

INSPECTION REPORT

ST. PAUL'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE

Haywards Heath

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 126101

Headteacher: Mr. J. F. Flower

Lead inspector: Mrs. C. Worthington

Dates of inspection: 1st – 4th March 2004

Inspection number: 259148

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 – 19
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 714

School address: Oathall Avenue
Haywards Heath

Postcode: RH16 3ET

Telephone number: 01444 415418

Fax number: 01444 417042

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Chairman of governors: Mr. P.E.R. Bailey

Date of previous inspection: 10th November 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Paul's Catholic College is a smaller than average co-educational comprehensive school currently situated in Haywards Heath with a wide catchment area in East and West Sussex. In September 2004 it will move to a new site five miles away. There are more boys than girls in nearly every year, especially Year 7. Most are white; about ten per cent are from other ethnic background – mostly of Asian origin. Their attainment on entry to the school is above average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average at just over four per cent, but the home circumstances of pupils are broadly average. The percentage of pupils who use English as a second language is low (just under two per cent) and all are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (5.4 per cent) is below the national average; the number of pupils with statements is about average. St. Paul's is involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and holds the Schools Achievement Award in 2002 and 2003. The school experiences difficulty recruiting staff because this area is one of high housing cost, but pupil mobility is low.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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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	14
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	20
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	24
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	49

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St. Paul's is a good school with many very good and some outstanding features. The headteacher is a very strong leader; he receives very good support from his deputy and the governing body. He has appointed some very good staff, despite difficulties associated with high housing costs, but management and teaching vacancies in information and communication technology (ICT) and business studies have restricted achievement. Teaching is very good and pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. The school gives good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The quality of education is very good overall.
- Excellent provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education generates excellent attitudes in pupils' learning.
- Standards in GCSE and National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds, particularly in English, mathematics and science, are in the top five per cent of the country.
- There is very good inclusion of all pupils in all aspects of school life.
- There is outstanding provision for drama.
- Provision for business education and ICT examination courses in Year 11 is unsatisfactory.
- Preparation for e-learning is very good.
- There is poor accommodation at present, but the school is moving to new, purpose built accommodation in September 2004.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The key issues have all been addressed and there have been good improvements in the standards achieved, in teaching and learning overall and in provision in many subjects. Provision in business education has declined recently because of staff illness; there are now improvements in physical education after recent staffing difficulties. The strong leadership of the headteacher has been retained, and the school is preparing itself very well for its move to new premises. It is in a good position to make further improvements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Standards in GCSE examinations are high and in the top five per cent of the country. Pupils do particularly well in English, mathematics, science, languages and the humanities. The school received achievement awards in 2002 and 2003. In addition to successes at GCSE and A level, the school's performance in the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 in 2003 was also well above average. **Achievement is good** overall. It is good in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and very good in Key Stage 4. During the inspection, pupils attained above average standards in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form and well above average standards in Key Stage 4, with high standards and very good achievement in many subjects, except vocational ICT and business studies in Key Stage 4. Pupils taking these options have missed work because of teacher absence and inadequate curriculum time. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well overall, due to good support.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good overall and outstanding in the main school. Pupils throughout the

school are committed to their school and to learning. Pupils' attitudes are excellent. Behaviour is very good. Attendance is good. Sixth form students have very positive attitudes but do not take enough responsibility in the main school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good overall. Teaching and learning are very good overall, very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, and good in Key Stage 3. Forty-five per cent of lessons seen were very good or better; 11 per cent were excellent. Subject expertise and planning are major strengths. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils but homework does not always offer sufficient challenge.

The quality and range of the curriculum is good. Opportunities for enrichment are very good because of the very comprehensive range of activities the school offers. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory because of the poor nature of much of the existing accommodation. Arrangements to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are very good. Teachers and the support staff know the pupils very well. Pastoral and academic monitoring procedures are highly effective in ensuring comprehensive support and guidance, but careers guidance could be better structured for the sixth form. The school actively seeks and respects the views of pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher and deputy head give very good leadership, well supported by the senior management team to give an effective, well-directed education for all pupils. Leadership and management of academic subjects and pastoral care are good overall, with much very good and some excellent subject leadership. Some, however, is weaker because of absent heads of department and lack of qualified staff to deputise. Governors give very good service to the school and governance is good. They have made a major contribution to the leadership of the school through their vision and success in carrying out the funding and planning for the new school and they ensure statutory regulations are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have a very high opinion of the school. It is oversubscribed and has a deservedly high reputation.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise standards in business education by improving teaching and learning, leadership and management, and providing effective guidance and assessment to ensure that pupils achieve reasonable grades in the summer examinations;
- Improve provision for ICT in Key Stage 4 examination courses by increasing the curriculum time and ensuring specialist teaching;
- Improve the corporate image of the sixth form and give more opportunities for students to take responsibility within the school and more guidance to help them prepare for life beyond school.

THE SIXTH FORM AT ST PAUL'S CATHOLIC COLLEGE

OVERALL EVALUATION

St. Paul's has a good sixth form that is cost-effective. Standards are average overall, and well above average in some subjects; students' attitudes to work are excellent. A-level results have improved since the last inspection and are average overall, but this masks some very high results, and many subjects have numbers that are too low to make valid national comparisons. The results show at least average and often much better added value to their GCSE results. Students achieve well through very good teaching and guidance. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- High quality teaching and learning in many subjects lead to very good achievement from modest GCSE grades.
- Provision for media studies is outstanding.
- There is very good provision in many subjects, though there are difficulties in provision for economics and business studies, which is lowering standards.
- Guidance for life beyond school years is not strong enough.
- Although they are treated as young adults, students do not take enough responsibility in the school.
- Year 13 students are spending their final school year in very poor accommodation.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English literature is good . Students achieve well because teachers know their subject well and communicate enthusiasm for literature.
Mathematics	Provision is very good . Teachers have good expertise, plan lessons well and make good use of ICT. Students work hard and are encouraged to think for themselves.
Science	Provision in chemistry is very good . Students achieve well through very good teaching which stimulates them and encourages them to learn independently. Teachers could improve students' written work by checking it more often and give more guidance on note-taking.
Information and communication technology	Provision is good . Students' range of ICT skills is widened and increased well. Some students do not have high enough entry qualifications to cope easily with the AS course.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision for media studies is excellent ; A level results are consistently high. Excellent teaching promotes outstanding achievement and very high standards. Leadership is highly influential beyond the school. Provision in music is very good . Standards are well above average; students' achievement is very good because of very good teaching, leadership and management.
Business	Provision in economics and business studies is satisfactory . Standards are average and achievement satisfactory at A level; the subject is recovering after a decline caused by recent staffing problems.

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

An excellent rapport between teachers and students has been established and a great deal of one-to-one support is given to students. Careers guidance is not structured, however.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head and deputy head of sixth form work well together; pastoral care is good. There is insufficient overview of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning, and the curriculum, and preparation for higher education and the workplace is not developed enough. Sixth formers do not take enough responsibility in the school as its most senior students, and those in Year 13 are spending their final year in very poor conditions before the school moves to new premises.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have positive views of the sixth form; they feel they are treated as adults and encouraged to be more independent here. They respect their teachers and value their expertise, which enables them to make such good progress in most subjects. They are happy with the progress they make in most subjects, but would like the difficulties in economics and business studies to be resolved quickly. They would also like the assessment of their work in some subjects to tell them more clearly how to improve.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are above average in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and are well above average in Key Stage 4 where they are high in many subjects; achievement is good overall and very good in some subjects. The school's attention to inclusion ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who use English as an additional language, achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2003, pupils' achievements were high and standards in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations were in the top five per cent of the country.
- Standards are well above average in English, science, French, Spanish, drama, design and technology and history in Key Stage 4 and in mathematics throughout the school.
- Achievement is very good in Key Stage 4 in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, French and drama, but unsatisfactory in business education and ICT examination courses.

Commentary

1. The number of pupils entering the school in Year 7 having reached the expected National Curriculum levels in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2 is more than in most schools; relatively few pupils have achieved higher levels. Statistically, this makes attainment on entry above average. The number of pupils with special educational needs is small. There is no noticeable difference in the standards and achievement of different groups of pupils.
2. The school's performance in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was well above average for English, mathematics and science. The school added considerable value to its pupils' attainment at age 11, particularly in mathematics and science where good improvement was seen from 2002, and achievement very good. Standards have risen steadily in the last three years in line with the rising national trend, except in English where there was a slight drop due to changes in marking in 2003.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.5 (36.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	40.3 (36.9)	35.4 (34.7)
science	37.8 (36.6)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 123 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

3. In GCSE examinations in 2003, pupils' achievement was excellent, and GCSE points scored in pupils' best eight subjects were in the top five per cent of the country compared to schools with similar Key Stage 3 results. The school's results have risen steadily year by year; national comparisons show that in 2002 and 2003, pupils improved much more than those in most other schools both in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 and in GCSE in Year 11. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' attainment at GCSE. The school achieves high examination results because of the relentless drive to improve standards. Led by the headteacher, this is the main objective of the College Improvement Plan and supported by all staff and governors. It places great emphasis on understanding pupils' different learning styles to enable them all to succeed, and this was seen successfully carried out during the inspection.

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	71 (69)	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	99 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	41.7 (40.7)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 105 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Standards seen during the inspection were well above average in English, science, French, Spanish, drama, design and technology and history in Key Stage 4 and in mathematics throughout the school. Pupils achieve very well in these subjects because of the very good expertise of their teachers and their own excellent attitudes to learning. Although they had received revision guides in science, examination preparation had not started in most subjects, but there is every indication that pupils' performance in public examinations will be maintained at these standards in the current year, and the school will meet its challenging targets.
5. Standards are below average in ICT on the GCSE course because there is a little unsatisfactory teaching. The school does not have an ICT specialist leading the subject. In business education, standards are well below average in GCSE at Key Stage 4. The teacher is on long-term sick leave and the school has been unable to find a replacement, which has adversely affected pupils' achievement in this year. Standards are average rather than higher in some subjects taken by all Key Stage 4 pupils but not examined – for example citizenship and core physical education.
6. Standards are above average in most subjects at Key Stage 3 and achievement is good. The majority of pupils enter the school in Year 7 with the expected level 4, and a high proportion achieves levels above the national expectation in Year 9. In physical education in Key Stage 3, standards are below average after last year's staffing problems, although they are rising quickly under the new department leadership, and achievement is satisfactory.
7. Pupils' literacy develops well and is a positive aid to high achievement in the humanities where the writing of extended pieces plays an important part. Mathematical skills are used and developed very well through the science and technology curricula. Pupils' skills of scientific enquiry do not develop as fast as their scientific knowledge in Key Stage 3 because not as much importance is attached to them. Skills in ICT also develop well. Many departments are making good preparation for the 'virtual learning environment' being developed for the new school and good use of the interactive whiteboard was seen, which motivated pupils and raised their achievement.
8. The school uses information satisfactorily from primary schools and its own tests to identify pupils with special educational needs and to set targets for them, including those in statements. The majority of these pupils achieve as well as others throughout the school as a result of good teaching and curricular arrangements, particularly in Key Stage 4.

Sixth form

9. The school's performance at A level, AS level and in the advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) in 2003 was in line with the national average and similar to those of 2002, though improvements were apparent in some subjects. The average outcome masks some very high results. Most subjects having enough entries to compare with national results were significantly above them, but there were many subjects with numbers too small for national comparison.

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	88.7 (92.4)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	28 (30.9)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	235.5 (231.2)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 49 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- Achievement is good overall in the sixth form. Although many have high GCSE grades on entry, this is not always the case; standards on entry are average for A-level courses and sometimes below, such as in ICT and business studies. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well above average in music and media studies. Achievement is excellent in media studies and was very good in the sociology lessons seen. Students consolidate and deepen their knowledge in subjects which they have studied at GCSE and achieve good results in subjects they are studying for the first time, such as media studies. This is because of the very good teaching they receive in these subjects. In economics and business studies, however, the absence of the head of department is having an adverse effect, and teacher expertise is not as high as in other subjects. In vocational ICT, students achieve well, even though they only gain average standards: they enter this subject with lower GCSE points scores than other subjects.
- Students' literacy and numeracy are good, but their use of ICT is not consistent; skills are not developing fast enough and this is holding back independent study. This has to do with the lack of a computer room in the sixth form centre, insufficient access to computers in school and the absence of a skills course in ICT for all students who need it. The planned e-learning environment for the new school will overcome current access difficulties and more skills training is currently being planned.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The attitude of pupils towards their learning is outstanding. Pupils throughout the school are committed to their school and to learning. Their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, is excellent in the main school and very good overall. Behaviour is very good. Attendance is good; unauthorised absence is far less common than found in most schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very positive attitudes and behaviour make a significant contribution to their achievement.
- The ethos of a community of shared values, which permeates the school, provides a consistent vision for the pupils' spiritual, social and personal development.
- The school encourages the pupils to develop a strong sense of self-knowledge and self-worth.
- The Community Days and residential weekends are highly successful team-building ventures which promote excellent working relationships and heightened empathy.
- Although they are treated as young adults, sixth form students do not take enough responsibility in the school.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.3
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.4
National data	1.1

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

12. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school and are keen to attend. As a result the attendance records for the school are good and most pupils arrive punctually at the start of the school day and for lessons. Their attitudes are outstanding because they have pride in their school and want to learn. They feel secure and confident in school and are extremely helpful and courteous because the school fosters these values and sets good role models. The school is committed to all its pupils; this is reflected in the low number of excluded pupils and the integration of the few disaffected pupils. The school encourages positive attitudes to achievement and the realisation of each pupil's potential.

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	536	15	0
White – Irish	14	0	0
White – any other White background	27	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	6	0	0
Parents preferred not to say	12	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	87	0	0

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

13. Pupils are highly motivated, largely as a result of the positive learning environment that teachers work hard to ensure. The school provides excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Pupils respect the beliefs, values and cultural traditions of others, and take keen initiative in moral matters. They have a great appreciation of their own religion and culture, and the strong emphasis the school places upon their social and personal development creates pupils' enthusiasm for and concentration on learning that is a major factor in their achievement. In their lessons, they are highly motivated, focused and absorbed in learning. They are encouraged to become increasingly autonomous learners as they move through the school.

14. The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme makes a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development. Pupils are encouraged to consider issues such as medical ethics and capital punishment from different points of view with tolerance and sensitivity. The Community Days and residential weekends have a very positive impact upon the ethos of support and empathy which permeates the school.

15. The school sets very high expectations for pupils' conduct and, as a result, pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Even where the teaching is not good, pupils' behaviour does not significantly deteriorate. Bullying is not a serious issue at the school. Any incidence is dealt with very quickly and effectively under the school's procedures. The Year 10 "Guardian Angels" (or GA@SPers as they are affectionately known) provide an advisory service for younger pupils experiencing personal difficulties.

Sixth form

16. Students in the sixth form have very positive attitudes to their work. This is reflected both in the parents' and students' questionnaires which indicate that students are happy to stay on at St Paul's. They are well motivated and, in most subjects, work hard in lessons and outside school hours. An excellent rapport between teachers and students has been established and a great deal of one-to-one support is given to students academically, which they really appreciate.
17. Opportunities for students to undertake residential experience are a significant strength, designed to facilitate the easy and positive relationships between students seen during the inspection. Relationships between the age groups are further improved by the provision of mixed tutor groups. All students have opportunities to undertake community service or help younger pupils, but this is undertaken voluntarily. Students are not, for example, assigned to lower school classes. The student committee runs a lively social scene and helps in the organisation of religion. The personal, social and health education curriculum in the sixth form is very good. However, not enough opportunities are taken to encourage students to exercise their initiative in, for example, linking with the local community, undertaking charity work and organising clubs in the lower school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The quality and range of the curriculum are good and there are very good opportunities for enrichment. Teaching and learning are very good, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good and produce a high level of achievement in many subjects, including mathematics and science. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their excellent attitudes to work. Nearly half of all lessons seen were very good or better, and just over one in ten was excellent. Nearly half the teaching seen in Key Stage 4 was very good; over half was very good in the sixth form. Learning is very good, even when teaching is at a lower level because of pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject expertise is very good; most teaching is done by specialists.
- Teachers' planning is very good and they use innovative teaching methods.
- Teachers have high expectations.
- Teaching and learning in business studies has been unsatisfactory because of difficulty in recruiting specialist teachers to cover long term absence, but lessons seen were satisfactory.
- Homework tasks do not always present sufficient challenge.
- Marking is inconsistent and does not always inform pupils how they can improve their work.

Commentary

18. Teaching are good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. Pupils' learning is very good throughout the school, enhanced by their excellent attitudes, even when teaching is of a lower standard. A slightly lower proportion of good or better lessons was seen in Key Stage 3,

reflecting the lower grades awarded in English, where teachers could do more to challenge pupils of higher ability, and in science, where pupils' practical skills of scientific enquiry are not developed as well as their theoretical knowledge of science. A high proportion of excellent teaching was seen in subjects where there are Advanced Skills teachers (media studies and drama). Their expertise is not only shared with the school, but also in other local schools to great advantage. There is evidence of recently improved and improving teaching in several subjects, and here achievement has not yet caught up. This is the reason that teaching overall is as yet better than achievement.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 148 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
17 (11%)	50 (34%)	53 (36 %)	27 (18 %)	1 (1 %)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

19. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Particularly good practice is evident in speech and language, and a Year 7 literacy support lesson seen was excellent. Teacher assistants are capable and effective, and help the achievement of their pupils. Teachers and assistants generally liaise well. However, some subjects do not always work effectively with the special educational needs department to improve both the quality of differentiation and their schemes of work. There are also no clear procedures to help staff deploy teaching assistants to best effect. In lessons seen, however, most teachers tailored the lesson at least satisfactorily and sometimes well to the needs of those pupils with learning difficulties, which helped their achievement.
20. Most teachers have very good command of their subjects and are specialists. This enables them to plan interesting lessons which motivate pupils to learn, many of them using self-created resources. In modern languages, for example, much use is made of games which enliven lessons and are often used as a way of checking new learning. The excellent relationships found in the majority of classes also do much to enhance learning. Pupils are secure in their teachers' expertise and they engage willingly in learning. Teachers make a point of addressing all pupils by name every lesson, and this adds to their sense of self-esteem; they know their views are valued.
21. One of the headteacher's major strengths is to appoint and develop new staff through a very thorough training programme. However, the school experiences difficulty recruiting teachers, despite the excellent learning ethos, because it is situated in an area of high housing cost. It results in problems when specialist teachers cannot be engaged to fill vacancies or to cover for sickness in permanent staff. This is currently the case in business studies, where the school has been unable to find a specialist teacher until very recently. After a period when learning was often poor, it is satisfactory in lessons now taught by a specialist, and the school is allowing extra time for the subject so that pupils' achievement can improve rapidly, particularly in Year 11. This has also been the case in music, art and physical education in the recent past, and standards fell in these subjects. Now that good specialists are once again teaching the pupils, standards are rising and achievement improving. In business education and ICT examination courses in Key Stage 4, a little teaching is still being done by non-specialists, with a consequent lack of continuity or challenge, which is depressing standards and achievement.
22. Teachers' planning is very thorough. This is a direct consequence of the training teachers have had on providing suitable material to meet the preferred learning styles of pupils. Often, as in science lessons, pupils are grouped according to their learning styles. However, this does sometimes take precedence over the checking of scientific skill acquisition, such as making a fair test.

23. Teachers' expectations are very high and there is some exceptional teaching in many areas, such as design and technology in the evaluation of chocolate bars. In drama, outstanding practice was seen in a Year 10 lesson on the interpretation of a scene from Romeo and Juliet, which demonstrated the teacher's extremely high expectations and excellent subject knowledge.
24. Teaching methods are often innovative and inspire pupils to succeed. These, too, make use of the teachers' training and are aimed at meeting the learning needs of all pupils in a class. The new interactive whiteboards, for example, although only in place in most subjects immediately prior to the inspection, proved inspirational to some teachers. Very good use was seen being made of them, especially in geography, design and technology, mathematics, science and modern languages. This motivates pupils who are eager to use the new technology and is preparing them very well for their participation in the e-learning environment which is being prepared in the new school.
25. Many pupils are learning how to work independently by using ICT and this also is good preparation for their new school. Some teachers set homework as 'independent learning tasks' but homework observed in pupils' books and being set in lessons was not often challenging enough to stretch their capabilities. There was too much catching up or finishing off.
26. Assessment is good. The school has a thorough programme of monitoring, assessment and review, which is used throughout, albeit not consistently, all departments. The school keeps a wealth of data pertaining to pupils' progress with frequent testing to add to performance data from external examinations. This is available to all staff, but some departments make better use of it than others. Assessment procedures are very good and very well used in mathematics, geography, modern languages and drama. In English, they are very good in the sixth form and good in the rest of the school. In art and history they are good. They are satisfactory in physical education and citizenship. Assessment has been lacking in business studies due to the absence of the head of department, who is the main teacher. Although formative and summative assessment are often done well, enabling pupils to have a good idea of their longer term targets, marking is not done frequently enough and does not give sufficient guidance on how to improve.

Sixth form

27. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and has similar strengths to those seen in the rest of the school; the very good expertise of teachers, very high expectations and some innovative teaching methods ensure that students make very good progress in most subjects. As is the case overall in the school, there is evidence of recently improved and improving teaching in several subjects, and in the sixth form overall achievement has not yet caught up the quality of teaching. This is the reason that teaching is as yet better than achievement. Relationships are excellent; students want to learn and most have confidence in their teachers. There is outstanding teaching in media studies, but in economics and business studies, it is satisfactory. Assessment in the sixth form is very good in all the subjects inspected, except for economics and business studies, where it is satisfactory.

The curriculum

The quality and range of the curriculum are good. Opportunities for enrichment are very good because of the very comprehensive range of activities the school offers. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory because of the poor nature of much of the existing accommodation.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The personal, social and health education programme makes a significant contribution to pupils' general education and personal development.

- Extensive enrichment is provided in music, modern languages, English and outdoor education pursuits.
- Preparation for e-learning is very good.
- The present accommodation is sub-standard. It is cramped and badly maintained.
- The range of learning opportunities in Key Stage 4 is wide.
- The match of teachers to the curriculum is satisfactory although there are some weaknesses in ICT, art and business education.

Commentary

28. The overall quality of curriculum provision is good and has improved in most areas since the previous inspection. The breadth of the Key Stage 3 curriculum is good overall and provision for ICT has improved. There is, however, no drama and some pupils do not study a language until Year 8, because they are taking extra literacy and numeracy; they have been formally exempted from the statutory requirement. Nevertheless, the range of three languages offered to most pupils remains an overall strength. Provision for citizenship is good and this subject is developing rapidly. The curriculum for Key Stage 4 is planned well with a wide range of learning opportunities to suit pupils' needs: it includes drama, three languages, and two applied vocational courses, and some pupils are steered towards applied ICT or applied business rather than having an open choice of option. Drama is introduced as an option in Year 10 and mathematics and science are set together to allow for flexibility of grouping.
29. Planning for personal, social and health education is very good. Some topics are taught in science and religious education, others in social studies. The central themes of self-awareness, self-esteem and relationships are also developed through the school's enrichment activities: teambuilding residential weekends, community days, mentoring arrangements and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Outside speakers usefully contribute to the health and safety and careers curriculum.
30. Individual education plans (IEPs) are prepared appropriately for pupils with special educational needs, but some have too many targets which cannot be assessed accurately. The formal and informal monitoring of IEPs is satisfactory. Formal arrangements are good, but subject teachers are not regularly involved. The provision in statements is implemented well. Overall, given the limited numbers of pupils with special educational needs, the school's curricular response is good. Inclusion of all pupils is very good. On the present site, it is impossible to provide adequate facilities for any disabled pupils, but plans for the new school provide for a spacious and stimulating learning environment that meets the needs of all pupils.
31. All of the statutory issues raised in the previous report have been dealt with satisfactorily. There are some timetabling problems to be resolved. Some subjects are taught twice on the same day and sometimes a double lesson is timetabled in two different rooms. This causes certain disruption to learning, but pupils' achievement is not noticeably affected.
32. The initial arrangements and preparations for developing e-learning are very good with two departments - geography and religious education - demonstrating very good practice. Training is shortly to be provided for all staff by 12 'champions' amongst the staff who have already been trained. Good use is already made of the interactive whiteboards to extend the range of the curriculum material and the resulting quality of pupils' learning.
33. The opportunities for enrichment are very good. There is an extensive extra-curricular programme for pupils. Although they come from a very wide area, their participation rate is good. Very many pupils take up music and drama and the recent production of *Jesus Christ, Super Star* involved over one hundred of them. There are plenty of visits and trips including one to the Globe theatre, study visits to France, Germany and Spain and a history trip to the National Army Museum in London. In addition, there is a wide range of sports activities led by many staff including the head teacher and caretaking staff. All year groups experience a community day and also have an extended weekend at a residential centre to experience a

wide range of outdoor education activities. The combination of these activities contributes strongly to the excellent ethos of the school.

34. Staffing is good in the school. The match of teachers to the curriculum is satisfactory; although there are some weaknesses in the ICT department. In art, there are no experienced staff and all lessons in business education are currently covered by temporary staff. In these areas there are some difficulties in recruiting suitable teachers. There are sufficient numbers of teachers in the other areas and they have a range of expertise that covers the curriculum. The match of the learning support staff to the curriculum is satisfactory. The national initiative to lessen teachers' workload is being implemented effectively, with administrative staff taking over some of the teachers' tasks: collecting money for trips, for example, is now managed by the bursar and his assistant.
35. The school's present accommodation is seriously deficient. The environment is generally not stimulating. The buildings are in poor decorative order. Some subject areas do not celebrate pupils' work by displaying it attractively. The library is small and very cramped, and is often used as a teaching space, which is not conducive to independent study. It is particularly restrictive for the sixth form, who have no facilities for ICT in their accommodation.
36. Resources across the curriculum that directly aid pupils' learning are satisfactory and have generally been updated and maintained since the previous inspection. The quality and quantity of library book provision is very poor. There are sufficient ICT resources across the curriculum. All teachers have access to laptop computers and there are currently eleven interactive whiteboards which are making a significant contribution to teaching and learning. Overall, resources are tuned to pupils needs and help them achieve specific competencies such that there are no barriers to learning.

Sixth form

37. The quality of the curriculum in the sixth form is good. The very wide range of academic A-level courses is a well considered response to the aspirations of students, the wishes of the community and the requirements of the funding body. There are some vocational courses and a good 14 - 19 curriculum pathway in ICT. A few students follow a combination of academic and vocational courses, well adapted to their needs. All courses enjoy parity of esteem whatever the level of study. An accredited course of critical thinking is held to be important to students' academic success, and this is combined effectively with the key skills of numeracy, communication and ICT to support the learning all students.
38. Provision for recreational sport is unsatisfactory, with girls poorly served, particularly in winter when basketball is the only option. Extracurricular drama is of excellent quality. Despite considerable discussion, there is still no curriculum policy. Monitoring, devolved to academic departments, is a significant weakness as it does not allow for a strategic overview. Since the previous inspection, the number of courses has increased considerably in line with the development of the sixth form.
39. The isolation of the current sixth form and its poor ICT facilities do not make it easy for students to study independently in the sixth form centre or to assume leadership roles. Although the school will be moving to brand new premises in September, no account has been taken of the current Year 13 students, who are expected to spend their final year in a bleak centre that is unkempt, manifestly demonstrated by the very poor state of the common room with its broken furniture and tattered carpeting, the lack of wall display, and the graffiti in the toilets, which, although clean, are not regularly supplied with soap.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are very good. Teachers and the support staff know the pupils very well. Pastoral and academic monitoring procedures are highly

effective in ensuring good support and guidance. The school seeks and respects the views of pupils well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships throughout the school are extremely positive, based on respect and care.
- The transition and induction arrangements for pupils joining the school from other schools are exemplary.
- The school positively seeks, values and acts on the views of pupils.
- The school's good monitoring of pupils' personal development ensures that their interests are promoted and safeguarded.
- Careers education is still under development and needs to be more differentiated to suit the needs of the whole pupil population.

Commentary

40. St Paul's is a small, caring college where pupils are well known by tutors and heads of year and their individual needs recognised. All pupils are made welcome and valued. They feel that there is a sympathetic adult to whom they can turn. Relationships throughout the school are outstanding. The school promotes the development of the pupils' self-esteem and self-awareness. Procedures for the protection of pupils in conjunction with the county's child protection agencies are effective, and all staff receive training.
41. The induction arrangements for pupils from primary schools are highly praised by both parents and their children, who settle well and are very happy at the school. They appreciate the encouragement and guidance that the teachers give them and grow in self-awareness and confidence as they proceed through the school. The pastoral team works closely with tutors and parents to ensure that all pupils who are having academic or personal difficulties are supported and guided well. The careers education programme is currently being reshaped to meet the needs of all the pupils better, particularly those who do not intend to carry on into higher education.
42. Overall identification, assessment, monitoring and accompanying review and target setting arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. These pupils benefit from some very good school systems but the department's arrangements are not always linked clearly to the school's arrangements, for example in the case of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs.
43. Pupils are encouraged to contribute their views on school issues in a number of forums, and they report that the school listens to and acts upon their suggestions, including school uniform and improvements to websites. The school council is well established. It is fully representative and pupils of all ages take their responsibilities seriously and contribute well to discussions. The council is at present chaired by a member of staff, which misses an opportunity for encouraging greater pupil responsibility.

Sixth form

44. The quality of personal support and guidance that the school provides for students in the sixth form is very good. Students, and their parents, receive a good standard induction in the sixth form, which helps family confidence and gets things off to a good start. Students value the rapport they have with their teachers and the one-to-one support provided, which they acknowledge contributes to their achievement. Where there is a problem, for example with poor attendance, students enter into sixth form contracts with clear objectives designed to lead to improvement. Tutors provide strong pastoral support, know their students well and are sensitive to their needs. The excellent relationships between students and teachers give students confidence to raise any concerns they may have. Information about the support provided by external agencies is also made available. Careers guidance is not structured.

Students are given some advice from Connexions, but they are expected to find out information for themselves and there is insufficient co-ordination by school staff.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are very good. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is held in high regard by the parents.
- Information to parents is excellent.
- The school consults parents and involves them in issues concerning their children.
- The school has extensive and productive links with other schools and colleges.
- Not enough sixth form students are involved in the local community.

Commentary

45. The school involves and consults parents on school developments – including the plans for the new school – and keeps them very well informed about their children's progress. The exception is ICT where achievement is not reported in all year interim reports. Parents particularly value the regular communication via the college website. There are frequent opportunities, both formal and informal, to talk to teachers; the consultative evenings and other college events, including the Year 11 monitoring interviews, are very well attended. The pupils' planners provide a further opportunity for a dialogue between school and home, though their use is uneven.
46. The school works very well with parents of pupils with special educational needs. They are encouraged to co-operate in reviews of progress and to help with their children's learning.
47. There are good links with the community, both the wider Catholic community and local businesses, which enhance the educational provision. Pupils undertake work experience in the locality and visit the local hospice and a special school where they give a Christmas carol concert. There is a good range of visits to theatres, concerts and arts festivals.
48. The school is part of a number of school and college networks – Central Sussex secondary schools, regional diocesan schools, an independent/state partnership, a federation with a local further education college, and its feeder primary schools. These networks have been productive both in exchanges of ideas and best practice, and also arrangements for sixth form students to take minority subjects at other institutions. Links with the feeder primary schools are strong, which results in the excellent transition arrangements. A number of subjects also have good curricular links, particularly those that have advanced study teachers who carry out their role of working with local schools very well.

Sixth form

49. Communication and links with parents continue to be very effective in the sixth form. There are adequate links with the local community, particularly in the provision of work shadowing placements for those interested in the professions. Some sixth form students do voluntary work in the local community. All undertake a week's work experience in Year 12 which they arrange themselves. However, they do not work within the school community, such as in attachment to forms lower down the school, although individual students may take part in the 'Guardian Angels' scheme.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership by the headteacher is very good. He is very well supported by his deputy and the governing body. Overall, leadership, management and governance are good and result in an effective, well-directed school which provides a good education for its pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and his deputy work very well together, and the senior management team gives good support.
- The governing body gives very good support for the headteacher's vision, particularly with respect to the new school.
- There is excellent leadership of design and technology, drama, and modern languages.
- The leadership of English, mathematics, science, geography, history, music and physical education is very good.
- There is no current leadership of business education or art; management is satisfactorily carried out by senior staff.

Commentary

50. Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher is a very good leader with a particular strength in the ability to appoint good new staff with potential for development. His leadership of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the school is outstanding, resulting in an excellent ethos where everyone is valued. The relentless pursuit of high standards are at the heart of the college improvement planning which is very ably led and managed by the deputy head who ensures that subject and pastoral teams all focus on two of the four targets in depth, and use these in their performance management review. The senior management team run their areas of responsibility well but, occasionally, department reviews are not completed quickly enough for effective action to be taken. The management of the introduction to e-learning is very good and is already having significant impact.
51. Governors successfully challenge the school to reach higher standards and improve the quality of provision. They give very good service to the school and governance is good. They have made a major contribution to the leadership of the school through their vision and success in carrying out the funding and planning for the new school. Governors have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ensure that statutory requirements are met and that the school includes all its pupils in all its work.
52. The college improvement plan is a good working document which is regularly reviewed. It reflects the aims of the school and generates improved standards every year in most subjects and an excellent environment for learning. The school's focus on the development of teaching methods to suit the researched learning styles of its pupils is having a very good effect, as shown by the high proportion of very good teaching.
53. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively through classroom observation, departmental reviews and performance management. Senior managers and department heads play an important part in monitoring the quality of teaching in their own and other departments throughout this school. This produces good improvement in most departments but sometimes the results of monitoring and evaluation are not acted upon quickly enough to ensure that standards are maintained. This is currently evident in provision for business education where, despite department reviews, the deterioration in leadership and management precipitated a fall in standards in the subject.
54. The pastoral team leaders are very effective in providing pastoral care and academic guidance, which supports pupils' learning. The headteacher and governors believe firmly in inclusion. They have appointed extra speech, language and psychological support, for example. Currently, two part-time staff share the responsibility for running the provision, but their overall accountabilities for teaching quality and curricular enhancement are limited. Consequently, the success of subject leaders in improving the achievement of pupils with special educational

needs is variable and there is a lack of strategic direction. Future improvement depends upon this issue being addressed.

55. The school uses its performance data well alongside its internal assessments to produce targets to improve pupils' achievement in most subjects, though not effectively in the Key Stage 4 vocational subjects of ICT and business studies. Departments demonstrate progress made by pupils and set higher targets yearly. Governors are attached to departments and monitor performance effectively through presentations and school visits.
56. Procedures for checking how well the school is doing and planning for improvements are good. The school analyses its data from examinations and tests carefully, using suitable systems to assess and predict achievement. The outcomes of these procedures are valuable, as seen in the good performances in external examinations. The successful implementation of the system of performance management has helped to improve teachers' use of assessment to track pupils' academic progress. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are generally effective in sharing good practice and identifying areas for development but there is scope for improvement in some subjects. The professional development of teachers increasingly reflects the priorities of the school and departmental improvement plans and the needs reported in the reviews of teachers' performances. A good programme of induction enables new and newly qualified teachers to settle in quickly to the school's routines.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2291539	Balance from previous year	93000
Total expenditure	2241171	Balance carried forward to the next	143368
Expenditure per pupil	3112		

57. Financial management is very good. The headteacher and governors budget systematically for all expenditure, based on the priorities of the college improvement plan. The governors have been particularly effective in funding the new school and the resources it needs, managing the delegated capital very effectively. A large surplus has built up over the years which has now wisely almost all been allocated to provide resources for the new school. The headteacher, governors, senior and subject managers have been far-sighted in their decision that the new school will be a virtual learning environment. They have carefully funded the staff training and purchase of resources which is already having a very good effect in several subjects.
58. Day-to-day financial management is very good; all the minor recommendations of the latest audit report have been completed. The school works very efficiently and strives for the best value in all its work. It gives good value for money.

Sixth form

59. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Strengths lie in the team work between the head of sixth form and her deputy who work well together. Although academic and pastoral provision are good overall, these aspects lack strategic overview for a sixth form that is due to expand rapidly in the impending move to the new school. A review has been carried out and there is a newly-devised development plan, but there is still insufficient attention to the corporate identity of the sixth form and the role of its students as the most senior members of the school. They have some opportunity to take responsibility, but this is left more to volunteers than to policy.
60. Whilst the head and deputy head of sixth form monitor students' work and progress by sampling, the monitoring and evaluating of teaching, learning and curriculum is left to subject departments and the senior management team of the school, so this aspect also lacks

strategic overview by the sixth form management. Curricular enrichment is good but does not include as much preparation for careers and university entrance as that found in most schools.

61. Although several subjects currently run with very small numbers, this is to ensure that provision is kept up to provide for next year's increase in numbers. This is cost-effective because so little has been spent on the sixth form facilities recently.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English, French and German were inspected in full.

Spanish was sampled. In the 2003 GCSE Spanish examination, the 18 candidates attained average standards. Teaching and learning seen was very good in Key Stage 3 and excellent in Key Stage 4. The leadership of the subject is excellent.

Example of outstanding practice

An introduction to talking about school subjects, using new technology. A Year 8 Spanish lesson, 30 beginners.

The five-minute warm-up consists of mock telephone calls about personal details, using a toy phone, which is passed around the class. The teacher uses symbols, some animated, on the electronic whiteboard to present the school subjects, without using English. The pupils quickly learn to pronounce the words through choral and individual repetition. Languages and sciences are learned first. The words and symbols are displayed and pupils have one minute to link them. The pupil who finishes first is allowed to operate the electronic whiteboard, which links each word to its symbol as she taps it. It is like magic! Other subjects are learned in the same way, 18 in all. At least half the class gets a turn to operate the technology. The teacher uses mime and facial expressions to add clarity. A challenging native speed recording of children talking about subjects is linked to the display. The correct version of the (multiple choice) answers is confirmed on the animated display, operated by pupils. Finally they link the phrases *me gusta/ no me gusta* to the new vocabulary, and play a game using two ticking time-bombs – say you like/dislike a subject and pass it on before it explodes. The class has huge fun and learns a great deal. The technology enhances the learning, allowing the teacher to present the new material excitingly and extremely professionally, obviating the need to fumble with flash-cards, hand out worksheets, or rewind tapes.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject leadership is good, and teachers work well as a team; management is good.
- Teachers involve pupils well in lessons, creating positive working relationships.
- Pupils achieve very well in Key Stage 4 lessons because of very good teaching.
- Best practice in assessment and target setting could be further developed.
- Written work is not challenging enough in Key Stage 3, particularly for higher ability pupils.

Commentary

62. Year 9 National Curriculum test results in 2003 were well above average, but in line with the average for similar schools. Standards have risen significantly since the previous inspection. Results were still better in 2002. Results at GCSE in 2003 were also well above national averages, both in English and English Literature, as they have been consistently in recent years. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was well above average for similar schools. Boys did much better than other boys nationally in the literature examination and the gap between their performance and that of girls is not as great as that seen nationally.
63. Current standards of work are above average in Year 9. Pupils entered the school with average attainment and are achieving well. Most are good readers. An interest in wider reading is encouraged well in lessons. Pupils adapt their writing for different purposes and make a good effort to develop ideas, for example using imagery and sensory detail well in descriptions. Errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation hold back overall standards for many average and

lower ability pupils, however. Achievement is good, though standards are not as high as last year's test results would indicate. This is partly explained by differences in the profile of attainment in the year group, but there could be more challenge in written work expected, particularly for higher ability pupils. Homework is not used regularly enough to develop extended writing throughout Key Stage 3. However, work for this year's tests is still to be completed and a range of booster classes and study support sessions are planned which clearly helped targeted pupils in their final preparations last year. Information and communication technology is used well to help pupils improve the presentation of written work and standards of accuracy. In one Year 9 lesson, pupils were enthusiastic about plans to publish newspaper reports they had written, including the use of their own digital photography to create authentic front page articles.

64. Teachers have high expectations for GCSE work, and standards are well above average by the end of Year 11. Pupils achieve well, and are well motivated by the demands of coursework essays. Extended personal and creative writing is well structured and expressive. Higher ability pupils also write intelligently about literature studied. Essays are developed in sufficient depth, with good use of textual detail to support arguments. Very good practice was seen in one Year 10 lesson to develop analytical, close reading skills when interpreting use of language and imagery in poems by Seamus Heaney and Danny Abse. Speaking is well above average throughout the school. Pupils give reasoned answers to teachers' questions and make constructive contributions to informal paired and small group discussions. They listen very well to teachers and their peers. Pupils with special educational needs make equal progress alongside their peers. Teaching assistants provide effective support.
65. Teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4 and pupils achieved very well during the inspection. Teachers manage pupils very well, and positive relationships are formed. They know their subject well and the best lessons are suitably varied, with a range of methods and resources used to engage pupils actively. As a result, pupils' learning is very good overall during their time in the school. They acquire skills and knowledge well. Most try hard to improve their work. There is good practice in the assessment of pupils' work and setting targets for improvement. It could be applied more consistently, however, and be further developed to focus pupils' efforts still more clearly. Achievement is limited in some lessons when teachers do not judge pace and timing well. Too many activities may be planned so that effort is rushed and there is not enough time to evaluate learning in final plenary sessions.
66. The head of department leads the subject well, showing a very strong commitment to further improving standards. She provides an excellent role model in her enthusiasm for teaching. Management is good. Subject planning is well organised and kept under continuing review. The programme of lesson observations, and checking of work set, could be more systematic, however. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards are higher, and the range of teaching methods is more innovative.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

67. Literacy is above average across the school. Effective practice to promote good standards of speaking and listening was seen in many subjects, especially through sharing ideas in informal group discussions. Reading is also well developed by coming to terms with a variety of texts, with an increasing focus on analytical and evaluative skills in English, design and technology and geography. Internet research is used constructively in design and technology, ICT and art. Pupils write regularly for different purposes. Factual note making and analytical report writing are required in most subjects. Whilst pupils have greater opportunities to produce more extended writing in a range of subjects in Key Stage 4, there could be more emphasis on this aspect throughout the school, particularly in science, ICT and music. Teaching of grammar and use of dictionaries feature strongly in French and English. Key words for subjects are also displayed in many classrooms, including physical education, mathematics and music, though their use is not always reinforced within lessons. Writing frames to help pupils develop and structure written work effectively are used to good effect in mathematics, history and

geography. There are also literacy catch-up sessions for pupils who need them in Years 7 and 8. These are particularly imaginative and effective, using a range of techniques to build confidence and help pupils improve.

68. There is currently no overall co-ordination of work to improve the teaching of literacy throughout the school, and no recent training for staff as a whole has taken place. Best practice is therefore not fully consistent. If standards are to improve further, it will be important to develop staff guidelines and begin systematic monitoring to ensure, for example, that spelling and grammar mistakes are marked consistently.

French and German

Provision in French and German is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is excellent and sets challenging targets for improvement.
- There is a strong team of committed teachers.
- Standards are rising as a result of very good teaching.
- Most pupils achieve very well, having started all foreign languages with no prior experience, but some higher ability pupils underachieve.

Commentary

69. French and German are currently the main languages offered. Spanish is currently offered as a second modern foreign language, and is a popular choice in Year 8. From September 2004, it will be one of the two main languages studied in Year 7. Pupils start all foreign languages with no prior experience, and make rapid progress. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were above average in German. In French they were well above average, but there were comparatively few higher grades. Some higher ability pupils underachieved. Standards in Key Stage 3 are above average in both languages. Pupils' writing is well above average. Overall, their achievement is very good in both German and French. Pupils with special educational needs and those of lower ability achieve very well. However, some higher ability pupils in mixed ability classes do not achieve as well as they should. In Key Stage 4, pupils achieve very well in French and attain well above average standards. Those studying German also achieve well and attain above average standards, though they speak less well than they write.
70. Teaching and learning are very good in both languages in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4, they are very good in German and excellent in French. The department's distinctive style of teaching reflects the exemplary way in which teachers work as a team and share good practice. Lesson planning is excellent. Teachers make very effective use of materials, many self-created. They use the newly acquired electronic whiteboard particularly effectively, and this has added an extra, exciting dimension to lessons. Teachers make good use of ICT, where possible, to enhance pupils' learning, for instance in homework tasks. Lessons are conducted almost entirely in the foreign language. To ensure that meaning is always clear, teachers make skilful use of facial expressions, mime, gesture and tone of voice, to support pupils' understanding. Games enliven lessons still further, and are often used as a way of checking the depth of new learning. Teachers ensure that every pupil takes a full part in lessons. They provide opportunities for pupils to be creative with the language they learn. Their marking is always thorough and helpful. Reports home to parents are of very high quality.
71. The leadership is excellent, has a clear vision for the future development of the department, and sets challenging targets. The department is very well managed. Assessment procedures are very effective, as is monitoring of classroom teaching. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall; pupils' progress is thoroughly recorded.
- Leadership and management are very good in promoting a strong work ethic, positive attitude and excellent relationships within the department.
- The rapidly improving use of the inter-active whiteboard to support teaching and learning is a strength of the department.

Commentary

72. Standards in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2003 were well above average compared with all schools and very high compared with similar schools. The results represent an improvement in standards over those seen at the previous year and are significantly better than the improving national trend, with boys performing equally as well as girls. Standards in GCSE mathematics in 2003 were well above the national average and very high compared to prior attainment by the same pupils when they were in Year 9, with a significant proportion achieving the highest grades. Current standards of work seen in mathematics across the school are well above national expectations and pupils' achievement overall is very good.
73. Teaching and learning are very good in Key Stage 3. Teachers' good command of the subject is evident in their detailed planning, teaching methods and explanations. Their questioning constantly challenges pupils' thinking and understanding; often there is a good balance between theory and practice. They have high expectations of their pupils. Very good use is made of the inter-active whiteboards to develop new concepts and improve the pace of lessons. Year 9 pupils, for example, investigated the properties of linear functions through inspection of their graphs leading to an appreciation of the intercept and gradient for the general solution. Teaching methods are effective and innovative with pupils sometimes performing better than expected because of their excellent attitude to the subject, their ability to work independently and collaboratively and ambition to do well. Pupils benefit from the 'quick-fire' questions often linked to the main learning objective as part of the National Numeracy Strategy. However, use of the end of lesson review is underdeveloped. The absence of key words and statements in lower ability pupils' records undermines their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. Homework is set regularly and marked up-to-date though the frequency of supportive annotations to aid learning is inconsistent. Opportunities to increase pupil involvement at 'self-assessment' needs to be explored further. All pupils are included in lessons, though the occasion to extend the gifted and talented pupil is sometimes overlooked.
74. Teaching and learning are very good in Key Stage 4. Teaching continues to be effective and innovative, including revision lessons making very good use of ICT. Teachers are successful in encouraging and engaging pupils in their work which reflects their own interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Work is often intellectually demanding, deepening understanding making very good use of previously taught skills. Year 11 pupils, for example, were comparing similar figures in terms of their lengths, areas and volumes using ratio and proportion. Teachers were observed addressing directly pupils' misunderstanding of new and old ideas before proceeding further. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Pupils' application and productivity is very good. Their presentation of work is very good and is an aid to review and revision. Procedures for assessment are very good and pupils are aware of their GCSE target grades and what to do to improve.
75. Leadership and management are very good. Improvement has been good: issues raised at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and standards have improved significantly with clear vision for further improvement. The National Numeracy Strategy is well in

place and sharing good practice is a feature of the department. An effective, hard-working and committed team of subject specialists has been established. As a result the department demonstrates considerable competence and inventiveness using the new inter-active whiteboards supporting very well the school's intention to introduce e-learning. Monitoring and evaluation procedures of department policy and practice are ongoing. Department documentation is very good and a real aid to curriculum development: record keeping, monitoring performance data, reviewing patterns, and taking action. The quantity and quality of displays requires improvement so that the learning environment is organised, stimulating and enriching. Library book provision is very poor.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well in mathematics lessons and other departments have systematically planned for the development of numeracy. In design and technology, science and geography, schemes of work identify what pupils are likely to know, understand and can do in mathematical terms. There are particular strengths in shape, space and measurement, and handling data. Number skills are particularly strong without pupils having to rely on the use of the calculator. Overall, the contribution of lessons to mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory with respect to the arts and very good with respect to the sciences. Numeracy is included in the College Improvement Plan though no school policy is in place. In-service training on raising awareness has taken place and an audit of numeracy is complete. Systems for monitoring and evaluating current practice are at an early stage. Arrangements for the lower ability pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, are underway. Currently, pupils' skills are developed sufficiently in departments to ensure all have full access to the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management of the department contribute well to raising standards.
- The very good teaching in Key Stage 4 helps pupils to achieve very well.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and good behaviour enhances their learning.
- Pupils' investigative skills are not as good as their scientific knowledge and understanding.
- Marking does not always show pupils how to improve their work.

Commentary

77. In 2003, results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average and achievement high compared with their prior attainment at the age of 11. The results indicate very good achievement and standards have been steadily rising. The dual award results at GCSE were well above average, but the number of pupils achieving A*-C fell slightly in 2003. Boys' performance was better than girls' both in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. Overall, standards in both key stages have improved since the previous inspection.
78. Standards are currently above average by Year 9 and represent good achievement because these particular pupils entered the school with average attainment. The department is now providing useful study guides and is improving its pre-test preparation programme to prepare students better and to gain more of the highest levels. In Key Stage 3, most average and lower ability pupils and those with special needs make at least good progress. They have a good knowledge of the science of life and living processes and an appropriate understanding of materials and their properties, and of physical processes. However, in many classes, a small proportion of the highest ability pupils are underachieving. Teachers pitch the work to suit the

needs of the rest of the class and do not always provide work of sufficient challenge and difficulty for all pupils. There are relatively few opportunities for them to research appropriate information, think critically about it and produce original extended writing. Consequently, they sometimes give answers lacking depth and understanding and do not apply their knowledge well enough.

79. In Key Stage 4, standards improve further and are well above average. This reflects the very good achievement since they entered school as a result both of the very good teaching and of pupils' commitment to their work. Searching questioning by teachers, and stimulating discussion, develops pupils' ability to relate their factual knowledge to a deeper understanding of underlying principles. This was seen in a Year 11 class where pupils were evaluating the methods scientists use to discover whether there is life elsewhere in the universe. In the best lessons, pupils are beginning to manipulate abstract ideas capably and relate learning in science to their own experience. Ideas are explained clearly, but some teaching follows examination requirements too closely.
80. Overall, pupils' skills in scientific enquiry are not as good as their knowledge and understanding of science. They have many opportunities to experience practical work, but more often than not, these require them to follow lists of instructions rather than designing, planning and carrying out their own practical investigations.
81. Teaching and learning are good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. Teachers use their very good knowledge of the subject to engage pupils' active interest and to ensure that learning takes place progressively and at a good pace. The best lessons have a well-planned and structured range of stimulating activities that engross pupils in work and motivate them well. Teachers' very high expectations and the level of challenge offered helps pupils grasp new ideas quickly and make very good progress in lessons. Very good use of resources and ICT, including projectors and the interactive whiteboard, enable teachers to provide further support and encouragement for pupils' learning. In Key Stage 3, when teaching is occasionally only satisfactory, the lessons are more ponderous; pupils have few opportunities to think for themselves and the usual crispness in lessons is missing. Pupils' attitudes are almost always very good. Even when the teaching is only satisfactory, they get the most out of lessons because of their desire to learn. Teachers provide many activities for pupils to practise and develop their well above average numeracy skills to support their learning in science. Pupils' literacy and ICT skills are above average. Although teachers generally mark pupils' books and folders regularly, they do not consistently provide evaluative comments to show them how to improve.
82. Leadership and management are very good and enable teachers to work closely together. As a result, all staff share a commitment to improving pupils' standards in science further. There has been very good progress on issues from the previous inspection. However, the need remains to further develop pupils' investigative skills, particularly in Key Stage 3, where they are weakest. Although assessment has improved, monitoring needs to be more rigorous to ensure that all pupils know exactly how to improve their work and that appropriate provision is made for pupils of highest ability. The technician provides good support to the teaching of science, but the hours available are low for a school of this size.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' skills and use of ICT across the curriculum are good, and the school is preparing pupils well for e-learning.
- Good resources and accommodation provide good conditions for learning.

- Pupils show very good attitudes to the subject, but there are too few opportunities for them to work independently.
- The frequency and quality of marking and assessment needs to be improved.

Commentary

83. This is an improving department with the development of e-learning and significant improvements already made to work in Key Stage 3. However, the overall provision for examination courses is still unsatisfactory and this causes some underachievement in Key Stage 4. Results in the Key Skills Course in 2003 were below the national average. Standards in Year 9 are above average and achievement is satisfactory given that pupils already have above average standards when they enter the school at the start of Year 7. In specialist ICT lessons, pupils in Key Stage 3 maintain above average skills in desktop publishing, use specialist software to present information to an audience, and use digital cameras and scanners as well as the Internet to research information. They use spreadsheets and databases successfully. There are too few opportunities for pupils to work independently to raise their overall level of achievement. They have limited opportunities to cover the thinking processes of analysis, planning the implementation of their work or writing an evaluation about the work they have done.
84. Pupils following examination courses in Key Stage 4 are working below expectation for their age on both the Key Skills and Vocational GCSE courses. Achievement overall is unsatisfactory on the examination courses though not in core ICT. Although there is evidence of improvement in the quality of pupils' folders and test results for the Key Skills course, there is still much work to be done in order to reach satisfactory standards overall. The first group to be entered for the Vocational GCSE will be in the summer of 2004. Pupils are working below national expectations and some of the folders seen were disorganised.
85. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout the school. Learning in Key Stage 4 has suffered from staffing difficulties, which has resulted in non-specialist teaching on the Vocational GCSE course. Specialist teachers know the subject well, and provide a range of planned tasks that actively involves the pupils. They support pupils individually in lessons although the range of strategies they use to meet their individual learning needs - particularly those of higher ability - is too limited. This often results in some pupils waiting for the next piece of work when others have not finished. In Key Stage 4, teachers structure some of the work to enable pupils to follow the guidelines of the examination mark scheme, although this is an area for development in management when guiding non-specialist teachers. Verbal comments and individual guidance are used well, but some Year 11 folders are completely unmarked. Teachers encourage co-operation in lessons and this leads to very positive attitudes. Pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn. In the lessons seen, teachers made good use of the interactive whiteboards, which are now having a good impact on pupils' involvement in their learning.
86. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The school has invested well to increase the computer resources and this is having a good impact on learning. The ratio of pupils per computer is now better than the national average. However, systems for marking, assessment and target setting need to be more effective and consistent across the department in order to support pupils more effectively in raising their achievement. There is an imaginative vision for developing the use of ICT within the new school. The significant increase in the quality of resources and planning has brought about satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

87. The use of ICT in all subjects across the curriculum is good overall. There are examples of very good work in mathematics, religious education, geography and design and technology. Good use was seen in modern foreign languages, physical education, and English. In all these subjects, pupils experience a good range of opportunities to use desktop publishing, digital

cameras and scanners to capture information. They use the Internet for research in most subjects and cover aspects of computer-aided design and control in design and technology. However, the use of ICT in art and with pupils who have special educational needs is underdeveloped. Where interactive whiteboards and data projectors are provided, teachers use them well to develop pupils' conceptual understanding of the work they do and also involve pupils effectively in their own learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good and the subject has made outstanding improvement since the last inspection.
- Pupils' overall achievement is very good because of the high quality of curricular planning and assessment.
- Teaching and learning are very good.

Commentary

88. Results at GCSE have been above average in recent years. There are no significant differences in the standards reached by boys and girls, and the pupils' points scores at GCSE compare favourably with those in other subjects. Currently, standards are above average; improvement since the previous inspection has been excellent.
89. When they arrive in Year 7 pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are average. As a result of a recently introduced imaginative, well organised and taught curriculum, enhanced by very good assessment and target-setting, most pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement. As a result of a new curriculum which contains an effective balance between geographical inquiry, places, patterns, processes and environmental change, pupils learn well and lay a firm foundation for GCSE study.
90. In Key Stage 4, those pupils who opt for the subject achieve well compared to their results in Year 9. This is the product of a carefully selected and organised examination course made more effective by the skilful use of ICT, mathematics and literacy. Pupils produce graphs, tables and writing assignments to illustrate a range of physical, environmental and human topics, such as British farming. Pupils learn well: they know how to undertake a geographical enquiry or piece of fieldwork because of the teachers' planning and organisation.
91. Teaching and learning are very good across the school. Standards of learning are helped by the subject knowledge, confidence and expectations of the department. The curriculum has been organised meticulously and assessment is used very well. Teachers are, therefore, enabled to take good account of pupils' learning needs; they have a clear scheme of work to support them and good fieldwork opportunities. On some occasions, however, they fail to give sufficient attention to the effectiveness of questioning when giving explanations to the class.
92. The subject is both led and managed very well by a most capable head of department. There is a clear link between the overall departmental strategy to improve standards and the structures to support it. Thus meticulous curriculum organisation and assessment of pupils' progress make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. There is an excellent development plan in place to tackle the next priorities and the subject is well placed for even further improvement.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standards reached in the 2003 GCSE examination results were well above national expectation and represent very good achievement.
- Teaching and learning are very good in Key Stage 4.
- There is very good leadership with a very strong emphasis upon further improvement.
- Effective teachers communicate their enthusiasm well to pupils.
- Books of pupils in Key Stage 3 are not always marked regularly, and the marking scheme used fully by the whole staff.

Commentary

93. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are above average. In Year 11, they are well above the national average. In 2003, 95 per cent of pupils secured an A* to C pass at GCSE, which was well above average.
94. The achievement of pupils in Key Stage 3 is good, since they enter the school with average standards in history. They quickly develop their historical understanding through a very good range of learning activities. By Year 9, pupils develop a comprehensive range of historical skills, including the interpretation of primary and secondary data, timelines and causation. They write at length and source analysis is very secure. Achievement in Key Stage 4 is very good because pupils develop a very good understanding of the higher level skills of analysis and evaluation necessary for success in the GCSE examination. Their note-making skills and essay-writing techniques are very good. Use of ICT to extend pupils' research skills is good, particularly in their work on Hitler and the Nazis.
95. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall in Key Stage 3; it is very good in Key Stage 4. A wide variety of learning techniques is used and most lessons have good pace and sufficient challenge for all pupils. There is very good use of the new interactive white board both by staff and pupils. Pupils' involvement in their learning is high; they work very hard in class and make considerable progress. Teachers are enthusiastic and their expectations of pupils are very high. As a consequence, pupils respond very positively to the subject. The pace and the variety of learning activities encourage all pupils to participate well. Those with special educational needs receive good support from teaching assistants and make good progress. The department's own assessments are good and give a clear picture of pupils' progress, but the marking of books is less secure with some work unmarked this term.
96. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good; standards, achievement, teaching and leadership are much stronger. Very effective leadership is dedicated to achieving the highest standards and is reflective and innovative. Management is good because teachers are focused on improvement and change especially for the introduction of e-learning. However, the sharing of the very good teaching practice is not sufficiently robust.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils from Year 7 upwards are very capable at learning independently and this helps them achieve well.
- There is very effective collaboration of an experienced team of teachers under new excellent leadership.
- There is a successful learning partnership using the excellent pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection.
- Not enough attention is given to directing pupils' assessment guidance.
- In a few lessons, the highest ability pupils are insufficiently challenged.

Commentary

97. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average, compared with all schools. Pupils made better progress, especially in resistant materials, than many boys and girls in other West Sussex secondary schools.
98. When they join the school in Year 7, standards in design and technology are average. They achieve well during Key Stage 3, and by the end of Year 9 standards are above average. Pupils respond very well to the challenges they are set and enjoy working independently. They learn to use a range of materials and tools with accuracy. By the end of Year 11 standards are well above average and achievement in Key Stage 4 is good. Pupils' GCSE project work is particularly strong. They are confident in the skills required in designing, communicating their ideas and making high quality products. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, as is behaviour in the design studios. Pupils settle quickly and sustain concentration well throughout most lessons and make a significant contribution to their own learning successes.
99. Teaching and learning are very good in both key stages. In a few lessons seen it was excellent. In most lessons, teachers' expectations are very high and pupils are encouraged to work with a high level of independence, such as in the Year 8 chocolate bar self-evaluation session. The teaching style has been adapted to be more lively and practical in nature. In all practical lessons, as in Year 10 food technology, opportunities are taken to draw the class together to review progress and extend pupils' understanding of the concepts underlying their work. Pupils are very willing to experiment and respond well to the advice they are given. In a few lessons, however, the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers have very good expertise in the industrial context of the topics they teach, and the very successful *green power electric racing car*, which came fifth best in a recent national competition. Pupils' work is assessed thoroughly and teachers are consistent in the standards they expect. As a result, pupils know their targets, but teachers do not always give sufficient attention to written guidance on what pupils need to improve.
100. The content of the curriculum is broad and balanced. Within Key Stage 3, the department teaches computer control with *pic-chip* buggies as part of its whole school contribution to ICT. Pupils display great creativity with their Year 10 design and make point of sale product displays and great attention to careful soldering in the Year 9 AM-radio project. In both key stages pupils all learn computer-aided design and machining as part of a very relevant approach to the curriculum.
101. Leadership and management are excellent. The departmental plan contains appropriate priorities to ensure that standards continue to rise. The head of department's vision for the subject is excellent. She has had a significant and very positive impact on the subject's improvement. The example set through her own teaching, work area monitoring, use of ICT, and school based in-service training has helped all staff to improve design skills and set high standards. The department's teachers work especially well together, share good practice and are given very good support in planning their work and ensuring that assessment is done accurately. A special feature of the staff is their successful strategy to focus on individual learning plans for each pupil. Thus the improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

The curriculum has been successfully developed. Standards have risen and the level of resources has been improved.

Example of outstanding practice

Use of new technology in a Year 9 lesson.

The new interactive whiteboard was used to great effect. Pupils were fascinated to see the new technology in action for the first time. Attention was rapt whilst the teacher explained how a Gantt chart can be used to convey the timeline for the construction processes for their first AM-radio projects. Pupils clamoured to use the system to show their thoughts. Both pupils and the teacher helped solve problems, setting up possible hitches in a very mature and constructive manner. The willingness of all concerned to admit to occasional learning difficulty and yet be receptive to solutions is a strength. This very positive learning ethic is making a strong contribution to the willingness of all to strive for excellence.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and Design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective and improving teaching has arrested the fall in standards.
- Teacher assessment is accurate and sensitive and helps pupils develop their skills and ideas.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory due to the absence of a head of department.
- Provision for ICT is poor and overall resources are not organised to support pupils' research.

Commentary

102. Standards on entry to the school are average and by Year 9, a high proportion of pupils are reaching the nationally expected standard, and some are reaching higher levels, which indicates satisfactory achievement. Standards at GCSE have fallen since the previous inspection and, in 2002, exam results were below the national average. There was some improvement in 2003, but the results in art and design were weak when compared with pupils' success in many other subjects. Inexperienced but highly effective teaching has recently arrested this decline in standards. Consequently, achievement is satisfactory now and standards are average at Key Stage 4. The department has suffered significant and continued turbulence in staffing which has had an impact on the trend of low achievement. The effectiveness of the two newly qualified teachers - the only members of the department - has been very good, and they have made a considerable effort to stabilise pupils' learning, raising standards in the very short time they have worked in the school.
103. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The dynamic, multi-media approach adopted, particularly to collage and drawing, is stimulating pupil creativity. Teachers' subject expertise gives strong support to pupils, especially in Year 11. This subject strength can be seen in confident demonstrations to large classes. Assessment is satisfactory and is accurately and conscientiously applied across the department. Sensitive marking enables pupils to develop their ideas and skills systematically. The atmosphere in studios is purposeful and the very good relationships help to build positive attitudes and to motivate pupils, most of whom are interested, keen and diligent at all times. Behaviour is very good and in lively practical lessons pupils are generally responsible and hardworking. Older pupils display good independent learning skills. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and talented pupils are being increasingly challenged to excel. Resources are not effectively organised, and this hampers pupils' research. Provision for ICT is poor and pupils' ability to apply digital techniques is significantly limited at present. Lesson and unit planning, classroom management and

resource organisation still require some improvement; this is successfully supported through the schools' mentoring programme for newly qualified staff.

104. Leadership is unsatisfactory due to the absence of a head of department, but management is satisfactory through line management and the good work done by new staff. This weakness affects strategic planning, effective resource management and overall efficiency. Schemes of work are not yet properly developed into a coherent plan that ensures clarity of learning objectives, progression, breadth and balance. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory, but the recent efforts of the new staff have stemmed the decline. Standards of low ability pupils in Key Stage 3 have improved, and sketchbooks in Key Stage 4 are now good. Pupils with special educational needs and those with other learning difficulty are making good progress.

Drama

Provision in drama is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- Pupils have exceptional skills in practical performance.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Frequent, highly acclaimed whole school productions are a key strength of the provision.

Commentary

105. GCSE results are well above the national average and keep pace with the rising national trend. Girls do better than boys. Pupils have exceptional skills in practical performance. For current pupils, standards are very high in Year 10 and well above average in Year 11. Pupils in both years make excellent achievement. They act with a sense of commitment and dedication. They have excellent collaborative skills and plan effectively to structure their rehearsal time. Their ensemble work is of very high quality. Pupils perform confidently and achieve as they do primarily because of the teachers' very well focused and constructive evaluation of their work, but also because of their own very well-developed skills of self evaluation. Evaluation of their own and others' performance was an impressive feature of all practical lessons seen.

106. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know their subject well and there is some exceptionally good teaching of practical skills. Teaching is stimulating, enthusiastic and consistently challenging. There is excellent management of classes and groups. Pupils have excellent learning routines and rapidly become engrossed in their work, which helps their learning.

Example of outstanding practice

The focus and intensity of Year 10 pupils' concentration during a lesson showed a group of critical and dedicated actors and theatregoers in the making.

In this lesson, teaching, learning and standards were excellent. The teacher showed first-rate knowledge of the subject and the requirements of the GCSE examination. A brisk start included the imaginative and highly effective tactic of freeze-framing a moment in the play which was being rehearsed. This eased the pupils into rôle as they continued the action the play from then on. Group collaboration in this activity was a high order. The teacher circulated giving constructive evaluation of extremely high quality. Pupils had already acquired exceptionally good learning skills and were well able to keep their focus and concentration as they acted upon this advice, and so made an excellent level of improvement. Pupils showed their work with sensitivity and, above all, intelligence. There was a particularly moving and believable interpretation of character in the presentation of the scene in "Romeo and Juliet" after Tybalt's death and Romeo's banishment. Critical thinking was clearly a strength in the learning process, as pupils were helped, after the performance, to take their evaluations one step further and rank them comparatively, and give their reasons.

107. Leadership and management are excellent. Leadership is inspirational, influential beyond the school. Management encompasses formal monitoring and improvement of all teaching and learning. There is an absolute determination that pupils should and must achieve as much as possible. To that end, the department makes excellent use of unsatisfactory accommodation. Superb opportunities for public performance motivate and enthuse pupils and are a key strength of provision. Drama was not inspected separately last time.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement are good overall.
- The very good leadership and management of the head of department have resulted in very good progress since the previous inspection.
- There is insufficient curriculum time at Key Stage 3 for pupils to develop fully their instrumental skills.

Commentary

108. Teachers' assessments and the standards seen and heard during the inspection indicate that the substantial majority of pupils achieve well, and reach above average standards by the end of Year 9. Pupils use appropriate musical terminology when evaluating their own and other's work. They perform on a range of instruments, including their own, sustaining independent parts in group performances. They create pieces that show an understanding of how the musical elements combine to create intended effects, such as film music. However, the capacity of some average and lower ability pupils at Key Stage 3 to achieve well on keyboards and percussion instruments is limited by the amount of curriculum time. At Key Stage 4, standards are above average and achievement is very good for the pupils following the subject. They improvise over given chord sequences. They perform to a very good standard and show a high level of understanding of music terminology and music styles such as when using the features of Indian classical music to create their own group compositions. Across the school, pupils' have very positive attitudes to music, demonstrating mature responses to practical work and in they respond to and ask questions.

109. Teaching and learning are very good overall. At Key Stage 3, most teaching is at least good, and sometimes excellent. Lessons have clear objectives and are delivered with good pace, enthusiasm and an awareness of learning styles. This helps pupils to gain a good understanding of musical concepts and terminology and to create effective music of their own. For a period in the autumn of 2003, non-specialist teachers took some lessons. Work was not well-matched to pupils' abilities and this limited the progress made by some lower ability pupils. At this stage, the marking of pupils' work was not always effective. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is consistently very good. Clear targets are set. Teacher knowledge is excellent and there are consistently high expectations of pupils and standards. Pupils receive clear guidance in preparing for the GCSE course and this enables them to develop good standards of musical knowledge and to attain high standards of performance and composition. Across the school, relationships are mature and productive. Assessment of practical work is good and pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and that of others. Over 100 pupils are learning to play musical instruments supported by a strong team of instrumental and voice teachers, many from the local authority's music service. Extra-curricular activities, for example a very successful production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, together with links with a local special school and performances in the community, make an important contribution to pupils' learning.

110. Leadership and management of the subject are very good with a clear vision for the future. Effective schemes of work are in place. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good and the quality of leadership and management has had significant impact on raising the profile of music in the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new head of department is giving very good leadership.
- A strong extra-curricular sports programme offers good opportunities for all pupils, particularly the gifted and talented, to extend their learning.
- The present accommodation and facilities are poor.
- Standards have declined since the previous inspection but are now improving because of the new leadership.

Commentary

111. No pupil in 2003 undertook GCSE in physical education. This was a consequence of an unsatisfactory staffing situation in physical education, which has now been successfully resolved. A small group of pupils is preparing to take GCSE in 2004.
112. Pupils arrive at school with below average standards in physical education, which shows their very varied experiences from a larger than usual number of primary schools. By the end of Year 9, standards in games and gymnastics are still below average, but this shows that pupils demonstrate satisfactorily achievement through Key Stage 3. In gymnastics, pupils successfully link simple gymnastic movements into sequences but often the quality of movement is not sufficiently refined. By the end of Year 11 standards are average, which demonstrates that pupils have achieved well during Key Stage 4. They show good close ball control in hockey and football but when placed in competitive situations the skills often not sufficiently robust to be effectively used in a game. Year 11 GCSE theory files show average standards; those of Year 10 pupils show that standards are improving. Teachers and learning support assistants ensure that pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and achieve as well as other pupils. Recent results in inter school fixtures show standards are beginning to improve.
113. Overall, teaching and learning are good; they are satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Teaching has many strengths, not least the good organisation and management of pupils, particularly when examinations prevented the use of the gym. Knowledgeable, enthusiastic and well-planned teaching motivates pupils and demands that lessons have a brisk pace. Teachers apply their knowledge well in lessons. Lesson planning is good, thorough and objectives are shared with pupils. However, planning of the skill development in games needs improving. Where lessons are less than good they are characterised by insufficient pace and challenge. Pupils' attitudes are usually very good and this is reflected in the effort they put into their work. Best learning occurs when pupils are well challenged, as exemplified in a Year 9 rugby lesson where there was an emphasis on tackling.
114. The leadership given by the new head of department is very good. Good management enables the department to run smoothly. Since the previous inspection standards in physical education have declined. The new head of department recognises this and acknowledges that there is much to be done to regain previous levels. A good development plan and schemes of work focus on raising standards, and they provide a vision for the way forward. The present accommodation is poor and has constrained the breadth of activities and development of the physical education programme. During the inspection there was evidence to show good improvement in the department.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies

The provision in business studies is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The links with the business community enable pupils to bring relevance to learning.
- Standards are currently below average and achievement is unsatisfactory because pupils do not receive enough guidance.
- Pupils do not know how well they are doing because work is not well assessed.
- Management is satisfactory.

Commentary

115. Pupils follow either an Applied GCSE course or GCSE Single Award in business studies. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were below average and pupils did less well in business studies compared to their achievement in the other subjects. Few pupils gained A* or A grades. The results were significantly lower than in 2002 due to staffing issues that are now being addressed.
116. By the end of Year 11 the standard that pupils reach in business studies is below average, and well below average on the applied business course. They are currently underachieving. Pupils have knowledge of business terms and make sound use of local companies to bring relevance to learning. They plan visits and prepare questionnaires to investigate the organisation and management of companies. Written work is weak because pupils do not understand what is expected of them and their answers are not well reasoned. Coursework for GCSE is below the expected standard because answers are insufficiently developed and work is incomplete. In the single award course, pupils make good use of ICT to develop assignments, but do not use it enough to research topics. They know about business financial systems and are aware of how companies like *BA* and *Ryanair* manage customer bookings differently, but they are weak in developing answers, particularly in meeting the exam criteria.
117. Overall, teaching is now satisfactory, after a period when the evidence of poor learning indicates that teaching has been poor. Staffing difficulties have resulted in pupils not receiving specialist teaching for an extended period of time and this has led to them making insufficient progress on the GCSE course. Work has not been adequately assessed, so pupils do not know how well they are doing or how they can improve. Consequently morale is low. Nevertheless, the recently appointed specialist teacher is now taking appropriate steps to guide and support learning. The aims of lessons are clear and appropriate emphasis placed on raising coursework standards and meeting the stipulated dates for completion.
118. The head of department is on long term sickness absence. There was no subject documentation available to give information about subject practices. There has been no full-time specialist teaching as the school has been unable to find anyone suitable and free to take up the post. Consequently, the monitoring of pupils' work and record keeping about progress has lapsed. The senior teachers have taken steps to improve the situation and have now appointed a specialist. They have arranged for pupils to have extra teaching and revision periods in order to catch up on work missed. The subject is being managed satisfactorily; there is not enough evidence to judge leadership.
119. Improvement since the previous inspection is poor. Standards are lower and pupils work is not being assessed as well as previously reported.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership, management and teamwork are responsible for the rapid development of citizenship.
- Insufficient time constrains the development of citizenship; pupils' achievement over time is only satisfactory, although in lessons, achievement is good.
- Assessment procedures are insufficient to check effectively the progress that pupils are making in developing the skills of citizenship.
- Teaching and learning are good.

Commentary

120. Pupils join the school with a very wide range of experiences in citizenship and social studies. By the end of each key stage, they reach average standards and have average skills of enquiry and knowledge about becoming informed citizens. The limited time allocated for the subject constrains the development of skills and so achievement is no more than satisfactory at all levels, in spite of good teaching. Year 7 pupils through their sex education course consider worldwide issues like the spread of diseases and from an early stage openly discuss resulting world issues. Pupils from Year 9 onwards show good listening and discussion skills. Many support their views with good reasons. The range of enrichment activities, such as elections for the school council, provides a good forum for all pupils to be involved in a democratic process. Such elections reinforce the subject in a practical way as pupils choose, support and elect representatives, so experiencing the electoral system.
121. Overall, teaching and learning are good. The enthusiastic teachers teach citizenship and social studies. They are very knowledgeable and apply their range of knowledge well, as demonstrated in a Year 9 lesson on world charities, which extended pupils' horizons about the range of charities. However, citizenship and social studies are only taught fortnightly, which acts as a constraint to the development of citizenship skills. Both long term planning and lesson planning is very good; they give coherence and consistency to the subject. This was well exemplified in two different Year 11 lessons on capital punishment and medical ethics. Lessons have good pace and challenge, as exemplified in a lesson on giving either time or money to good causes where pupils were very actively involved in their learning. The very good attitudes and relationships help to underpin learning and ensure that pupils become better-informed citizens. All are fully integrated into lessons and they learn well. They are developing the skills of enquiry and communication, and the skills of participating and taking responsible action as young adults.
122. The citizenship coordinator is giving good clear vision and direction to the subject. She is working successfully with a small team of teachers in the development of the subject. She has, in a very short period of time, given the subject status and recognition. Planning is very good with well laid out schemes of work, which give staff good guidance. Monitoring and assessment of work takes place but needs to be extended. At present, there is insufficient information to monitor progress or judge achievement over time. Citizenship was not a curriculum subject at the time of the previous inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, seven 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
Art and Design	5	60	90	0	42.7	18	39
Biology	7	57.1	81.6	0	33.2	14.3	33.2
Chemistry	7	71.4	84.8	14.3	36.9	21.4	35.2
Communication Studies	5	80	94.2	60	36.1	36	38.5
English Literature	5	60	94.4	20	37.9	26	38.9
Geography	9	66.7	88.3	0	36.4	17.8	36.3
Mathematics	8	87.5	74.2	25	34.3	31.3	31.3
Physics	5	100	82	20	36.2	34	34.3
Religious studies	6	66.7	90.0	0	38.9	25	37.9

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
Biology	13	100	91.6	46.2	36.3	80	74.1
Business studies	11	100	96.4	45.5	32.8	89.1	76.5
Chemistry	9	100	94	22.2	45.9	77.8	81.1
Communication studies	7	100	98.3	85.7	36.8	102.9	81.1
Drama	7	100	98.1	57.1	41.5	91.4	82.9
Design and technology	5	100	95.3	20	35.5	72	76.5
English Literature	16	100	98.5	37.5	43.7	82.5	84.3
Geography	12	100	97.1	33.3	40.5	80	80.9
History	8	100	97.1	62.5	41	102.5	81.2
Mathematics	13	100	93.3	46.2	52.2	78.5	84.7
Other social studies	13	100	94.3	38.5	38.9	80	77.7
Physics	8	100	92.8	50	42.8	82.5	78.6
Sociology	10	100	95.4	40	39.6	76	79.1

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification	% gaining merit	% gaining distinction

		School	England	School	England	School	England
Information Technology VQ	6	100	84.3	0	24.5	64.6	64.3
Travel and tourism	12	100	88.1	0	15.7	61.7	61.4

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature was inspected in full. French and German were sampled. Standards in French are well above average. Teaching and learning seen were excellent. In German, standards are above average; teaching and learning were very good.

English

Provision in English Literature is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subject very well and communicate an enthusiasm for literature.
- Leadership and staff teamwork are very good.
- Students are well motivated and achievement is good.
- Larger numbers of students in Year 12 create additional burdens for teachers.
- Guidelines to promote students' independent learning are not strong enough.

Commentary

123. A-level results were in line with the national average in 2002, and similar in 2003. This year, there was 100 per cent success rate at grades A-E, with some 30 per cent gaining A and B grades. The great majority of students reached or exceeded their target grade in the examination. Results at AS level were just below average in 2002, but improved in 2003. Some students have retaken modules this year, with the hope of further improving their grades.
124. Achievement is good for current students. Most are on track to exceed their target grades. They contribute well to class discussions and are prepared to justify and explain views when challenged. Standards in Year 13 are above average, especially in coursework. Students take the opportunity to reflect on and revise essays, so that final drafts represent their best work. Writing by higher ability students, for example studies of character and motivation in *Othello* and analysis of the modern novel *I'm the King of the Castle* by Susan Hill, is governed by a sensitive personal response and well supported by detailed textual reference. The work of lower ability students shows less capacity to evaluate style and technique, and is sometimes marred by poor expression. Students make good use of word processing skills, however, to present their coursework to a high standard.
125. Teaching was very good during the inspection. Students achieved very well in lessons, which are thoroughly prepared and characterised by positive working relationships between staff and students. A range of imaginative teaching methods is used to create a successful balance between the contributions of teacher and student. Above all, teachers know their subject very well and communicate their own enthusiasm for literature. This clearly enhances students' response to the subject overall. Learning is highly interactive, with many opportunities for whole class and group discussions. Coursework is assessed promptly, with detailed written comments that evaluate achievement constructively against examination grade criteria. Teachers are also prepared to give additional personal help and guidance where it is needed. Larger numbers in the current Year 12 group create pressure on staff time in this respect, however. Teachers expect students to read widely and research topics, but some find the adaptation to sixth form study challenging. Guidelines to promote independent learning could be further developed, particularly to help students at the beginning of Year 12. Opportunities are taken to broaden students' horizons through external visits, however. Year 12 students, for

example, attended a creative writing workshop in the autumn. Visits to the theatre and art exhibitions have supported Year 13 students in their study of the gothic novel.

126. Curriculum leadership of English in the sixth form is very good. Planning for the subject is thorough. Teachers collaborate closely to share good practice and are committed to continuing improvement. In particular, importance is attached to keeping up to date with changes in examination requirements at this level. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards have been maintained following the successful introduction of new A and AS level courses.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is overall very good and students are achieving very well in all lessons.
- Teachers plan lessons well and use their knowledge of the subject effectively.
- Good use is made of ICT.
- The school accommodation is unsatisfactory in providing a regular teaching base where ICT equipment, materials, displays and posters etc., can be concentrated and enhance the quality of learning.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Students work hard and are encouraged to think for themselves.

Commentary

127. In 2003, AS and A level mathematics results were an improvement on the previous year. The proportion of students achieving grades A and B was above the national average in both examinations. All students entered for the examinations achieved a pass grade or better. Students' achievement measured against their performance at GCSE was very good. Current standards in work seen are above average and students are achieving well. Student files are generally well managed with much work included that is often indexed and supported with revision sheets. Year 12 students make good use of their past GCSE work to move into new areas and are well into the course. Good understanding of the rules of algebra and the transformation of formulae, for example, enabled students to investigate graphically various algebraic functions and their inverse using graphic calculators and laptop computers. Students recall knowledge well and apply it confidently in class and in their written work. In a pure mathematics lesson Year 13, students worked collaboratively using a wide range of resources from sugar paper to the inter-active whiteboard to investigate and identify the integral function as the inverse to given differential algebraic and trigonometrical functions, emphasising the good continuity and progression within the scheme of work.
128. Teaching is very good overall; students achieve very well in lessons. Teachers plan well and use their good knowledge and technical competence of the subject effectively. They have high expectations of their students and use innovative methods that engage them well, asking questions that are stimulating, requiring them to think and resolve problems. As a result, students work hard and often contribute as much to lessons as the teacher. There is a good balance between theory, discussion, practice and record keeping. Good use is made of the new inter-active whiteboards to maintain a brisk pace and review past work through 'pages' that demonstrate the conceptual development of topics are at an early stage.
129. Leadership and management are very good. Standards since the previous inspection have been sustained with increasing numbers of students attending. There is a shared commitment to raise standards further and the needs of the higher ability students are being met.

Assessment and marking are well handled and provide positive points for improvement. Teachers are approachable and prepared to give up much of their time outside lessons to provide additional support, which is valued and appreciated by the students. The school accommodation for sixth form courses has some unsatisfactory features, notably the variety of teaching rooms used. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

SCIENCE

Chemistry was inspected in full and physics sampled in three lessons. Biology was not inspected. Teaching in physics was satisfactory in the Year 12 lesson and good in both Year 13 lessons. Teachers showed good expertise and planned lessons very thoroughly, but Year 12 students needed more explanation of the context for their calculations. Students showed good independent practical skills and excellent attitudes to their studies. Achievement is satisfactory. Students are generally doing as well as their prior attainment indicates.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2003, A level results were well above average and represent very good achievement.
- Very good teaching stimulates students and encourages them to learn independently.
- Students' very positive attitudes to the subject contribute well to their learning.
- Insufficient checking of students' written work and lack of attention to improving their skills in note taking limit the progress of those of lower ability.

Commentary

130. In the A-level examinations in 2003, the small number of students entered makes national comparisons inappropriate, but in relation to their GCSE results, students achieved very well. Retention rates are good. The performance of girls was better than that of boys. The AS level results were well below average because an unusually large number of students opted for the course with low entry requirements, and chemistry was their only science subject. Their attainment at GCSE was well below average in general science so their achievement in chemistry has been good.
131. Currently, standards on entry to the sixth form are about average; no student has followed a GCSE chemistry course. Many have insecure basic knowledge and their skills of independent learning are generally weak. However, most achieve well and standards are above average by Year 13. Almost all respond well to teachers' probing questions that encourage them to draw on chemical theory in support of their answers.
132. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieved very well in the lessons seen. Teachers use their good knowledge of the chemistry topics to provide clear demonstrations and explanations. They use practical work very well to illustrate teaching points and to develop students' learning. Students engage fully in the activities, concentrate very well and work productively. Some, however, are reluctant to initiate discussion or challenge concepts. Teachers' expectations are high and a very good rapport ensures that individual students' problems are identified and appropriate help given.
133. The quality and quantity of notes in students' files is very variable. Teachers do not check this aspect sufficiently well, or provide sufficient guidance to lower ability students on how to improve note-taking skills. Analysis of files indicates that higher ability students take a great deal of care over producing high quality notes. These are arranged logically, and in one instance, a card system was in operation to highlight important points for revision purposes. By contrast, other files were very much slimmer and sometimes disorganised.

134. The management of the department is very good. The team works well together, sharing ideas and helping students to overcome difficulties. High standards are promoted and the department is committed to raising standards. Staff keep detailed information about students' performance and use it effectively to provide appropriate support for those having difficulty or are underachieving. Longer term planning for provision for those less scientifically inclined, but who would like to know more about science, are in hand. Resources are satisfactory, but will improve when the school moves. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the previous inspection, and standards at A level, (apart from 2002) have been much higher. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students increase their range of ICT skills well.
- Very good relationships provide very good conditions for learning.
- The suitability of the course for those who have only limited experience in ICT needs reviewing.

Commentary

135. Standards at the end of Year 13 are close to average. In 2003, the number of students gaining A and B grades at AVCE was below average, although the majority of pupils achieved a pass grade. There is clear evidence of improving standards in the work seen during the inspection. The AS-level results in 2003 were below average, largely due to the fact that sixth form students have not done ICT at GCSE. As a result, the course has been challenging for them. Nevertheless, they are achieving well.
136. Although over the two year course students reach broadly average standards, those in Year 12 work exceptionally hard to acquire the basic skills and knowledge required to pass the AS-level examination. They enter the sixth form with below average skills. By the time they do some of the modular examinations, they still lack a broad enough range of knowledge. There is particular emphasis on learning to use the specialist software before they can attempt the required coursework. As a result, there are enormous constraints on time in order to complete the coursework. In Year 13, students are more confident and familiar with a wider range of software and show application of this in a variety of challenging tasks. Coursework for the A-level course is well planned and structured to meet the coursework criteria. Students have good knowledge of using spreadsheets and databases, which they master largely during Year 12.
137. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and they are well organised for lessons. Students benefit from the very structured and specific guidance and support which is well matched to the needs of individuals. Teachers set clear objectives in lessons to guide students with their work. Teachers cover the knowledge to good depth and explain the information well. They use the interactive whiteboard and data projector well, often with deep discussion which disseminates knowledge effectively across the whole group. In Year 13, teachers discuss specific points for development with individual students, which helps to consolidate students' own plans for their coursework. However, there is a need to monitor the progress of coursework assignments more rigorously in order to ensure all students are on target for completion. Most students develop good skills in numeracy to cover work on spreadsheets and gain sufficient understanding of the concepts. Their standard of literacy is good and they complete work to an appropriate level as required for the examination. Teachers establish very good relationships with the students, which create a very good learning ethos.

138. Leadership of the subject is good. The AVCE course is now well established and standards are improving as a result of the good teaching. There is a need, however, to review the prior ICT experience of students when they start the course and also review the suitability of the course for some pupils. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

HUMANITIES

Humanities subjects were not inspected in full, but psychology, sociology and geography were sampled.

139. In geography, the observation of students in lessons and an analysis of samples of their work confirm that the standards of those on AS and A level courses are above average. Since the students start the course with average GCSE attainment, these standards represent good achievement. Students showed good knowledge and skills and a particular strength is their ability to test their hypotheses through conscientious data collection, as seen in the Arran fieldwork. Teachers had high expectations. Year 13 students grasped the characteristic landforms of periglacial processes because of the teacher's knowledgeable, brisk and clear explanation, strengthened by very good follow-up work. On some occasions, however, the teachers failed to give sufficient attention to the effectiveness of questioning when giving explanations to the class.

140. In sociology, standards were above average in AS and A-level classes and achievement was good. Teaching and learning were very good in one lesson seen and outstanding in the other.

141. One lesson in psychology was seen in Year 12 on conformity and obedience. Teaching was very good and used innovative methods to help students focus on key aspects so that they could gain a clear understanding of the article they were studying. Learning was very good as students enjoyed the academic challenge set; discussion was rather teacher-led, however. Standards were above average, and achievement very good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high.
- Achievement is excellent.
- Teaching is excellent overall and outstanding in Year 13.
- Leadership and management are excellent.

Commentary

142. A level results in media studies are consistently very high. Standards of current students in Year 13 are also very high. They have an excellent practical and theoretical knowledge of the stages of production. They have read critical theory widely and identify those suited to inform and evaluate their practical work. Standards of work from students in Year 12 are well above average in their practical and theoretical knowledge of new media techniques.

Example of outstanding practice

A Year 13 lesson promoting very high standards

This planning for this lesson was exceptionally good, and almost on an individual basis, supported the excellent achievement of all students of very varied ability. Students' self-evaluation of the trailers they were showing for the first time was supported individually and excellently in the recapitulation of some appropriate critical theories

which enabled them to see to what extent these were confirmed or broken in their work, and what effect that had. Students' knowledge of postmodernism in this lesson was such that they readily identified reference to one media text in another in a variety of film clips, using their knowledge of crime films in black and white to pinpoint techniques of humour and satire. Their first screening of finished trailers showed technical expertise and an exceptionally high standard of stylish camerawork which compelled attention. The use of music to enhance mood showed unusual sophistication.

143. Excellent teaching promotes an excellent level of achievement and very high standards. The curriculum is in the air as well as on the page, and the teachers work together as a highly effective team, continually discussing and developing ways to raise standards even higher. They have an excellent level of knowledge of the subject and the requirements of the A-level examination, which they keep up-to-date. Lessons are carefully planned, frequently providing work well matched to the needs of individual students. There is a very good level of ongoing assessment which helps teachers to give individuals an exceptionally well focused and rigorous level of support and this helps them to succeed.
144. Lessons are conducted at a crisp pace. Expectation of students is very high and amply realised. Some of the excellent achievement seen was based on consistent and high-quality support for collaborative learning, some of it in very carefully constructed groups in which unlikely personalities and different capabilities combine, under careful supervision, in an impressive standard of learning. The structuring of students' research, a significant strength, gives them all the skills needed for highly effective independent learning. There are many extra-curricular activities available of a professional nature including the annual conference of the consortium of Sussex media and technology students, which all attend. There are rigorous weekly textual analysis classes for students which improve standards in all areas of the subject.
145. Leadership of the subject is excellent and highly influential beyond the school. The excellent management provides a model for others in the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, highly effective teamwork and an absolute determination to achieve the best possible outcomes for every student.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

- Standards are well above average and students' achievement is very good.
- Teaching and learning are consistently very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

146. The number of pupils entered for A level in 2003 was too small to make effective comparison with national averages. There is only a small number of pupils studying music in the sixth form but numbers will rise in 2004. Students are competent score readers and have a very good understanding of musical styles and genres. They are very good performers and have a very good understanding of styles and appropriate harmonic techniques, completing Bach chorales to a high standard.
147. Teaching is consistently very good. The teacher's subject knowledge is excellent and lessons are well prepared and planned to build upon students' strengths. Expectations are high and the curriculum offers students comprehensive support in preparing for A level, with opportunities for independent study. Students display a mature attitude to music and contribute significantly to the musical life of the school.
148. Leadership and management are very good. Assessment of students' work and the comments they receive are very good. Here, there is a good range of resources and students make good

use of information and computer technology to create and refine their compositions. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

149. Vocational courses in Leisure and Tourism at intermediate and advanced level were sampled. Results in the 2002 AVCE course were average and all students successfully completed the course. Girls achieved better than boys. Standards are currently average on both VCE at intermediate level and on the AVCE course, and achievement is satisfactory. At intermediate level students know about the planning of holidays and the differences between tour agents and operators, but do not develop their answers orally in sufficient depth. In the advanced course, students gain skills in organising an event and appreciate the importance of planning to meet health and safety requirements, but lack experience of meeting or visits to the workplace. Students' studies in Year 13 are enhanced through links with local businesses. Two lessons were seen; teaching and learning were satisfactory. Students benefited from knowledgeable and experienced teaching. Lessons had clear purpose and progress was supported by good student attitudes to learning. However, teachers did not make enough demands on students in oral and written work.

BUSINESS

Economics and Business Studies (joint) modular course

Provision in economics and business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very limited resources of books and reference materials have an adverse impact upon learning.
- Recent and temporary staffing is beginning to develop the subject through relevant and up-to-date case study material.
- Standards are beginning to improve, especially in Year 12.

Commentary

150. In the 2002 A-level examination, 45 per cent of students gained A or B grades which signified satisfactory achievement. These results reversed a three-year decline in the standards achieved. However, in the AS examination, no student achieved the higher grades. In 2003, none of the students secured A or B grades at A level, though all achieved at least at their expected grade. In the AS examination, 16 of the 20 candidates achieved grades below target. Approximately 50 per cent of students do not continue from Year 12 to Year 13, though most complete the AS course. This indicates that achievement is not as good as it should be in Year 12.

151. Written work in both years shows that students are now reaching average standards and this represents satisfactory achievement. Students in the Year 13 class identify the main features of the supply chain and are familiar with the concepts of consumer sovereignty and supermarket power. Year 12 students identify the circular flow of money.

152. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and sometimes very good. Most teachers have good knowledge and understanding of economics and business, but there is some evidence of weaknesses in subject knowledge and an uncertainty about the syllabus content. Some basic factual mistakes were noted in one lesson. Rigorous question and answer sessions probe and develop the students' understanding in some lessons, although not all students are confident enough yet to take a full and active part in discussion. In these lessons, teachers have very good rapport with their students. Some students are not fully aware of the coursework timetable and this leads to uncertainty in planning their work. Until recently, there was insufficient

homework to reinforce learning, and insufficient examination preparation. The recording of the assessed pieces is inconsistent and gives many students an insecure basis for learning. Recently, the use of a wider range of up-to-date case studies is beginning to develop the course and improve standards, although in some lessons there is still an over-reliance on the single textbook.

153. No judgement can be made on leadership because the department head is absent. Management is being satisfactorily carried out by the line manager but there is a lack of vision of how the subject should develop. Insufficient attention had been paid to monitoring teaching and learning, and weak teamwork led to a serious decline in achievement, especially in the AS course. Assessment procedures are currently unsatisfactory. Self-review mechanisms are not strong enough to identify the weaknesses and to improve students' learning. Currently, resources are poor because students have access to one course text book and no other additional research materials.
154. This joint course is new and was not offered at the last inspection.

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		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its previous inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	3	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	1	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		1
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	5	5
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	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	4	3
The effectiveness of management	4	3

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