

# ADDENDUM TO REPORT ON HILLVIEW SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

URN: 118922      INSPECTION NUMBER 259238

DATE OF INSPECTION: 20<sup>TH</sup> – 24<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2003

## PAGE 7

### SUMMARY

Replace the Leadership and Management paragraph with that below:

**Leadership and management overall are very good.** The headteacher's confident leadership is very good as he knows quite clearly how to nurture further improvements. Management is very good at all levels. The supportive governing body's work is excellent. It is quite clear how it wants the school to develop even further. Governors do not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

## PAGE 23

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Replace overall judgements under heading with those below:

Leadership and management overall are both **very good**.

The work of the governing body is excellent. Governors do not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

## PAGE 59

### PART D

Replace the line on governance with that below:

The governance of the school	1	1
------------------------------	---	---

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HILLVIEW SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

Tonbridge

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118922

Headteacher: Stephen Bovey

Lead inspector: Clare Gillies

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> October 2003

Inspection number: 259238

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

© Crown copyright 2003

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of students: 11 to 19 years

Gender of students: Female

Number on roll: 1212

School address: Brionne Gardens  
Tonbridge  
Kent

Postcode: TN9 2HE

Telephone number: 01732 352793

Fax number: 01732 368718

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Cllr Godfrey Horne MBE

Date of previous inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> May 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hillview School for Girls is a Performing Arts Specialist school which has Beacon, Artsmark and Sportsmark status and the Investor in People award. Since 2000, it has received two school achievement awards. In 2002 a national newspaper listed it as one of the best 200 maintained schools for A-level results. The number of students has increased every year since the last inspection to reach 1212, larger than average. The increasing sixth form, which includes six male students, has almost 200 students, including well over 100 in Year 12. The on-site nursery provides childcare for staff and is used by sixth-form students following childcare courses. Hillview is classified as a non-selective school. Students come from homes with an above average socio-economic context. Over 99 per cent of students are of white British origin, with just over 20 students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The very few students who do not speak English as their mother tongue, speak English fluently. The percentage of students on the school's register of special educational needs is well below average, as is the percentage of students with a statement of special educational need.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities*
20597	Clare Gillies	Lead inspector	
8992	Julian Vischer	Lay inspector	
4351	Jeanne Strickland	Team inspector	English
32362	Ken Warburton	Team inspector	Mathematics
22780	David Custance	Team inspector	Science
33193	Vera Bergersen	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32329	Andrew Stafford	Team inspector	Art and design
2714	Martin Patterson	Team inspector	Design and technology
3827	John Knight	Team inspector	Geography
10666	Patricia Wheeler	Team inspector	History Citizenship
15023	Ali Haouas	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
4288	David Williams	Team inspector	Music
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education Dance
27226	Richard Cribb	Team inspector	Religious education Special educational needs Personal, social and health education
3353	Anne Fenton	Team inspector	Performing arts Drama
5241	Cyndi Millband	Team inspector	Biology in the sixth form
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Business studies Information and communication technology in the sixth form
25551	Allan Hodge	Team inspector	Business studies in the sixth form

\*Subjects inspected in depth - most other subjects were sampled.

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Limited

National Westminster Bank Chambers  
Victoria Street  
Burnham-on-Sea  
Somerset  
TA8 1AN

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

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS</b>	<b>10</b>
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>15</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>ANNEX: BEACON AND PERFORMING ARTS SPECIALIST STATUS WORK</b>	<b>60</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### THE SCHOOL AS A WHOLE

#### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the school is very good** because standards improve each year the students are at school and they make very good progress. Teaching is very good, particularly in the performing arts. Leadership and management are very good. The school provides good value for money. The school's links with the community are exceptional, as is the positive atmosphere generated by the focus on 'stimulating creativity to raise achievement'.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- GCSE results are well above average. The sixth form is growing and results are above average. In all years, students achieve very well overall.
- Students are proud of their school and happy to be there. Their behaviour is very good and they are confident young people. They form excellent relationships with teachers and each other. In practically all lessons they work hard. Their determination and enthusiasm certainly contribute to the success of many lessons.
- Standards in the performing arts are exceptionally good. Students appreciate and enjoy all these subjects and the wealth of activities in the lunch hour and after school. In many lessons, students' enjoyment in learning is clear.
- The school's links with the community, other schools and colleges are excellent. These are underpinned by the school's Beacon and Performing Arts Specialist status.
- Teaching is very good. The inspection confirmed what students and parents think – that they are taught well. During the inspection teaching was at least good in over 70 per cent of lessons. Staff willingly give up time to run activities and to help students in many ways.
- Leadership and management are very good. The headteacher most effectively encourages staff and students to achieve higher standards. Teachers and support staff at all levels generate an expectation that any student can do well and succeed.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is very good.
- Standards and achievement in citizenship and information and communication technology (ICT) are not as strong as they are in other subjects.
- A minority of teachers does not match work carefully enough to the students' different levels of ability.

The school's effectiveness has improved well since its last inspection. The number of computers has increased and all students now have discrete ICT lessons. Standards and achievement have improved in this subject but staffing changes have interrupted progress; hence this area still needs attention. Overall, teachers and students are using modern technology more.

#### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	n/a	C	B	

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

**Students achieve very well in all years.** Standards of work in Years 7 to 9 are above average, as were results in the 2003 Year 9 National Curriculum tests. English results were well above average. GCSE results for 2003 are likely to be at least as good as those in the table above. In 2003 nearly

half the girls attained A\*-C grades in mathematics, science and English (despite a drop in this subject from 2002); a significant improvement. Standards of work in Years 10 and 11 are above average. A-level and Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) results improved in 2003 – 40 per cent of entries gained A/B grades. Standards are above average in the sixth form. In all years, standards are high in the performing arts. Relative to their other subjects, students in Years 7 to 11 do very well in dance, drama and design and technology.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.** The latter underpins the strong sense of community that is central to the ethos of the school and students' development. Students' confidence, self-esteem and relationships are excellent. Students' behaviour and their attitudes to school and work are very good. Attendance is above average and punctuality is very good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The quality of teaching is very good** with many examples of excellence, particularly in the performing arts, design and technology and geography. The quality of learning is also very good. Students enjoy many of their lessons; they are conscientious, attentive and keen to do well.

The curriculum is very good with a wide choice of academic and vocational subjects for GCSE, plus the bonus of dance and drama lessons in Years 7 to 11. Care, guidance and support are very good – students are happy and they feel safe and confident about their future. The school's partnership with parents is very good. Parents receive many interesting and informative school publications, although they would appreciate knowing more about their daughters' progress. The school's partnership with the community is excellent. Many teachers visit other schools, mainly primary ones, to share their expertise. Performing arts groups give much pleasure to other schools and the school offers classes, and an exciting summer school, for a wide range of ages, including adults.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management overall are very good.** The headteacher's confident leadership is very good as he knows quite clearly how to nurture further improvements. Management is very good at all levels. The supportive governing body's work is excellent. It is quite clear how it wants the school to develop even further. Governance is unsatisfactory only because it does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

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

Parents and students in all years are very satisfied with everything the school offers. They particularly appreciate the excellence in the performing arts and the confidence it instils. Parents rightly believe their children make good progress. Although a few students in Years 7 to 11 are proud to wear the school uniform, most are not happy with it. They feel it is neither comfortable nor adaptable for extremes of temperature. The inspection team acknowledges the students' views and recognises that the uniform is to be reviewed this year. There is no question that some of the toilets and changing rooms are poor.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- raise standards and achievement in citizenship and ICT;
- share the very good practice of those teachers who skilfully prepare work for students with different abilities;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- introduce a daily act of collective worship.



## THE SIXTH FORM

The growing sixth form now has almost 200 students (more than 100 in Year 12) including six male students. A very wide range of AS-, A-level, AVCE and childcare courses is offered.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is very good.  
Its cost-effectiveness is good.**

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards are above average and rising. Students achieve very well overall. In 2003, all those who wanted to go to university attained their required grades for their first choice places.
- Students enjoy being in the sixth form. They are mature and confident young people who contribute much to school life.
- Standards in the performing arts are outstanding.
- The school's links with the community, other schools and colleges are excellent. These are underpinned by the school's Beacon and Performing Arts Specialist status.
- Teaching is very good overall. During the inspection it was very good in a third of lessons.
- Leadership and management are very good and students receive much practical and caring support to achieve their goals.
- The curriculum is rich, with a good selection of vocational and academic courses, which a significant number of students combine.
- The on-site nursery is a superb resource for the increasingly popular childcare courses.

### 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 in depth.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Good.</b> Above average standards, very good achievement and good teaching and learning. Teachers share their enthusiasm for literature with students very effectively and students respond by working hard and with evident enjoyment. The library is not adequate for research and reference.
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Average standards and achievement, and good teaching and learning. Teachers provide well-structured and challenging lessons. Students enjoy the subject and readily contribute to discussions. They do not use ICT enough.
Science: Biology	<b>Good.</b> Average standards and good achievement, teaching and learning. Students reason out theories for themselves and tackle complex work, but their explanations are too superficial and they are not creatively involved in lessons.
Information and communication technology	<b>Unsatisfactory</b> (for AVCE, not GNVQ). AVCE: below average standards and unsatisfactory achievement, teaching and learning. GNVQ: average standards and good achievement, teaching and learning. AVCE work is not challenging enough; more specialist teachers are needed.
Humanities: Geography	<b>Very good.</b> Above average standards and very good achievement, teaching and learning. Very good practical and fieldwork. Clear and well-structured lessons. Enthusiastic leadership.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	No subjects were inspected in depth.
Visual and performing arts and	<b>Excellent.</b> Very high standards and excellent achievement. Very good

media: Drama	teaching and excellent learning. Lively and energetic teaching, visionary leadership, a superb studio theatre and committed students.
Visual and performing arts and media: Performing arts	<b>Very good.</b> High standards and very good achievement, teaching and learning. Dance, drama and music teachers bring their combined subject expertise to this successful new vocational course. Students design stunning sets.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel: Physical education	<b>Good.</b> Above average standards and good achievement, teaching and learning. Students' physical skills are better than their written work. Lessons have a good pace.
Business	<b>Very good.</b> Well above average standards, good achievement and very good teaching and learning. Stimulating teaching means that students learn with interest and enthusiasm.
Health and social care	No subjects were inspected in depth.
General education	No subjects were inspected in depth.

---

*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'.*

Most other subjects were sampled during the inspection. Small numbers take **French** and achieve well. **Physics** and **chemistry** also have small numbers; achievement was disappointing in these subjects, and in **sociology** in 2003. Teaching is good in **psychology**, and very good in **law**, where students achieve very well. Students are taught very well in **history**. They work very well independently in **religious education** where teaching is good. Standards are average in **design and technology**; students receive much effective professional support. Students achieve well in **art**, which is becoming more popular. In **dance** standards are very high. Students achieve well in **music** and **media studies**. Achievement is good in AVCE **leisure and recreation** and **travel and tourism**. The **childhood education** courses are very successful. All students take **general studies** in Year 12 and a few continue to A-level; results are below average but it is a worthwhile course.

## ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

**Advice, guidance and support for students are very good.** The team of tutors and other staff contributing, for example, to careers and university guidance, ensure that students are encouraged and supported to move on to worthwhile higher education or employment. Students are treated as young adults, which they appreciate. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities, such as being prefects or mentors, and they work sensitively with younger students.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

**Leadership and management are very good.** The head of sixth form and the tutors know all the students very well. The head of sixth form is very keen to see it increase and flourish. The governors and headteacher are enthusiastically supportive of this planned development. Sixth-form life runs smoothly and the temporary arrangements for the common room and study areas are managed as well as possible.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Well over 90 per cent of students enjoy being in the sixth form and feel that they are taught well. They find that their work is assessed helpfully and that they are encouraged to study independently and to research topics. Although one third of them noted in the pre-inspection questionnaire that they do not feel there is an adult in school they would turn to if they had a problem, there is no evidence that they are not encouraged and supported whenever necessary.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

*Terms used:* the term 'capped' average points score describes the total points students attain for their **top eight** GCSE subjects. The average points score relates to the total points students attain for **all** their GCSE subjects. **Value-added** describes the amount of progress students make, for example between their results at the end of Year 9 and their GCSE results two years later. Statements about **achievement** take these value-added measures into account, combined with how well students do compared to their ability.

Standards overall are **above average** in all years. Achievement overall is **very good** in all years. With minor fluctuations, the trend in Year 9 National Curriculum test results is upward, with the best overall points score ever in 2003. GCSE results were particularly impressive in 2001 and, after a dip, they picked up again in 2003. Sixth-form results improved in 2003. What is significant is that value-added measures consistently confirm that students do better compared to schools nationally, and often much better, as is likely to be the case in 2003.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 9 National Curriculum tests were above average in 2003. English results were well above average.
- The capped average points score GCSE results for 2003 is likely to be well above average. Despite a drop in English results, in 2003 nearly half the girls attained A\*-C grades in all three of mathematics, science and English, a significant improvement.
- In all years, standards are particularly high in geography, dance, drama and music. Relative to their other subjects, students in Years 7 to 11 do very well in dance, drama and design and technology.
- Standards and achievement in citizenship and ICT are not as strong as they are in other subjects.
- In 2002, a national newspaper listed the school as one of the best 200 maintained schools for A-level results. A-level and AVCE results improved in 2003 – 40 per cent of entries gained A/B grades.
- In 2003, all students who wanted to go to university attained the grades they required for their first choice places.
- The value-added between Years 7 and 9, Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form is well above that expected.
- Standards in citizenship and ICT are not as strong as in other subjects.

#### Commentary

1. The table shows that Year 9 test results shifted upwards from 2002 to at least above average in 2003. The overall points score for the three subjects combined was the best the school has ever attained. Particularly encouraging was the significantly improved percentage of students attaining the higher level; in all three subjects, over 40 per cent of pupils reached Level 6. All targets were met or exceeded.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.7 (32.8)	--- (33.0)
mathematics	35.1 (32.7)	--- (34.7)
science	34.4 (33.8)	--- (33.3)

*There were 199 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. Students with special educational needs achieve very well. In 2003 for example, 73 per cent of those with a reading age below nine raised their reading ages by six months following a programme of support. At the end of Year 9, 72 per cent of supported students achieved levels above those predicted for them in their English, mathematics and science results combined. The smaller number of GCSE students receiving support also attained good results. This very good progress is due to the extremely thorough diagnostic work, the quality of support and the caring and sensitive work of the whole special educational needs team.
  
3. Although the percentage of students attaining five GCSE grades A\*-C in 2003 did not meet the school's targets, the average capped points score held up well. The school knows exactly which students did not achieve as well as expected, for example getting four, rather than five, good GCSE grades. These students had poor attendance and/or were not well motivated when they were in class. Despite the disappointing drop in English and English literature results, nearly half the girls attained A\*-C grades in all three of mathematics, science and English, a significant improvement on the year before. The second table below summarises the key points about subject grades since 2001 and further information is in Part C.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	61 (57.4)	--- (49.9)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94.9 (95.5)	--- (90.9)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96.6 (99)	--- (94.6)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	38.6 (38.9)	--- (34.6)

**GCSE RESULTS 2001 – 2003 (percentage with grades A\*-C)**

**Bold shows where performance was above average in 2002 and likely to be in 2003**

	2001	2002	National 2002	2003	Comments
English language	80	56	57	57	*Subjects in the 2003 column where over 20% of grades were A*/A
English literature	79	60	62	54	
Mathematics	70	48	50	<b>58</b>	
Science (double)	75	<b>58</b>	50	<b>59</b>	Results exceed the national averages in many subjects. It is impressive that, except in English, they also exceed or match the national averages for girls, which are higher than those for boys.
Art and design	76	57	65	60*	
French	55	<b>56</b>	47	<b>55</b>	
Geography	77	<b>64</b>	56	<b>70*</b>	
History	80	<b>61</b>	58	<b>64*</b>	
Drama	73	<b>97</b>	69	<b>98*</b>	
Music	89	<b>94</b>	70	<b>92*</b>	
Food	57	<b>74</b>	52 for all DT subjects	<b>94</b>	
Graphics	85	<b>67</b>		<b>58</b>	
Resistant materials		<b>75</b>		<b>78</b>	
Textiles	69	<b>64</b>		41	
Physical education	94	<b>73</b>	54	<b>59</b>	Value-added in 2003 was particularly strong in drama, dance, geography and music. It was not as good as expected in art and both English examinations. Staffing problems, now resolved, contributed to the latter. A number of girls who took art had poor attendance. Those who attended regularly did well.
Business studies	81	58	54	<b>79*</b>	
Dance	71	<b>88</b>	51	<b>86*</b>	
Religious education	59	57	57	<b>92*</b>	
RE (short course)			50	<b>40</b>	
Spanish	Not taken		50	43	
Statistics	Not taken		68	<b>77*</b>	

4. During the inspection, standards were:
  - well above average in design and technology, dance, drama and business studies;
  - above average in English, science, geography, art, music and physical education;
  - average in French, Spanish, mathematics, ICT, history, religious education;
  - below average in citizenship.
5. During the inspection, achievement was:
  - very good in geography, design and technology, dance and drama;
  - satisfactory in ICT and GCSE history;
  - unsatisfactory in citizenship;
  - good in all other subjects.

### Sixth form

6. The table below shows that the school's overall points score was above the national one in 2002; it is likely to be in 2003 as well. Detailed information about subjects is found in paragraphs 136 to 190. During the inspection, the standards of work seen were above average in over two out of four lessons and students achieved well in the majority of them. National data is not available for 2003 but the school's analysis of value-added shows that students achieved particularly well in law, dance, English literature, drama, business studies, music, psychology and in AVCE performing arts, travel and tourism and leisure and recreation. Students did not perform as well as expected in French, sociology, chemistry, art, general studies and physics. Overall value-added has improved since it dropped below expected levels in 2000.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98.8 (98.7)	--- (94.8)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	40.2 (36.7)	--- (39.4)
Average point score per student	275.5 (276.3)	--- (263.3)

*There were 55 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

7. During the inspection, in the nine subjects inspected in detail, standards were:
  - well above average in business studies, drama and AVCE performing arts;
  - above average in English, geography and physical education;
  - average in mathematics, biology and GNVQ ICT;
  - below average in AVCE ICT.
 And achievement was:
  - excellent in drama;
  - very good in English, geography and AVCE performing arts;
  - good in biology, physical education and business studies;
  - satisfactory in mathematics and GNVQ ICT;
  - unsatisfactory in AVCE ICT.

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

Students' attitudes are **very good**, and **excellent** in the sixth form.

Their behaviour (including incidence of exclusions) is very good, and excellent in the sixth form. Attendance is above average and punctuality is very good.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (personal development) is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' confidence and self-esteem are exceptional.
- Students' relationships with others are excellent.
- The school sets very high expectations for students' conduct.
- The school stimulates a desire to learn extremely effectively.
- The school promotes and monitors attendance and punctuality very well.

### Commentary

8. The school encourages attendance very well, consistently reaffirming the importance of high levels of attendance as an essential part of good learning. This is laid out as an integral expectation for both students and parents and constantly reinforced throughout a student's life at the school. Parents and carers too are very responsible and support and encourage their daughters' attendance. This is reflected in the students' very good punctuality at the start of the day. Students are punctual for lessons which, despite the five minute gap between lessons, is commendable given the hilly and spread-out nature of the site. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

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

Authorised absence	
School data:	8.5
National data (2001-2002):	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	0.1
National data (2001-2002):	1.2

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

9. One of the most striking features of students' attitudes and behaviour is their maturity. This drives two essential qualities of the school. Firstly, it means that students repeatedly learn more in lessons. They make a substantial contribution to their own learning because of their very positive approach; their quiet concentration and perseverance bring the dividend of greater achievement. Secondly, it is reflected in the excellent relationships throughout the school. Students feel happy, secure and very well looked after. The school encourages good relationships and these contribute significantly to students' confidence and self-esteem. The relatively new and extremely promising student-to-student mentoring scheme, principally involving Years 10 and 8, is a fine example.
10. Staff act as very good role models and stimulate a desire to learn very well through, for example, the excellence shown in the performing arts and dance. These areas of the curriculum show students just how effectively they can achieve, regardless of their perceived or imagined weaknesses. But staff are also committed to running a very good range and number of clubs and extra activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, involving relatively large numbers of both staff and students. These have the same very positive impact on students' personal development.
11. The school sets very high expectations for students' conduct and works consistently and tirelessly to achieve them. As the table below shows, the number of fixed period exclusions is very low. The school deals exceptionally well with any form of harassment. Students know this and know that the school pursues a just and fair course. The result is that students are almost free from bullying. The strict enforcement of the uniform code reflects the school's high expectations for behaviour.

#### **Ethnic background of students (2003)**

#### **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	1087	10	0
White – Irish	1	2	0
White – any other White background	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	2	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	100	0	0

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

12. The school has a very strong identity of which it is proud. Students respond thoughtfully to opportunities to pray or reflect at the twice-weekly year assemblies. The use of a prayer book for students to enter their own private prayers is a very good way of developing their spiritual awareness. Several subjects, especially the performing arts and art, provide high levels of spiritual experiences within lessons and the curriculum. Other subjects do not search out ways in which they can contribute to students' spiritual growth – an area for development. Teachers value students' questions, often giving them time to reflect on their own thoughts and ideas.
13. A clear moral and social code is promoted consistently. Students know they are expected to behave well, contribute to school life and the community. They appreciate that they all have a role to play and are valued equally. The school develops their honesty, integrity, trust and respect very well. It also seeks to make them aware of moral choice. In religious education, students explore the morality of abortion, euthanasia, war and other controversial issues. During a geography lesson, students were challenged to evaluate sportswear, using criteria, among others, such as exploitation of workers, comfort and price. They explored the social and moral implications of their actions as consumers. Students do think about others. They participate in a huge range of fund-raising events for a number of charities throughout the year. The student mentoring scheme, mentioned above, provides the chance for students to make a very positive contribution to the social harmony of the school.
14. Assemblies, personal, social and health education (PSHE), religious education, English and citizenship lessons explore issues around racism and prejudice. There is no evidence that students are not tolerant. The very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated, though they do not celebrate and share their own distinctive cultural heritage with others. Students take part in culturally-based art, drama and music appreciation and performance. In art, a study of Holbein's 'The Ambassadors' allowed students in Year 10 to explore the cultural and social background of the masterpiece. In a geography investigation into the causes and effects of flooding in Mozambique, Year 11 students learned about cultural and social issues facing less economically developed countries. Opportunities to widen students' horizons about different societies are missed in some subject areas.

## Sixth form

15. Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent and they contribute much to the life of the school. They give up time to help younger students by supporting tutor groups and take on responsibilities in several areas. They help in the dining room and in supervising in the playgrounds. They also run the school houses which brings them into contact with younger girls, even though the system is not very active. In performing arts they work in the community (see Annex).
16. An excellent example of successful debate was observed in a Year 12 PSHE session. The tutor and students engaged in lively, energetic discussion about how progress should be monitored and targets set in the sixth form. All listened to each other and cheerfully agreed to disagree. Throughout, the invisible boundary between respect and familiarity was never crossed.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**.  
The quality of education provided in the sixth form is **very good**.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **very good**.  
The quality of learning is **very good**.  
The quality of assessment of students' work is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-qualified, enthusiastic, caring and diligent teachers.
- Hardworking, interested and attentive students.
- A mutual enjoyment of lessons, which is apparent in many lessons, especially those in the performing arts.
- Very good support for students with special educational needs.
- Not all teachers match work carefully enough to the different levels of ability in their classes.
- Assessment systems are workable, realistic and practical.

### Commentary

17. As the table below shows, teaching was at least very good in almost half the lessons seen during the inspection. It was clear, from discussions with students and examination of their books, that this is the normal pattern. This explains why students achieve so well and why they and their parents responded so positively to questions about teaching in the pre-inspection questionnaire.
18. Predominantly good or better teaching was seen in mathematics, business studies, design and technology, religious education and the performing arts, and in ten subjects altogether in Years 10 and 11. In these years two out of five lessons were at least very good and students' learning and achievement was correspondingly high, particularly in Year 10. The unsatisfactory lessons were not typical, largely explained by inexperienced teachers who failed to get as much out of the lesson as they should.

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 142 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
-----------	-----------	------	--------------	----------------	------	-----------



12 (8.5%)	34 (24%)	54 (38%)	37 (26%)	5 (3.5%)	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.

19. In addition to impressive formal qualifications and other attributes, such as advanced skills teacher status, many teachers keep themselves up to date and interested by contributing to the school's Beacon and Performing Arts Specialist status work in the community. Details of this are in the Annex. The overarching outcome is that teachers gain as much as they put in – picking up ideas from primary schools and other colleagues, sharing their expertise with adults and younger children and having fun at the same time. The school's encouragement of professional development also contributes well to the expertise of teaching and non-teaching staff (see paragraph 55 and the box below this paragraph). Some teachers are particularly skilful when using ICT: PowerPoint presentations, electronic whiteboards and other technologies, all of which make learning more interesting and accessible.
20. Students' determination and enthusiasm certainly contribute to the success of many lessons. They are shrewd in choosing GCSE option subjects, such as business studies, geography, drama and Spanish, where they know the teaching is often imaginative and lively. Their respectful, yet relaxed, rapport with teachers means that they are happy to answer questions, even if they are not sure of the answer. Teachers rarely raise their voices and address students as respectfully as they expect to be treated. Students observed: 'They're strict but it's a nice school to go to'. Clear evidence exists that teachers exploit students' confidence in speaking and making presentations:

**Performing arts skills enhancing teaching in other subjects**

In a Year 9 graphics lesson teachers made very good use of the students' confident acting skills. Groups of four performed presentations of their prototypes of new mobile phones. Each member of the group, through role modelling, demonstrated a particular design feature, for instance how a head-mounted support for the phone met a disability need. They delivered convincing demonstrations of their designs, complete with its technical specification. Then they answered very probing questions from the 'buyers' – the rest of the class. The teachers' very effective use of these role-plays made learning about what makes a successful design very real, meaningful and a great deal of fun! In a Year 8 art lesson the teacher referred to 'your knowledge of costume design and how shape can express topics and emotions.....You know that ballet utilises movement and lighting to achieve effects – I want you to think about that now'. Also in Year 8, in a project shadowing the Carnegie Award for fiction, students read seven books and subsequently hosted a day of drama and character study – their performing arts skills meant they carried it off really well. Role-play and empathy are regular ingredients of geography lessons.

21. Other highlights from some of the successful lessons seen during the inspection include:
  - several different activities in the hour, so that students were kept busy and alert;
  - dynamic and lively presentations so that students were interested from the first moment;
  - effective use of PowerPoint and electronic whiteboards, reflecting the high standards of presentation students should aspire to;
  - motivating demonstrations of high quality performance or work so that students aspire to excellence;
  - wise selection of texts that appeal to the students' interests;
  - providing students with a choice of activities so they can select the one that matches their preferred learning style;
  - noticing pupils who have not contributed as much as others in lessons and encouraging them to join in.
22. In all classes, even those which are formed on the basis of ability and performance, the range of abilities is quite wide. Some teachers, such as in art, and design and technology, are experts at knowing how to design and provide work that matches students' needs; others tend to teach with the average student in mind, so that higher ability students finish work too quickly. In mathematics, and a few other subjects, the lesson plans show how different abilities are to be considered, but the reality is that all students do the same work.

23. Students with special educational needs are generally taught very well, particularly in the learning support department. Here, teaching is highly skilled and finely tuned to nurture their learning. The lively, imaginative approaches used by a visiting teacher boost students' confidence and self-esteem by giving them encouragement so that they work well when they return to lessons. Teachers are generally very aware of the needs of those with special educational needs. In a dance lesson, the teacher adapted her teaching very sensitively to address a student's specific disability. Students' individual education plans generate good achievement – in Year 7 mathematics, clear targets ensure that all students know what they have to achieve and how their progress is judged.
24. Students' learning is strongly enhanced in most lessons where the skilled curriculum support assistants work closely with teachers, checking that students understand the work and can join in fully. The positive working relationships they have with students often mean girls deal effectively with their own unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour. One girl who took time out in the special needs office returned successfully to a lesson.
25. A new and less cumbersome assessment policy retains the principles of the former good policy. The unit record sheet (URS) remains a central feature. It effectively summarises work to be done, how it will be assessed, outcomes, students' reflections and targets negotiated between teachers with students. Information about students' attainment on entry to the school and at the end of Years 9 and 11, plus value-added data, is used well as a starting point to measure progress and set targets. Most departments operate the assessment system very well, particularly in art, dance, English, geography, history and physical education, but standards are not yet assessed in citizenship or PSHE. Parental involvement is seen as a crucial part of the assessment procedures (see paragraph 48). Teachers set well planned homework and most mark it helpfully and constructively.

### Sixth form

26. Recent A-level and AVCE results confirm that students are taught very well, particularly in business studies, geography, law, physical education and the performing arts. Reasons for the unsatisfactory lessons, in AVCE ICT, are outlined in paragraphs 156 to 159. Teaching is equally effective in Year 12 and Year 13 and students in both years study hard and appreciate the quality of education they receive. In the pre-inspection questionnaire it was striking how impressed and complimentary students were about the teaching.

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 55 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (5.5%)	15 (27%)	22 (40%)	12 (22%)	3 (5.5%)	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.*

27. Over nine out of ten students feel that the staff are experts in their subjects and the inspection confirmed their views (see paragraph 19). Characteristics of the very effective teaching and learning seen in the sixth form were:
- thorough analysis of answers to examination questions, stressing how to overcome weak areas, so that students learn through their own mistakes;
  - teachers knowing precisely when to intervene in discussions, so that most of the time students debate and argue amongst themselves;
  - encouraging students' thinking skills by requests such as 'Talk me through that';
  - developing students' independent research skills by setting interesting challenges which have direct relevance to the work required.
  - setting time limits for activities, so that lessons pass quickly and students have to be alert;

- reinforcing key concepts by regular reflection at the same time as making the links between elements of subjects clear;
  - knowing when to give subtle hints about work that students find difficult, so that they persevere with confidence but are not spoon fed.
28. Assessment of students' work is very detailed and based on the same URS used in the main school. At this level, discussion between teacher and student is a more central part of the process than in the main school. Tutors play a key role in having an overview of how students are progressing, academically and personally, and they do this well, using afternoon registrations to iron out problems. Four out of five students feel their work is assessed helpfully, that they are fully involved in setting their academic targets and reviewing their progress. They understand their predicted grades, based on their GCSE performance, but also appreciate that, as many students have done in the past, they should aim to exceed them.

## The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good**.

Opportunities for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities, are very good.

The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall, with some excellent and some poor features.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide choice of academic and vocational subjects in Years 10 to 13, plus the bonus of dance and drama lessons in Years 7 to 11. The new nursery is a key ingredient of the sixth-form childhood education courses.
- An enormous number of lunchtime, after-school and Beacon and Performing Arts Specialist activities.
- Unsatisfactory provision for citizenship, and too little time for ICT in Year 8.
- Exciting new buildings, computers, resources and equipment, such as electronic whiteboards, which have helped to raise standards.
- Despite being modernised the library is still too small and lacking stock.

## Commentary

29. Some imaginative curriculum design has supported the development of the Performing Arts Specialist ethos of the school. This helps students to prepare for further education as well as developing their self-expression and confidence. All students study dance, drama and music in Years 7 to 9 and these are popular GCSE options. GCSE drama and dance are taught after school as well, extending the combination of subjects students can choose. The already good range of GCSE and vocational courses is evaluated carefully each year. In September 2003 a double vocational business GCSE was introduced in addition to the popular GCSE in business studies. Opportunities for excellence in the performing arts are notable features of the curriculum at all key stages.
30. All students choose between French or Spanish in Year 7, and then add the other one in Year 9. Carefully planned innovations have offered students a wide range of opportunities for extra-curricular activity including summer schools, lunchtime clubs, Saturday classes and Easter revision programmes. Each department has listed the students it considers to be gifted and talented but so far no programme of special activities has happened. Teachers spot talented performing arts and physical education students and make sure they are challenged to achieve highly. Studying after school, a selected group of students take the separate sciences for GCSE, a good foundation for AS courses. In 2003, 30 students took GCSE statistics.
31. The collective worship provision is still unsatisfactory as students attend only one or two assemblies per week. Students in Year 8 only have one hour per fortnight in ICT. Achievement

in this subject is hampered by this timetabling – to be reviewed this year. The provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory and the school is considering whether discrete lessons, rather than topics being taught through PSHE, might be better. It was a positive step introducing the short course citizenship GCSE. However, it is a pity that only students taking the full GCSE religious education can choose to follow the course at present.

32. The purpose-built drama studio has certainly contributed to the achievement in this subject. The suite of well-organised design and technology rooms help students to be creative. The sports hall has made a wider range of physical activities possible, although some old changing rooms and toilets are in a poor state. Students with special educational needs have benefited from the new centre, where they make very good progress in key skills. The study support centre has helped individuals who need time out when difficulties arise in lesson times. This should, however, be manned at all times during the day, so that no student in distress is left unsupported. The new buildings will improve the enjoyment of learning significantly but, equally, staff do wonderful things in poor accommodation – inside the art rooms it is cheerful and covered in exciting art work.
33. Since the last inspection the school has continued to spend an above average percentage of its budget on resources; they are now good. This has improved the quality of education, particularly in English, science, design and technology, geography, French, Spanish and the performing arts. Significant improvements have been made in the range and availability of ICT equipment, particularly in science, and in equipment for performing arts and music technology.
34. The library, although still too small and not yet at the centre of learning, has been transformed into a well-managed and pleasant area. The number of computers and books does not meet the needs of many subjects, despite considerable expenditure and updating. The school has recently appointed a qualified librarian and teacher to take a lead in library developments, planned to be at the heart of the major new building project. The curriculum is significantly improved by the use of resources outside the school, such as museums, galleries and field-study centres.

### **Sixth form**

35. Each year the school tries to expand the subjects offered and, as the sixth form grows, more courses become viable. In September 2003 NVQs in French and Spanish started and AVCE ICT was introduced; GNVQ ICT being well established. AVCEs are also offered in performing arts, travel and tourism and leisure and recreation. With A-levels in law, general studies, sociology, psychology and media studies, on top of subjects offered for GCSEs, the curriculum is rich. The Diploma and Certificate of Childhood Education is described below:

Littleview nursery: a valuable sixth-form curriculum resource combined with a facility to support staff retention, both for Hillview, other local teachers and support staff with pre-school children.
--

The sixth form curriculum includes two CACHE (Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education) courses, one the equivalent of three A-levels, and students use the on-site nursery for all their lessons and some observations. The year-old nursery provides high quality childcare. It is very well run with three highly qualified staff, who liaise well with the CACHE teachers. The very positive Ofsted inspection in July 2003 stated that 'Parents cannot sing the staff's praises too highly'. The new librarian at Hillview accepted the post, and another member of staff returned to work at the school, because of the nursery. They do not have to pay for childcare during the school holidays or drive to childminders in the mornings. A one-way window just inside
---

the entrance of the nursery means that students can observe children unnoticed; the quality of their written work is very high because of this. One student is considering using the diploma as her qualification to go to university, to study primary school teaching and others have career plans in childcare. Thus, the school retains and attracts staff and provides a very worthwhile vocational course for the sixth-form curriculum.

36. Sixth-form students use all the same facilities as the main school. Their temporary common room and study rooms are reasonably well fitted out and will improve dramatically when the new building is complete. The equipment purchased for A-level media studies and music technology is raising standards in these subjects. An interesting and worthwhile development is the link with a local school which has different expertise in design and technology. Hillview students will have the option of studying silversmith work in another school.

### Care, guidance and support

Care, guidance and support are **very good** overall. The school ensures students' care, welfare, health and safety very well. The school provides very good support, advice and guidance for students based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development. The school seeks to involve students well in its work and development. Advice, guidance and support for sixth-form students are very good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Child protection provision is very good.
- Students have very good access to well-informed advice and guidance.
- Students are well supported by a trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school.
- The school operates very good induction arrangements.
- Students' involvement in the interviewing of new staff is an innovative way of seeking and acting on their views.

### Commentary

37. The procedures for child protection are very effective because of the high level of expertise and very good communication between key staff, and the mutual support and advice they can share. In addition, the governor with responsibility for child protection plays an active and knowledgeable role. This high quality provision extends also to other areas such as pregnancy and young women's potential medical problems. Prefects play an important and effective role in playground supervision.
38. Teachers know students well and students interviewed feel very well supported by one or more adults in the school. Although the student questionnaires broadly support this, students in Years 10 and 11 were evenly split. Not enough evidence was gained during the inspection to fully explain this contradiction but feelings about the school uniform, particularly strong in these years, may be a contributory factor. The relatively new mentoring programme between Years 10, who receive targeted training, and Year 8 offers a very useful additional person for younger students to turn to.
39. The level of advice that students receive is very well informed and reflects the wide variety of opportunities on offer in the school, in particular the ethos of promoting students' capacity to achieve and develop a sure sense of self-belief and high self-esteem. In academic areas too, support is very well informed. For example: the good provision of targeted support for underachievers; the detailed monitoring by tutors and the student-parent-tutor target setting of the academic review days where students, parents and tutors meet together to agree targets, are all seen as valuable. Impartial guidance on further study and careers opportunities is also very good.

40. A very good programme of induction ensures that new students make a very positive transition to the school. Year 5 pupils in primary schools visit the school and then a member of staff visits them when they are in Year 6. Thus, links are forged with students which remain throughout their time at Hillview. Sixth-formers are also well involved in supporting younger students, largely through their attachment to tutor groups.
41. Although students' views are sought through the school council this, by common consent, has not been as effective as it could be, so the whole structure is under review. This review is being led by the head girl and her deputy and is a root and branch evaluation, which is entirely appropriate. However, it means that students' views are currently not being comprehensively listened to or acted upon. Nevertheless, there are other ways that their opinions are heard. Students' involvement in interviewing new staff is an excellent initiative and existing staff and governors listen and act on their views. The very good relationships in the school also mean that students' views are both expressed and acted on.
42. Provision for students with special educational needs is very good. It is very well guided by the importance placed by the headteacher and the whole team on ensuring full educational and social inclusion. All students have full access to the whole curriculum. There is a strong focus on the improvement of reading and literacy skills. The intensive work in English and mathematics through the small Year 7 curriculum support groups is particularly effective.

### **Sixth form**

43. Students are treated as young adults, which they appreciate. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities, such as being prefects or mentors, and they work sensitively with younger students, particularly helping Year 7 students to settle when they are new to the school. Well over 90 per cent of students enjoy being in the sixth form and feel that they are taught well. They find that their work is assessed helpfully and that they are encouraged to study independently and to research topics. Although one third of them noted in the pre-inspection questionnaire that they do not feel there is an adult in school they would turn to if they had a problem, there is no evidence that they are not encouraged and supported whenever necessary.
44. The involvement of students in school life by seeking their views suffers from the same shortcoming as for the main school – the school council is not currently effective. However, it is of great value that the suggestions for reform are being led by the head girl and her deputy, in consultation with their peers, because this shows how keen the school is to involve sixth-formers fully.

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

The school's partnership with parents is **very good**.

The school's partnership with the community is **excellent**.

The school's links with other schools and colleges are **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- General information issued to parents is very good. Other links contribute very well to parents' involvement with their daughters' learning at school and at home.
- Procedures to deal with concerns and complaints are very effective.
- Mechanisms for the transfer of students at Year 11 and in the sixth form are very good.
- The school's contribution to the community and many other schools is exceptional (see Annex).

## Commentary

45. The *In View* newsletter, which has a strong input from students and makes interesting reading, and the information sent to parents telling them about the school's Beacon and Performing Arts Specialist status work is all of a very high quality. Annual reports on students' progress are good. The level of detail is informative; important information on how to improve is included and levels of attainment are clear. However, the reporting of citizenship, sometimes written about under personal development, does not meet statutory requirements which demand a separate heading.
46. The school is responsive to parents' views. A comprehensive survey of a random sample of almost half the parents was very thoroughly analysed by an outside agency and discussed in detail at management level. The modern foreign language provision was altered as a result. However, this is not as effective as inviting all parents to express their views, thereby giving them a sense of being fully consulted. Only two-thirds of parents feel that the school seeks their views effectively, contrasting with their very positive views about the school overall.
47. Procedures to deal with parents' complaints and concerns are very good because staff take their concerns seriously. This is reflected in the questionnaire responses, where over 80 per cent said they felt comfortable approaching the school with a problem. The friends association works conscientiously to raise funds for the school. The Christmas fair raises a substantial amount of money for the school and students are fully involved, running and organising stalls. Parents and many others from the local community attend.
48. Parental involvement is seen as a crucial part of the assessment procedures at the school and the arrangements for that involvement are impressive. An academic tutoring day has been introduced as part of the whole-school system for tracking students' progress and setting them targets. Form tutors play a crucial part in this. In advance of the day, they are given time to monitor and review progress with their students. Later, the school timetable is suspended for a day and parents have a 15-minute discussion with the form tutor, to set targets that focus on specific, relevant and achievable goals.
49. The link policeman contributes much to school life, providing practical support for PSHE drugs education, contributing to the A-level law course and supporting the school whenever needed. The specialist schools in the area have come together and persuaded the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) that one community plan for them all would ensure that primary schools get the best provision and move forward together. This is an excellent initiative, as is the West Kent Federation of 15 secondary schools, which have joined forces to work together to reach a target of 80 per cent of students attaining five A\*-C GCSE grades in 2004. They plan to achieve this by offering revision courses, supporting disaffected students and providing mutually beneficial staff development. They hope to develop teacher training within the group. It is excellent that very different schools see the education of young people as their collective responsibility.
50. Parents are well informed and involved in the very good mechanisms for student transfer. The particularly strong links to feeder schools begin when students visit the school in Year 5. Very good strategies for early identification of special educational needs are backed up by good teamwork. The curriculum support assistants and senior teachers approach the primary schools directly to gather data, and to be sure that students will transfer happily. Many students have visited the school for Saturday classes, so they are familiar with the atmosphere before they arrive.

## Sixth form

51. Sixth-form parents were as positive about their contact with school as those in other years. Transition into the sixth form works very well and students settle in quickly.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are both **very good**.

The work of the governing body is excellent. Governance is unsatisfactory only because it does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's confident leadership is most effective, as he knows quite clearly how to nurture further improvements.
- The governors bring a wealth of practical experience and wisdom to their work.
- The professional and personal care given to every member of the school community makes staff happy to work at the school. Students certainly sense this team spirit.
- Leadership at all levels is thoughtful and effective.
- Leadership and the organisation of citizenship and PSHE have yet to be resolved.

### Commentary

52. The headteacher, who is now in his fifth year, is justifiably proud of his school, staff and students; they know this and appreciate it. He is quite prepared to tackle any underperformance rapidly and changes in the leadership of departments have happened. He knows exactly what is going on and keeps his finger on the pulse. The headteacher is seen regularly around the school and he is respected by all. He has a quiet, thoughtful manner that inspires confidence. He is ably supported, at present, by one deputy headteacher who is enthusiastic about the school and a valuable member of the efficient senior management team. Practically all parents feel the school is well led and managed and most students in Years 7 to 9 agree. The lower percentage in Years 10 and 11 is probably a reflection of these students' views on the uniform and the strict standards of behaviour expected. The headteacher is confident these underpin the school's success.
53. The chair of governors has given many years of service to the school and he directs the governing body with insight, common sense and affection for the school. With a good mix of ages and experience, governors ask the right questions, meet regularly, expect to keep themselves up to date by attending training and have a keen eye on the finances. The school's race equality and action plan are realistic and well written; all students are certainly treated as individuals and respected equally. The governing body has played an important role in furthering the Specialist Schools Trust mission statement: 'promoting the arts educational culture which is creative, expressive, technological and vocational.'
54. Financial management is very good. The governors' finance committee monitors spending closely through monthly reports. Funds are carefully allocated to support priorities identified in the school development plan, for example in the provision of an extra mathematics group in Year 7. Specific funds, such as those for special educational needs, the Performing Arts Specialist and Beacon school projects are used very effectively. Financial performance is compared with other schools through the West Kent Bursars' Association and a system of tendering for supplies and services is in place. The school generates valuable additional income through its nursery, and reprographic services to other institutions. The parent-teacher association is very active in raising funds which provide significant benefit for the school. A major building plan is in place, with a £3.1million local education authority grant. The governors are aware that the school canteen runs at a loss and are considering ways to cut the deficit and improve catering facilities. Income and expenditure per student are above average, but the school gives good value for money.

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



Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,892,434
Total expenditure	3,773,813
Expenditure per student	3,301

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	55,043
Balance carried forward to the next	173,664

55. Performance management is well established and its importance is confirmed by the school arranging for staff to spend a day out of school, discussing their performance and objectives for the future. It is tightly linked with professional development:

Putting into practice the philosophy that all staff are equally valued and deserve to receive high quality training and career development.

Before government initiatives to reduce teachers' workload came in, the school carried out a survey by questionnaire, asked teachers to keep work diaries, and consulted staff about these issues. Two key areas emerged: covering for absent colleagues and the demands made on middle managers. As a result, one full-time and two part-time lesson supervisors were appointed to cover for absent teachers and pressure has been eased for one particularly overloaded manager, the special educational needs co-ordinator. This was achieved by recognising the skills which curriculum support assistants have and encouraging them to study for qualifications. Two of them are training to become teachers, following the graduate teacher training programme in the school. Another is teaching the lowest ability set in Year 7 mathematics very successfully. Others develop particular specialisms by training at a linked special school. Whether studying for the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers, attending rewarding training sessions, learning on the job through Beacon and Performing Arts Specialist status work or improving their practical skills, all staff know their future career developments are supported. The governors and headteacher rightly accept that teachers will often move on for promotion but they also provide career openings within the school to try and keep them.

56. The leadership of many departments, including special educational needs, is very good, though it is unsatisfactory in ICT and citizenship, and the pastoral care that students receive is well considered and effective. All other layers of management, whether financial, catering, maintenance or administration, work smoothly and efficiently. Members of the senior management team have taken on new roles since September 2003. This is partly the reason why the organisation of citizenship (see paragraph 135) and PSHE, and progress with arrangements for gifted and talented students have not moved forward fast enough.

### Sixth form

57. The head of sixth form and the tutors know all the students very well. The head of sixth form is very keen to see it increase and flourish. The governors and headteacher are enthusiastically supportive of this planned development. The head of sixth form leads very well and has an excellent relationship with the students. Sixth-form life runs smoothly and the temporary arrangements for the common room and study areas are managed as well as possible. The team of tutors and other staff contributing, for example, to careers and university guidance, ensures that students are encouraged and supported to move on to worthwhile higher education or employment.
58. The school manages sixth-form funding well. Governors are aware of the constant need to review the cost-effectiveness and viability of courses which have small numbers. Governors are also aware that sixth-form teaching is an important factor in the retention of good teaching staff. Numbers in the sixth form have increased in the current academic year and retention between Year 12 and Year 13 is very good. The range of courses offered can be reviewed if numbers continue to increase, but new courses must be staffed from existing resources. Income and expenditure per student are closely balanced; the sixth form is not being subsidised by the main school.

# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

The subject reports below should be read in conjunction with the table above paragraph 4 which contains information about GCSE results.

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **good**.

<i>Standards of work are above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good overall</i>
<i>Teaching is good, especially in Years 10 and 11</i>	<i>Learning is good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory</i>	

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 9 test results have improved significantly and were well above average in 2003.
- After a period of staffing instability, the teachers now work as a committed team, well led by a new head of department who gives a clear sense of direction and purpose.
- Students are keen to learn and they respond well to lively and effective teaching.
- The department makes very good use of assessment and data analysis to evaluate progress, identify needs and plan work.
- In the past two years GCSE results have been disappointing; English underperformed in relation to other subjects and to national standards. There were significant staff changes during this period.

#### Commentary

59. Year 9 test results have shown a downward trend since the previous inspection, but improved significantly in 2003. Standards are now above average in Years 7 to 9 with some particularly good work in Year 9. GCSE results have not shown the same improvement; they were below average in English and English literature in 2002; 2003 English results were similar and literature results dropped further. However, the department is to be commended on the high entry figure for literature and its determination that all students should have full access to the literature programmes. Staffing difficulties in the past two years have affected teaching and the department is now working determinedly to improve GCSE results. Though above average overall, the range of attainment in present GCSE classes is wide.
60. Standards are very good in speaking and listening. Confident and articulate, students readily answer questions or voice opinions and some good reading aloud was heard. The friendly and supportive classroom atmosphere is helpful in this. Students' reading is developed by some good choices of texts for class study, and by the book trail scheme which encourages wider reading and critical evaluation. Use of the library for research and reference has been limited hitherto but there are plans to develop these skills in timetabled library lessons.
61. Writing was identified as a weaker area in the previous inspection, and although much good work goes on in language and literature, there is still some lack of sustained writing in Years 7 to 9. There is good provision for it in the schemes of work, but exercise books and folders show that some students are not writing at sufficient length, particularly in Years 7 and 8. The good basic skills which students acquire need challenge and extension. In GCSE classes students are given more time to research, draft and complete their language or literature

essays. Year 10 students produce some good writing as they begin to enjoy the opportunities of the new courses. Year 11 students show sound understanding of examination requirements and of how they can develop and improve their work. Their books and coursework folders contain good examples of useful target setting and some very helpful marking.

62. Students in Year 7 reached above average levels in English at the end of primary school. Currently, they are achieving well overall because they are highly motivated and responsive to good teaching. Students with special educational needs, and others in some of the lower sets, achieve particularly well; they respond very well to carefully planned and imaginative teaching. In a Year 10 lower set, the teacher used her own writing as a model to demonstrate ways of writing about personal experience. The students were intrigued and encouraged to write. There was an equally good use of the teacher's own writing in a Year 10 top set, when students were invited to criticise and modify a mini-saga before trying out the form for themselves. In both these lessons, there was a lively sense of shared pleasure in language and ideas. The teachers' input – creative and alert to opportunities – made the very best of the lesson plan.
63. This quality was a feature of the best teaching and there were examples in all years. In some lessons in Years 7 to 9, teachers followed a lesson plan conscientiously, but did not adjust it when students seemed bored or when opportunities for extending their range and vocabulary arose. Lesson planning did not always take account of the needs and potential of higher attaining students. In all lessons, very good relationships contributed to the pleasures and outcomes of learning.
64. The new head of department is establishing a committed and effective team after the changes which unsettled the department last year. Very well-managed use of data analysis is helping the team to assess progress and determine development needs. Assessment is thorough and well used to shape plans and targets. Good links have been developed with other departments, particularly with performing arts and special educational needs. The department is making a valuable contribution to the life and work of the school and is now well placed to move forward and raise standards at all levels.

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

65. The literacy strategy was introduced and initially co-ordinated by an English teacher and her successors. Every subject area was involved and all teachers took part in a training day to look at ways in which their work could develop students' language skills. A member of the modern foreign languages department took over as literacy co-ordinator in September 2003 and he is now preparing an audit of work in subject areas.
66. Although few departments have literacy policies, much good work is being done to foster good reading and writing. Key words are a strong feature in art, geography, science, music and physical education lessons. Some particularly good examples were seen in dance lessons. Literature too has been imaginatively used by some departments. In science, students wrote poems as part of their work on pollution and in music, novels were used as a stimulus for composition. Drama, working closely with the English department, has its own language policy and contributes much to the development of the good speaking skills noted throughout the school.
67. A more consistent approach to correcting errors is needed. In some subjects, teachers pay too little attention to this, particularly to spelling. Form tutors could be more alert to spelling errors in homework diaries. In other subjects where students write regularly, they could be encouraged to write at greater length, and to draft and review their work. Some of the best work occurred when teachers explored word meanings, looked at ambiguities or contradictions and helped to develop students' interest in language. In one lesson, an opportunity to learn the difference between compliment and complement was not picked up. Teachers who can see and take such opportunities are making a good contribution to students' language development.

## Modern foreign languages: French and Spanish

Provision in French and Spanish is **good**.

<i>Standards of work are average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently above average French GCSE results with an impressive percentage of A\*/A grades.
- Students' attitudes and high motivation are exemplary; these have a direct impact on their achievement.
- Teaching is sometimes very good or excellent.
- Leadership is very good because the head of department's enthusiasm inspires teachers and students alike.
- Students can study two languages and more are choosing to do so.
- High attaining students spend extra time with the language assistants, which is good, but occasionally the written work they do is not always demanding enough.
- The accommodation is uninspiring and hard to display work in, but this department will have rooms in the new building.

### Commentary

68. Many higher attaining students achieve very well in Spanish as a second foreign language in Years 7 to 9. The first group to take GCSE Spanish in 2003 performed well, although the percentage of A\*-C grades was below average, with a third of students getting grade D. Present standards are better. Recent French GCSE results have exceeded the students' targets, confirming that they achieve well. Most students, particularly those with special educational needs and those who are bilingual, achieve well. Overall standards in French and Spanish are average at the end of Year 9.
69. Students learn well because all teachers, whether native speaking or not, are excellent role models who have very good knowledge and understanding of how students learn languages best. They successfully foster methods that are effective and which result in concrete gains within lessons and over time. They are keen to try out new ideas, for example the government's recently introduced Key Stage 3 Strategy for teaching modern foreign languages. They have generated a positive attitude in students; practically all girls are attentive and keen to speak French or Spanish. It is impossible to measure, but very likely, that students' performing arts skills help them to feel confident speaking phrases in foreign languages.
70. Teachers consistently ensure that the balance of skills practised in lessons is right and this leads to good rehearsal of structures, grammar and vocabulary. Over time, and as students increasingly draw on their previous learning, they grow in confidence and mirror the teachers' demonstrations effectively. All teachers use the overhead projector effectively to practise language and extend learning. Where teaching was less effective, English was spoken unnecessarily or French or Spanish speaking started rather late in the lesson, or was not the main emphasis.
71. Teachers positively share good practice and ideas as they strive for continuous improvement. The head of department inspires teachers and students to enjoy learning and speaking modern foreign languages. The teachers' enthusiasm to offer Spanish in all years is confirmed by the

fact that those who were not fluent honed their skills by attending evening classes and gaining further qualifications. The department is active in a number of whole-school initiatives and has worked effectively on cross-curriculum themes, for example a joint trip with history and science to Lyons. Members of the department have developed skills such as using ICT, developing literacy and numeracy by working with other departments or collaborating with primary schools and higher education institutions, to train and mentor new teachers. This emphasis on staff development has certainly improved teaching and learning.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

<i>Standards of work are average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management of the department.
- Carefully planned lessons – teachers convey clearly their high expectations.
- Students enjoy lessons and take much pride in their work.
- Minimal use of ICT in lessons.
- Assessment, so that teachers can identify weaknesses in students' understanding, is underdeveloped.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not meet the needs of all the different abilities in their classes.

### Commentary

72. Students' attainment on entry to the school is just below average. Although the percentage of students reaching higher levels in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was below average in 2002, results in 2003 were better, especially the proportion who gained Level 7 or higher. GCSE results also improved in 2003, after dropping to just below average in 2002. Students are now achieving well in all years.
73. Lessons are well planned with an effective three-part structure in line with the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Teachers share objectives with students and give them short-term targets, so that they have specific goals to aim for throughout lessons. However, whilst lesson plans identify graded tasks for students of differing abilities, these are rarely put into action. Students generally work hard, with interest, and are attentive, which certainly contributes to a good pace being kept up. They take a considerable pride in their work and present it well. Teachers mark work carefully, so that students know where they have made mistakes, and what they should do to correct them. Teachers use mathematical terms clearly and concisely, so that students fully understand the meaning and significance of new vocabulary. Teachers ask many questions, to check that students fully understand what they are learning, and offer praise and advice where needed. Consequently, students feel encouraged and they confidently have a go at answering questions, even when they are unsure.
74. The recently appointed head of department has recognised the department's needs and has initiated steps to ensure the deficiencies are dealt with. She has a clear vision about the future of the subject and, after consulting all the teachers, she has drawn up a realistic plan to address the weaker aspects of teaching described in the paragraph below. In Year 7, an unusual feature is that the lowest set is taught by an experienced curriculum support assistant. This has been very successful and the small number of students in the group have made rapid progress.

75. Although assessment has improved since the last inspection, with clear records of students' progress, analysis of weak areas in test and GCSE results is underdeveloped. Adjustments to schemes of work, to compensate for deficiencies in students' understanding, have been minimal so far. Neither do the schemes of work refer to using ICT. The department dealt with the issues of the last inspection with the exception of this one. When ICT is used, students gain a much clearer understanding.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

76. There was evidence of mathematics being used or reinforced elsewhere in the curriculum:
- In drama, students make models and use scale drawing.
  - Correlation techniques are used widely in Years 10 and 11 in geography.
  - Science lessons frequently use simple calculations, calculations involving formulae, use of graphs (some involving ICT) and the use of scales.
  - Proportion, balance and tessellation are embedded in the art curriculum.
  - Students studying design and technology measure and weigh accurately. They also use the skill of estimation when working on design briefs.
  - Some French and Spanish lessons have an introductory numeracy session.
  - Rhythm and sequences feature regularly in music lessons.
  - In religious education lessons, students use timelines, bar and pie charts and carry out some data analysis.
  - Students' numeracy skills are competent enough for them to cope with other subjects well.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

<i>Standards of work are above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Committed, specialist, hardworking and mutually supportive teachers who are very well led.
- High quality staff-student relationships.
- High standards of presentation, marking and commentary in students' notebooks.
- A reliable and supportive technician team.
- Occasionally, the lesson structure does not leave enough time for a good summary at the end.
- Weak memory of facts by middle and lower attaining students.

### Commentary

77. Standards are rising. All students now take GCSE dual-award science; GCSE results in 2003 showed they had achieved well. Students attain above average standards because good teaching fires their interest and enthusiasm, and student-teacher relationships are very good. Year 7 students are able to design experiments, for example to test the factors controlling the strength of a cup of tea. They have a good understanding of the principle of a fair test and, after well-guided class discussions, they confidently identify the variables requiring control. By Year 9, students make simple predictions and describe chemical reactions using words and symbols well.
78. Years 10 and 11 students show good practical and predictive skills. The presentation of written work in notebooks is impressive, as is the use of ICT in coursework. However, middle and lower ability students find it hard to remember facts and relate different aspects of the subject;

they need help to do this. At all levels, the standards of students with special educational needs are commensurate with those of others in their classes; teachers liaise well with the dedicated curriculum support assistants. Selected higher attaining students in Years 10 and 11 have volunteered to study after school for the GCSE in the separate sciences – a good foundation for sixth-form work. In all years, gifted students are extended both in class and homework with additional work suited to their needs.

79. Students are diligent in class and do their homework extremely well. They share and articulate their ideas well in discussions, particularly when teachers know when to intercept and guide their thinking. Students' understanding of scientific concepts develops well as their knowledge increases – seen in a Year 11 class discussing covalent and ionic bonding.
80. Apart from Year 7, the three sciences are taught by specialists, who communicate their enthusiasm and respond fully to students' queries. Teaching is good because teachers incorporate good references to background examples that make the subject relevant and often use ICT, such as interactive whiteboards, PowerPoint presentations and material downloaded from the Internet, most effectively. However, some ends of lessons observed were too rushed for the content of the lesson to be reviewed thoroughly. Teachers make positive comments on written work so that students understand how well they are doing although more subject-specific information and guidance would be helpful.
81. Science staff are working well together, led by a very effective new head of department. Good teaching practice is shared, and the head of department monitors teaching and marking. Records of students' performance are comprehensive and easily accessible. This, together with a new procedure for setting and monitoring students' individual targets, should ensure students achieve their full potential. The good links with primary schools, through the department's Beacon work (see Annex), should help to ensure that Year 7 students do not repeat work done before, but move on fast. The department is well served by a dedicated team of technicians.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

<i>Standards of work are average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is satisfactory</i>
<i>Teaching is satisfactory</i>	<i>Learning is satisfactory</i>
<i>Leadership is satisfactory</i>	<i>Management is satisfactory</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good one-to-one teaching leads to individual students making reasonable progress.
- The teachers' skilful use of the electronic whiteboard makes a good focus in lessons.
- In a number of lessons seen, teaching was not fast enough for students to cover enough work.
- The full content of the National Curriculum is not covered.
- All students do the same work, so a few find it too difficult and others find it too easy.

### Commentary

82. The Year 9 National Curriculum teacher assessments, carried out at the end of the previous academic year by staff who have now left, overestimated how well students were doing. Standards are now just average in all years. In Years 10 and 11 students have had improving success in A-level 1 (GCSE is Level 2) Key Skills course, which 86 per cent of them attained in 2003. Based on their prior attainment, these students achieved satisfactorily. Present Year 11 students are likely to do as well, although the material covered is not stimulating, nor are they using the full range of ICT skills they will need in the future. A minority of them are

unenthusiastic about their ICT. The current Year 10 classes have started on a short GCSE in ICT. They are doing work of a suitable standard at the beginning of this course. Their work on designing databases is going well.

83. All students use the computer network competently, carry out a considerable amount of skilled Internet research, and use a range of presentation software reasonably well. As they tackle the same tasks and are not given more complex ones if they finish quickly, a few of them do not move on fast enough. Teachers use the electronic whiteboard effectively to introduce new work, which does focus students on what the lesson is about. However, when students do not start working at the computers after 20 minutes or so, they become restless, and, if all lessons start with whiteboard presentations, then they are less attentive.
84. In discussion with students it emerged that practically all of them have computers at home. A few students could achieve more than the overall average standards seen in Years 7 to 9 if the skills and expertise they have acquired outside school were acknowledged and developed. Students have a basic grasp of spreadsheets and databases but few tackle them with any sophistication.
85. One-to-one teaching is particularly good and the teachers are encouraging and supportive. Pupils learn well when they receive this individual attention. In certain lessons the Key Stage 3 Strategy materials are used effectively, particularly in Year 8, but with only one lesson a fortnight in this year, these students will not cover enough ground overall. Students who finish work quickly can access worksheets on-line to move forward but they do not always do this. Those who get stuck and cannot move on without help do not have access to any simple instruction sheets to keep them working independently. It is good to reinforce basic keyboard skills, but in a couple of lessons students carried out rather mundane tasks for too long. So far the new head of department has not been able to track enough evidence of students' previous work, either on screen or printed out, so assessment of where students are at is not straightforward.
86. ICT was a key weakness at the time of the last inspection and the school did its best to improve the situation – introducing discrete ICT lessons in every year, increasing the number of computers and the amount of software installed. Technical support is now very good. The new head of department has inherited a situation where experienced staff have left, there are not enough specialists, and a new course has been introduced in Year 10. He is enthusiastic and has already produced a valuable, well-considered and detailed development plan. A lot still needs to be done to bring the schemes of work and assessment methods up to date, and to generate materials which students can use to work on their own.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

87. During the inspection good practice was seen in business studies, music, drama, geography, science, Spanish and design and technology but not in English, mathematics or history. The animation club in art is popular and interesting. Increasingly, students use computers at home to do their homework and coursework. They enthusiastically use the computer rooms at school during the lunch break. Staff use their laptops and projection equipment well to make their teaching more interesting.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

<i>Standards of work are above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is very good</i>
<i>Teaching is very good</i>	<i>Learning is very good</i>



<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been very good</i>	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improving GCSE results, which are now above average.
- Enthusiastic and vibrant leadership and management.
- Lively, imaginative and successful teaching.

## Commentary

88. In Years 7 to 9 all students have good map reading skills, produce good quality annotated maps and diagrams, use technical vocabulary accurately and demonstrate an above-average standard of factual knowledge and understanding. These qualities were seen in a Year 9 lesson, when students described and explained the causes, effects and human responses to a Japanese earthquake. Lower attaining students are less sure in their explanations, and find it difficult to write at length.
89. GCSE results have been above average for the last five years and are much better than at the time of the previous inspection. These results reflect how very well the students achieve. GCSE students extract relevant information from a range of sources and make accurate notes. A Year 11 group, studying causes and effects of the 2000 Mozambique floods, used technical vocabulary accurately in their descriptive writing. Students' coursework is very good because teachers give them a very good grounding in fieldwork methods. They test hypotheses by successfully using a good variety of statistical methods to analyse their fieldwork observations. Some lower attaining students are less sure in analysing their findings but still produce accurate graphs. Skilful teaching ensures that students have developed good thinking skills, which they demonstrate on the frequent occasions that they are required to classify and sort diverse geographical facts. The department lays stress on improving students' literacy by emphasising key words, encouraging discussion and by providing writing frames to help them to write at length.
90. Teaching is never less than good and on occasions is excellent. All teachers are adept at showing students how to extract information and use resources, so that they learn very well. Students are very keen about this subject because teaching is lively and enthusiastic. In one excellent lesson students rested their heads on their desks, closed their eyes and listened as the teacher related very vividly the experience of a person sitting in a room during the first 30 seconds of an earthquake. Immediately after she finished, the students engaged in animated discussion about what happened next. The classroom continued to buzz with purposeful activity, and the lesson ended with first-class empathetic writing about earthquakes. In a very few lessons work was not adapted for students' different abilities; for example, not all Year 7 students can tackle six-figure grid references without some extra help.
91. Geography is deservedly a popular subject in the school. Well-organised fieldwork gives students opportunities to enjoy the practical aspects of the subject. The teachers' marking and assessment are particularly thorough, consistent and helpful. Students know how well they are doing and how to get better. Displayed work illustrates to students the high expectations their teachers have and the standards to which they should aspire. The displays also raise the profile of this subject and make the geography rooms lively and interesting. The head of department is very experienced and her teaching is of a very high quality. She manages the department very well.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

<i>Standards of work are average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in GCSE classes</i>
<i>Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in the GCSE classes</i>	<i>Learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in GCSE classes</i>
<i>Leadership is satisfactory</i>	<i>Management is satisfactory</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory</i>	

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching, learning and achievement are better in Years 7 to 9.
- Good, practical assessment which helps girls to understand how they can improve.
- A number of higher ability students in the present Year 11 are underachieving in their GCSE coursework.
- For a minority of students in all years, achievement is not as high as it could be because teachers give the same work to all students, regardless of their ability.
- There are too few textbooks.

### **Commentary**

92. In Years 7 to 9 students understand that history is based on evidence and they distinguish well between primary and secondary sources, as they focus on this early in Year 7. In a Year 9 lesson on the treatment of slaves, students demonstrated their ability to evaluate evidence as they examined pictures, texts and cartoons and made perceptive observations. Their good achievement is largely due to the good teaching and learning in these years, and to the teachers' thoughtful selection of assessment tasks, which tell students their levels and what they must do to improve their learning.
93. GCSE students, who achieve satisfactorily, have a good knowledge and understanding of their in-depth topic – they have made a good start interpreting the political problems facing Elizabeth 1 at the beginning of her reign. Their coursework on Dover castle shows they have a basic understanding of how historical factors influenced the development of the site. Higher ability students are not achieving as well as they could because they have not practised analysis and evaluation enough, and they find it difficult to apply their historical knowledge to appreciate the relationship between events. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are average overall.
94. Teaching is more effective in Years 7 to 9. In a very good Year 7 lesson on the Norman Conquest, the teacher did not spoon-feed the students but expected them to think for themselves. Students had to evaluate and explain why William the Conqueror won the battle. Teachers helpfully focus on improving students' literacy skills by using structured worksheets, and writing frames to develop essay writing. However, too often the same tasks are set for all; high ability students could tackle harder work. Occasionally, underestimating GCSE students' potential, teachers do not give students enough time to work on their own and reflect. When they carry out tasks mechanically students underachieve.
95. The strengths within leadership are the high quality assessment, which students find helpful, and the way books are marked, with valuable comments telling students what they need to do to get better. Teachers do not observe each other at work enough so they do not share the good practice evident in some lessons, particularly in Years 7 to 9. As there are not enough textbooks, students cannot take them home, a contributory factor to the lack of high achievement.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

<i>Standards of work are average for GCSE students and</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
--	--------------------------------------

<i>in line with expectations for all others</i>	
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is good</i>
<i>Leadership is good</i>	<i>Management is satisfactory</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students learn well because lessons are planned thoughtfully and effectively.
- Students find the content of the lessons challenging and very interesting.
- The few students who take the full GCSE do extremely well.
- Assessment and marking do not give students a clear idea of their progress, or how they could do better.

### Commentary

96. Students enter the school with below average knowledge and understanding. By the end of Year 9, most of them understand and explain well how beliefs change the way people act; they can argue a case well and support it with reference to different religious viewpoints. In Years 10 and 11 students tackle difficult issues sensitively and maturely, seen in written work on abortion. They gain significantly in their ability to interpret religious beliefs and attain standards in line with expectations. They enjoy studying the good and diverse range of topics. All but one of the 12 students who took the full GCSE attained grades A\*-C in 2003; results in the short course taken by the rest are not so strong.
97. Lessons are well planned and the specialist teachers have valuable qualifications and expert knowledge. In a very good lesson on Jesus, the teacher developed students' awareness of fact and belief. Sensitively using their knowledge of Princess Diana, he led them to a very good grasp of the issues. They achieved very well, explaining why many people believe Jesus was both man and superhuman. Non-specialist teachers are well supported, using well-prepared materials. When Year 11 students explored the meaning of evil, they learned and achieved well because they had to justify their own views and beliefs and draw conclusions. Work brings students face-to-face with ethical and moral questions, encouraging them to think out their beliefs and to challenge their prejudices and biases.
98. The line manager has provided very good support during staff absence. Monitoring of learning to share good practice is limited. In a few classes, marking is inconsistent and a small number of students underachieve – they regularly need to be told how to do better. This is linked to the fact that assessment is not yet fully developed so that moderation of how students are doing is not secure.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

<i>Standards of work are well above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is very good</i>
<i>Teaching is very good</i>	<i>Learning is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- An experienced team of specialists and support staff who, collaborating most effectively, generate a good atmosphere and expectations of high standards.
- Success in consistently raising standards and results since the last inspection.
- Successful exploitation of the students' excellent attitudes and behaviour.
- The valuable attention given to assessing students' work, and guiding them on what to do next, is not emphasised enough in teachers' written comments.
- Too little use of ICT in Years 7 to 9.

## Commentary

99. Students join the school with weak technical skills: many have never used basic construction tools and have limited experience of formal drawing and design techniques. Year 9 levels have steadily increased since the previous inspection; they are now high. The well above average GCSE results include a high percentage of A grades. The development of students' creative skills has significantly improved and most students develop their skills, knowledge and understanding remarkably well.
100. Students' design work is very good, and they explain and communicate their ideas to a high standard, such as when Year 9 students made presentations of their mobile phone designs through role-play (see box below paragraph 20). To develop initial design ideas, students carry out broad-ranging research very thoroughly. Year 11 textile projects make very good use of data generated by questionnaire surveys. Students' evaluation of their food products is also very good, and they draw on good technical vocabulary to help them explain their projects.
101. Teaching is significantly helped by the high quality technicians and learning support assistants. A key strength is the way teachers encourage good habits and develop students' basic skills. Good practice in design is constantly reinforced by helpful discussions. In Year 7, the teacher insisted that students measure very accurately as they constructed their electronic hand testing games. Some teaching is outstanding, such as the Year 9 lesson on mobile phone designs mentioned above, a Year 8 self-review of textile designs and a Year 11 sensory analysis of food products. In many lessons, teachers very skilfully guide students to decide for themselves what they need to learn. This style of learning is most effective in GCSE classes.
102. In most lessons students are encouraged to use technical and descriptive words when analysing their products. They enjoy their creative work and some show exceptionally good independent study skills when researching for design information. Teachers mark work regularly, but do not always give enough written guidance on how students might improve their work. Students help each other to be successful by willingly sharing and helping each other, another significant factor in the high quality of learning. Students use ICT more in all years and their skills are put to good use, especially in GCSE classes; more of this in Years 7 to 9 would be valuable. Students with special educational needs make progress that is as good as other students, very well supported by teachers.
103. The relatively new leadership has resulted in effective systems for identifying and supporting students' progress across the different disciplines. The team approach to developing and improving the subject is a strength, and explains why standards have improved so much.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### Art and design

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

<i>Standards of work seen are above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>

*Improvement since the last inspection has been very good*

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A lively range of teaching styles and ideas helps students to learn well.
- A valuable focus on improving students' literacy contributes significantly to their development.
- Teachers assess work well, tracking students' progress to set realistic, but challenging, targets.

### Commentary

104. Years 7 to 9 students use sketchbooks well to record their experiences. In Year 7, students do useful experiments which extend into a worthwhile two-colour printmaking project. By Year 8 students, influenced by the paintings of Frank Stella, understand well the concept of drawing a journey that starts by using a line and develops into a picture by adding coloured shapes. By the end of Year 9 they attain above average standards and in all years they achieve well. Last year's GCSE results, which are likely to be close to average, were lower than predicted because the department had staffing problems (now resolved) and several students' poor attendance meant they underachieved. Present students are working well, particularly annotating their work with personal comments and incorporating computer manipulated images. This raises the standards of their work which, in Year 11, are high enough for them to tackle sixth-form work with confidence.
105. In Year 7, teachers make lessons fun by using lively ideas which students enjoy. One example of such very good practice was a lesson analysing a painting. The teacher's imaginative preparation required students to wear coloured hats to indicate their different tasks: recording facts about the artist and the painting, focusing on what were good points, or on what ideas were being expressed. These analysis tasks were timed and rotated, so that the lesson moved quickly and students' concentration, thinking and learning were excellent. At the end, groups made short dramatic presentations to the rest of the class. One student made the comment, about Gauguin's 'Hail Mary': 'This painting makes me want to sing and dance.' Homework was to write a poem about the painting, a good example of literacy through art.
106. In a GCSE coursework lesson students responded well to the teacher's skilful questioning about the symbolism in Holbein's 'The Ambassadors'. After students had picked out the scientific instruments, globe, books and lute the teacher asked: 'What other meanings can these objects have?' This led students to conclude that the ambassadors travelled, were learned, and appreciated music – effective learning. Much evidence was seen of students helping each other, especially with friendly criticism about how to improve their work.
107. The head of subject tackles developments in the department's work in a robust way. The way topics are planned and covered benefits all students positively, particularly those with talents or with special educational needs. The monitoring of teaching and learning is a model of good practice. Staff give generously of their time for extra-curricular activities and this helps students significantly.

### Dance

Provision in dance is **very good**.

<i>Standards of work are well above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is very good</i>
<i>Teaching is very good</i>	<i>Learning is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently very high standards in all years.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and high expectations – learning is both challenging and enjoyable.
- Students are very enthusiastic and show a strong commitment to the GCSE course.
- The accommodation is barely satisfactory.

## Commentary

108. Unconfirmed figures for 2003 indicate that GCSE results are once more at a very high level. Standards of work seen during the inspection, particularly in Year 11, are very high. Because of their own enthusiasm and very good teaching, students' movement skills develop rapidly in Year 7, and they acquire knowledge of a variety of dance techniques as they progress through the school. A further reason for their successful achievement is the excellent relationships which exist between students, and also with their teachers. As a consequence, they work very well, both independently and in small groups, and they enjoy their lessons, particularly when choreographing their own compositions.
109. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and sometimes excellent. Teachers' high quality assessment very effectively shows students what they need to do to reach a higher level and what their next target is. In a Year 7 lesson students linked all their previous learning to form a fluent sequence of dance movements while exploring new pathways and directions. Extra-curricular activities are excellent. All girls can practise and extend their interest in the subject. GCSE students attend these sessions and benefit significantly from them. An after-school session brings together students from two other schools to study GCSE dance as an extra subject in one year. During the inspection, students were planning their choreographed pieces. A Year 7 and a Year 11 girl danced together, interpreting a poem about death, with sensitive imagery and skilful use of unison and canon. Students of all ages are inspired by their teachers and clearly share their love of movement.
110. The leadership of this dedicated team of teachers has changed very recently. The previous head of department encouraged and supported staff very well, particularly in their professional development. The new head of department, who is also newly qualified, has benefited considerably from the excellent role model and professional support provided by her predecessor. The department regularly evaluates its own performance and shares best practice; it is constantly looking for ways to improve even further.
111. Dance makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral and cultural development through the issues explored, the styles of dance studied and the emotional elements evoked. Accommodation in the old hall and small cramped changing rooms is shared with physical education. The other dance facility is also small and the floor is poorly surfaced. Dance is now an independent subject in the school and is taught by three specialist teachers.

## Drama

Provision in drama is **excellent**.

<i>Standards of work are well above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is very good</i>
<i>Teaching is very good</i>	<i>Learning is very good</i>
<i>Leadership is excellent</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been very good</i>	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils make very good progress, including pupils who are less academically able.
- The teachers' excellent subject knowledge, energy and commitment, inspire students and contribute to their enthusiasm and concentration.
- Time is used extremely well and the pace of lessons is stimulating.

- The work interests and engages pupils.
- Pupils acquire new knowledge and are committed to working hard; they work willingly, are engaged, concentrated and are productive.
- At the beginning of lessons students work independently by conducting their own warm up.

### Commentary

112. GCSE results are well above average; they have improved over the last two years, particularly the percentage of A\*/A grades. In Year 7, students have an excellent induction into drama and make good progress. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their thoughtful planning ensures that students experience incremental learning and challenge. Students develop their vocal and physical skills. They co-operate and collaborate very well as they develop improvisations and practise new skills.
113. Students use space and levels well, for example in Years 7 to 9 when working on performances about the hardships of slavery. They combined interesting physical theatre with an imaginative soundtrack and video imagery of a student performing as an ancestor of a slave. Students conveyed pain and suffering most effectively through sounds as well as words. GCSE students discuss their work using a developing critical vocabulary and knowledge of theatre practitioners, such as Brecht and Stanislavsky.
114. Since the last inspection the number of students choosing this subject for GCSE has gone up. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved. Regular homework now develops understanding and preparation for performances. Management, communication and support are very good; the head of department leads by example and a technician supports the technical work of the department extremely well. In all years this subject supports pupils' personal, social and health education. Students work on projects which challenge racism or they investigate environmental issues and public responsibility.
115. Teachers and students use technology well, for example lighting, sound and video imagery for GCSE performances. Extra-curricular activities are available for all year groups and are compulsory for GCSE students. This extra time boosts their achievement and gives them extra support for developing practical work. Excellent quality performances are well supported. Students visit the theatre regularly and develop their critical ability, enjoyment and enthusiasm for theatre.

### Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

<i>Standards of work are above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
<i>Teaching is very good</i>	<i>Learning is very good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Impressive GCSE results.
- Often high quality teaching, which enthuses and engages students.
- In Years 7 to 9, students are sometimes not clear about what they need to do to extend and develop their work.

### Commentary

116. When they enter the school, most Year 7 students are working at below the expected level. After a few weeks, they compose and perform simple pieces and talk about music using basic

musical terms, for example in a lesson where they created music to represent the sea's contrasting moods. Most students make good progress and compose, perform and discuss music confidently by the end of Year 9. Their blues compositions, for example, show good understanding of the music's style. In some lessons, students make good use of computers to support their learning. GCSE students are particularly well motivated, achieve well and develop their musical knowledge and skills, so producing work of a high standard. Results have been very high for several years.

117. A significant proportion of teaching is very good and some excellent teaching was observed during the inspection. In these lessons teachers concentrate on developing students' listening and evaluative skills through practical work, so they make particularly good progress. Introducing African drumming to Year 10 in a lively and dynamic way, the teacher skilfully guided students through a logical sequence of practical activities on a range of percussion instruments. By performing, students understood the concepts of poly-rhythmic music. The teacher linked the work with other musical styles and introduced new musical terms. After their performance students listened to a similar piece played by African musicians, to identify the concepts they had explored. In less successful lessons, students did not always spend enough time on practical work so they did not achieve as much.
118. The music studied, such as the blues unit in Year 9, usually interests and engages students so they enjoy lessons and work hard. Whenever possible, music from the past is linked with more contemporary versions, which students really appreciate. Although lesson plans describe the expectations for different groups of students, a few of the worksheets do not always help students of different abilities to know what they should do next in order to achieve to their full potential.
119. There is scope for analysis of GCSE results against national data, to analyse achievement, to diagnose possible areas for improvement and to set future targets. The department makes a very good contribution to the school's Performing Arts Specialist and Beacon status work in the community and this in turn helps the teachers' evaluative and reflective approach to improvement (see Annex). The very experienced head of department manages the Beacon and the department's work very well. Her enthusiasm contributes significantly to students' enjoyment of this subject. There is a significant amount of music-making beyond lessons, some of which involves the wider community. Over 200 students receive instrumental lessons at school and the range of extra-curricular activities is good.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

<i>Standards of work are above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is good</i>
<i>Leadership is good</i>	<i>Management is good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been very good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Above average standards in all years and students' good achievement.
- The very good range and number of extra-curricular activities.
- Very positive attitudes and very good relationships between staff and students.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation limits students' learning.
- As three different year groups have a lesson at the same time, the accommodation is not always available and teaching in ability groups is not possible.

### Commentary



120. Students have different experiences before joining the school but most attain average standards in games activities and below average in movement skills. By the end of Year 9, students attain above average standards in most activities and their achievement is good. Girls have the added benefit of participating in dance lessons, as well as their physical education activities, and this helps to improve their general posture and poise. Girls build a secure knowledge of fitness and warm up effectively. They gain this understanding through teachers' insistence on thorough warm-up activities at the start of every lesson.
121. Students improve their level of performance in games activities because teaching focuses well on helping them to develop skills. They can experience a good variety of games including basketball, hockey, netball and volleyball. The analytical skills of students in Years 7 to 9 are not as well developed as their performance skills; this strand of the National Curriculum is not emphasised or promoted enough in lessons.
122. Students in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards because teaching is consistently good. Teachers continue to build girls' performances in games and develop their co-operative, evaluative and team-building skills in core lessons. Present GCSE students produce very good quality written work, and their most competent practical expertise, linked with the extra help teachers give them in GCSE clubs, indicate standards that are at least above average. Individual students and teams achieve high standards in regional and county competitions in athletics, swimming, gymnastics, football, trampolining, netball, judo and rugby. These talented students attain well above average standards and they benefit from the very good opportunities teachers give them. In most cases, students with special educational needs achieve as well as others.
123. Students' overall good achievement is directly attributable to the good teaching in Years 10 and 11 and to their very positive attitudes and relationships with teachers. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is less consistent. Although timetabling restricts the division of year groups on the basis of competence in physical activities, in the majority of lessons teachers circulate well, extending the more able and helping those students who find the activity difficult. This is a positive strategy that promotes all students' learning. Where teaching was less effective, tasks and resources were not matched well enough to the students' wide range of abilities, for example in gymnastics, or time on activities was lost because of poor organisation of students and resources, for example in games.
124. Students also achieve well as the result of good leadership and management by the head of department. She is newly appointed and already has a clear vision of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and of its future direction but has not yet been able to monitor teaching. Testing, in order to assess students' standards on entry, is being developed. Means for assessing students' progress in Years 7 to 9 are being monitored to provide more consistent and accurate results. The Sportsmark award has been achieved twice. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because there is only one specialist indoor area. The old hall is shared with dance and has a small, poorly ventilated changing room, and the field is very small and quickly becomes waterlogged.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

<i>Standards of work are well above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
<i>Teaching is very good</i>	<i>Learning is very good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been very good</i>	

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching helps students to achieve well.
- Prompt and detailed marking.
- Links with local business and industry are limited but improving.
- Because some lessons take place in rooms without computers, students do not always use ICT enough in lessons, although they use it very well for their coursework.

## **Commentary**

125. GCSE business studies is a very popular course. In addition, an office applications course is being followed in Year 11. In Year 10, this has been replaced by the new applied double business GCSE. Over 100 students are following one of these vocational courses in each of Years 10 and 11. A significant number is considering continuing the subject in the sixth form. GCSE results improved significantly in 2003, reflecting good achievement over time. Many students on the business communications course attained high grades, many above predictions. These improvements are due to the very good teaching and leadership of the subject now in place.
126. Standards are above average on the new applied double business course in Year 10, which has made a promising start. Higher attaining students produced high quality work using desktop publishing to make eye-catching brochures, after a class visit to a local hop farm. Business studies students in Year 11 draw high quality graphs linking demand and price. In coursework projects, Year 11 students use ICT most effectively to present well-researched reports, importing location maps and graphs of consumer surveys by local retailers. Applied business students worked very well in small groups to critically discuss their ideas for a new business; they are clearly well motivated by practical tasks.
127. Teachers keep students very engaged and interested. Students know exactly what to do. Teachers mark work promptly and in detail, and in the best practice, they give students a review sheet with effort grades and targets for improvement. They assess work very well. Some lessons take place in rooms without computers – not an ideal situation. The large classes make it difficult for teachers to move around the rooms freely.
128. GCSE results have improved significantly in the short time the new, experienced and very well qualified team has been in place. The head of department has exciting plans for increasing vocational pathways to the sixth form. Closer links with local businesses are being planned which will help the students to link their studies with industry even more. The subject is very well managed by an enthusiastic and very well qualified team.

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

### **Personal, social and health education**

Provision for personal, social and health education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good planning and materials mean that teachers deliver a worthwhile programme.
- Students develop good understanding of important issues they will face in life.
- Students are very supportive, learning well from each other.
- There is no system to check how students are getting on and their written work is rarely marked.

### **Commentary**

129. The Years 7 to 9 programme satisfactorily covers major areas such as sex education and relationships, drugs, bullying, smoking, road safety, planning work and setting targets. The programme for students in Years 10 and 11 is good. Students learn about human rights and responsibilities within society. Their skills of enquiry and communication develop well. They consider a good variety of topics relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Their willingness to listen to each other and their tolerance of different views is particularly strong. They achieve reasonably but, as their work is not marked regularly, they do not easily recall the topics they have studied.
130. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most tutors challenge and develop students' understanding of issues that they face in their lives. In a good Year 7 lesson on assessing academic progress and setting targets, the teacher and learning support assistant created a helpful atmosphere in which students willingly talked about their work and shared their concerns. Students learn a great deal through exchanging knowledge and ideas. Teachers handle personal issues sensitively in other subjects, particularly in dance and drama lessons. In these and other lessons and activities, excellent relationships, often between younger and older students, generate a very secure, supportive and friendly atmosphere in which students share their thoughts and gain confidence.

## Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

<i>Standards of work are below expectations</i>	<i>Students' achievement is unsatisfactory</i>
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is good</i>
<i>Leadership is unsatisfactory</i>	<i>Management is satisfactory</i>

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Many opportunities for girls to take an active part in the life of the school and the wider community.
- No assessment of how students are doing, so their achievement was not mentioned in the 2003 annual reports to parents.
- Provision through other subjects is patchy, and it is largely incidental.
- Unsatisfactory arrangements for organising the subject.
- While the school council is under review it cannot provide a practical experience of democracy in action.

## Commentary

131. The school is at an early stage of introducing citizenship. Most of the key topics, such as rights and responsibilities or the global community, are taught in PSHE lessons, mainly in Years 8, 9 and 10. The school has completed an audit of where other subjects already cover citizenship topics. So far, however, teachers have not emphasised these topics enough, and students' work on them is not assessed for its citizenship elements. Many Year 10 students taking the full course religious education GCSE have chosen to study the short GCSE citizenship. Their understanding of individuals' rights and legislation is secure, and better than that of other students in Years 10 and 11. The school is already considering introducing the short course for all. Present provision is therefore patchy, with no evaluation so far of how effectively it is working.
132. From discussion with students it is clear that their knowledge and understanding of citizenship is below that expected for their age. As they are alert and thoughtful in many subjects, their potential to do well in this subject has not yet been met. Their learning has not been assessed

and their written work not marked. Reports to parents at the end of the last academic year did not meet statutory requirements.

133. Some good teaching and learning was seen during the inspection. Teachers encourage group work and so developed students' skills of discussion, co-operation and negotiation. Activities are well planned, supported by good quality teacher-produced resources. An external speaker from the Refugee Council, addressing Year 10 students, successfully challenged their perception and, in many cases, their misunderstandings about asylum seekers. Students learned a great deal in this session.
134. Students often join in activities within school and the wider community, for example performing to audiences in residential homes or primary schools. Some volunteer to take on responsibilities and become prefects and mentors. Many girls involve themselves in charity work and fundraising very successfully. The school council is due to start up again soon; this will help students to experience democracy first hand (see paragraph 41).
135. The school has tried, and failed, to appoint a citizenship co-ordinator. The task has been overseen by a senior manager who, with numerous other responsibilities, is unable to give the subject the time and interpretation it needs. In spite of this, the schools' values and ethos ensure that most students are responsible citizens within the community.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, nine 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 and 2003. National data for 2003 is not yet available.

### *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
Taken in Year 13		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	2 (1)	100 (0)	--- (90)	50 (0)	--- (42.7)	35 (0)	--- (39)
Biology	3 (2)	100 (50)	--- (81.6)	0 (0)	--- (33.2)	30 (20)	--- (33)
Business studies	1 (1)	100 (0)	--- (89.1)	100 (0)	--- (31.7)	50 (0)	--- (35.4)
Chemistry	0 (2)	(100)	--- (84.8)	(0)	--- (36.9)	--- (35)	--- (35.2)
Dance	3 (1)	100 (100)	--- (94.8)	30 (0)	--- (51.5)	36.7 (40)	--- (43.2)
English literature	1 (2)	100 (100)	--- (94.4)	0 (100)	--- (37.9)	40 (55)	--- (38.9)
French	4 (1)	100 (100)	--- (85.4)	50 (0)	--- (35.2)	42.5 (30)	--- (34.9)
General studies	14 (29)	100 (79)	--- (88.3)	8 (21)	--- (36.4)	22.9 (0)	--- (36.3)
Geography	2 (3)	100 (100)	--- (25.7)	50 (0)	--- (78.6)	35 (26.7)	--- (30.0)
History	2 (1)	100 (100)	--- (88.3)	0 (100)	--- (36.4)	35 (60)	--- (36.3)
Mathematics	1 (0)	100 ---	--- (74.2)		--- (34.3)	40 ---	--- (31.3)
Media studies	15 (2)	100 (100)	--- (94.2)	73 (0)	--- (36.1)	41.7 (40)	--- (38.5)
Physics	0 (2)	(50)	--- (82)	(0)	--- (36.2)	--- (10)	--- (34.3)
Psychology	0 (4)	(100)	--- (83.2)	(25)	--- (32.5)	--- (30)	--- (33.6)
Sociology	3 (1)	100 (0)	--- (83.2)	0 (0)	--- (32.5)	26.7 (0)	--- (33.6)

The 2002 national averages for sociology and psychology are the same because these subjects are grouped together as other social studies

**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	5 (4)	100 (75)	--- (96.1)	20 (0)	--- (48.7)	76 (50)	--- (85.1)
Biology	9 (6)	100 (100)	--- (91.6)	22 (50)	--- (36.3)	68.9 (86.7)	--- (74.1)
Business studies	8 (4)	100 (100)	--- (96.4)	63 (0)	--- (32.8)	97.5 (65)	--- (76.5)
Chemistry	5 (3)	100 (100)	--- (94)	40 (33)	--- (45.9)	76 (60)	--- (81.1)
Childhood studies CACHE Diploma						104 (95)	n/a
Dance	4 (2)	100 (100)	--- (95.1)	100 (50)	--- (50.3)	110 (100)	--- (85.8)
Drama	6 (8)	100 (100)	--- (98.1)	50 (12.5)	--- (41.5)	93.3 (70)	--- (82.9)
English literature	10 (11)	100 (100)	--- (98.5)	60 (54.5)	--- (43.7)	96 (92.7)	--- (84.3)
French	1 (1)	100 (100)	--- (96.2)	0 (0)	--- (46.1)	80 (60)	--- (83)
Geography	20 (5)	100 (100)	--- (97.1)	35 (80)	--- (40.5)	80 (108)	--- (80.9)
General studies	22	96 ---	--- (90.1)	9 ---	--- (29.1)	60 ---	--- (69.3)
History	5 (7)	80 (100)	--- (81.2)	60 (71.4)	--- (41)	84 (97.1)	--- (81.2)
Law	5 (6)	100 (100)	--- (94.3)	100 (67)	--- (38.9)	116 (96.7)	--- (77.7)
Leisure and recreation AVCE	4 (0)	100 ---	--- (86.9)	25 ---	--- (12.7)	80 ---	--- (58.3)
Mathematics	1 (3)	100 (67)	--- (93.3)	100 (0)	--- (52.2)	120 (46.7)	--- (84.7)
Media studies	12 (5)	100 (100)	--- (98.3)	42 (20)	--- (36.8)	86.7 (80.0)	--- (81.8)
Music	2 (3)	100 (100)	--- (97.7)	50 (0)	--- (41.8)	90 (80)	--- (82.2)
Performing arts AVCE	10 (0)	100 ---	--- (92.5)	70 ---	--- (40.8)	104 ---	--- (78.8)
Physical education	6 (4)	100 (100)	--- (95.4)	17 (0)	--- (29.5)	66.7 (75)	--- (73.2)
Physics	2 (2)	100 (100)	--- (92.8)	50 (0)	--- (42.8)	80 (60)	--- (78.6)
Psychology	7 (4)	100 (100)	--- (94.3)	43 (75)	--- (38.9)	80 (100)	--- (77.7)
Sociology	7 (2)	100 (100)	--- (95.4)	29 (0)	--- (39.6)	77.1 (40)	--- (79.1)
Spanish	1 (0)	100 ---	--- (96.2)	100 ---	--- (47.3)	120 ---	--- (83.6)
Travel and tourism AVCE	11 (3)	100 (100)	--- (15.7)	27 (0)	--- (88.1)	76.4 (66.7)	--- (61.4)

The 2002 national averages for law and psychology are the same because these subjects are grouped together as other social studies.

**Level 2 vocational qualifications**

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
ICT intermediate GNVQ	9 (10)	88.9 (90)	n/a	55.6 (10)		0 (0)	n/a
Childhood studies CACHE certificate	3 (0)	100	n/a	66.7	n/a	33.3	n/a

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

136. **French** is taken by a small number of students. A Year 13 lesson seen during the inspection was good because the teacher pitched the work at exactly the right level to challenge students of different abilities. They practised speaking intensively. Most students are achieving well because the teacher's sensitive questions encourage them to respond.

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

<i>Standards of work are above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is very good</i>
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is very good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The above average A-level results reflect very good value-added.
- Teachers share their enthusiasm for literature with students very effectively.
- Students respond by working hard and with evident enjoyment.
- The classrooms are unsuitable for group discussions.
- The library, though improving, is not adequate for research and reference, and students rarely use it.

### Commentary

137. In the last three years A-level results have been above average; significantly improved since the last inspection. AS-level results in 2003 were less good; the head of department has made a careful analysis of the reasons for this. These students are now in Year 13 and some good work was seen in lessons. Studying Shakespeare's women, several students drew on wider knowledge of the plays and there was interesting reference to a recent production some had seen in London. In another good lesson, students showed that they understood approaches to critical analysis when asked to compare two texts of different genres. They talked relevantly of narrative perspectives and the use of imagery and mentioned other language features which they recognised.

138. The 20 Year 12 students were confident and articulate in a lesson on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', making useful contributions to the discussion. Preparing individual presentations, they showed good understanding of the text and the task, indicating that they had received good literature teaching for GCSE on which to build. One student made an interesting comment on the difference between studying this Shakespeare play in Year 8 and for A-level. Others agreed that they were now finding much more in the play.

139. Unfortunately, the layout of the classrooms does not encourage interaction because students sit in rows facing the front so their comments are usually addressed to the teacher, which affects the quality of their learning. More thought could be given to room adjustment even if a room change is not possible. In some impressive coursework essays, from this year and last, writing was fluent, analyses perceptive, and arguments carefully presented and sustained. Students learn how to use reference and quotation effectively and the best work shows that they are able to set the books studied in a wider context, and to see interesting links and cross references.

140. In both years, achievement is very good because students want to learn and are well taught. Teachers convey their good knowledge and appreciation of the texts. They ensure that students enjoy literature and will get more from it than an examination grade. Students in both

years are warmly appreciative of the English teaching, particularly of how accessible they find the teachers, and the care teachers take when assessing their work. Documents record the teachers' detailed discussions and analysis of students' work and progress.

141. After two recent changes of leadership, the new head of department has given the team a clear sense of direction and priorities. Assessment and evaluation are being used very well, to determine strengths and any weaknesses in the teaching and learning and to guide planning. There is scope for further improvement in student recruitment, extra-curricular activity and in the use of the library. Although English literature has been one of the most successful subjects in recent years, numbers taking it have been rather small. Teachers take students to theatre productions and exhibitions, but as yet the department does not provide a range of other activities such as clubs, debates and visiting speakers. The library is not seen by sixth-form students as an important resource, and this is a tradition now ready for change.

### Language and literacy across the curriculum

142. The good work done across departments in the main school to improve writing and encourage reading gives sixth-form students a very good foundation for their work. The confident and articulate speech noted in many subjects in Years 7 to 11 is also a feature of sixth-form lessons, where there are opportunities to develop discussion and presentation.
143. A-level results in recent years show that in a number of subjects which require good standards of writing, students are attaining above national levels. In English literature, geography, law and history, results were above average in 2002. In 2003, there were also encouraging results in several subjects; the percentage of A and B grades shows that students are competent writers and are not being held back by inadequate language skills.
144. The library has not been good enough for sixth-form study and research and it is clear that the majority of A-level students do not use it very much. The stock of books in such newer subject areas as law and psychology is improving and the school has plans, with the new librarian, to develop the library and encourage students to use it more. It should become an important resource for sixth-form students.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

<i>Standards of work are average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is satisfactory</i>
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is very good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led and managed.
- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good and they provide well-structured and challenging lessons.
- Students exhibit an obvious enjoyment of the subject and readily contribute to discussions.
- ICT, including graphic calculators, is not used enough to support and enhance students' understanding.
- The number of students progressing on to the A-level course in Year 13 is low.

### Commentary

145. Although A- and AS-level results are below average, it is recognised that these students' GCSE grades were lower than that expected as the foundation for advanced study. Some of



them had not been exposed to the depth of knowledge and understanding gained by studying for the GCSE higher level papers.

146. Teaching and learning are sometimes very good. In addition to planning carefully, so that students understand each new aspect of the course, teachers give them helpful examples to illustrate notation or to enable them to visualise solutions to problems. In an AS lesson students had difficulty trying to solve simultaneous equations with one linear and one non-linear equation. The teacher provided only subtle hints about how the curve should be sketched, so students gained a better appreciation of possible solutions, as well as a technique which they could apply to other situations. They did not have access to graphical calculators, which would have given them a much clearer visualisation of the questions they were tackling.
147. In all lessons seen, teachers made sure that the students' widely differing abilities were catered for. They offered clarification to those finding it difficult to grasp concepts and provided developmental examples to extend higher attaining students. Students obviously enjoy lessons; they are actively involved throughout, ably applying their understanding of previous work. As a result, lessons proceed at a good pace. The absence of any form of ICT detracts from the overall quality of the teaching. In an AS statistics lesson processing data, the students would have benefited by having access to a spreadsheet. The head of department has recognised this deficiency and is taking steps to remedy the situation.
148. The head of department, fully aware that standards are below average, has identified the mechanics component as being the most problematic. She also recognises that the numbers of students progressing on to A-level is very low. In the short time she has been in post, she has initiated changes which appear to be bearing fruit. Teaching is now shared, each teacher focusing on particular aspects of the course. Also, since the school enters some students for GCSE statistics, their knowledge of this unit is much better than had previously been the case. The statistics unit will now be examined much earlier, allowing more time and concentrated teaching on the remaining two units, one of which is mechanics.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

149. Students' numeracy skills are good enough for them to cope with their A-level and AVCE courses. In geography, students use advanced statistical correlation techniques to analyse data. Science lessons involve the use of calculations, formulae and graphs and students tackle these reasonably well. Year 13 students look confidently at the structure underpinning music, such as Bach chorales. The level of mathematics used in physical education is higher than normally expected, with students carrying out good statistical analyses of questionnaires. In business education, students produce good, well-labelled graphs of consumer surveys, carry out critical path analyses and use decision trees.

### SCIENCE

150. Achievement in A-level sciences in 2003 was below that expected, especially in physics and chemistry. Numbers taking these two subjects are too small to compare results with national statistics. Encouragingly, both subjects have attracted more AS students this year. Underachievement in AS-level **physics** last year was partly due to staffing changes. The one student has missed the rigours of debate with others. She displays commendable determination to complete the A-level course. In the lesson seen, her learning about energy was thorough, due to competent and knowledgeable teaching and because of her admirable efforts to answer tricky questions on her own.
151. The disappointing 2003 A- and AS-level **chemistry** results were partly because the students had not understood the depth of answers required in the examinations. In a lesson on spectroscopy, Year 13 students made sound progress determining the number of different

hydrogen environments in molecules, through explicit, well-planned exercises and by helping each other. There is scope for them to be more challengingly involved throughout lessons.

## Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

<i>Standards of work are average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is good</i>
<i>Leadership is satisfactory</i>	<i>Management is satisfactory</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching encourages students to reason out theories for themselves.
- Students' determination to tackle complex work enriches their learning.
- Students' explanations are too superficial for advanced level. Their learning targets are not sharp enough to track their progress meticulously.
- Students' creative involvement is limited throughout lessons and imaginative summaries do not happen, which thwarts learning.

### Commentary

152. Three A-level students achieved well in 2003, the others satisfactorily. Achievement was satisfactory in the 2003 AS-level examination. Teachers are monitoring the standards attained by the current Year 13 students more sharply than before. Predictions show that all students are likely to pass, although the proportion of A and B grades may be below average. Overall, students are achieving well. They made good progress learning more about plant physiology because in this lesson they had to explain their observations of actual specimens showing the effect of auxin hormone. Their answers in class and written work, however, show that their explanations can be too superficial, and they find it difficult to apply their knowledge and ideas to new situations; this needs more practice to cement understanding.
153. Year 12 students' standard of work is average and their achievement is satisfactory as they move steadily on from GCSE work into new areas. They made good progress learning how DNA instructs a cell to produce particular amino acids, through simple paper activities. They battled well to understand more complex ideas that needed clearer illustration – how these proteins control the behaviour of cells. Teachers do not always encourage students to explain their ideas and understanding in depth; this would help students to know where their learning is not secure.
154. Students' good attitudes towards tackling complex work enrich their learning. Through various well-planned demonstrations, that clearly illustrated the theory, Year 13 students diligently reasoned out ideas about what causes changes in movement in plant cells. The lesson had a quick pace through relevant activities that succinctly explained new ideas. Students' learning is further helped by the teachers' regular, constructive written comments on work. However, if students do not answer questions about difficulties, or make notes after they have discussed them, their learning is not substantially extended. In some unimaginatively planned lessons the pace slows, and in the review at the end of the lesson students are not encouraged to reflect on what they have been doing; as a result they learn less effectively.
155. The department offers extra classes after school, confirming its clear commitment to raise standards. There are too few extra-curricular activities, although fieldwork is being reintroduced for Year 12. Checks are being made on the general progress of individual students, but the subject is not yet used to identifying targets that sharply focus upon learning particular aspects

of biology. Nor is there regular monitoring of teaching and learning through classroom observations and scrutiny of class work.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory overall** (mainly in terms of the AVCE course).

<i>Standards of work are below average in the AVCE and average in the GNVQ course</i>	<i>AVCE students' achievement is unsatisfactory. GNVQ students' achievement is satisfactory</i>
<i>Teaching for the AVCE is unsatisfactory but it is good for the GNVQ</i>	<i>Learning is unsatisfactory for the AVCE and good for GNVQ</i>
<i>Leadership is unsatisfactory</i>	<i>Management is unsatisfactory</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is well matched to students' needs in the Year 12 GNVQ course; they achieve well and make good progress.
- The AVCE course in Year 12 is unchallenging with inadequate preparation and too little assessment taking place.
- There are not enough trained specialist staff to stimulate high achievement in the AVCE course.

### Commentary

156. Both ICT courses are new since the last inspection, the AVCE course since September 2003, so the first group is in Year 12. Nine students took the GNVQ examination in 2003 and their results were good. In recent years an increasing number of students have gained merit grades. Students are producing good work in GNVQ lessons, where effective and experienced teaching is well focused on their individual styles of learning. Students are highly motivated and enthusiastic and are keeping clear, up-to-date portfolios. Standards in AVCE lessons are below average. Although it is early days, the unit on presenting information lacks any advanced level content and students are not acquiring high level skills.
157. AVCE students are not currently achieving their potential, bearing in mind their ability and the knowledge some of them gained from either the office applications course in Years 10 and 11 and/or business GCSE. Teachers are not preparing stimulating materials which could raise students' achievement. One-to-one teaching does move some of them forward reasonably well, but most of them have no idea of the course structure or of the standards they should be aiming at. In comparison, the small group in the GNVQ course means that each student has enough of the teacher's time to achieve well.
158. A largely unvarying teaching style limits the range of opportunities for the students to learn in different ways. Students do most of their research individually on the Internet. Having found a *professional* memo, not all students know what a cc is for, the nature of blocked left versus indented style, or how to complete a formal letter. Their PowerPoint presentations reveal a lack of understanding of contrast and font size – the key to audiences being able to read them. Teachers do not regularly assess work, nor do they set or mark homework rigorously, so students are not getting enough direction in their studies. When teachers pose questions at the end of a lesson, to summarise important points, the students' response is limited, indicating that they have not learned enough.
159. These courses are valuable additions to the curriculum and students are very enthusiastic about them. The head of department is new to the school and to the AVCE course requirements and the introduction of the course has not been managed well so far. There are

no text books and no basic collection of resources. A significant amount of management time needs to be set aside to make sure that the course succeeds.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

160. ICT is used much more than it was in the past, particularly in business studies, leisure and tourism, and music. The number of computers in the students' workroom is adequate and there are plans to upgrade the rather old computers in the study area. All students have e-mail accounts, although they rarely use them to e-mail work home. Their ability to cope with their sixth-form courses is reasonable, and when they need to use a software program they have not met before, subject teachers competently instruct them about it.

### HUMANITIES

161. Teaching is good in **psychology** and students feel responsible for how they learn. They have good knowledge and understanding of human behaviour and are designing very good research projects. Achievement in **sociology** was below that expected in 2003. Present sociology students were working on their own during the inspection week so no lessons were observed. Just as past students have done, present students are achieving very well in **law**. They concentrate hard on interpreting finely differentiated definitions. This is because of the teacher's skill in motivating and inspiring students through a clear perception of how to direct their learning, and an enthusiastic appreciation of the fine nuances of a subject new to the students.

162. In **history**, students have detailed knowledge and understanding of Italy in the years before World War One and they write extended analytical essays well. They discuss confidently and work well on their own. They are taught very well. Teaching is good in **religious education** and students work very well independently. They have good knowledge and understanding of theology being challenged, as they study Thomas Aquinas' five proofs of God.

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

<i>Standards of work are above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is very good</i>
<i>Teaching is very good</i>	<i>Learning is very good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been very good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' practical and fieldwork assignments are very good.
- Teachers deliver lessons with a clear, well-considered structure.
- The high retention rate in Year 13 indicates students' enthusiasm for the subject.
- Very good leadership and management underpin the overall high standards.
- Students have yet to develop fully their essay writing skills.

### Commentary

163. Standards are above average overall, consistent with recent A-level results. These peaked in 2002, when over three quarters of the students attained A or B grades. AS-level results are as good. These impressive results, which have improved since the last inspection, reflect how very well the students achieve. All students compile comprehensive, well-organised notes, extracting relevant information from a range of sources. They have a very good grasp of both human and physical geography concepts.

164. Studying the theoretical aspects of river floods, Year 12 students dealt confidently with advanced hydrography concepts. Year 13 students have a mature appreciation of the difficulties of implementing decisions reached at international conferences, for example on global warming. Teachers' expert guidance and organisation of fieldwork mean that students produce coursework of a very high standard. They test hypotheses by subjecting their observations to rigorous statistical analysis. The department develops students' numerical skills so that they use advanced statistical techniques accurately, and gain a thorough appreciation of the best method to use. Throughout Years 12 and 13, in oral and written work, students' maturity of interpretation and grasp of geographical concepts steadily improves. They use ICT well, to present their work attractively and to carry out Internet research. They are beginning to write well-argued essays. At least half of them however, have yet to achieve the fluency that achieves the highest examination grades.
165. Teaching is never less than good, and it is frequently excellent, a marked improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and an infectious enthusiasm that produces very positive responses. The large number choosing the subject in both years illustrates their interest. Students learn very well. Under expert guidance they use an imaginative and interesting range of resources and enjoy practical and fieldwork assignments. The best teaching is characterised by a good tutorial style, incisive questioning, challenging content and a brisk pace. These qualities were illustrated when Year 13 students worked to tight deadlines, linking population trends to stages of economic development. The teachers' good use of well-chosen case studies brings theoretical concepts to life. They mark extended pieces of writing regularly and give students accurate judgements on the quality of their work.
166. The subject is very well led and managed. The good sequencing of topics and themes, combined with the relevance of case studies, contribute significantly to how well students learn. Many of the significant improvements since the last inspection are attributable to a very good and detailed staff development programme. The department is not resting on its laurels and realises that it needs to keep up with new developments. Under current leadership the subject will continue to thrive if these forward-thinking developments are realised fully.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

167. Standards in the sixth-form **design and technology** courses are average. Students learn well and make good progress in these new courses. The professional help and support given to students is extensive and effective, often through lunchtime and after-school sessions.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

168. In a Year 13 **art** lesson students were challenged by the teacher to produce experimental outcomes in a set time from the observation of natural forms. The students worked confidently on large sheets of paper mixing charcoal marks with white emulsion paint to achieve individually creative results. Standards are average and students achieve well. The subject is becoming more popular.
169. Students achieve extremely well in **dance**. Results and standards are very high. Students pick up new material speedily because they are dedicated and enthusiastic, and the teaching is excellent. After watching a video they practised and repeated movements with technical precision and accuracy.
170. Standards in **music** are broadly average and students achieve well. Their compositions are fluent and stylistic and they give well-controlled and accurate performances. They are taught very well and develop very good, confident aural and critical listening skills, such as in lessons

on Bach chorales and orchestral music. **Music technology** A-level is enhanced by the very good resources and the teacher's specialist knowledge.

171. During the inspection the **media studies** teacher was absent. Students were undertaking independent research confidently. Over 20 students are following this popular course in both years. From discussion with them it is clear that they enjoy the course and feel they are achieving well. Results have been above average.

## Drama

Provision in drama is **excellent**.

<i>Standards of work are very high</i>	<i>Students' achievement is excellent</i>
<i>Teaching is very good</i>	<i>Learning is excellent</i>
<i>Leadership is excellent</i>	<i>Management is excellent</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been very good</i>	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lively and energetic teaching with excellent features.
- Committed students who engage in independent study and work hard to practise and develop new skills.
- Visionary leadership of the department and the Performing Arts Specialist work.
- Students' technical ability, performances and response are very good; they develop an excellent use of critical and technical language.
- A superb studio theatre and technical support, so performances are at a professional level.

## Commentary

172. In 2003 half the students achieved A grades at A-level. Examination results are rising and, having received a good grounding in drama in the main school, more students are choosing this subject. Students in Year 12 have made considerable progress in half a term. Studying the 'Caucasian Chalk Circle' and 'A Streetcar Named Desire', they have engaged in well-planned units of work which incrementally introduce new skills, knowledge and understanding about these plays.

173. Students attain very high standards because they are fully committed, work hard and are taught by experienced teachers whose subject knowledge is extremely good. All teaching has excellent features and some lessons are outstanding. Students' physical skills are excellent and their vocal skills improve throughout the course. They have very good knowledge of the technical aspects of theatre, including the ability to edit and use video within theatrical performance, and have a well-developed, critical understanding and vocabulary. Male students in Year 12 make good progress, despite lacking the same fundamental knowledge and skills as the female students who have had the benefit of a longer experience of drama in the school.

174. Students' learning is excellent. They take responsibility to manage the physical and vocal warm up for the class and lessons begin promptly and energetically. When examining the 'Caucasian Chalk Circle' the teacher used skilfully-framed questions to individual students, to review previous knowledge of Brechtian theory, and to stimulate students' thought and imagination. Students answer questions well and make useful and informative notes. The pace of lessons is unflagging and students work industriously against tight deadlines as they devise their own plays. Teachers close lessons by encapsulating the learning and setting individual study.

175. Assessment takes place continually during the lessons and most students are mindful of their individual targets: 'I am working on developing my characterisations and taking on playing more

than one role during devised work'. The students' performances of their work in progress demonstrated their excellent physical, vocal and performance skills, combined with moments of high tension and haunting images. Afterwards, they evaluated each other's devised plays about Tiennamen Square and child murderers extremely well, providing high quality and relevant critical analysis.

176. The outstanding studio theatre, the excellent resources and the teachers' and technician's expertise are exploited to the full, and students benefit accordingly. The head of department and the enthusiastic and energetic community projects manager contribute enormously to the success of the work in the community (see Annex). The head of department's leadership is excellent; it is a significant factor in the department's success.

## Performing arts

Provision in AVCE performing arts is **very good**.

<i>Standards of work are very high</i>	<i>Students' achievement is very good</i>
<i>Teaching is very good</i>	<i>Learning is very good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been very good</i>	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- A new vocational course which has been established quickly and successfully. It contributes significantly to the Performing Arts Specialist work.
- Teachers who have excellent subject knowledge and working practices.
- After discussion, students and teachers set well-considered targets which, along with the course specification, help students to know how to improve their achievement.
- Teachers from different disciplines collaborate and support students extremely well.

## Commentary

177. With half the students attaining grade A, and none less than grade C in the final examination, it is clear that standards are very high. Dance, music and drama teachers work closely together so their work blends logically and students experience a very good, wide range of learning styles. Students' audition pieces, performed in public, reveal how well the activities and demands of the course are closely matched to their needs. Students chose suitable audition pieces including speeches from 'Macbeth' and 'Equus', musical numbers, modern dance and ballet. After touring schools with Theatre in Education productions, they hone their skills in managing children's behaviour through practical role-play. Details of the students' excellent work in the community is in Annex A.

178. Students are autonomous, they work hard, collaboratively and co-operatively, are enthusiastic and enjoy the subject. Their observations and notes are very good because they prepare them carefully, incorporating reflection on their knowledge and skills. Students have chosen to examine in depth technical options such as lighting and video, or design, or support work for primary school teachers. Students took responsibility for the design of 'Metamorphosis' and the school production of 'Anything Goes'. Their design and realisation of the sets was stunning.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

179. Students achieve well in **AVCE leisure and recreation** because the very good teaching encourages them to think independently and debate thoughtfully. Students respond enthusiastically to the teachers' skilful questions. Results and standards are above average in **AVCE travel and tourism**. Students achieve well, given their starting points. Teaching, by geography specialists, is good and planned methodically. The practical and theoretical

elements of the course are interwoven skilfully, giving students insights into the demands of the course and helping them to learn effectively.

## Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

<i>Standards of work are above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
<i>Teaching is good</i>	<i>Learning is good</i>
<i>Leadership is good</i>	<i>Management is good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been very good</i>	

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' good achievement in lessons.
- Good and very good teaching, leading to good learning.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students.
- Good leadership and management generate a productive work ethos.
- The lack of a dedicated room for teaching.

## Commentary

180. Although the percentage of A-level A and B grades has been below average, an above average percentage of students pass this subject. Their achievement is good in relation to their abilities and GCSE performance. A few students do better in physical education than in their other subjects. The course is becoming more popular. Analysis of results shows that the weakness is in the students' portfolios. The department's self-review has already identified this and corrective measures are in place.
181. Students are good performers and take part in at least one sport to a high level. They learn to analyse basic skills and develop the ability to evaluate and give feedback accurately. When teachers manage discussions skilfully, as in a Year 13 lesson on motor skill development, students enjoy them and their knowledge and understanding increases rapidly. They make thoughtful and perceptive comments discussing sensitive issues, for example younger students' attitudes to sport. Students' good achievement is largely the consequence of the teachers' subtle and skilful questions. Progress is firmly rooted in the very good relationships which teachers establish with the students and the students' enthusiasm and determination.
182. Teachers mark work in an informative manner so students understand the examination requirements. Students use ICT effectively, for example in the production of fitness charts. Lessons are well structured and taught at a good pace; teachers use a variety of independent, and often practical, activities that strengthen learning. Teaching and learning are particularly effective when students research topics in small groups or pairs and feed back their findings to the group. Teaching was satisfactory rather than good when too much time was spent on a mundane task and the summary failed to consolidate learning effectively.
183. The productive work ethos in most lessons is a reflection of the good leadership and management. The teachers are fully aware that sixth-form teaching must stimulate independent and collaborative learning. Students enjoy and learn from the extra-curricular activities provided for them. Improvement has been very good with the introduction and establishment of the AS- and A-levels. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, as teaching takes place in a variety of rooms. The unsuitable sports reception area, sometimes used for the theory lessons, considerably restricts styles of teaching and learning.

## BUSINESS



## Business studies

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

<i>Standards of work are well above average</i>	<i>Students' achievement is good</i>
<i>Teaching is very good</i>	<i>Learning is very good</i>
<i>Leadership is very good</i>	<i>Management is very good</i>
<i>Improvement since the last inspection has been very good</i>	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Stimulating teaching means that students learn with interest and enthusiasm.
- The courses are all very well organised.
- Links with local business and industry are not yet well enough developed.
- Because some lessons take place in rooms without computers, students do not always use ICT enough in lessons.

### Commentary

184. Sixth-form business studies courses lead on from very popular ones at GCSE. Results have risen significantly from a very low level in 2001 to a high standard in 2003; students achieved very well overall. This improvement is due to the very good teaching and leadership now in place. In the AS-level examination in 2003, over half the students gained A or B grades.
185. In a very good Year 13 lesson, students discussed their strategies for a new chocolate bar critically and with marketing flair. Their coursework projects are well linked to local businesses where some, but not all, students have part-time jobs. One student's evaluation of the feasibility of installing a new thermal oven was outstanding, backed by excellent, detailed network diagrams to illustrate critical paths. Her well-drawn graphs, showing changes in aggregate supply, imported into wordprocessed text were very effectively presented using ICT.
186. Teachers' excellent, often cheerful, relationships with students keep them fully engaged in their work, helping sustain their excellent attitudes. When teachers noted problems in students' understanding of marketing and financial concepts, they explained and reinforced essential terms very clearly, and gave extra examples. Teachers assess students' work very thoroughly and, in one-to-one tutorials, monitor the progress of their interesting coursework projects most rigorously.
187. Students make frequent presentations to improve their communication and numeracy skills, for example volunteering to draw supply curves on the whiteboard. In lessons, students cannot always use ICT for oral presentations or for analysis of statistical data on spreadsheets, because some rooms do not have computers. This affected the progress made in a Year 12 lesson where students could have used spreadsheets to model changes in the break-even point. This issue is being addressed, as is teachers' limited use of speakers and visits to local retail businesses, to help students understand how businesses operate.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

188. Teaching is good in the **childhood education** courses. This is described in the box below paragraph 35.

## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

189. In Year 12 all students follow an **AS general studies programme**. Depending on the grade they attain and their interest, they can continue the subject to A-level. They find the content

stimulating, as it covers significant moral and social issues and they enjoy debating them. In a sound Year 12 lesson students investigated the qualities of a successful politician, reasons for benefit payments and commuting issues. Their understanding of 'social conscience' was secure. Results have been below average but students' awareness of world issues develops well by following the course. They are expected to read newspapers and keep up with current events.

190. Students also have a weekly **PSHE** session which particularly focuses on careers, choosing universities and consideration of future employment. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. Students learn to appreciate the meaning of 'smart' targets although they are not all convinced about the value of the academic tutoring day. All tutors successfully use these sessions to nurture a positive rapport with their students, boost their confidence and discuss any concerns they have.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<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>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>2</b>
Students' achievement	2	2
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>1</b>
Attendance	2	3
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well students learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	1	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1	1
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The governance of the school (unsatisfactory only in terms of not meeting the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship)	1 (5)	1 (5)
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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

## **ANNEX A: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SCHOOL'S WORK IN THE COMMUNITY LINKED WITH BEACON (B) AND PERFORMING ARTS SPECIALIST STATUS (PA)**

### **IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

Non-specialist music teachers in primary schools wanted to know more about **music** and music technology, and ways of encouraging children to learn instruments. The head of music has delivered several workshops on music skills and using ICT in music for primary teachers, as well as teaching young children about composition, using paintings as a starting point. She is teaching some Years 3 and 4 students about pentatonic music. The school organised four didgeridoo workshops. She observes 'The work with primary schools has given me an insight into the Key Stage 2 curriculum and informed a link with the work with our Year 7'. The **orchestra** has given concerts and workshops at three primary schools, successfully encouraging more primary children to start learning instruments. Hillview has bought and lent out 15 flutes, lent violins and a melodic percussion set. The head of music hopes some of these instrumentalists will come to Hillview and raise its standards of instrumental playing and ensemble work. **(B/PA)**

A feeder primary school identified a lack of confidence about **art** and how to teach basic drawing skills; staff did not know how to advise students to make their work better. A workshop taught these primary teachers how to teach basic drawing skills through practical activities. A booklet was produced which suggested activities for each focus and adaptable worksheets to use for evaluation. The course was repeated for several schools. The benefits for Hillview, of art no longer being just a play activity in these primary schools, is that students arrive in Year 7 with good art skills, so they can achieve more by the end of Year 9. In a previous year the art department helped primary schools to develop environmental sculpture techniques. **(B)**

Only some primary schools in the area were offering **French** tuition; therefore, students arriving at Hillview were not all starting from the same point. A French teacher gave hour-long lessons every week to a primary school. The lessons took the form of a club based on fun repetition, games, songs and French cooking. Later the visits happened twice a week, so younger children had a taste of French lessons too. The girls who left this primary school and came to Hillview in September 2003 are ahead of their class. The benefit for them is that they have excelled in the lessons so far, and they are stretched by producing extended work and by being more creative and helping others. **(B)**

The **performing arts** technician gives technical help to primary schools, for example building sets, helping with lighting and rigging up lighting and training staff how to use it. The Year 13 AVCE students have given eleven music, drama and dance workshops to primary schools. The Hillview family of primary schools have received master classes and demonstration lessons in teaching **dance** and in the current year primary school teachers will come and watch Year 7 dance lessons at Hillview. A **drama** teacher visited five primary schools to help staff teach drama based on the book 'The Paper bag Princess'. Primary school teachers will observe Year 7 drama lessons in the future. The community projects manager at Hillview and the headteacher of a primary school organised a very successful **multicultural performing arts day** where 75 teachers experienced workshops, led by Hillview staff, on African drumming, gospel singing and Indian dance. **(B/PA)**

The **English** department has trained some primary school teachers on how to use interactive whiteboards with students with special educational needs, and had a theatre company working for a day on creative and innovative learning. The **mathematics** department has worked with gifted children in primary schools, as have also **physical education** teachers, focusing on gymnastics. The school hosted an **On-line** evening with ten secondary and primary schools. **(B)**

### **IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Sixth-form **music** students visited a special school to demonstrate sound qualities, range, repertoire for their instruments and the whole orchestra played two concerts (one at Christmas) to give the children the experience of live concerts. Such performances give Hillview students more confidence. The head of music worked with a newly qualified teacher at a boys' school and mentored a teacher at another secondary school. She notes that such work helps her own monitoring skills. The head of drama led a full training day on A-level drama for ten secondary school teachers. **(B/PA)**

A Pro Desk Top CAD course was organised for **technology** teachers both at Hillview and a local grammar school. This covered basic techniques and experience of more advanced work. Handouts and training materials were prepared for the course which took place over four weeks. The feedback was very positive. The course

resulted in teachers being trained to instruct students in both Hillview and other schools in computer-aided drawing. **(B)**

Another secondary school identified **science** GCSE coursework as an area it wanted to develop; a lack of staff experience and suitable ICT equipment meant that students achieved grades which were often below their potential. Two Hillview science teachers put together a two-week plan which focused on obtaining and analysing results and using ICT resources with Years 7 to 9 students. Hillview staff took laptops, data-loggers and LCD projectors and team-taught in Year 10 and younger lessons. The interactive 'Flesh Eaters' and 'Energy House' proved very successful. The GCSE coursework was completed in greater depth than before and the secondary school recorded its best ever results. Students' response to ICT in lessons was excellent. One of the Hillview teachers wrote 'It allowed me to teach in a very different environment that made the use of ICT as a constructive teaching and learning tool very apparent'. **(B)**

The head of **geography** mentored her counterpart at a boys' school, organised joint fieldwork and investigated primary-secondary transition in geography. She surveyed local feeder schools about the geography topics and skills they taught. Weaknesses in map skills were identified. Two Hillview geography teachers led a session on map skills for teachers from over 15 primary schools. Hillview has been able to plan its geography lessons for Years 7 to 9 more effectively so that work is not repeated, and it builds on the skills and knowledge developed in Years 3 to 6. **(B)**

## **FOR OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY (all PA)**

Every Saturday during term time, **River Drama**, a local drama group for children with Down's Syndrome, uses Hillview's studio theatre. The Hillview theatre technician and community projects manager provide help, along with three sixth-form volunteers. Twenty members of River Drama also joined in some of the summer school workshops.

Weekly **dance classes** for adults focus on contemporary dance and dance numbers from musicals. Teachers from primary schools, non-teaching staff, parents and other adults work together and will perform informally to family and friends. The **Hillview Community Choir** meets once a week and has performed twice in the school, in a residential care home and even at the Albert Hall. On Saturdays there is a **dance club**, known as **Com-Motion**, for boys and girls aged 9 to 14 and a **drama club** in the studio theatre for the same age group. This group's performances have included extracts from Roald Dahl's 'The Witches' and a contemporary version of 'Cinderella'.

In addition to winning gold medals at the Kent Youth awards and performing at the Chance to Dance show in Sevenoaks, the **Hillview Dance Company** works with groups such as Age Concern and with pupils from a special school; joint projects continue. In May 2003 Hillview hosted a community **jazz singing workshop** for adults and students over 16. The mixed **Hillview Youth Theatre**, for males and females aged 14 to 22 started in September 2003, led by a professional actress. It has ambitious plans to go to the Edinburgh Festival in 2005. Just before the inspection the studio theatre hosted a **giant head making workshop** for anyone in the Tonbridge community and evening workshops on **costume making** for adults and over 14s. The heads and costumes will be worn at the Christmas festival parade.

The **performing arts summer schools** are very successful, with two weeks of dance, drama and music workshops. Boys and girls come from most of the local primary schools, as well as secondary schools to enjoy activities such as (in 2003) Indian dance, African drumming, learning stunt co-ordination and stage fighting, circus skills and gospel singing and rapping.