

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FULSTON MANOR SCHOOL**

Sittingbourne

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118886

Headteacher: Mr A Brookes

Lead inspector: Mr T Feast

Dates of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> September 2003

Inspection number: 259237

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:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1155
School address:	Brenchley Road Sittingbourne Kent
Postcode:	ME10 4EG
Telephone number:	01795 475228
Fax number:	01795 428144
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs R Couzins
Date of previous inspection:	9 <sup>th</sup> March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Fulston Manor is a large, mixed foundation comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 18. Students in the locality are selected by ability for entry to secondary education at 11+. The attainment of the students on entry to Fulston Manor in Year 7 is below that found nationally. The school does select a small number of students each year on their ability in music and sport. Overall, the school is heavily oversubscribed. The school works in partnership with two local selective schools in providing education for sixth-formers. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average but, overall, the family circumstances of the students are below those found nationally. The number of students with mother tongues not believed to be English is low. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs is below the national average. The percentage of students provided with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national figure. The number of students who have been identified as coming from traveller families is very low, as is the number of refugees and asylum seekers. There is a small number of students in public care. The number of students transferring to and from the school other than at the planned times is low. The school has had difficulties in recruiting qualified teachers in recent years, particularly in science and design and technology.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3650	Mr T Feast	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
16472	Ms C Stormonth	Lay inspector	
32362	Mr K Warburton	Team inspector	Mathematics
32278	Mr D Roberts	Team inspector	English
12890	Mr T Jardine	Team inspector	Science
8119	Mr D Milham	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
20533	Mr D Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design
1782	Mr A Lyons	Team inspector	Design and technology
20537	Mr K Ball	Team inspector	Geography
14633	Ms J Bannister	Team inspector	History
12624	Ms A Farren	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
18846	Mr P Priest	Team inspector	Music
18888	Ms J Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education Citizenship
20719	Ms A Fraser	Team inspector	Religious education
17171	Mrs M Last	Team inspector	Special educational needs
1085	Mr J Laver	Team inspector	English (sixth form) History (sixth form)
5241	Dr C Millband	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form)
11709	Ms R Bernstein	Team inspector	Leisure and tourism (sixth form) Health and social care (sixth form)

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Fulston Manor is a very good school and provides very good value for money.** The headteacher and leadership team are very successful in establishing an ethos of high student achievement and very good individual support. The house teams, complemented by other staff, are very successful in driving the twin priorities of the academic and personal development of students. The achievement of the students is good. They mature into confident young adults with a great pride in their school. Standards are in line with national averages overall and well above those of similar schools.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher and leadership team provide very good leadership and management.
- The school is very good at creating effective teams of staff to support student achievement.
- The quality of teaching is good, resulting in students achieving well.
- The school provides very good opportunities for learning outside the school day.
- There is an inconsistent use of assessment information, including National Curriculum levels, to assist teachers' planning of differing tasks, and resources to meet the needs of different groups of students.
- In Years 7 to 9, departments are inconsistent in their use of information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching their subjects.
- There is not enough attention given to the development of mathematics across the curriculum in Years 7 to 9.

The school was previously inspected in March 1998. Since then the improvement has been good in areas identified as weaknesses. The school now meets statutory requirements for design and technology and religious education but not for modern foreign languages. Library provision has improved significantly, as have students' opportunities to use ICT in curriculum areas in Years 7 to 9. Opportunities for spiritual and cultural development have improved, although the school does not meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance			All schools		Similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	D	n/a	n/a
Year 13	A/AS-level and VCE examinations	E*	E	n/a	n/a

**By the end of Year 11, students achieve well, and attain levels overall in line with those nationally.** In English and mathematics, standards currently are in line with national levels and, in science, they are below. In other subjects, levels are in line with national levels other than in art and design, physical education, ICT and English literature, where they are above, and in modern foreign languages where they are below. These standards are well above those of similar schools. By the end of Year 9, students achieve well in respect of their standards when they enter the school and attain levels in line with national levels in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, they are in line, other than in art and design and music where they are above. Whilst examination standards in the sixth form have been well below average overall, the work seen during the inspection was often in line with national expectations and students make good progress in their courses. Results in a number of the vocational courses are above the national levels.

**The quality of students' moral and social development is very good, that of cultural development is good and students' spiritual development is satisfactory. Overall, students' personal development is good. Students' attitudes are very good and behaviour is good. Attendance is in line with the national average and improving.** Punctuality is good. The students' interest in, and contribution to, extra-curricular activities and posts of responsibility in the school are very good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching is good across all year groups.** An emphasis on the consistent implementation of the school's teaching and learning policy has contributed to better teaching and this results in good learning by the students. They achieve well in most subjects and respond well to high expectations. Teachers manage their classes very well and only on rare occasions is the quality of teaching unsatisfactory. Information from assessment activities is not used consistently to help teachers plan their lessons to meet the differing needs of students in their classes.

There is very good support for students, both with their academic and their personal development. The house system plays a significant role in this support. There is very good provision of extra-curricular activities and the curriculum overall provides good opportunities for all.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The headteacher and the leadership group provide very good leadership and management.** The governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Subject leaders provide good leadership. The school works effectively as a team and this has contributed very well to the improvements made since the last inspection. There is a very positive ethos which is shared by the school community.

## **PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are very satisfied with the school and what it offers. The school's very effective links with parents make an important contribution to students' academic and personal development. Whilst the student questionnaires highlighted areas of issue, discussion with students showed them to be very positive about their learning and what the school has to offer, other than general agreement that there was too much homework.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- To work consistently across all departments to use assessment information, including National Curriculum levels, to assist the planning of activities and resources to meet the needs of different groups of students within classes.
- To plan and provide for ICT consistently across all departments in Years 7 to 9.
- To plan for and support mathematics consistently across the curriculum in all departments, especially in Years 7 to 9.

and to meet statutory requirements:

- In providing a daily act of collective worship.
- In respect of modern foreign languages and their disapplication in Years 10 and 11.
- In providing specific information to parents in the prospectus and governors' annual report.

## THE SIXTH FORM

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good and it is cost effective.** It is a developing sixth form, in which standards are now in line with national expectations in a number of subjects. Students join the sixth form with below average standards, and achieve well as the result of a combination of good teaching, very good leadership and management and very positive attitudes. The sixth form has been enlarged considerably since the previous inspection and offers a good range of courses. A minority of Fulston Manor students take the opportunity to study courses at the other partnership schools and the school receives a number of students from its partners on its courses in the sixth form.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Overall standards have improved since the previous inspection.
- Students achieve well by the time they leave the sixth form.
- Student attitudes are very positive, contributing to a good retention rate and very good relationships.
- The sixth form offers a good range of academic and vocational courses.
- Leadership and management are very effective in promoting shared provision and ensuring a strong contribution to the existing partnership.
- There is a very good level of personal and academic monitoring which ensures that students are well supported throughout their time in school.
- The sixth form does not comply with statutory requirements in respect of providing a daily act of collective worship.

### 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. Standards are improving and students achieve well, responding positively to good teaching and effective leadership.
Mathematics	Provision is good. Standards are improving. Good teaching results in good achievement by students.
Science	Provision in human biology is good. Although standards are below national expectations, students achieve well in response to good teaching.
Humanities	Provision in history is good. Rising standards are reflected in good examination results. It is a popular subject and students achieve well, responding to good teaching.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in music is satisfactory. The one Advanced Level student is achieving well. Provision in art and design is good, as a result of some good and very good teaching. Performing arts were not a focus of the inspection.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in leisure and tourism is unsatisfactory. Standards are below national expectations.

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is good. Standards are rising.  
Students achieve well in response to good teaching.

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

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

**The quality of advice, guidance and support provided for students is very good.** Induction arrangements for entry to the sixth form are thorough. Once in the sixth form, students receive a high level of personal tutoring and support, for which they are very appreciative. They are well prepared for the next stage of their lives in further education or the world of work.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**Leadership and management are very good.** There is a shared vision of how the partnership should develop further, and a good level of co-operation between the participating schools. A flexible and caring approach allows students of all abilities to feel included, valued and supported. The sixth form is managed very effectively by the head of sixth form and his team. Procedures for monitoring student progress are very good.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are very positive about their experience in the sixth form. Although a minority of students are unable to follow their preferred combination of courses, the majority feel that the sixth form offers a rich diet of subjects, which are well taught by committed and approachable teachers. Students also enjoy opportunities for extra-curricular involvement in clubs, for supporting charities and events in the community, and for involvement with the lower school. They feel well supported in their studies. The inspection team found that the concerns expressed by some students about unsatisfactory relationships between peer groups were not significant. Students would heartily recommend the sixth form to others.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

**By the end of Year 11, students attain standards broadly in line with those nationally and well above those of similar schools. Their achievement is good.**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The achievement of the students is good.
- Standards are well above those of similar schools.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs, students in public care and those with English as an additional language is good.
- Attainment in Years 10 and 11 in art and design, English literature, geography and physical education is above that expected nationally.
- Attainment in science and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 is below that expected nationally.

#### **Commentary**

1. Fulston Manor is a comprehensive school operating in an area where there is selection by ability for places in schools at 11+. The students' attainment on entry to Fulston Manor in Year 7 is below that found nationally. By the end of Year 11, students achieve well and attain levels overall in line with those nationally. In work seen during the inspection, attainment in English and mathematics was in line with national expectations and in science it was below. In other subjects, levels were in line with national expectations other than in art and design, physical education, geography and English literature, where they were above, and in modern foreign languages where they were below. These standards are well above those of similar schools. The GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average for the percentage of students achieving at least five grades at A\*-C. These results and the average point scores of the students represented a fall on the standards attained in previous years. The results in 2003 improved significantly. The percentage of students who attained at least five grades at A\*-C was 48 per cent, a rise of ten per cent, and all the students attained at least five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A\*-G. The school exceeded its targets for 2003 by a significant margin. Overall, girls attain higher standards than the boys in their GCSE results. Students with English as an additional language attain standards in line with their fellow students and their achievement is good. Students with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set for them, as do the relatively few students in public care or who are refugees.
2. By the end of Year 9, students achieve well in respect of their standards when they enter the school and attain levels in line with national expectations in English, mathematics and science. In work seen during the inspection in other subjects, attainment was in line with that found nationally, other than in art and design and music where it was above. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the results were in line with national standards and were well above those of similar schools. Results in mathematics and science were better than those in English. Boys did better than girls in mathematics and science but not as well in English. In 2003, the results were better than the previous years' in English and mathematics but fell sharply in science. The school exceeded its targets for English and mathematics but missed its target for science. Students with English as an additional language attain standards in line with their fellow students and their achievement is good.

### **Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.5 (36)	33.1 (32.7)
mathematics	34.2 (33.5)	34.5 (34.2)
science	33.2 (32.5)	33.2 (33.0)

*There were 179 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

### **Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002**

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	38 (44)	50 (48)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (91)	98 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	34.8 (n/a)	39.8 (n/a)

*There were 183 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

### **Standards in GCE A/AS-level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2001**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	88 (79)	(n/a) (n/a)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	39 (44)	(n/a) (n/a)
Average point score per pupil	12.8 (12)	17.5 (17.6)

*There were 68 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

## **Sixth Form**

3. The examination results in 2001 were well below the national average, reflecting in the main the lack of grades at the highest levels. Girls generally did better than the boys. Results in 2002 were similar. Results in 2003 did show an improvement but there are no national yardsticks yet to make a comparison. This improvement has been maintained and, in many of the subjects seen during the inspection, attainment was often in line with national expectations and students were making good progress in their courses. Results in a number of the vocational courses are above the national levels.

## **Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

**Attendance and punctuality are good and improving in Years 7 to 11. Attitudes to learning are very good throughout the school and behaviour is good in Years 7 to 11. Aspects of personal development, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good.**

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The ethos is very positive and all students feel included and part of a caring and happy community, and they are proud of their school.

- The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good and have improved markedly over the past year.
- The school sets the highest expectations for conduct and successfully achieves good standards through rigorous and consistent application of policies.
- Moral and social development is promoted very well and the curriculum and student experiences are enriched by good cultural development.
- Planning for spiritual development across the curriculum is inconsistent and the school does not meet the statutory requirements for collective worship.
- A small minority of students cause nuisance and some name-calling, including some of a racist nature, and occasional noisy and boisterous behaviour was observed during the inspection.

## Commentary

4. Good attendance and punctuality are promoted very well and their continuing improvement is an appropriate high priority for the school. In this regard, a Family Liaison Officer has been appointed and is already strengthening links with families and encouraging better attendance. The daily monitoring of absence and the follow-up of absences are very good.
5. Students are very keen to come to school and are enthusiastic about all aspects of school life. They are full of praise for the interesting lessons they enjoy and the wide range of clubs and trips they actively participate in. These opportunities extend students' personal development very well and instill in students a real desire to learn and succeed.
6. Most students are helpful, considerate and consistently behave well. Break-times and lunchtimes are pleasant and relaxed. During the whole-school assembly observed, behaviour was impeccable and there was a real sense of a close and happy community sharing successes and achievement. Students confirmed that they feel part of 'something that is very special' when they are together. Behavioural incidents are monitored very well and appropriate steps are taken to help students improve. Bullying and racism seldom occur and are simply not tolerated. When reported, these incidents are dealt with very well. The exclusion rate is below average for this type of school and reflects the positive ethos.
7. Students' personal development is fostered well. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Positive reinforcement of the values of respect, care for others, trust, fairness and high moral standards are strengths. This helps students to be considerate and thoughtful in their approaches to others. Students mature into very confident young adults with good social skills. The Year 11 prefects were highly praised by their Year 7 peers for their helpfulness when the latter were new to the school. They also help in the smooth running of the school by carrying out a range of duties conscientiously. Students' understanding of their own culture and the diversity and richness of other cultures is well developed, especially in religious education, English, art and design, drama and music. The spiritual dimensions in learning were a weaker feature and were not sufficiently planned for across the curriculum.

## Attendance

### *Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.8	School data	0.0
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of students*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1061	12	1
White – any other White background	18	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	11	0	0

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

## Sixth Form

8. Despite good efforts to encourage better attendance and punctuality in the sixth form, some students are not responsive. A significant number are regularly late and the attendance of a small number is unsatisfactory. Overall, attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.
9. Students' attitudes to their work are very good. They feel that they are treated as adults and enjoy the freedom and trust placed in them to work in their private study time and use the sixth-form facilities unsupervised. They are responsible and confident young people. They behave very well and there has been only one exclusion in the past year.
10. Students take responsibility for their own personal development and are able to choose from a wide variety of good opportunities to participate in the main school, in the sixth form and in the community. For example, performing arts students organised and ran the auditions for the next school drama production, are in charge of the wardrobe and 'props', operating within a tight budget. They set very high production standards. Sixth-formers' contribution to helping run extra-curricular activities is very good and there are mutual benefits.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

**The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. The school works very well with parents and the community. The school's care and welfare of the students are very good. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The formal involvement of students and parents by the school seeking and acting on their views is satisfactory.**

## Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good and students' learning is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good command of their subjects and courses.
- Teachers' emphasis on high standards of behaviour is very good.
- Homework is used very well to re-inforce and extend students' learning.
- The staff's promotion of equality of opportunity is very good.
- Students apply themselves very well to their work.
  
- Students' abilities to work independently are not as developed as other aspects.
- Teachers do not use information from assessment activities consistently to help their planning of tasks and resources to meet the needs of all the students in the class.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 169 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (2%)	45 (27%)	72 (43%)	43 (25%)	5(3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

### Commentary

11. The quality of teaching is good overall and is of a similar standard throughout the different year groups. This results in students learning well in all the different age groups. Students' learning is supported well by the teaching of literacy across the subjects but the support for mathematics across the curriculum is inconsistent. Parents and students are positive about the quality of teaching in the school. There is a good match between qualified teachers and the subjects they teach and this provision has a good impact on students' achievement.
12. Teachers have a good understanding of the type of lesson which enables students to achieve well. The school has placed great emphasis on its teaching and learning policy and this has resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching. Teachers have a very good command of their subjects and, in the best lessons this is combined with an enthusiasm to which students respond very positively. Excellent teaching was observed in drama, religious education and citizenship. Teachers manage the students very well overall but, on the rare occasions when the strategies are unsuccessful, the teaching is unsatisfactory. Even though the students complain about the quantity of homework, the amount set and the quality of the tasks play an important role in students' achievement. Teachers, overall, plan well to ensure that the special needs of different groups of students are met. The school is now focusing on gifted and talented students but not all departments are equally successful in this respect yet. Teachers' assessment of students' work is good but the information from this is not yet used consistently across departments to guide students on how to improve or to help teachers plan a range of tasks to meet the differing needs in the class.
13. The students learn well. They acquire new knowledge and skills well and they show great pride in their work. They concentrate well and persevere when tasks are challenging. They work well together in pairs and small groups but find it more difficult to work independently, preferring to be guided by the teachers.

### Sixth Form

14. The quality of teaching is good and this helps students to learn well. Teachers use methods that enable the students to learn effectively and, in the best lessons, such as an excellent human biology lesson, they challenge the students to produce work of the highest quality. Teachers' assessment provides good guidance to the students on how to improve and, in some areas such as history and English, it is very good. Students work well but most prefer to work to the teachers' direction rather than follow their own lines of investigation.

## The curriculum

**The school provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum which meets the students' needs throughout their time in the school.** The variety of subjects offered ensures that the students develop an appropriate range of skills and knowledge for external examinations, as well as preparing them for further education and employment. Students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Religious education is taught throughout Years 7 to 11 and meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in the sixth form. However, there is no provision for a daily act of collective worship.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant.
- The extra-curricular provision is very good.
- Staff are well matched to the curriculum offered.
  
- Disapplication procedures for students are not met for modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 and this is a weakness.

## Commentary

15. All students in Years 7 to 9 follow the same curriculum. On entry to the school, the students are placed in three ability bands on the basis of their primary school attainment. As they progress through the school, groups are further refined according to students' abilities in English and mathematics. These arrangements enable teachers to match the work more closely to the differing needs of the students.
16. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 offers a core element of English, mathematics, science, physical education, religious education and life skills, together with four option choices. Provision is made for vocational courses and all Year 10 students undertake work experience. All subjects are taken to GCSE level or its equivalent. Because of staff shortages, not all students in Year 11 are following a course in design and technology or a modern foreign language. In Year 10, the school is failing to meet the statutory requirements relating to the disapplication procedures for a modern foreign language. However, the curriculum meets the needs of all students, there is good equality of access and they achieve well as a result.
17. The formal curriculum is very well supported by a rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities. Many subjects offer clubs, workshops and revision classes and there are additional whole-school opportunities for physical education, dance, music and theatrical events. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is offered to students over the age of 14. In the summer term, the school organises an activities week for students in Years 7 and 8 and a school camp for students in Year 9. Students and parents emphasised the importance of the Year 9 school camps in supporting students' development and the ethos of the school.
18. The school is working hard to implement the National Strategy for Key Stage 3. Staff have received training on literacy and mathematics across the curriculum and the principles and cross-curricular links identified in the strategy are included in departmental schemes of work. The strategy is not consistently implemented across departments, particularly in respect of mathematics and ICT across the curriculum. An effective programme for personal, social and

health education, including citizenship, is taught. In 2003, catering, dance and applied business studies were added to the Year 10 options. A single science option instead of the usual double option was offered to selected students in Year 10, enabling them to have more curriculum time for the development of their foundation-level, key-skills course. The school continues to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of its students.

19. Despite staff turnover and recruitment difficulties in some areas, the match of staff to the curriculum is good overall and very good in English, geography and history. Support staff are provided with detailed information about students with special educational needs whom they support very effectively in class. Students with English as an additional language are provided with very good support where necessary.
20. The school is located on a compact site and efficient use is made of the limited space available. Standards of cleanliness and repair are high and there are attractive display areas to celebrate students' achievement and provide information. The addition of new suites for ICT and performing arts has greatly enhanced curriculum provision in those areas. The provision for learning resources is good in most subjects. Good progress has been made with developing the library since the last inspection but the current resources are still not adequate for the school's wide curriculum.

### **Sixth Form**

21. In the sixth form, a wide range of vocational and academic courses is on offer to suit students of all abilities. Arrangements with the two local selective schools allow students the opportunity to study at more than one centre, increasing choice even further. In 2003, general studies, dance and a Certificate of Financial Studies were added to the Year 12 options. This year, as part of the school's developing links with the Learning and Business Observatory, 30 Year 12 students will take part in a pilot scheme to develop their entrepreneurial skills. There is a good match of staff to the curriculum, which prepares the students very well for the demands of higher education and employment. As in the main school, citizenship is delivered in tutorials and other appropriate lessons. All sixth-form students are expected to participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered, including community projects and charity fund-raising events. The purpose-built sixth-form block provides suitable teaching rooms, ICT facilities and recreational areas. However, current provision does not allow for full access by disabled students.

### **Care, guidance and support**

**The school ensures that the care and welfare of students are very effective and the arrangements for health and safety are exemplary. The school provides good support, advice and guidance for students based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development. Students' views are not regularly and widely canvassed formally as part of school improvement.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The house system is very well managed and plays an important part in the care and guidance provided. Students feel secure and well looked after and this helps them achieve their best.
- The management of health and safety is excellent.
- Induction of new students is very effective and individual arrangements are made to help students settle quickly and enjoy school life.
- Students have good impartial advice which leads them towards further study or career opportunities.
- The formal involvement of students through the seeking, valuing and acting on their views is not consistently undertaken and this is a weakness.



## Commentary

22. The care and guidance provided are strengths of the school. Students confirmed strongly how much they value the house structure and the close relationships they develop with staff and fellow house members. The school focuses on helping all those who are underachieving or have any personal difficulty. The effective monitoring of academic and personal development by staff enables the progress of students from all ability levels to be tracked and any underperformance detected. Those students are mentored and helped to resolve issues, organise their work and manage their time better. The results of this guidance are impressive.
23. The arrangements for child protection and for students in public care are very good and all the requirements are met. The careful and sensitive monitoring and guidance for individuals are highly effective. Clearly understood Internet access policies are in place and adhered to. When students are ill or injured, they receive a high level of care and attention. All medical needs are very well catered for. All risk assessments are carried out and routine checking systems for health and safety throughout the school are excellent.
24. The arrangements for induction are very good. New Year 7 students were very pleased at how quickly they had settled and mastered the daily routines and complex campus in the short time they had been at school. Careers education and guidance are good and all students are able to benefit from the impartial advice on further study or careers opportunities to help them realise their ambitions. Students, in their questionnaire, did not always feel that their views are sought and responded to. In further discussions, they felt that this was an area that was good in Hales House through the house council but was unsatisfactory elsewhere.

## Sixth Form

25. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and they say that their teachers provide very good personal and academic help and support. The sixth-form induction week was praised for giving students a real insight into life in the sixth form. Newly arrived students were pleased that some individual arrangements were made to welcome them and familiarise them with the school.
26. Students have ready access to well-informed and impartial careers information and guidance. Students say that they receive good guidance when choosing their course options. They are interviewed early in Year 12 to map out their career paths and receive advice and help to pursue their post-18 choices. Resources for university applications are very good. Students' views can be channelled through the sixth-form common room committee but students do not always feel that they are listened to and would welcome a more effective way to put their ideas forward.

## Example of outstanding practice in health and safety

**The health and safety management system is excellent. It is fully implemented and forms the basis of exemplary practice throughout the school.** The health and safety manager has excellent knowledge of good school health and safety practice and works hard to ensure that the highest standards are met at all times. A specialist consultant is commissioned to carry out regular inspections of the school. Issues raised are prioritised and tackled as soon as possible. Heads of department carry out thorough risk assessments of hazardous areas of learning and ensure good, safe practice. The regular checking systems for fire and electrical safety are carried out at the right frequency and records indicated excellent practice. All students' medical conditions are known and are fully catered for by a qualified nurse. The welfare room is fully equipped and, when students are ill or injured, they received high quality treatment.

The designated person ensures that the many trips are fully analysed for risk, and detailed information to aid planning is available on a CD-Rom. There is some exemplary guidance and a safety checklist for staff to follow when planning trips. The health and safety aspects of trips are shared with parents to alert them to any possible risks before permission is sought to go.

## **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

**The links with parents are very good and the school is held in very high regard. Links with the local community are very good and the school links with other schools and colleges are good overall.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a very strong partnership with parents who are warmly welcomed into school as an important part of the school community.
- The school works very closely with parents to support learning and ensure student happiness, and deals well with any issues that arise.
- The arrangements for receiving students from primary schools and later moving them on to colleges of further and higher education are very good.
- Links with the community are very good and are developing rapidly.
  
- Parents' views are not regularly gauged formally as part of school improvement and this is a weakness.
- The prospectus and the governor's annual report to parents do not contain all the required information and, therefore, do not currently meet statutory requirements.

### **Commentary**

27. The school works very effectively with parents to support students' learning, and support for the wide range of school activities is very strong. Parents feel a strong sense of partnership based on mutual trust and great confidence in the school across all aspects. Teacher/parent consultations, school reports and termly reviews provide good-quality information about students' learning and how they can be supported. Parents are actively involved when there are any particular issues concerning behaviour, attendance, medical or other educational needs, and the joint approaches to this support and help for students work very well. The Family Liaison Officer, a new appointment, is strengthening links with some families. Sometimes, parents' views are taken into account, for example, the Year 7 parents' induction review survey, but parents generally are not extensively consulted formally as part of school improvement. Procedures to deal with any concerns or complaints are effective.
28. Links with the local community are very good. Students regularly take part in local and national events, such as the huge number of sporting and musical activities and the marketing challenge competitions. Very good links with local businesses ensure that the Year 10 work-experience programme, business studies and vocational courses are significantly enhanced. The school continues to work hard to gain local sponsorship for its Business and Enterprise status bid and has been moderately successful.
29. The school works in close co-operation with local schools and colleges. There are very good links with contributory primary schools and these ensure that students' transfer to Fulston Manor goes very smoothly and students settle really quickly and happily. The taster days, projects and activities were highly commended by the students. The Swale Headteachers' Forum is involved in sharing local best practice in a number of areas to benefit learning in local schools.

### **Sixth Form**

30. The school works in partnership with two local selective schools to provide a well co-ordinated programme of courses for sixth-form students. The transfer arrangements to the sixth form and other post-16 colleges, including vocational training courses, are very good. Students indicate that the range of advanced, intermediate and foundation courses suits their interests

and talents well. Links with Christchurch College are good for enlivening music, business studies and vocational learning through specialist teaching and project work. The local Learning Business Observatory is running a research project and Year 12 students are developing some advanced business skills using the latest technology.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The headteacher and the leadership group provide very good leadership and management. The governors fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Subject leaders provide good leadership. The school works effectively as a team and this has contributed very well to the improvements since the last inspection. There is a very positive ethos which is shared by the school community.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership by the headteacher and the leadership group is very good.
- Management at all levels is very good.
- The governing body is effective.
- Financial management is very good.
  
- The governing body has not ensured that all statutory requirements are fulfilled.

### **Commentary**

31. The governors are hardworking and loyal to the school but also hold it to account, as 'critical friends'. Governors have ensured that the school fulfils its statutory duties except that it does not provide a daily act of worship, the governors' annual report to parents and the prospectus do not fulfil all the statutory requirements and the disapplication procedures for students are not met in modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.
32. The governors' staffing and curriculum committee regularly receives presentations from heads of department that enable it to understand standards and teaching and learning in subjects. Through the finance sub-committee, governors have a very good understanding of financial planning and the school is no longer in the financial difficulties found at the last inspection. Financial leadership and management are very good.
33. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school. He is committed to raising all students' achievements and improving standards, as well as helping them develop into mature individuals. He has ensured that the staff share his high aspirations. This has resulted in a very strong culture for learning that is raising standards.
34. The leadership of the school is well established with the roles and responsibilities of those involved clearly set out. It is very effective and contributes strongly to school improvement. The quality of leadership in subjects and houses is good overall.
35. The quality of management is very good. The school systematically undertakes self-evaluation and, in many areas, subject leaders carry out a systematic programme of review of the quality of teaching and learning. The school improvement plan concentrates on school priorities and has success criteria to enable its evaluation. Departmental reviews set clear targets and make a substantial contribution to the development of teaching and learning. Line management is focused on priorities and is supportive. Performance management has contributed to the consistency of good teaching. The management of individual students through the house system is very good. New members of staff are carefully inducted and receive constructive support and advice. The programme of professional development is targeted to help improve teaching and learning. The school works very effectively with its partner institution on initial teacher training and the graduate training scheme.

## Sixth form

36. The leadership of the sixth form by the headteacher and the head of sixth form is very good. The governing body is committed to extending the existing partnership with the two local selective schools to provide a good range of academic and vocational opportunities for sixth-form students. This joint provision is working very well. Both the headteacher and the head of sixth form are committed to a sixth form that can cater for the needs of students with a wide range of abilities.
37. The day-to-day management and organisation of the sixth form is very good. The positive ethos of the sixth form has resulted in increased numbers this academic year. Students are carefully inducted and sensitively helped through the transfer from main school to the sixth form. Management makes sure that the sixth form is an asset for the school by ensuring they are good role models for younger students.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,702,756
Total expenditure	3,763,396
Expenditure per student	3,381

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	(60,640)
Balance carried forward to the next	40,697

# **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**

The focus was on English. Drama was sampled. Provision in English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students make good progress as a result of good teaching.
- There is good teamwork amongst staff.
- Good, thoughtful and principled leadership and management are contributing well to the raising of standards.
- There is insufficient use of assessment information in Years 7 to 9 to aid teachers' planning of different tasks and resources to meet the differing needs of students.
- There is insufficient planning for the regular, informal observation of lessons so that the best teaching ideas and methods can be shared by the department.

#### **Commentary**

38. When students enter the school, their attainment in English is below average. At both ages 14 and 16, students' results in public examinations and National Curriculum tests in English are broadly in line with national averages. Results in GCSE English language have improved in each of the last four years. English literature results at GCSE are above the national average. Students make good progress during their time at the school. The number of students attaining levels above the Level 5 expected nationally in the tests at age 14 and grades above Grade C in the GCSE examinations rose in 2003.
39. Students' good achievement is largely attributable to good teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and include a good range of activities so that students can learn in a variety of ways. Teachers manage their classes well and, consequently, students' attitudes and behaviour are good. The teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants is good. This is an important factor in the good progress made by students who find some of the work difficult. Effective help is given to those students for whom English is a second language. Teachers and their assistants ensure that the work undertaken by these students is suitable and stimulating. Appropriate homework is set regularly for all students.
40. Standards of reading and writing are in line with those nationally. Standards of speaking and listening are above. A group of lower attaining 14-year-olds, for example, successfully undertook a demanding role-play exercise, based on the novel they were studying. Very well-structured preparation ensured that the students knew exactly what was expected of them and how to succeed. As a result, they were able to speak with confidence, showing some insight into the characters they were representing. In contrast, some students find it difficult to write in complete sentences, with accurate spelling and punctuation.
41. The department recognises that students need to know precisely how to improve their work and this lies at the heart of the department's plans to raise standards. Teachers already mark work thoroughly, providing much helpful advice to students in their comments. They make explicit how students can achieve their potential in public examinations. The introduction of the optional National Curriculum tests for younger students gives teachers the opportunity to re-

focus their assessment arrangements so that they gain a more accurate picture of these students' progress and are better placed to help them.

42. The head of department has been in post since September 2002. She has a clear vision of how the subject should develop so that students' attainment can improve further. She is well supported by the team of staff, who all share her commitment to improving standards.
43. Teaching is monitored through good school systems. The head of department has plans to introduce additional, regular and informal observations by teachers of each others' lessons so that the most effective ideas and methods can be shared and implemented widely, but this is not yet a regular feature of the department's work.
44. Since the last inspection, the department has improved well. Results remain close to the national average. The quality of teaching has improved. Resources are now appropriate. Standards of speaking and listening have improved. Although some examples of good computer-based work were seen during the inspection, the department still lacks adequate access to ICT.
45. Drama is taught as an optional subject at GCSE. Results have been consistently good. Impressive teaching has established an ethos within which students assume a high degree of responsibility for their own learning. As a consequence, they work with maturity and purpose.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

46. The overall standard of literacy in the school is in line with national expectations. Given that the students' attainment on entry is below average, this represents good progress. There are good arrangements for helping those students who, on arrival at the school, have problems with literacy. Teachers and their assistants make good use of the National Literacy Strategy to ensure that there is a well-structured and well-taught course to improve these students' skills. Literacy is further developed through the subjects of the curriculum. This is part of the school's strategy to improve teaching and learning, which is co-ordinated by a deputy headteacher. In some lessons, teachers use every opportunity to develop students' skills in this respect. In others, however, opportunities are missed and there is not yet sufficient consistency across all the departments.

### **Example of outstanding practice in drama**

In a Year 10 mixed-ability drama lesson, students were able to produce practical work of a very high standard. They displayed total focus and concentration throughout the 70-minute lesson. They performed complex warm-up activities without intervention by the teacher. During the main body of the lesson, they co-operated in groups to produce sophisticated still images and were then able to reconstruct, in dramatic form, the events and characters that lay behind the images that they had represented. They were able rapidly to incorporate newly-explained techniques into their performances. In groups and as a whole class, students evaluated performances with insight and tact.

The quality of the students' work was attributable to the high degree of responsibility accorded to them. They responded with impressive maturity. The teacher had established a culture in which students could work enthusiastically and purposefully. The lesson moved at high pace, always presenting the students with challenging tasks. Achievement was warmly recognised. Behind the success of this lesson lay evident professional skill on the part of the teacher in explaining new techniques, and his total clarity of purpose about the lesson. He was well supported by a skilled teaching assistant. Everything was underpinned by an unrelenting focus on improving standards.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Team members are committed to improvement.
  
- Teachers and students make too little use of the modern foreign language being studied.
- There are few opportunities for students to work independently and this is a weakness.
- Teamwork across the department is not fully established.
- Day-to-day management of the department is unsatisfactory.
- The disapplication procedures in Years 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory and do not meet requirements.

### Commentary

47. Standards attained in modern foreign languages are below those expected nationally and students' achievement is unsatisfactory overall. In 2003, students' performance in French at the end of Year 9 was well below that nationally. In 2002, students' GCSE French results were significantly below the national average. The percentage of students attaining grades A\*-G in French in 2002 was in line with the national average. In relation to other subjects in the school, GCSE performance in French was weak. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations indicate considerable improvement in the percentage of students attaining grades A\*-C, with all the students entered attaining grades A\*-G.
48. Students' attainment by the end of Year 9 in work seen during the inspection was in line with that expected nationally and their achievement is satisfactory. Standards attained by students by the end of Year 11 are below those expected nationally and their achievement is unsatisfactory. Students' understanding and use of the language are often hesitant because of the lack of French spoken by teachers in lessons. In a Year 10 lesson, introduction of key vocabulary in the written form resulted in uncertain pronunciation by the students. Written work in Year 11 indicates a predominance of drills and exercises, with little creative and extended writing. The needs of students with learning difficulties and the gifted and talented are not consistently planned for.
49. Spanish is offered to students in Years 10 and 11. Take up is low. The students' GCSE results in 2002 were below those attained nationally and in 2003 they declined further.
50. The quality of teaching and learning in French and Spanish is unsatisfactory overall, but is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Effective teaching is characterised by high expectations of what students can achieve, and opportunities for students to develop their use of the foreign language. Less effective teaching and learning occur when lessons are slow to start, students are not able to work independently and the English language predominates. Students' attitudes are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The development of cultural links with France is progressing satisfactorily.
51. Management of the department is unsatisfactory; the school has been unable to appoint a specialist subject leader. Use of assessment data to monitor students' progress and inform planning is inconsistent and unsatisfactory; marking does not always help students to develop and there is a lack of consistency in approaches to teaching and learning. The school's procedures for the disapplication of students in Years 10 and 11 do not meet the current requirements. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is well led and managed.
- Lessons are carefully planned with high expectations of students.
- Students have positive attitudes towards mathematics.
  
- The use of ICT in lessons is not consistently planned for.
- Assessment information is not used consistently to aid teachers' planning.
- Marking of students' work is inconsistent and generally inadequate in giving guidance on how students should improve their grades.

### Commentary

52. Attainment of students on entry to the school is below that found nationally. By the time students reach the end of Year 9, national test results are in line with those nationally for the percentage of students attaining Level 5, though they are still below for the proportion of students reaching the higher Level 6. Achievement is good. The upward trend in results at GCSE has been maintained, with the proportion of students gaining A\*-C grades in 2003 showing an improvement over the previous year. The percentage of students gaining grades A\*-G, which bettered national averages in 2002, improved in 2003. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.
53. The quality of teaching is good overall in Years 7 to 11. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and have high expectations of students. Lessons are well planned with three-part structures in line with the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Objectives are shared with students. Short-term targets ensure that students have specific goals to achieve throughout lessons. Students generally have positive attitudes to mathematics and this contributes towards a good pace being maintained. They take a pride in their work and presentation is generally good. Students are attentive when teachers are describing the next phase of lessons, resulting in students making good progress. The quality of marking of students' work is inconsistent, ranging between good and unsatisfactory. Where it is good, students are informed where mistakes have been made and what they should do to correct them. Where marking is unsatisfactory, work is simply ticked or crossed, or not marked at all. Teachers use clear and concise terminology ensuring students fully understand the meaning and significance of new vocabulary. Short-term targets are used within lessons to ensure pace is maintained. Good levels of questioning ensure students remain focused throughout lessons. Students are encouraged and are confident to respond, even when unsure of the accuracy of their answers.
54. The department is well led and managed. The recently appointed head of department has recognised the needs of the department and has initiated steps to ensure that any weaknesses are dealt with. She has a clear vision about the future of mathematics in the school. A good departmental action plan has been drawn up with appropriate targets, and these have been shared with staff. There is a strong team ethos within the department. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is appropriate for all students, including those with special educational needs.
55. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, with no unsatisfactory teaching observed. Assessment has also improved. The department has clear records of students' progress. However, analyses of areas of weakness in test performances throughout Years 7 to 11 have not been fully developed. There have been minimal adjustments to schemes of work to compensate for deficiencies in students' understanding. The department has successfully dealt with the issues of the last inspection with the exception of the use of ICT in lessons. While

graphic calculators are used by groups of students, there was no evidence of ICT being used in lessons and there was no reference to ICT in departmental schemes of work.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

56. There was limited evidence of mathematics going on elsewhere in the curriculum. There is insufficient emphasis in lessons of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy for mathematics across the curriculum. In design and technology, students were observed using drawing and space, using scale drawing and ratio. In a food technology lesson, students were weighing and measuring large and small volumes of ingredients. In science, there was evidence of mathematics in students' exercise books and, in one particular lesson, graphs, pie charts and bar charts were being used. A history lesson involved dealing with birth and death rate calculations. In art and design, students make patterns using symmetry, use simple perspective and are involved in three-dimensional representational work using cylinders, spheres and cubes.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good.
- Students' achievement is good.
- The staff are a dedicated team who are keen to improve standards and quality.
- The departmental development plan does not focus on raising standards and achievement and this is a weakness.
- Information from marking is not used to devise short-term, subject-specific targets to help improve students' progress.
- There is no systematic identification of, or provision for, gifted students.

### **Commentary**

57. GCSE results over time have been below the national average and have fluctuated between well below average and below average. Girls' results have been significantly lower than the boys'.
58. Standards in Year 9 are in line with those expected nationally, which represents good achievement for students in relation to their attainment on entry. Students with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority groups also achieve well. Students have a reasonable grasp of scientific facts and processes across the four areas of the curriculum. For example, higher attaining students could predict the reactivity of a series of metals from the Periodic Table and average students could identify and understand the issues associated with the abuse of alcohol and drugs by studying health education pamphlets.
59. Standards in Year 11 are below those expected nationally. These standards have been affected by the difficulties in recruiting specialist science teachers. Students' achievement is good overall in relation to their standards when they started the course; it is satisfactory for the higher attainers and good for the majority, who are average or lower attaining students. Students with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority groups achieve as well as their peers. Students show a greater knowledge and an increasing understanding of scientific ideas. They are able to draw on prior work to help understand topics. Overall, students' understanding of scientific concepts varies widely. For example, higher attaining students were able to explain the reaction of alkali metals in terms of their atomic structure but were less sure why surface

area affected the rate of reactions. Evaluation is a weakness in coursework which means that students cannot fully link their results with their predictions.

60. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; in lessons observed, it ranged from satisfactory to very good. Most students try hard, co-operate and behave well. In the best teaching, students' interest and concentration are engaged by enthusiastic presentations and a variety of methods that require their active involvement. Clear explanations improve students' understanding and tackle their misconceptions. Students' books are very well marked with detailed comments explaining errors and suggesting improvements. However, information from marking is not used to set short-term, subject-specific targets to improve students' progress. Students with special educational needs learn well because teachers know their respective targets and teaching assistants are well briefed before lessons. Teachers are aware of gifted students but these are not yet systematically identified and there is no specific provision for them. Literacy is well developed through the use of key words in context, although there is relatively little creative writing. Calculations and graphs are used appropriately. However, the use of ICT for teaching and learning is sporadic. Less effective lessons contained weaknesses such as an over-theoretical approach, too many undemanding worksheets or the use of time-consuming techniques, such as 'cut and stick', that do not advance students' progress.
61. Leadership is good. Although the departmental development plan does not focus explicitly on raising standards and quality, the staff work hard to do so. They are a dedicated team who work well together. The leadership of teaching and learning and the curriculum is imaginative and has produced some innovative ideas through the sharing of good practice. Management is also good. Examination results are carefully analysed and effective action to try to tackle underachievement is taken. The commitment to the Initial Teacher Training Scheme has helped to recruit several good teachers. Technicians and teaching assistants are very effectively deployed to help teachers work efficiently. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory; the examination results are similar due to the very high level of staff turnover but the accommodation and resources are much better.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**, but the subject is underdeveloped across the curriculum.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management of the department are good, reflected in above average standards and good achievement by students.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good, contributing to good teaching.
- Students' attitudes, enthusiasm and behaviour are very good, contributing to good learning.
- Students' ability to work independently is good, contributing to good learning.
  
- Access to facilities for all students hinders ICT across the curriculum, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment information does not consistently give guidance on how students can improve.

### **Commentary**

62. In the assessments at the end of Year 9 over the last three years, results have improved and have been above the national average. In the GCSE examinations, results have been variable between 2001 and 2003 but have been close to or above the national average. Students achieve well. In the GNVQ course, a 100 per cent pass rate was achieved with the majority of students achieving merit grades. Girls' results are better than the boys'.
63. From a low starting point on entry in Year 7, students are quickly brought up to a common point and they then make good progress in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, the majority have

achieved a good standard within the taught units. They experience all strands of the ICT National Curriculum and can competently use their skills. They develop good researching, wordprocessing and desktop publishing skills. Projects are challenging and allow students to extend themselves. Standards in ICT in other subjects of the curriculum are variable; in some they are satisfactory and continue to improve, but not all subjects allow students their full entitlement to ICT.

64. In Years 10 and 11, all students develop their capability either through examination courses or life skills modules. Standards are good and continue to improve and students' achievement is good. Wordprocessing and desktop publishing skills are developed to a higher level. All students gain a good understanding of information processing and information systems. They are able to apply this knowledge to major projects, which are of their own choice, with real end-users. They provide a complete system answer, from identification of the problem to the final test and evaluation of their solutions. Coursework is a strength and many students produce high-quality work. However, some students are not completing all coursework sections. Standards in GNVQ courses are particularly strong and students can confidently present and handle information, as well as develop good hardware and software projects. Digital photography, photo imaging and music composition are used very effectively in other subjects and several subjects are developing the use of ICT as a learning tool. Access to facilities continues to be a problem and does hinder students' learning.
65. The quality of teaching and learning is good and, in lessons observed, ranged from satisfactory to very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and are confident in their delivery. Lessons begin with good, clear introductions and the identification of objectives. Data projectors and interactive whiteboards are used effectively when available. Students are attentive, concentrate well and are keen to learn. They are confident and can work independently. Good-quality support materials are provided to help students of all abilities. Students with special educational needs are fully included in lessons, usually without additional assistance.
66. Leadership is good. The subject is led by a dynamic and very experienced teacher, who has a clear vision for the future developments of the subject for the whole school. Use of the latest wireless technology is being developed with the clear focus of raising achievement in all subjects. Involvement in graduate teacher mentoring is keeping the department abreast of the latest developments in education. Management is good. Organisation is efficient and embedded in good practice. All staff have clear roles, share responsibilities, work as a team and support each other well. Very good documentation is in place and the needs of all students are considered sensitively. Target setting and monitoring of teaching are in place and procedures are kept under review.
67. Improvement has been good since the last inspection. There are now discrete lessons for all students, with further developments across the curriculum. There is a good range of GCSE courses. GNVQ is firmly established. The ratio of computers to students has improved and is now nearly 1:5, with wireless networks being developed. However, despite this favourable ratio, students are not experiencing their full entitlement across the curriculum as discrete ICT courses get first call on the facilities.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

68. Standards in ICT across the curriculum are above those expected. Where students have access to ICT facilities in their other subjects, they demonstrate good expertise and confidence with the technology and it contributes to the effectiveness of their learning in those subjects. In some subjects, however, insufficient use is made of ICT.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students develop a sound understanding of geographical skills and use this to achieve well in lessons.
- Students' attitudes to their work are very good.
- Teaching is good. Time in lessons is used effectively.
- Leadership and management are very good.
  
- Assessment data is not used with sufficient effectiveness to inform curriculum planning and this is a weakness.

#### Commentary

69. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is broadly in line with that nationally. Standards at the end of Year 11 were below national expectations in 2002. However, these students performed better in geography than in other subjects. In 2003, the number of students attaining an A\*-C pass rose significantly. As was the case in 2002, none of the students' results were ungraded. In both the national tests and GCSE examinations, the attainment of girls is significantly higher than boys.
70. In the lessons observed, the levels of attainment generally matched national expectations. In Years 7 to 9, effective use is made of the local area to develop enquiry skills and students can discuss their findings using appropriate geographical vocabulary. In Years 10 and 11, students have a sound knowledge and understanding of fluvial and tectonic processes and can explain their impact on human activities. Again, good use is made of the south-east region when analysing environmental issues. Work in exercise books is accurate and well presented and reflects a wide range of learning activities. In some lessons seen, there were missed opportunities for the development of literacy, numeracy and citizenship skills.
71. All students, including those with special educational needs, learn well. They are attentive in lessons and focus quickly on the tasks set. Both boys and girls show a keen interest in their work and respond well to supportive teaching although, on occasions, boys' literacy skills let them down. They work well collaboratively when required.
72. Teaching is good overall and the students achieve well as a result. There were no examples of unsatisfactory teaching. Where teaching is very good, there is a greater degree of challenge leading to the development of thinking skills. Teachers show good subject knowledge and the brisk pace of lessons ensures that time is used productively. There is good use of the interactive whiteboard as a teaching aid in geography lessons.
73. The department is very well led and managed. The group of teachers work well together as a team and have a shared commitment to raising levels of achievement. There has been good progress since the last inspection. However, the department is not consistent in its use of assessment in Years 7 to 9 and makes insufficient use of the statistical data available to produce more sharply-focused targets for teaching and learning.

## History

Provision in history is **good** with significant strengths.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching throughout the school leads to students achieving well.
- The curriculum is well planned, resourced and adapted to student needs.
- A good emphasis is placed on developing students' skills in communication and thinking.
- Assessment and marking are not focused sufficiently to help students to improve their work in Years 7 to 9.
- There is insufficient use of ICT provision and external visits to support students' learning.

### Commentary

74. Students enter the school with below average knowledge and understanding in history and, by Year 9, their work is close to but below national expectations, however this represents good achievement. In the GCSE examinations in 2002 and 2003, standards of attainment were in line with national expectations and, overall, achievement was again good. Although the subject is more popular among boys than girls, girls performed significantly better than the boys, and better than in their other subjects. Standards of work seen during the inspection were in line with national expectations in Year 11. Students are well prepared for examinations and coursework assignments. Boys' standards are higher in the investigation of historical sources, and girls' in extended writing.
75. Achievement is good. Students make progress in lessons. Their recall of facts is good, and they are taught in manageable sections to build understanding of difficult topics such as changes in religion during the Reformation, or population growth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Years 10 and 11, students progress well in the coursework units, working out why women had to wait to get the vote, or why the Metropolitan Police had problems with solving crime in the Victorian period.
76. Teaching is good, leading to good understanding for all. Students can argue a case with reasons because teachers encourage them to think that there is no one answer to historical questions, about cause and effect, or the reasons why there has been change over time. Teachers manage classes and resources for learning well. Discussion and groupwork are now a strong feature throughout the school.
77. Under a new head of department, a strong team is moving forwards in a variety of initiatives. For example, the team is extending gifted and talented students through project work using library facilities to study castles in Year 7, with a further piece of research planned for Year 8 on the Renaissance. Experience and enthusiasm among the team result in very good links to initial teacher training. Leadership and management are good.
78. Improvement since the last inspection has been impressive in developing students' confidence to argue and discuss historical issues from Year 7. Yet, overall improvement is only satisfactory as not enough progress has been made in using ICT applications in history, or in adopting a common marking scheme using National Curriculum levels for assessments throughout Years 7 to 9.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The standards at Years 9 and 11 are in line with the standards expected by the locally agreed syllabus.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social, cultural and citizenship development.
- Leadership and management are good.
  
- The time for the subject in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

79. The GCSE students achieve standards broadly in line with those nationally. The standards in Years 9 and 11 are in line with the expectations of the agreed syllabus and show very good achievement in relation to students' attainment in the subject on entry to the school. In Year 9, most students can recognise similar beliefs and values found in different religions, and identify distinctive features of Christianity and other major world religions. In Year 11, they can demonstrate how religious beliefs and values influence attitudes on questions of human rights.
80. Achievement at Years 9 and 11 is very good. Students respond well to the high expectations of their teachers and the pace and variety of activities in lessons and behave very well. Students benefit from lessons with clear outcomes and enjoy paired work that allows them the opportunity to test out their ideas before writing. The use of homework is good and helps extend and consolidate learning. Common assessment tasks assess knowledge and understanding and enable teachers to set targets to raise attainment. The attainment and achievement of students with English as an additional language is in line with that of their peers. Students with special educational needs make good progress towards their targets.
81. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In lessons observed, it was always good, often very good and sometimes excellent, with innovative ways of involving students actively in their learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan and prepare lessons well. They have a consistent approach to topics and share best practice. Every opportunity is used to develop students' self-worth by valuing their efforts and respecting their views. There are excellent opportunities to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life. The consideration of moral and ethical issues, such as those surrounding euthanasia, helps students' moral and social development. Learning about aspects of major world religions increases students' cultural awareness and understanding of how belief influences lifestyles.
82. Leadership is good. It gives a clear direction for the subject and provides the drive to raise standards. Management is good and the department works very well together. Monitoring and evaluation have focused on teaching and learning to be more effective and to raise standards.
83. The department has improved well since the last inspection. Statutory requirements are now met. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural and personal development and to citizenship.

## Example of outstanding practice in religious education

### Religious education Year 8. Lesson extract on how the synoptic gospels were written. An innovative approach to the topic.

To illustrate how the synoptic gospels were written, the teacher selected three students to leave the room. A member of the class was asked to mime making a sandwich to the class and to the first of the three students from outside. This student then mimed well what he had observed to the second student and the class. The third student repeated this action in a different way. The teacher established that each presentation had similarities and differences to the original. Then a volunteer represented Mark, two students stood each side of him representing Matthew and Luke, they put a hand on Mark's shoulder to show they had used his version of events. A student representing another source stood where Matthew and Luke could touch him, to indicate they had both used this source. The class grasped the symbolism. Then a student stood next to Matthew to show he had his own additional source. This was repeated for Mark. This enabled the class to understand the synoptic gospels and their place in the story of Jesus and why there are similarities and differences in the three accounts.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have a good choice of courses In Years 10 and 11.
- GCSE results are in line with the school and national averages and some students now gain the highest grades.
- At the end of Year 9, students' attainment is in line with national expectation and achievement is good.
- Teaching is good, enabling students to learn well.
- Although computers are used in lessons, there are inadequate facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) and this is a weakness.

#### Commentary

84. In the GCSE examination, results by subject in design and technology vary year on year because the makeup of the groups varies too. The overall results are satisfactory, in line with national averages overall and very similar to students' grades in their other subjects. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall.
85. At the end of Year 9, students' attainment is in line with national averages at Level 5 and above. This masks the fact that there are few very high levels when compared with the national averages but students come into the school with lower than average prior attainment, therefore, achievement is good. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve at a similar rate to that of their peers.
86. This improved performance results from good teaching with effective teaching materials, real expertise and a genuine commitment from staff who willingly give additional help out of class. During the inspection, teaching was good and shows significant improvement from some of the work seen in books last year. Assessment is helpful to students but marking is not sufficiently consistent in regularly correcting students' mistakes and misunderstandings. Learning is good and students show maturity, listening well and working quickly to make the best progress they can. Their relationships with their teacher are good; teachers have very high expectations of the quality of their work and behaviour and the students respond very well.

87. There is good leadership of the team of proficient teachers and day-to-day matters are managed well. The level of resources is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient computers, although the number is increasing, and this restricts the proper use of computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM), which should be taught, and there is a shortage of modern materials. The new food rooms are good but the older rooms are cramped and restrict the range of resources that can be made available to the students. The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are higher than in many other subjects in the school and, by Year 11, are above those nationally.
- Teaching is good overall, with some very good teaching and high expectations.
- Challenging and very interesting schemes of work as well as other learning opportunities are planned.
- In Years 7 to 9, teaching methods encourage students to develop independent learning skills.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and they work hard in art and design.
  
- Opportunities for personal, spiritual and oral development and citizenship are not consistently planned for.
- There is no specific planning to extend gifted and talented students.
- There are insufficient resources in the department for the appropriate development of ICT skills.

#### **Commentary**

88. Students in Year 9 reach standards that are above the national average. Given that they enter with below average attainment, they are achieving well. Students learn to draw, use colour and manipulate a range of other media with confidence and skill as the result of good and very good teaching, demonstrations and teacher support. They learn to work effectively as individuals and in small groups. Homework, linked to classwork, is set and marked regularly. Students know their levels of attainment and how to improve their standards. The access to computers and relevant programs, as a means of supporting and extending students' work, is restricted in the teaching rooms. Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve at a similar rate to that of their peers.
89. Overall, students in Year 11 are working at levels that are above the national average. Results at GCSE in 2003 showed that high standards are being maintained. Students have developed good skills in drawing, painting, printmaking and three-dimensional materials. They have the ability to organise their own learning. They demonstrate high levels of presentation. They take great care in their finished work, which is influenced by a strong personal or cultural theme, or the work of famous artists. The exciting and vigorous work resulting from the study of masks and gargoyles is a very good example. Those who are gifted and talented are not challenged sufficiently.
90. Teaching and learning are well managed and organised and are good overall. Teachers have high expectations of all students who are informed of their working levels and made aware of the criteria used to assess their work. Lesson plans in all year groups are insufficiently focused on students' personal development regarding oracy, spirituality and citizenship. Data emerging from well-planned assessment procedures is not used sufficiently to sharpen the focus of the department's annual curriculum review.

91. Student attitudes and working relationships are very good. Teachers have created a very good climate for learning. Students respond with interest and enthusiasm. They behave very well.
92. Art and design makes a good contribution to students' social, moral and cultural education as well as the ethos of the school through the range of good displays in art rooms and public areas.
93. Art and design is very well led and managed by a very experienced and talented specialist who sets and maintains high standards. Organisation and planning are good. United under strong leadership, a team of diverse yet complementary specialists have established a fertile learning environment in which art and design education can flourish.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good, enabling all students to achieve well.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good – it is varied and wide-ranging.

### **Commentary**

94. Standards overall match those nationally for all schools. Teachers' assessments of Year 9 students in 2003 showed a high proportion reaching Level 5 or higher. Most current students demonstrate these standards too and standards are above those expected nationally. Their responses to music heard and the use of terms they learn are strengths. Comparative weaknesses are the use of notation without note names and too little use of computers for music making. GCSE results show that the proportion of candidates gaining A\*-C grades has varied in recent years, but the A\*-G proportion is above the national average. In 2002, results were above the national average for all schools. Boys and girls in Years 10 and 11 now work at least at the level expected nationally overall.
95. These standards represent good achievement for younger students, few of whom arrive with developed skill, knowledge or understanding of music. Achievement of most in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Those identified as talented rise to the challenge of extended tasks and thrive in the many performing groups. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as others. The performance of boys and girls is similar.
96. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11 and they are good overall. When teaching is at its best, strengths are the very good relationships, high expectations of students' behaviour and effort, very good planning and the effective use of time and resources. With GCSE classes, further strengths are the promotion of thinking skills and helping students to feel more confident. Where teaching does not reach this high standard in Years 7, 8, and 9, challenge is more limited, teachers talk more than is necessary and time allowed for different activities needs adjustment to be more effective for learning.
97. Leadership of music, within performing arts, is very good. It is pro-active and imaginative. Courses and schemes are constantly monitored and revised if this is expected to raise achievement and standards. Opportunities are sought to extend learning experiences with visits, workshops and staff development. The use of publicity, in school and beyond, to celebrate success assures a high profile for music and drama.

98. Management of music is very good. Systems are devised which enable efficient use of time, space and resources by all members of the team. This includes eleven instrumental teachers and staff covering lessons when necessary. The use of assessment to promote learning is very good in all years. Areas needing development, on which action is already taking place or planned, are the use of computers and the refinement of assessment up to Year 9 to match standards expected nationally.
99. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained and teaching improved. Schemes of work in Years 7,8 and 9 are of very good quality and firmly based on the National Curriculum. Accommodation is now very good. Extra-curricular provision is attractively diverse, including samba, African drumming and an 'ostinato' band. Although the provision of ICT resources has improved, it is not yet sufficient to allow their use for music making in all years.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The achievement by the students in Years 7 to 11 is good.
- The students' attainment in Years 10 and 11 is above that expected nationally.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Schemes of work do not provide planned opportunities for teaching the evaluative component of the National Curriculum, literacy and numeracy skills, and this is a weakness.
- There is insufficient analysis of assessment data to set targets for students in the examination classes.

### **Commentary**

100. Students' attainment on entry, in Year 7, is below average. This is the result of lack of experience in some areas of the National Curriculum before joining the school. By the end of Year 9, students attain average standards and their achievement is good. Boys and girls build a secure knowledge of fitness and are able to warm up independently and effectively. Students gain this knowledge in their fitness lessons and through teachers' insistence on thorough warm-up activities at the start of every lesson. Students in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards because they continue to improve their games and athletic skills in core lessons. Students' analytical skills are not as well developed as their performance skills and there is a lack of emphasis in promoting this strand of the National Curriculum in lessons. Analysis of the GCSE results in 2003 indicates they are likely to be above the national average and an improvement on the previous year. The positive attitudes of students and their high practical expertise, linked with the extra help provided by their teachers, has brought about steadily rising standards. Individual students and teams achieve high standards in regional and county competitions in athletics, cricket, gymnastics, football, netball, hockey and rugby. The attainment of these talented students is well above the national average and they benefit from the very good opportunities offered by their teachers. The achievement of students with special educational needs is in line with those of their peers in most cases. The attainment of the boys and the girls is similar.
101. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was good. Students benefit in their learning because most year groups are divided by ability. This is a positive strategy that promotes the learning of all students. Not enough attention is given to setting different tasks to match the differing needs of students. However, in the majority of lessons, teachers circulate well to extend the more able and to help those students finding the activity difficult. Teachers have high expectations and encourage students well but do not always use their assessments

to respond or plan for individual needs. Students have very good relationships with their teachers. This benefits their learning and allows teachers to manage successfully the unco-operative behaviour of a few students.

102. The head of department provides clear educational direction and very good leadership for the subject. Good improvements have been made since the previous report. Baseline testing has been established in order to assess students' standards on entry. Means for assessing students' progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 are being developed to provide consistent and accurate results. The analysis of statistical information does not yet provide information to ensure a more effective means for tracking students' progress in examination classes.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject is managed well and the subject leader has very good vision for future development.
- A thorough audit of the curriculum has identified five main subjects where citizenship is planned, taught and monitored.
- A specialist teacher has recently been appointed.
- Life-skills lessons for Years 10 and 11 include units of citizenship taught by specialist teachers.
- The time allocated in Years 7, 8 and 9 is very short.
- Teachers and students are insufficiently aware of all opportunities that can be taken to become informed citizens.

### **Commentary**

103. Students begin the study of citizenship with below average levels of attainment and they reach standards that are in line by increasing their knowledge as they move through the school. The achievement of the majority of students is satisfactory. However, many students remain unaware of the relevance of citizenship to their everyday lives because the subject is new and is not yet fully embedded into the curriculum.
104. Students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, are developing understanding because of the progressive units of work planned by the subject leader. The interesting life-skills course delivered in Years 10 and 11 includes units of citizenship that are taught by specialist teachers. Their very good expertise gives students a clear understanding of ethical, cultural and political issues. The skills of enquiry and communication are not yet sufficiently developed by students in Years 7, 8 and 9 because the short time for study makes it difficult to thoroughly investigate topics and to generate independent learning activities. In the best lessons when stimulating resources are used, students are interested and achieve well. However, a minority of students in Years 10 and 11 do not respect, value and listen to the views of others.
105. The subject leader has a very clear vision for future developments and has worked hard to raise the profile of the subject by extensive planning and the provision of training for all teachers. The benefits of these initiatives are not yet consistently seen in the quality of teaching, which, overall, is satisfactory but which varied from unsatisfactory to excellent during the inspection week. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen when students' behaviour was not managed effectively and the resources used were uninteresting.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### *Level 3 GCE AS-level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	10	50	90	10	42.7	16	39
History	5	100	91.8	0	37.2	26	37.8
Mathematics	5	20	74.2	0	34.3	4	31.3
Sports/PE Studies	5	40	88.2	0	27.7	10	33.8
Business	10	40	87.1	0	16.5	24	60.1
Health and Social Care	7	92.9	90.1	0	16.3	57.1	62.5
Art and Design VQ	23	100	89	30.4	27.4	80	69.4
Information Technology VQ	24	100	84.3	42.9	24.5	85.7	64.3
Travel and Tourism VQ	7	57.1	88.1	0	15.7	22.9	61.4

### *Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	7	85.7	96.1	14.3	48.7	71.4	85.1
Biology	6	50	91.6	16.7	36.3	33.3	74.1
English Literature	6	100	98.5	50	43.7	83.3	84.3
Design and technology	5	100	95.3	20	35.5	52	76.5

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well in response to good teaching.
- Leadership and management are good.
- The assessment of students' work is very good.
- Student attitudes are positive.

#### **Commentary**

106. Recent examination results at Advanced Level indicated that fewer than average students achieved the higher grades in English literature. However, the standard of work of students currently in Year 13 is in line with expectations, reflecting a rising trend in attainment. Most importantly, students of both genders achieve well in relation to the standards they achieved at GCSE level. This is the result of the good teaching and learning which take place and also a result of the success of the leadership in developing the expertise necessary for teachers to manage the introduction of relatively new syllabuses. The great majority of students are particularly successful in debating and making informed judgements on the range of texts which they analyse. They are able to substantiate their personal opinions on works as diverse as Shakespeare, nineteenth century Romantic poetry and the dour pessimism of Philip Larkin's verse. Written work is well structured and appropriately analytical. The level of achievement has steadily risen during the previous three years.
107. Teaching and learning are good, contributing directly to this good progress. An important characteristic of the teaching is the very good assessment; work is marked very thoroughly and students value the constructive comments and clear focus on precise assessment objectives. This helps students to improve the accuracy and relevance of their written work. Teachers also use challenging questioning effectively to extend understanding, as in a Year 13 lesson analysing key themes in Shakespeare's 'Othello'. Above all, students value the active learning which results from the emphasis which teachers put upon independent research and constructive debate. The results are evident in the confidence with which students articulate their opinions and substantiate them with textual references. Where parts of a lesson are teacher directed, students respond very well to the enthusiasm and expertise of the presenter.
108. The leadership and management of the department are good. The attention given to targeting course objectives, ensuring good professional development and updating teachers' awareness of syllabus requirements, has been a significant factor in driving up achievement. Students' enjoyment and understanding are increased by visits such as that to a war poetry exhibition at the Imperial War Museum.
109. Progress and the quality of teaching remain as good as they were at the time of the previous inspection. However, overall standards have risen and, therefore, there has been a good improvement.

#### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

110. Language and literacy skills are satisfactory but in some cases hinder students attaining the highest grades.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good.
- Students exhibit an obvious enjoyment of the subject.
- The department is well led and managed.
  
- There was no evidence of ICT in lessons or planning.
- Examples to aid teaching are not being pre-selected before the lesson and this adversely affects the pace of progress.

### **Commentary**

111. Results in the sixth form are below the national averages at both AS and Advanced Levels with a number of students gaining an ungraded classification. However, it is recognised that GCSE grades in mathematics gained by these students were lower than national expectation, and some had not been exposed to the depth of knowledge and understanding that is generally expected of a potential Advanced Level student.
112. Teaching and learning are good overall and were sometimes very good in the lessons observed. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good and they provide specific pointers or hints to enable students to arrive at general solutions. This was particularly noticeable in an AS Level class where students were experiencing difficulty in understanding vectors in the abstract. The teacher was able to illustrate specific concrete examples which enabled students to appreciate the concept being taught. In all cases, teachers showed high levels of perseverance, using supportive examples to clarify situations. Students were involved throughout the lessons and showed good understanding of previous work. They also exhibited an obvious enjoyment of the lessons and had a good rapport between themselves and teachers. Students' positive attitudes to mathematics resulted in a good pace being maintained. Students made good progress due to the teachers' input and their own willingness to fully participate in lessons. Planning was well supported by the teachers' choice of examples. However, where examples were not carefully pre-selected before the lessons, the pace of progress suffered. No evidence of ICT was observed in lessons or in the planning. However, the head of department intends that the whole department be trained in how to incorporate ICT in lessons. She has already distributed lists of useful websites to teachers.
113. The head of department is fully aware that standards in the sixth form are below national averages. However, in the short time she has been in post, she has initiated changes which have started to have a beneficial affect. For example, sixth-form teaching is now shared between teachers, each teacher focusing on particular aspects of the course.
114. The Advanced Level group is much smaller than that studying for the AS Level. As a result, teaching is almost conversational in style, enabling the teacher to give more individual attention to students. In the AS Level class, which is larger, more whole-class teaching takes place. However, in both year groups, students learned effectively and relationships with teachers are very good.
115. Provision is good in the sixth form. Standards are improving and good teaching results in good progress being made by students.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

116. There was minimal evidence of mathematics being included in teaching and learning elsewhere in the sixth-form curriculum. This mirrors the situation in the main school. Areas where the use of mathematics was observed included science, in particular biology, where students were constructing accurate bar charts and were also producing graphs illustrating exponential growth. In health and social care, students were calculating pulse rates and, in leisure and tourism, a class was using percentages.

## SCIENCE

### Biological science

Provision in biological science is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good with excellent features.
- High-quality comments on class work are substantially helpful to students in their learning.
- The development of students' skills of analysis and evaluation is good because experimental methods have been taught well.
- The organisation of students' work is very good in helping to raise their standards.
  
- Standards in human biology and environmental science are not yet sufficiently high.
- Learning targets for individual students are insufficiently focused.
- Students' involvement is too limited in some unimaginative lessons, which thwarts their learning through debate and challenge.

#### Commentary

117. Advanced Level results in 2002 were low in human biology but improved in 2003. Although no-one in 2003 achieved grades A or B, all the students passed the examination. In relation to their GCSE results, they did well. AS Level results were below average at A-B grades in 2002 and a few students did not complete the course but, in 2003, almost all did. Environmental science was also studied in 2003. At Advanced Level and AS Level, results were below the national expectation, mainly because students did not achieve the highest grades. Results, overall, have been adversely affected by an unusually high turnover of staff.

118. Standards of current students are below those expected nationally for the course. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. Assessments, so far, show that all are likely to pass the examinations. They made very good progress because of their teacher's expert planning of challenging activities that demanded much of them. A teacher's striking subject expertise helped their progress in understanding the impact of government initiatives upon farming. There is scope now for more debate and challenge of assumptions throughout lessons.

119. Overall, Year 12 students are achieving well. A significant number are successfully moving on from their GCSE work into new areas. The actual rate of progress is strongly linked to how imaginatively teachers involve students in confronting new ideas. They made excellent progress in learning about how DNA replicates because highly effective teaching speedily led them through activities that sharply involved them in grappling with complex ideas. They enjoyed arguing about the best way of using new technical language, thus widening their vocabulary whilst increasing understanding. Students in another lesson had difficulty recalling knowledge well and, in particular, applying it since they did little more than make notes in response to focused questions.

120. Analysis of their work shows that students have very good opportunities to learn more about scientific methods. The presentation of their investigative records is praiseworthy. The very

best work, investigating the activity of catalase enzyme, makes hypotheses explicit, conclusions consistent with results and very good critical evaluations. Support is thorough in helping those who have difficulty justifying variables, or who are slower at recognising anomalies in results. Work is usually highly organised, reflecting a high degree of commitment and diligence from students, which helps their reflection.

121. Teaching is good overall with notable examples of very good and excellent features, all reflected in the quality of students' learning. The best teaching has high expectations of what students are capable of achieving, has clearly-planned, stimulating and sometimes imaginative activities. In these lessons, students were constantly and energetically involved. There is a close rapport between teachers and students, which substantially helps them to hurdle over difficult work, like learning about the politics of agriculture. They also patiently attend well to tedious sessions. Marking is constructive and consistent. It gives students clear indications about how well they are progressing and, in encouraging further progress, causes them to reflect.
122. New to the position, the head of department is keen to lead and develop the management role. A clear commitment to raising standards already exists. Good use is being made of assessment information to check the general progress of individual students, but the department is not yet used to identifying specific targets that sharply focus on learning particular aspects of the subjects. Several visits and residential fieldwork in Suffolk enrich students' experiences, although library books and periodicals are not sufficiently up to date or of sufficient variety for Advanced Level work.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

123. Years 12 and 13 lessons in vocational courses were sampled. Students' results are well above the national average and are within the range of the top quarter of schools across the country. Teaching is a strength and students are enthusiastic, confident and independent users of ICT. Their coursework is of a very high standard.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

124. Sixth-form students demonstrate good ICT skills in their subjects and this supports their learning very well.

## **HUMANITIES**

In humanities, history was a focus and sociology and religious education were sampled. In sociology, one lesson was observed in which students achieved well in response to good teaching. Provision in religious education is satisfactory. The subject is tackled through a specific conference. There is planning to increase the provision by adding a module to the work in personal, social and health education.

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well in response to good teaching.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Assessment of students' work is very good.
- Students have very good attitudes.

## Commentary

125. Standards are in line with those expected of 18-year-olds nationally, in the key areas of knowledge, understanding and ability to evaluate evidence. This confirms the recent Advanced Level results, which in 2003 continued a trend of demonstrating a good percentage of higher grades, and reflected a rising trend in student achievement. Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE standards, and this is principally due to good teaching. There is no particular trend in attainment by gender. Students have a good command of higher-level skills. For example, they have a good appreciation of different interpretations of events, such as the Norman Conquest, and show an understanding of how and why the reputation of an individual such as King John has changed over time. Most students express themselves well in debate and write effective essays and structured answers, partly because the teachers give considerable attention to the relevant assessment objectives and the ways in which students can produce an analytical response.
126. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers convey their very good subject knowledge well through questioning and explanation. Their challenging expectations produce a good response from students. The teaching is particularly effective in getting students to research, to think independently and analytically, or to work collaboratively. This emphasis on independent, active learning is greatly appreciated by students, and the positive attitudes in lessons contribute considerably to the good achievement. Teachers also use resources effectively to increase understanding, for example in a Year 12 lesson in which the teacher used video and a variety of written sources as a basis for students' investigation into the dispute over the succession in 1066. The marking of work is very good; students are left in no doubt about the quality of their work and how they can improve.
127. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department is building on existing strengths, by ensuring good professional development, for example helping both teachers and students to acquire a good understanding of examination requirements. Students also benefit from visits; for example, they enjoy visiting the archives at Canterbury in order to handle evidence at first hand.
128. Advanced Level history was not offered at the time of the previous inspection and therefore no judgement is possible on improvement.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design and music were focus subjects for the inspection. Performing arts and photography were sampled. In performing arts, results are well above the national average because of very good teaching. Students achieve well, responding to good teaching. They show enthusiasm and work hard, many intending to study further and make their careers in the arts.

Photography is a well-established, well-organised and successful course.

### Art and design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching is good, with some very good features.
- Independent learning skills are well developed.
- There is a challenging curriculum with good additional learning opportunities.
- Students have very positive and enthusiastic attitudes.

- Opportunities for students' personal development are not sufficiently planned for.
- There are inadequate resources for ICT to support and extend learning in teaching rooms.

## Commentary

129. Students in Year 13 are working at levels that are above the standards expected nationally. With well-established skills in independent learning, students explore and select visual information in relation to their own ideas. They manipulate a wide variety of materials and processes to communicate their ideas successfully and skilfully. The course content is extremely varied and very interesting. Students' work in both two- and three-dimensional media shows imagination, inventiveness and confidence. Research and experimentation are extensive, sometimes prolific. The re-introduction of life drawing would provide greater opportunities for the advancement of gifted and talented students. Results in previous years have been well below the national average, mainly due to the lack of grades at the highest level.
130. Teaching is good, sometimes very good. Learning is well managed and organised. The specialist teachers are very enthusiastic and have very high expectations of all students. Students are well informed of assessment criteria and regular feedback encourages improvement. Students' knowledge, understanding and levels of appreciation are extended by visits to galleries and the opportunities provided to study the roles and status of artists in society.
131. Teachers have created a very good climate and specialist environment for sixth-form learning within an existing art room. With ready access to this area, students respond with enthusiasm and commitment. They also provide inspirational role models for students in other year groups working nearby.
132. Leadership and management of the course are very good. The head of department provides a clear vision and direction for the subject. Organisation and planning are very thorough. A fertile, colourful, lively learning culture and exciting learning opportunities fully engage the learners. The current sculpture project and the development of Byzantine tempera painting are very good examples.

## Music

Music is offered at AS and Advanced Level. Groups remain very small but are sometimes boosted by students from partnership schools, to mutual advantage. Results in recent years have usually included As and Bs but numbers are too small for valid statistical analysis. The current Year 13 student is achieving well. Students contribute to, and benefit from, the school's good quality and wide-ranging extra-curricular work.

### Example of outstanding practice

**The organisation of the school drama production provides excellent opportunities for students to demonstrate independence and take real responsibility.**

Auditions for the school production are posted. Hordes of students arrive at lunchtime. One by one they enter the drama studio – where eight Year 12 students of performing arts conduct the auditions, efficiently and effectively, sitting at a long table, taking notes and conferring afterwards to determine who should be awarded the parts. This is part of their course. The director (the drama teacher) is outside. He has given each Year 13 student a detailed, written brief with a real budget. They are charged with full responsibility for costumes, sound and lighting. The whole enterprise shows a welcome fusion of sixth form and main school and of coursework and extra-curricular opportunities.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

### Leisure and tourism

The focus was on AVCE leisure and recreation and AVCE travel and tourism in Years 12 and 13, and GNVQ Intermediate leisure and tourism in Year 12. Physical education was sampled. One lesson was seen in which teaching and learning were good and students showed a keen interest.

Provision in leisure and tourism is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Community links, trips and work experience enhance the course very well.
- The links with the geography department are good.
- Shared teaching groups in Years 12 and 13 hinder attainment and progress.
- Recruitment and retention of students is unsatisfactory.
- There is no departmental development plan.
- The range of resources, including ICT, available for students is limited.

### Commentary

133. Results in AVCE and Intermediate GNVQ in 2002 are well below the national average, though over the previous five years they have been well above the national average. In AVCE in 2002, no student achieved higher than a D grade. In 2003, in Intermediate GNVQ, the grades were no higher. This reflects the attainment of the students on entry to the course. In lessons observed, students are achieving in accordance with their prior attainment.
134. Overall, students at both levels make satisfactory progress in lessons and in work seen. In AVCE, classes are very small, sometimes limiting the range of teaching strategies that can be used. In one Year 13 class, for example, there was only one student. In a satisfactory Intermediate GNVQ lesson, when students were able to work in a group to role-play tour operators and customers to develop key concepts of 'half board/full board, transfers, corporate hospitality', they made progress with communication skills and supported each other in evaluating the benefits of one operator against another. There is insufficient development of ICT and numeracy in the courses.
135. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but there are a number of weaknesses. Whilst the aims of the lesson are clear to the teacher, the students' understanding of them is sometimes confused. The range of teaching and learning strategies is limited and relies heavily on a teacher-led/dominated approach, which does not give enough opportunity to extend the students' thinking and background knowledge. On advanced courses, there is insufficient emphasis on analysis and evaluation in the lesson, though there is evidence that teachers' assessment of students' work is used to encourage higher-level skills. There is a heavy reliance on textbooks, though good contacts have been made with the leisure industry for vocational opportunities. Some group work and discussion occurs but it is not always well managed.
136. Management of leisure and tourism has some weaknesses. At AVCE Level, leisure and recreation and travel and tourism are taught in the same class in both Years 12 and 13. Teachers share units as well as classes. This impedes the progress of the students. The management of the course lies with the geography department, whilst some teaching staff are in the history department. One member of staff is on long-term absence. It difficult for the team leader to hold full, regular, focused team meetings because of the team's commitments to the other disciplines. The departmental handbook is brief and there is no specific departmental development plan.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The focus was on the Advanced Vocational Level in health and social care in Years 12 and 13 and the Intermediate Level health and social care in Year 12.

Provision in health and social care is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recruitment and retention of students at AVCE and GNVQ Intermediate Levels is good, with a gradually improving gender balance and rising standards of achievement.
- Good leadership and management create a consistent approach to assessment and record keeping.
- The use of assessment data to raise the performance level of individual students is good.
- Teachers do not plan sufficiently a range of tasks and resources to meet the different needs of students within the classroom.
- The range of resources, including ICT, available for students is limited.
- Accommodation is spread, without access to a common resource base.

### Commentary

137. Results in AVCE and Intermediate Level GNVQ in 2002 were below the national average, but over five years have been steadily improving. Achievement is satisfactory when account is taken of students' earlier attainment.
138. Students at both levels make good progress in lessons and in work seen. In one good AVCE lesson, they showed a good level of understanding, describing the advantages and disadvantages of particular patterns of communication, related to different care settings, with some students able to evaluate their relative advantages. They were able to link their local experience to the theory. Students develop satisfactory communication skills, through presentations and discussion. In a good GNVQ Intermediate Level lesson, the students, in twos or threes, presented the topic confidently to the group, using a range of visual aids they had produced and engaging the other students in feedback to evaluate their presentation. The use of ICT is limited and students have little opportunity to develop their numeracy skills.
139. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make their expectations clear and create a positive climate for learning. Relationships between teachers and students are good and students clearly enjoy the subject. Students support each other and are given the opportunity to work in pairs and groups and evaluate their work together. There is, however, an over reliance on textbooks, and handouts are not always appropriate in catering for the differing literacy capabilities of the students in the class.
140. Leadership and management are good. Assessment procedures are well organised and meet examining board requirements. Teachers meet regularly, and work well as a team, co-ordinated by the team leader, to check the quality of the students' assignments and plan for joint classes. They have built up very good links with the local Education Business Partnership and local health care organisations to make sure the vocational aspect is satisfactorily tackled. Students' progress is well monitored by using individual student performance data to compare current performance to predicted grades.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

The grades entered in the table (see below) should be identical to those in the *Record of Corporate Judgments* (RCJ).

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

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

*poor (6); very poor (7).*