drawn and used well. Pupils analyse data satisfactorily in spreadsheets in ICT, and use statistics to learn about the industrial development of Russia in history. In geography, pupils use grid references, scale and direction to an average standard. Creating pie charts showing government spending forms part of citizenship lessons. In design and technology, pupils use their numeracy skills confidently to measure, but are less assured when drawing to scale.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is good and provides a clear vision for improvement.
- The assessment and monitoring of pupils' work are good.
- Work is needed to identify and introduce a wider range of teaching strategies to challenge the most able pupils.
- The monitoring of teaching is underdeveloped.

Commentary

104. Standards achieved in the 2003 test results at the end of Year 9 were in line with national averages. This represents a good achievement, as pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are below average. In comparison with similar schools the results are well above average. Standards achieved in the double award GCSE science examination were broadly in line with national averages. The proportion of A*-C grades obtained by the small number of pupils following the GCSE separate science courses was below national averages, but in line with expectations, given their prior attainment.
105. In work seen, standards in Year 9 were above average, and higher than recent test results suggest. Throughout Years 7 to 9 pupils make good progress and achieve well. Lesson objectives are shared with the pupils and lessons are well structured. Relevant starter activities encourage the active involvement of pupils and provide a suitable stimulus for the main learning activities. The ends of lessons are well used to consolidate and review pupils' understanding. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate increasing skills in practical investigations. These were shown by a Year 7 class studying how temperature influences crystal size and by Year 9 pupils investigating the role of the leaf in photosynthesis.
106. Standards in Year 11 are average and achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory rather than good, because the curriculum time in Year 11 is not enough to allow understanding to be fully developed. Some pupils find it difficult to recall previous learning and so encounter problems with the understanding of more demanding topics. Pupils enjoy the variety of practical activities and act sensibly and safely during experimental work. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.
107. Teaching throughout the school is good overall. Teachers are well qualified and have secure subject knowledge. They plan lessons well and include a variety of activities that keep pupils interested and involved. They ask probing questions that encourage pupils to think for themselves, use their initiative and apply their understanding of science. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Written work in all years is well presented and accurate, whilst homework is regularly set and marked constructively. Setting arrangements begin in Year 7. Subsequently, separate sciences are introduced in Year 10 for higher attaining pupils. There is a need, in the

interim, to focus on providing more extension work and challenge for these able pupils. Additionally, selection for the GCSE separate sciences needs to be more rigorous, taking account of pupil's prior attainment in science.

108. The department is effectively led by the recently appointed head of department, who has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. Good use is made of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress and to set targets effectively. Strategies for monitoring and improving the quality of the teaching within the department are underdeveloped. Resources and ICT provision are good. Accommodation is adequate and health and safety aspects are dealt with effectively. The department is well supported by capable and committed technicians. Improvements since the last inspection have been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good, leading to very good achievement.
- Leadership is excellent and the subject is very well managed.
- Pupils work hard and are very enthusiastic.
- Not all subjects use ICT effectively to enhance teaching and learning.

Commentary

109. The school's assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 showed that standards were well above average. Current standards are above average for pupils at this stage and a high proportion of pupils reach the nationally expected level. However, relatively few pupils reach the higher levels, for example by showing independence in their selection and use of appropriate software to solve problems or devise computer models. Achievement is very good, given that pupils come into the school with below average knowledge and skills in ICT. Pupils' skills in reading, writing and spelling are weaker, which, for instance, limits their ability to show a clear sense of audience when producing documents.
110. Standards in the 2003 GCSE examination were well below average. This was the first year that the school entered pupils for this exam and the small cohort achieved satisfactorily, taking into account their overall attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9. The lack of sufficient resources also played a part, with most pupils unable to sit alone at a computer until the latter part of the course. Current standards in Year 11 are now above average overall. A high proportion of pupils are adept at analysing simple 'real life' applications and providing solutions involving spreadsheets, business stationery and a relational database. Achievement is very good, since most pupils began the course with limited experience of ICT in Years 7-9. Standards in other aspects of ICT, such as the ability to manipulate images, to measure and log events and to design or manufacture products using ICT, are average.
111. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Expert teachers make lessons lively and challenging and the pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm. Good use is made of limited resources, with teachers employing imaginative solutions. In Year 9 lessons, a higher attaining pupil sat at a computer to input information projected onto a screen to illustrate the teachers' instructions. This overcame the limitations of both of space and equipment, as well as involving all pupils well. All teachers make clear to pupils what they are expected to achieve and give very good support and feedback on performance. For example, teachers tell pupils what level they are working at in lessons and help them keep a record of progress in their folders. Teachers also use assessment very well to help plan lessons and to set individual work and homework. Special needs assistants work very effectively with pupils with specific learning difficulties so that they achieve as well as the others.

112. Leadership in ICT is excellent and management of the subject is very good. The head of department is an Advanced Skills Teacher providing an excellent role model for teaching and learning. He has made substantial changes to the curriculum as a result of a thorough evaluation of need and the constant monitoring of provision. For example, pupils in Year 9 are now entered for the short course GCSE examination. This is a great boost to their confidence and achievement. Great care is taken to ensure that all pupils, including the gifted and talented, are catered for. Innovative online systems maximise the use of the limited accommodation and resources. At the same time they encourage other subject departments to develop the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning. For example, the e-mail system is used extensively to disseminate worksheets, homework and lesson objectives. Many pupils have computers at home and e-mail can be used to transfer homework. This enables parents to become more involved in their children's learning.
113. The school has made excellent improvement in ICT since the previous inspection. At that time, leadership and management were unsatisfactory, there was little ICT taught and resources were unsatisfactory. The school now meets statutory requirements and all other aspects have improved dramatically.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

114. The pupils' competence in ICT is above average at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. Pupils develop a high level of competence in the use of software to tackle a range of tasks. Their skills in searching, selecting and presenting information in different forms are equally good, although few can produce designs which are clearly aimed at specific audiences. Other aspects of ICT are used satisfactorily, such as measuring and logging data in science, analysing data in geography or producing musical compositions. ICT is used well in science, religious education, leisure and recreation and very well in history. Other subjects use ICT satisfactorily except for mathematics, design and technology, geography and physical education, where there are problems of access and understanding of how to use ICT to enhance learning. The number of computers is below average for a school of this size and the network is currently working at maximum capacity. This causes problems of access to computers in some areas, such as in food technology and mathematics.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average.
- Pupils achieve well, given their below average standard on entry in Year 7.
- Good use of enquiry techniques and thinking skills improve attainment.
- Modern technologies are used well in teaching, but ICT use by pupils requires further development.

Commentary

115. Results in GCSE examinations are well above the national average although no pupils attain the highest A* grade. Girls do better than boys, and results show a five year improving trend. Standards in work seen are in line with national averages at the end of Year 9 and above average in Year 11.
116. Achievement by all pupils, including those with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language, is good. On entry to the school, pupils have lower than expected standards in geography. Good strategies build geographical understanding, skills and

knowledge steadily, such that most pupils make better than expected progress in Key Stage 3. In Years 10 and 11 pupils work hard with good application and pupils are very well prepared for the higher tier GCSE paper in particular.

117. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In less effective teaching, not enough is expected of pupils, the teacher talks for too much of the lesson and learning is too slow, so not enough is achieved. Behaviour is well managed and pupils are co-operative and participate well. Lessons are usually well planned with good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their learning. Where teachers use a wide range of active teaching and learning strategies, pupils learn well and understand new work. Open questioning and challenging tasks encourage very good development of thinking skills. The most effective teaching makes very good use of ICT, and resources overall are used well. Marking does not always tell pupils how to improve their work and often focuses on presentation rather than on the subject. Assessment and progress monitoring is sound, but not enough use is made of National Curriculum criteria to help pupils know how well they are progressing. GCSE candidates have clear targets and are keen to attain their expected grades.
118. Leadership and management are good. Assessment data is analysed and used very effectively, but the monitoring of teaching and learning is not systematic enough. There is some use of ICT by pupil in all years, but this is generally underdeveloped. Access to ICT is unsatisfactory and constrains pupils' learning. There are now sufficient textbooks. Literacy and numeracy development is well integrated in all topics. Citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural topics feature in work for all years, but are not identified in planning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, particularly in standards at GCSE level.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good, ensuring good achievement throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Very good co-operative work between teachers and teaching assistants means that achievement by pupils with special educational needs is also good.
- Leadership and management are good
- Assessment is very good; pupils are involved in assessing their own work and consequently are aware of their standards and their targets.
- There are insufficient textbooks both for class and independent use for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Programmes of study lack sufficient detail to ensure direction in individual teacher's planning.

Commentary

119. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are average. In 2003 the proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was close to the national average. The lack of higher grades reflects the ability profile on entry in Year 7. These results are an improvement on those reported in the last report. For an increasing minority of pupils in Years 7 to 11 standards are above average. Achievement in Years 7 to 11 is good, considering pupils' below average standards on entry.
120. The quality of teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils and use them effectively to build pupils' confidence and encourage their active participation. Lessons are prepared very well. Very good collaborative work between teachers and teaching assistants ensures good progress for those pupils with special educational needs. Expectations are high and the activities organised in lessons are challenging. In Years 10 and 11 particularly, these are directed towards the achievement of higher levels of attainment. A variety of methods is used to stimulate interest and often enthusiasm. As a result, pupils' attitudes are very good. They respond positively in the lessons and work hard. Consequently, the level of progress made by pupils, including those with special

educational needs, in skills such as the analysis of evidence, is sometimes better than in similar schools nationally. The marking of pupils' work is generally good and some is very good, but there are inconsistencies between teachers.

121. Leadership and management are good. The very hard-working acting head of department has a clear idea of how to improve standards and is leading a team that is unafraid to be innovative in its commitment to raise pupils' interest and their achievement. Regrettably, there is no peer observation of lessons and so some very high quality teaching practice is not being shared, although the department's teaching is monitored effectively. Although there are some visits to places of historical interest, including First World War battlefields, there are none in Years 8 and 11. Programmes of study are only outline schemes and lack the detailed focus that would direct individual teachers' planning. Departmental improvement plans are insufficiently focused or detailed. There are insufficient textbooks for pupils in Years 7 to 9, leading to sharing in lessons and giving no opportunities for pupils to work independently at home. The department has a very positive policy for the improvement of literacy and has been a model for whole school developments and training in that area. ICT resources are being used positively in teaching and learning history, although access to ICT rooms is limited by a high level of demand for those resources. The level of improvement since the previous inspection is good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology and consumer technology

Provision in consumer technology is **good** and in design and technology it is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' high levels of motivation lead to good achievement
- Pupils gain competent practical skills and make good quality products, using a wide range of materials.
- Assessments of pupils' progress are not used to help teachers plan.
- The timetable is unsatisfactory and limits pupils' learning.

Commentary

122. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Pupils enter the school with lower than average levels of achievement. By the end of Year 9, and the end of Year 11, pupils' standards are comparable with those found nationally. As a result, pupils' good achievement reported at the time of the last inspection has been maintained. In GCSE, results vary from year to year but standards in design and technology have been lower than average overall. However, last year, pupils did particularly well in home economics, and results were above average, reflecting high levels of motivation. Girls do not perform as well as boys in design and technology in Year 10 and 11. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of the others. Pupils' achievement is good in child development.
123. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers are experienced and knowledgeable. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 learn to work competently with a good range of materials. In the most effective lessons, teachers have very high expectations that are made explicit through the quality of their planning and the level of their support. The teachers' planning is detailed and well focused on learning, rather than on the tasks to be completed. As a result, all pupils know what is expected of them and they are clear about how to achieve high quality outcomes. Pupils are shown how to manage their time and how to reflect on their work as it progresses. Pupils are questioned very effectively to check their understanding and clarify learning. This contributes to a very good pace and there is a tangible sense of urgency about learning. The higher achieving pupils are inspired and enabled to be very creative, without being told what to do. This is because of the teachers' very good understanding of design principles and how they impact on the purpose of the product. The confidence of lower achieving pupils is appreciably boosted

when the products they make turn out better than they imagined. In occasional lessons, the highest achieving pupils are insufficiently challenged, because there is too much teacher talk and too little pupil activity. In these lessons, the level of fidgeting and low-level chat goes up.

124. Good teaching ensures that pupils make a good range of products in design and technology in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in food and child development lessons have high levels of skill and knowledge. They point to good levels of support and lots of practical work as the reasons why they choose the subject. However, planning in both departments is insufficiently detailed, because it does not provide a basis for assessing what pupils have learned. Long term planning does not identify how pupils' design skills will be taught throughout Years 7 to 9, for example, how to work with a design theme, how to manage time, and how to work with product specifications. Although grades and levels are given, they are insufficiently well linked to the planning or to the programmes of study. As a result, assessments at the end of Year 9 are sometimes optimistic, so the outcomes cannot be used to amend teachers' planning in response to the individual needs of pupils. Most pupils make good use of ICT for writing evaluations, for research and for presentation. Literacy is appropriately reinforced and numeracy is extended as it occurs in lessons.
125. Leadership and management of consumer technology are good. They are characterised by a rigorous review of provision. Outcomes from learning are analysed and used to construct an action plan. In design and technology, leadership and management are satisfactory. However reviews of provision are bland and outcomes from learning are not sufficiently well analysed to improve provision. As a result, the range of practice in design and technology varies widely. The timetable for both departments is unsatisfactory. The uneven distribution of lessons throughout the two week timetable and the one hour lessons for food make planning and management of learning unnecessarily difficult. Difficulties are exacerbated in consumer technology by the lack of a technician and insufficient access to ICT. Throughout the department resources are limited by a very tight budget. There is insufficient use of computer aided design and manufacture and control technology.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good attitudes and relationships contribute positively to pupils' learning.
- The course taught in Years 7-9 does not ensure that all students receive a thorough grounding in the necessary basic skills.
- Marking and assessment are not used sufficiently to inform planning, so pupils are not adequately informed about their standard of work.
- Art makes a good contribution to the cultural development of pupils.

Commentary

126. In 2003, by the end of Year 9, students were working at a level above that expected nationally, according to teacher assessments. This was not confirmed by work seen during the inspection. The percentage of students gaining A*-C grades at GCSE in 2003 was below the national average; however there was a good proportion of higher grades and pupils achieved slightly better in art than in the other subjects they took. Based on the evidence of work seen during the inspection, pupils in Year 9 and Year 11 are working below the level expected nationally.
127. Achievement is satisfactory overall, including that of pupils who have special educational needs. Pupils arrive in Year 7 with below average skills and understanding overall, although

attainment on entry varies widely. The schemes of work used at present do not address this variability. As a result, progress in the acquisition of basic skills is slower than it might be. However achievement varies because of the variable quality of teaching. By the end of Years 9 and 11, in both art and photography, most pupils are working at below average standards. While some pupils are not achieving as well as expected, due to unsatisfactory teaching, some pupils achieve well.

128. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, varying from very good to unsatisfactory. Relationships are generally good; pupils work well together and want to do well. The main strengths in teaching lie in the good use of practical demonstrations and the use of pictures and examples of work. These strategies ensure that all pupils understand and are inspired to create their own artwork, as in a Year 7 lesson where pupils made textured tiles in clay inspired by the buildings of Gaudi. Questioning is used particularly well, as in a Year 8 lesson where pupils drawing one another in action poses discussed the effectiveness of each pose in portraying movement. A feature of the weaker teaching is that learning objectives are unclear both in planning and teaching. They are not explained in a way that pupils understand and result in pupils being unable to make connections between previous and current learning. Planning tends to focus on tasks rather than learning aims. Whilst day-to-day feedback is generally used well to help pupils improve their work, most pupils do not know the level at which they are working. In Years 7-9, pupils do not understand the relationship of marking on their work to their National Curriculum level. Assessment is clearer in Years 10 and 11, as it relates to examination criteria, but targets are not set using information about prior attainment.
129. The quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory. Since the subject leader arrived six months ago he has raised an awareness of art through display around the school and has thus enhanced the environment. As a result of his considerable expertise in the field of ICT and animation there is a greater awareness of how ICT could feature in the art curriculum. However, development priorities for the department do not identify action to raise standards and achievement. Neither does monitoring of teaching and learning ensure consistency across the department. This was a major concern in the last inspection and has contributed to unsatisfactory improvement since then, as does a lowering in the quality of standards and teaching. Schemes of work taught in Years 7 to 9 do not set out the necessary progression of learning. They do not ensure that all pupils reach the end of Year 9 with a good grounding in the basic skills and techniques, or knowledge and understanding of artists and cultures both here and abroad. There is not enough communication, especially in the form of dialogue within the department. The subject leader has not managed to create an effective team in which members share good practice, feel guided and supported and where every member of the team feels equally valued. In spite of these deficiencies, provision overall is satisfactory, given the achievement of higher attaining pupils particularly at GCSE, and the good contribution to pupils' cultural development. This latter is achieved through art studies and trips to local and national galleries. Good opportunities are offered to use ICT, photography, textiles and three-dimensional materials creatively.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress.
- Pupils respond with commitment and enthusiasm to the stimulating and challenging teaching.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Accommodation and resources are poor.
- Inadequate provision is made for teaching the technical side of the subject.

Commentary

130. The proportion of pupils obtaining a grade in the A*-C range in the 2003 GCSE examinations was well above average for boys and girls. Attainment at the top A* and A grades was very high. This represents very good achievement, when account is taken of pupils' below average communication skills on entry to the school. It also represents good improvement since the time of the last inspection. Such high standards have been the norm over recent years.
131. Many pupils choose to study the subject to GCSE level. This enables them to learn from each other through lively discussions and to engage in group activities that cater for a wide range of competencies. The work seen during the course of the inspection is well above average standard in Years 9, 10 and 11. Levels of achievement are very good. Pupils in all years work well collaboratively and are able to communicate ideas and emotions, using a range of drama techniques. They have good evaluative skills. The work they do makes a significant contribution to their personal development and the issues they explore through performance contribute to their moral and social awareness.
132. Pupils achieve very well because of the very good teaching, which is both stimulating and challenging. The teacher is a subject specialist, who is able to put across his own enthusiasm for the subject. He has established very good working relationships in the classroom and ensures that pupils of all competencies are actively involved in preparing for and contributing to performances. There is a wide range of activities available to pupils outside of taught time to broaden their understanding and enjoyment of the subject.
133. The leadership of the subject is excellent. The head of department's drive and enthusiasm account for the high standards attained and his sense of self-worth and confidence compensate for the inadequate accommodation and limited finance. Provision overall would be excellent were it not for the limitations of the poor space and meagre resources. The school does not, for example, provide fully for the technical side of drama. The management of the subject is very good. Rigorous systems are in place for monitoring and evaluating pupils' work. Significant improvements have been made to the curriculum in recent years, to meet their different needs. The subject has been particularly successful, for example, in getting boys in Years 10 and 11 to perform well and attain high standards.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is not good enough, because of previous staffing instability; current teaching is much better and achievement for Year 7 pupils is satisfactory.
- The head of department has established clear priorities for raising standards and the profile of the department
- The assessment of pupils' work is not done regularly, and is not shared with pupils so they do not know how well they are doing or what they must do to improve.
- The range and variety of extra-curricular ensembles contributes significantly to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

134. Standards are well below average by the end of Year 9, and in the current Year 11 they are below average. Despite pupils having generally good standards of performance, the significant weaknesses in composing and listening skills meant that pupils' performance in the 2003 GCSE examination was well below average.
135. Pupils' musical ability is below average at the start of Year 7. Since the beginning of the year, there has been significant improvement in standards attained by these pupils, including those

who are gifted and talented or who have special educational needs. This is because they have benefited greatly from the stability and continuity in teaching; as a result their achievement is satisfactory. However, for pupils in Year 9 achievement is unsatisfactory; they have had considerable disruption of their learning, caused by many changes of teacher. Their knowledge and understanding of musical skills is well below expectations and they are unable to create simple melodic compositions. Pupils in the current Year 11 are struggling to complete their coursework as they had limited structured teaching in Year 10; again, achievement is unsatisfactory. Compositions show little understanding of melodic construction and use of chords to accompany pieces. They are not competent using musical language to describe their work; however they are using computer programs reasonably well to notate their compositions.

136. Teaching is satisfactory; with good features for pupils in Year 11. The musical knowledge, challenge and high expectations by staff ensure that all pupils are involved in their lessons. Teachers' enthusiasm, combined with good working relationships, especially with pupils in Year 11, ensure that they work hard. Pupils lack confidence when asked to perform in lessons, although other pupils give good support and encouragement. Assessment of pupils' work is a weakness, consequently pupils are unsure how well they are doing, or how to improve their work in order to gain higher grades. Tuned and un-tuned percussion resources are unsatisfactory and restrict what can be taught during lessons.
137. Since the previous inspection the department has gone through a period of staffing turbulence, which meant there was limited development and progress. As a result, improvement has been only satisfactory. With the recent appointment of the current head of department, improvement is now good. Through her good leadership and management, robust procedures for monitoring and evaluating pupils' performance have been established. Morale has risen noticeably since the new appointments were made and there is now a very positive will to identify and tackle the underachievement of the past. Analysis of the reasons for poor past performance has been undertaken and teaching strategies have been implemented to secure improvement. Ethos is much improved, and the department provides a good musical environment for pupils. Hence, in spite of unsatisfactory achievement, provision overall is currently satisfactory, and there is considerable potential for further improvement. Pupils benefit from the good opportunities for making music together in a variety of venues.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, pupils achieve well, in both the compulsory and the GCSE courses.
- Good quality teaching and learning across all years results in good progress for all groups of pupils.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning.
- The good attitudes and behaviour of the great majority of pupils result in a positive atmosphere in lessons.
- Very good extra-curricular provision throughout the year extends pupils' learning.

Commentary

138. Standards in Year 9 are below average. Most pupils, however, achieve well in relation to their capabilities and their generally well below average standards on entry. In dance, most pupils have only a limited range of choreographic devices; the use of different levels, unison and presentational skills are not well developed. Nevertheless, they work well together as small groups to present their own choreographed performances and are gradually improving the

quality of presentation. In gymnastics, most understand the principles of supported and counter balances. Few, though, are able to hold these effectively because of a lack of body tension; fluidity of movement between balances to produce sequence work is lacking in many.

139. Standards in the Year 11 compulsory course are average. The majority has continued to build on the skills and techniques learned in Years 7–9 and achieves well. However, pupils have not reached their full potential in badminton, because of a lack of suitable indoor accommodation prior to April 2003. The few more capable boys use a good range of shots effectively and play to opponents' weaknesses, but the majority of pupils are still not using footwork sufficiently well. As a result, their stance is too square and they rely too much on the use of overhead shots. In netball, pupils achieve well. Many have good individual skills and techniques and their use of space and tactical awareness is improving. Across all years pupils have developed well their understanding of the principles and procedures for warm up.
140. GCSE physical education has continued to be popular but few higher attaining pupils opt to take the course. In 2003, attainment was broadly in line with the national average and has generally been so over the past three years. In relation to their prior attainment at the end of Year 9 most pupils achieved well. Current standards in Year 11 are average; pupils are achieving well. In their theory lessons, for example, they are developing well their knowledge and understanding of the physiological and psychological factors affecting performance. No practical lessons were seen.
141. Teaching and learning are good across all years and result in good progress. Teachers have a good command of the activities being taught and have a consistent approach as regards behaviour and discipline. Lessons are well structured, purposeful and provide progression and challenge. In Year 9 dance and gymnastics lessons, for example, well planned and structured activities, including pair and small group work, ensured that pupils were all actively involved and improving their skills and techniques well. Learning objectives are made clear at the start of lessons; thus pupils know what is expected of them and in the best practice there is good reference to key terminology. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Pupils respect the ethos within which the subject is taught; this enhances the quality of learning and promotes a good atmosphere in lessons, as seen, for example, in Year 7 dance lessons. Teachers circulate very well in lessons and their effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes pupils well aware of their capabilities. There are, though, occasions when there could be more structured pupil evaluation of their peers – this would help them to refine and develop their own practice and deepen their knowledge and understanding even further. There is insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning in the subject. Effective assessment procedures are in place in Years 7-9 and are being developed for the compulsory course in Years 10 and 11.
142. Leadership and management are good. There is a sense of purpose and a focus on improving standards. Although there is little timetabled opportunity for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching in the department, regular meetings enable good practice to be shared and developed. This contributes well to the team ethos and the induction of newly appointed staff. Newly developed schemes of work provide focused lesson plans, but contain insufficient reference to the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Effective self-evaluation has led to the production of improvement plans for each key stage of the National Curriculum. Unsatisfactory resources impair the quality of field athletics provision and there are insufficient textbooks for the numbers of pupils who opt for the GCSE course. Extra-curricular provision is very good and extends pupils' learning. As a result of the commitment of teachers, fourteen pupils have attained representative honours at district level and eight at county level in a variety of sports. Two have attained national representative honours, one being a current world record holder. The under-15 rugby union squad are currently East Kent champions. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Two GCSE lessons in **business studies** were sampled. Standards are average, but pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, because of the consistently good teaching they receive.

143. An innovative and well-organised course in **life skills** is provided in conjunction with Canterbury College for pupils who experience difficulty with the full GCSE provision. Pupils attend Canterbury College for one day per week when they are able to choose from a variety of vocational courses. In school, pupils follow a course that is intended to develop their self confidence through a programme of activities designed to encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning.
144. The quality of learning is good. Teachers use a good variety of teaching methods to motivate and engage pupils well. Well-prepared resources are used to stimulate and encourage pupils to prepare their own presentations. Good use is made of ICT. Comparisons with examination results are not appropriate, but students make good progress, achieving well. They enjoy the course and attend well. Their personal development is enhanced. The course is well managed, with good communication between the school and the college ensuring that pupils' progress is well monitored.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education was sampled. Provision is well structured within a programme with good resources, which covers all requirements. However, the quality of teaching seen varied from good to unsatisfactory. Some teachers used the centrally organised lessons plans and resources well, whilst others did not prepare lessons carefully enough. Limited co-ordination between a number of subjects means that the school's sex education programme lacks cohesion. There has been some training for teachers, but a lack of monitoring means that there is no clear picture of the needs of the teachers and consequently no clear development plan

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is no formally taught scheme of work for citizenship in Years 10 and 11, and the statutory programmes of study are not fully implemented.
- A scheme of work has been produced for citizenship in Years 7 to 9, which enables teachers to plan their work.
- There is insufficient formal monitoring or evaluation of the teaching of citizenship or the effectiveness of other subjects' contribution to the subject.
- Good assessment procedures are being developed to ensure statutory requirements for the reporting of pupils' attainment are met at the end of Year 9.

Commentary

145. The school teaches citizenship lessons fortnightly in Years 8 and 9 and as part of the personal, social and health education programme in Year 7. In Years 10 and 11, there is no formal provision for citizenship. There has, though, been an audit as to where subjects are delivering aspects of citizenship.
146. Standards of work seen in Years 8 and 9 are average. Achievement is satisfactory. A scrutiny of a sample of work in Year 9 showed pupils developing a secure knowledge and understanding of issues concerning rights and responsibilities. In lessons observed in Year 8, pupils were exploring issues of crime and the impact of this in society through the production of sketches in small groups.

147. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 8 and 9 is satisfactory and results in sound progress by most pupils. Classes are generally well managed, particularly where pupils are working in small groups to prepare their own sketches for the rest of the class to watch. In one Year 8 lesson, for example, the teacher effectively laid down clear guidelines for behaviour whilst pupils were rehearsing and performing. In some instances though, pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to be involved in discussion and applying their knowledge to learning. At the end of lessons, teachers do not always use the time sufficiently well to draw together with pupils the specific citizenship themes being explored. In the one unsatisfactory lesson seen, teaching skills were weak and as a result pupils made little or no progress. The teacher spent most of the time at the front of the class working well with the more willing learners, but did not focus on or draw in the others.
148. The attitudes of most pupils are good, but there is no real enthusiasm for the subject – particularly in Year 8. Inspectors' discussions with Year 9 pupils revealed more interest in the subject, particularly because they enjoyed the opportunities for discussion. However, in the one Year 9 lesson seen, the poor attitudes of a large minority distracted others and had a negative impact on the quality of learning.
149. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. The main priorities have been on ensuring provision in Years 7 to 9 and the meeting of statutory requirements for assessment and reporting at the end of Year 9 in 2004. The need to ensure provision of citizenship in Years 10 and 11 is acknowledged and has been given appropriate priority in the planning. Although an audit of subject provision has been undertaken, there is no monitoring or evaluation of other subjects' teaching of citizenship. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching is done through teacher feedback procedures. As yet, there is no formal timetabled provision for the monitoring of teaching the subject. There has been no formal audit of how whole school initiatives such as the school council, support for CAFOD, charity work and Fair Trade week contribute to the development of pupils' citizenship in relation to National Curriculum requirements. Citizenship was not reported on at the time of the previous inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

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
General Studies	53	84.9	78.6	13.2	25.7	28.9	30.0
Mathematics	5	20.0	74.2	20.0	34.3	10.0	31.3

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	12	100.0	96.1	16.7	48.7	78.3	85.1
Biology	15	86.7	91.6	26.7	36.3	62.7	74.1
Business Studies	13	100.0	96.4	7.7	32.8	69.2	76.5
Communication Studies	14	100.0	98.3	71.4	36.8	101.4	81.1
English Literature	27	100.0	98.5	37.0	43.7	80.7	84.3
Geography	7	100.0	97.1	0.0	40.5	60.0	80.9
History	8	100.0	97.1	50.0	41.0	85.0	81.2
Information Technology	6	100.0	89.1	16.7	22.4	70.0	64.1
Performing Arts	8	75.0	92.5	25.0	40.8	60.0	78.8
Other Social Studies	9	88.9	94.3	22.2	38.9	64.4	77.7
Religious Studies	11	100.0	96.3	72.7	44.0	101.8	82.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving and are now above average.
- Students are achieving well, because of the good teaching and their own positive attitudes to the subject.
- A small number of students are underachieving, because of poor attendance.

Commentary

150. The provision caters for thirty-three students. There is a one year AS course in English literature for students in Year 12 and then a further year of A-level study in the subject for Year 13 students. The subject is popular with male and female students and retention rates are good. Results in the 2003 A-level examinations were average and this was a significant improvement on the results of previous years.
151. The standard of work of the Year 13 students, as seen during the inspection, now exceeds national expectations and levels of achievement are good for male and female students. The significant rise in standards is because of improved teaching techniques and most students' very positive attitudes to the subject. Students in Year 12 are working at average levels of attainment and their achievement is satisfactory.
152. Students in Year 12 have a good understanding of the context in which writers work and the cultural and social issues which influence them. They are confident in putting forward their own ideas about literature, supporting those views with appropriate textual references. Students in Year 13 have developed good analytical skills and an independent approach to their work. Reading skills in the interpretation of texts are highly developed. Most students have positive attitudes to the subject and high academic aspirations, but the work of a minority is unsatisfactory, because they fail to attend lessons on a regular basis.
153. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They convey their own enthusiasm for the subject to the students, who respond by working productively as individuals and in groups. The pace of lessons is challenging and expectations are high. The teaching encourages students to follow their own lines of enquiry and to take responsibility for their own learning. Good use is made of a range of questioning techniques, both to extend learning and to test understanding.
154. The leadership and management of English are good. Teachers collaborate closely to share good practice and the monitoring and evaluation of students' progress is undertaken efficiently. There has been good progress since the last inspection in improving standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

155. Provision for the development of key skills in language and literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory and standards are average. There is evidence in subjects such as English that students are encouraged to use literacy skills to improve the quality of their written work and discussions. When this happens, such skills support their learning and enable them to achieve well in their examination courses. Students studying leisure and tourism are confident and articulate when evaluating their work and they have developed good skills of independent study. In science, students use specialist terms confidently and accurately when discussing their work.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have not developed satisfactory skills of independent study.
- Standards are well below average in Year 13 and achievement is unsatisfactory, due to recent staffing difficulties.
- There is insufficient use of computers in the teaching, reducing some aspects of visual learning.

Commentary

156. Students study the first modules of mechanics, pure mathematics and statistics in Year 12 and the second modules in Year 13. In the 2003 A-level, the number of students entering for the examination was too small for national comparison. One of the two students entered was successful. In the 2003 AS-level examination of Year 12 students, performance was very low, due to severe staffing difficulties not finally resolved until October 2003. This has resulted in a loss of interest, particularly by those students who find the use of algebra difficult when solving problems.
157. Standards seen in Year 13 in the inspection were well below average. Students do not have the firm grasp of basic mathematics that enables further development of skills in pure mathematics. Basic definitions are not fully understood. In mechanics the solution of problems is not based on the rigorous formation of accurate equations. Some Year 12 students have weak algebraic skills, inhibiting their progress in pure mathematics. The achievement of students is unsatisfactory, due to the disruption of the teaching in the recent past and the unsatisfactory development of students' independent learning skills.
158. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, an improvement on the recent past. The strength of the teaching lies in the good subject expertise of the teachers, as explanations are clear and accurate, and students learn well from them. The pace of the learning is satisfactory, but no better, because the teaching has to repeat some of the algebra from the GCSE course on a regular basis. The use of scientific calculating machines to sketch new functions is helpful to learning, but these calculators lack the visual learning opportunities provided by a computer-controlled screen. They are too small to promote effective whole-class discussion, for example of tangents to a point on a curve. Computers are not used enough in the teaching. Work set for homework is not completed well enough for secure learning and students' own initiatives are lacking. Teaching has not yet developed students' independent learning skills satisfactorily.
159. Leadership and management are currently satisfactory. Management in the recent past failed to provide the quality of teaching necessary for successful outcomes in sixth form courses. Appropriate action has been taken and the current staffing provision is now good. Standards have declined since the last inspection, and improvement has been unsatisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

160. Standards of mathematics are satisfactory and present no barrier to learning in the sixth form. In vocational subjects numeracy support is effectively planned in health and social care. Opportunities for further development of leisure and tourism in the use of data are missed. History A-level students use graphical evidence to form opinions relating to historical events. Error calculations are used well in chemistry and physics

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was on biology, but **chemistry** was also sampled. In chemistry the small AS-level group was achieving well and was well supported by the teacher, who was able to offer almost individual tuition. A good lesson was seen, where the teacher's thorough subject knowledge led to a clear exposition of a difficult topic. The group then successfully completed a practical to determine the enthalpy change of a reaction and were able to evaluate and account for the error sources. Students enjoy the subject, finding it both challenging and interesting. They have positive attitudes and are determined to succeed. Standards of attainment at AS-level in 2003 were below national expectations. There was no A-level entry. In work seen during the inspection, standards at AS-level were average overall. The five students in Year 13 who are following the A-level course are on target to achieve at least as well as their predictions.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to structure the work effectively, ensuring that teaching is consistently good.
- There is a very good working relationship between students and teachers.
- Some students are too reliant on their teachers, so they do not become independent learners.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Support for students is good.

Commentary

161. In the 2003 A-level examinations, results were below average, but the trend has fluctuated relative to the capabilities of the small classes. The small number of entries in most years makes comparisons with national averages inappropriate. At AS-level all seven students obtained pass grades and have continued to A-level in Year 13. Standards of work among current students are in line with national averages, and the achievement of most is satisfactory, although there is a spread of performance. This is in part a reflection of the entry policy, which allows students to start the course with low levels of prior attainment.
162. Teaching is good overall. Teachers know their subject well and teach with enthusiasm, though the pace can sometimes be somewhat slow. Questioning is good and makes the students think. This results in most students learning the topics effectively and making good progress in lessons. Lessons are well planned, with clear objectives being conveyed to students. Teachers offer additional assistance on an individual basis to students encountering difficulties. Students ask for help when needed and confidently enter into class discussions. This good interaction in lessons encourages students to show initiative. A Year 13 student delivered his presentation on how temperature affects plant and animal distribution with great confidence. Students move successfully on from their GCSE work into new areas and extend their knowledge. A small Year 12 group enthusiastically studied various modes of nutrition and how organisms are adapted to their life cycle. Regularly set assessments, coursework and homework are marked carefully, with constructive comments that assist the students to improve further. The teachers know the students and their needs well, having taught many of them in the main school. They provide good support and guidance.
163. There are good relationships between teachers and students as well as between the students themselves. The attitudes and behaviour of the students is very good and this ensures a pleasant co-operative working atmosphere in lessons. Students fully appreciate the support given by the teachers and consider that they are well prepared for their examinations.
164. Leadership and management are good. There is a good scheme of work. Resources are well managed, with a sufficient range of support materials available. The laboratory refurbishment programme needs to be maintained. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve well.
- There are no major weaknesses. However, the ICT curriculum is less well developed in the sixth form than in the main school.

Commentary

165. Standards in the A-level and AS-level computing examinations have been variable. In 2002, A-level standards were above average. In 2003 the A-level group size fell dramatically after the previous year's disappointing AS-level results. The three remaining students performed poorly. This year, students will enter for a different examination: ICT A-level. Whilst standards in Year 13 are currently below average, they have improved since the AS-level examination in Year 12 and students are working hard to improve their coursework. Achievement is good, since students entered the course at a standard well below what would be expected for this type of course.
166. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Students are taught by specialists with expert knowledge and experience. Teachers use a range of imaginative techniques to interest and stimulate the students, such as skilled questioning, paired discussions and investigations, and amusing visual demonstrations. Resources, including online material, are used effectively to provide students with good models and examples of what they could achieve. Whilst Year 12 students have now reached average standards, it is clear that achievement in both years is often constrained by the students' lack of communication skills and limited experience of ICT prior to the sixth form. In one Year 13 lesson the teacher used a full-size skeleton and gave lots of verbal clues to explore the 'human computer interface'; despite this, students found it extremely difficult to discuss and write a cogent report on what they were learning. In a discussion afterwards all the students, including the highest attainers, revealed that they were using the course merely to develop ICT skills which would be useful to them in a variety of careers.
167. The leadership and management of the A-level course is very good. The new leader for ICT has introduced a more relevant course, improved the availability of software and hardware and provides an excellent example for teaching. He has achieved this through careful analysis of need and rigorous monitoring of all aspects of the departments' work. Improvements made lower down the school are already paying off in the raising of interest and achievement. Both recruitment and retention rates have improved dramatically. There was no comment on sixth form provision in the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

168. The students in the sixth form employ average knowledge and skills in ICT to help them in learning. Students are able to use word processing and multi-media software to present their work in different ways. They use graphs and tables to analyse data and search the Internet for material relevant to their subject. Only in a few subjects are teachers specifically developing these skills to meet particular needs. In English, for example, students are taught how to find and analyse particular Web-based documents in order to explore the social and cultural backgrounds of the writers they are studying. At present there are no courses for sixth form students, studying other subjects, to refresh or develop ICT skills.

HUMANITIES

The focus was on history but **geography** was sampled. Standards in the AS-level examination in 2002 were well below national average and these were carried through to A-level in 2003. In previous years all students had achieved pass grades at A-level, but few had gained the higher grades. Groups are small, around 6 or 7, and results vary from year to year. Teaching in the lessons sampled was good. Standards of attainment are average and achievement satisfactory.

169. **Psychology** was also sampled. Both AS and A-level examination results last year were slightly below the national average, but students achieved well, reaching grades that were well above those predicted on their GCSE grades. Current standards are good, with students having a very sound understanding of the complex concepts and language of the subject. In a Year 13 lesson students were observed competently comparing the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky on child development. Essays are well prepared, with good examples of evaluative thinking. Students are making very good progress and are on target to achieve grades that are well above predictions based on previous GCSE grades. An experienced teacher uses her very good knowledge of the subject and a wide range of active teaching methods to motivate and challenge students. Lessons proceed at a good pace, with interested students responding well. Relevant assignments are well marked, with good advice on how to achieve higher grades. The subject is very well managed with a clear commitment to improving standards.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at AS-level in 2003 were well above average.
- Teaching is very good, accounting for the students' very good achievement in Years 12 and 13.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Assessment is very good; students are involved in assessing their own work and consequently are aware of their standards and their targets.
- Marking of students' work is done to a high standard and is very informative.
- Programmes of study are insufficiently detailed or focused to help teachers in their lesson planning.

Commentary

170. Standards at the end of Year 13 are above average. For a substantial minority of students, standards are well above average. In 2003, the proportion of students passing at AS-level was well above average, with a well above average standard at the higher A/B grades. In 2003 the proportion passing at A-E grades at A-level was well above average at 100 per cent, but with below average performance at the higher A/B grades. Examination results have improved considerably since the last report. Achievement in the sixth form, from an average intake in Year 12, is very good.
171. The quality of teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. Excellent relationships between teachers and students generate a confident and positive environment for learning. Lessons are prepared very well, to reflect both the demands of the work and the teachers' examining experience and expertise. They are structured in a seminar style, in which teachers use their strong subject expertise to frame open questions that lead discussion to evaluate the consequences of historical events and their significance. In discussing the rise of Nazi Germany, they direct students to consider in their reading the changing interpretations of those events over the 50 years since the Second World War ended, as well as the potential for a more prejudiced approach by earlier authors. Other lessons are planned effectively to make use of ICT resources, such as spreadsheet charts to analyse changing voting patterns in Germany between 1920 and 1933, when the Nazi Party gained power. Teachers inspire confidence in their students. They set challenging assignments, which lead students to use their own knowledge analytically and evaluate new evidence critically. Strong support is given to individual students especially those who are less assured. Assessment of students' work is very good and developmental, so students know their standards and their targets and how to achieve those goals. Students work very co-operatively with each other, listening critically to each other's views before reaching a consensus opinion. They respond very positively to demanding work and sustain a high level of concentration.

172. Leadership and management are good. Year 12 students attend conferences in London and thereby have the opportunity to meet and hear professional historians and learn more about the demands of A-level work. There have, however, been no visits organised yet for Year 13 this year. Programmes of study are only outline schemes and lack the detailed focus that would direct individual teacher's planning or the work of new appointees. Departmental improvement plans are insufficiently focused or detailed. There is some very good use of ICT in teaching and learning. The level of improvement since the previous inspection is good.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

173. **Design and technology** was sampled. By the end of Year 13, pupils' standards are below average, because they start the course with levels of knowledge that are lower than those nationally. Nevertheless, their achievement overall is satisfactory. The small and fluctuating numbers in Years 12 and 13 make year on year comparison difficult. Sixth form students have good levels of independence. Most students receive helpful feedback on their work.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

174. **Drama** was sampled. Results at A-level have been well above average in recent years. Standards seen in the work observed were also above average. Achievement is good. In the one lesson observed teaching was very good, as students were preparing for a performance in the evening. Students have developed a range of acting techniques through imaginative, unscripted performances and a number go on to pursue careers in theatre and television.
175. **Film Studies** was also sampled; three lessons were observed. Results in the AS and A-level film studies have been consistently above the national average for the subject. Teaching, often conducted in a seminar style, is very good, well informed by excellent subject knowledge and draws on an extensive diversity of texts. It is challenging, with detailed feedback ensuring that students research thoroughly when presenting coursework, which contributes to their very good achievement. The subject is very well led and managed and remains very popular. However, because there is only one specialist room, many double lessons are disrupted, as students have to change rooms half-way through.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good attitudes contribute positively to students' learning.
- Unsatisfactory co-ordination of teaching adversely affects achievement.
- Not all teachers use marking and assessment adequately.
- Trips to galleries enhance understanding about art.

Commentary

176. Numbers of students staying on to study art in the sixth form have varied since the last inspection, though generally groups are less than ten. Standards have varied from well below to being in line with the level expected nationally, although national comparisons are difficult when group sizes fall below ten.
177. In work seen during the inspection, students in both Years 12 and 13 were working at a standard below average. This represents unsatisfactory achievement, as most students gained A-C grades at GCSE and achieved well. Students in Year 13 did not achieve as well as expected at AS-level and most students in Year 12 are working at a level lower than expected.

178. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory and in the lessons seen, varied from good to unsatisfactory. Three teachers share the teaching. There is insufficient communication, both about the courses and about students and their work, to establish a consistent approach. Whilst high attaining students feel confident to select from the varied opinions offered by different teachers, lower attaining students find conflicting advice sometimes confusing, especially if they lack confidence. This is having an adverse effect on the achievement of some students. The main strengths in teaching include high quality advice and feedback on ideas, techniques and direction of work, which allow students to develop personal responses to themes. Less strong features include the use of inappropriate methods to achieve learning aims, poor use of time and poor organisation. Students' progress is not tracked well enough to inform them of how they are doing and to make it clear to them if they are not achieving as well as expected. Students' good attitudes contribute positively to their learning. They are self-motivated and conscientious. High attaining students discuss their work articulately, explaining their aims and objectives clearly.
179. The quality of leadership and management is unsatisfactory, as there is insufficient co-ordination of the work of the teachers. The lack of a consistent approach is affecting the continuity of learning. Students are fortunate to have a studio in which to work, but it is not well equipped and work left there is not secure. Taking work and materials back and forth from the art rooms to the studio on the other side of the school site wastes timetabled lesson time. An area more easily supervised and better equipped would encourage a more valuable use of students' time outside lessons, whilst art rooms are being used for timetabled lessons. Trips to galleries locally, in London and in Paris, are a valuable extension to lessons and establish a context in which students can create their own artwork.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Leisure and recreation

Provision in leisure and recreation is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good opportunities to take responsibility for their learning and work well together.
- Assessment is detailed and formative and contributes much to improving standards.
- Very good use is made of ICT to support learning.
- Numeracy skills development needs to feature more in each unit of work.
- Accommodation difficulties disrupt learning.

Commentary

180. Standards for the nine students who were the first to complete this AVCE course in 2003 were above average, and most achieved above their predicted levels. Standards are average in the current Year 13 but vary. Although achievement overall is satisfactory, some students underachieve. Standards are well above average for the ten Year 12 students who commenced the course in 2003 and their achievement is good, relative to their results at GCSE. Retention and attendance are satisfactory.
181. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned. Teachers are enthusiastic about teaching the course and students appreciate this. Students have good opportunities to take responsibility for their learning. Independent study standards are sound and very good use is made of ICT in lessons and in home study. Students work with confidence individually and co-operate very well in group activities, thus developing event-planning and communication skills. Opportunities to develop numeracy skills are not sufficiently exploited. Assessment is very well organised and closely focused on examination criteria. Marking is of good quality, both valuing the work students have done and giving good guidance on raising standards. Teachers know

students' needs well. They monitor their work carefully in lessons and give good individual teaching, which improves the attainment the achievement of all students, including those who experience difficulties with learning. Students work and behave very well in a happy, productive atmosphere. A well-integrated programme of relevant workplace visits and syllabus-related activities enlivens the course and improves learning.

182. Teachers work well as a team and leadership of the subject is good. Organisation and management of the course is good and students express high levels of satisfaction with their choice. Timetabling of rooms is unsatisfactory, because frequent room changes disrupt learning; students are rightly very critical of this. However they are very pleased with the content and teaching of the course and appreciate its practical elements. Difficulties that students experience with deadlines are aggravated because the department does not ensure that assessment points are sensitively planned to help students schedule their work. Leisure and recreation was not reported at the previous inspection. There is evidence that standards have improved over the two years the course has been offered.

BUSINESS

Business Studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy the subject, learning and achieving well because of the quality of teaching offered.
- Good teaching is challenging the students to develop independent study skills.
- The curriculum has been developed well since the previous inspection, enabling the students to gain better insights into business practices.
- The use of assessment data as a tool to improve the quality of teaching and learning is underdeveloped.
- The variety of strategies teachers use to enliven learning are limited because the available accommodation is unsuitable and access to ICT resources is limited.

Commentary

183. A-level results in 2002 were below average. Though all students gained a pass grade, very few gained A or B grades. Some differences in performance based on gender are discernible, with boys doing better than girls. The results for boys were in line with national expectations, but for girls they were well below average. Examination results for 2003 were similar to those in 2002. The results in both years suggest that achievement is satisfactory in relation to the students' levels of attainment at GCSE two years earlier.
184. For present students in both Years 12 and 13 standards are below average, but given that the average level of prior attainment for these students is well below average, they are achieving well. No strong differences in performance based on gender were evident during the inspection. However, in a Year 12 class, two female students displayed far more confidence than their male colleagues and the quality of their oral work was particularly good. In their studies of businesses, all students are gaining a working knowledge of business environments and all are able to highlight basic key features. They are less confident in using skills of analysis and evaluation. This is largely because most students' literacy skills are below average and they are not confident or fluent speakers or writers. Teachers are tackling this issue, and the curriculum has been suitably developed. It now offers students very good opportunities to develop their oral, written and ICT presentational skills by giving them real life situations to investigate and report. Satisfactory opportunities exist for students to develop their numeracy skills and there

are good opportunities for developing ICT skills, despite the issues that exist regarding access to ICT resources.

185. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff prepare well and are prepared to challenge the students. They encourage them to work both independently and collaboratively. All teaching seen was at least good and occasionally very good. Students' learning is enhanced because staff plan their lessons well. The business challenge undertaken in conjunction with neighbouring schools and the local Education Business Partnership provides very good case studies. These enable the students to develop a range of skills, not least their ability to present their ideas, both orally and in writing, to their peers and business people. Such activities improve students' confidence, literacy skills and understanding of the business world. Assessment techniques are satisfactory and marking is good. However, the department struggles to set students target grades and monitor their progress in relation to set targets. This is because prior attainment grades are not issued until well after the course has started. This aspect of the department's work needs to be improved, if standards are to rise further.
186. This curriculum area is led and managed well. The subject is popular and course retention rates are very good. The students achieve well, despite having to work in unsatisfactory, crowded accommodation, which makes access to ICT resources quite difficult. The present classrooms do not offer a suitable business-orientated environment in which the students can work. This limits the scope that teachers have for innovative teaching strategies. Nevertheless, improvement since the last inspection has been good, principally because of the developments in the curriculum.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

187. **Health and Social Care** was sampled. The 2003 results gained in this intermediate GNVQ course were well below the national average, with a significant number of students not reaching their full potential. The overall picture during the last three years has, however, been very positive. The school has carefully examined the reasons for the disappointing results last year and has ensured that mistakes previously made in course choices will not happen again. The standards of attainment of the current group taking the course are above average. Students are achieving well, with results showing that they are on target to achieve grades above those predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. They have a sound base of knowledge and are developing good independent learning skills. During the inspection, a group were, for example, using ICT well to produce work relating to health and safety. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Experienced teachers use a wide range of teaching methods to motivate and challenge students. They encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning in a very supportive and stimulating classroom environment. This is a well managed department, which ensures that students are given good opportunities to relate theory to practice through organised work experience placements.

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

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