

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HERNE BAY HIGH SCHOOL**

Herne Bay

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118920

Headteacher: Mr D O'Donovan

Lead inspector: Mrs S D Morgan

Dates of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> September 2003

Inspection number: 259287

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Modern (non-selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1463
School address:	Bullockstone Road Herne Bay Kent
Postcode:	CT6 7NS
Telephone number:	01227 361221
Fax number:	01227 742281
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Fishpool
Date of previous inspection:	October 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Herne Bay High is a large modern (non-selective) Foundation school. It has 1277 students in Years 7 to 11 and 186 students in the sixth form. The school is situated in Kent which has selective schools. Over 25 per cent of students in the local area are offered places in selective schools. This results in the school not recruiting students from across the full range of attainment. Students' attainment on entry has shown some improvement but overall is well below average. There are similar numbers of boys and girls in Years 7 to 11, although the proportion varies between year groups, with significantly more boys in Year 10 and more girls in Years 12 and 13. The school takes its students from the local area. The percentage of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, at just above twelve per cent, is broadly average. Over one quarter of students in Years 7 to 11 have been identified as having special educational needs, an above average proportion. These students have a range of needs, with most having learning and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is broadly average. Almost all students are white British, with small numbers from a range of other ethnic groups. The proportion who speak English, as an additional language is low, and a small number of students are at an early stage of learning English.

Herne Bay High has Sports College status. It is the only secondary school in the town and has developed a wide range of community provision. The school has been increasing in size, is popular with parents and is oversubscribed. It has received a number of awards, including the DfES Achievement Award, Sportsmark and has gained Investors in People status.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1355	Mrs S D Morgan	Lead inspector	
19798	Mrs J O'Keefe	Lay inspector	
32312	Mr P Johnson	Team inspector	English; sixth form English, media studies
5525	Mr R Cooper	Team inspector	Mathematics; sixth form mathematics
30433	Dr C Corp	Team inspector	Science; sixth form biology
30973	Mr G Hancock	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
2501	Ms R Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design; sixth form art and design
32590	Mr R Fenwick	Team inspector	Design and technology
33150	Ms A Pilgrim	Team inspector	Geography
10761	Dr P Willan	Team inspector	History
15075	Mr B Stephens	Team inspector	Modern languages
2496	Dr A O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Leisure and tourism; sixth form leisure and tourism English as an additional language
20490	Mr P Wilson	Team inspector	Music
7926	Mr J Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education; sixth form physical education
25352	Ms G Taujanskas	Team inspector	Religious education
2652	Mr R Lomas	Team inspector	Special educational needs
2495	Mr B Munden	Team inspector	Citizenship
32231	Mr A Lyons	Team inspector	Business studies; Sixth form business studies
30814	Mrs E Coley	Team inspector	

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Herne Bay High School is a **good and improving** school with a number of outstanding features. It provides a high quality learning environment in which the personal success and the achievement of all are promoted well. Standards have improved, teaching is consistently good and students achieve well. Students are proud of the school and parents are supportive. The headteacher and senior managers are providing very good leadership and have a clear vision of how to improve the school further. Overall the school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- GCSE results have shown rapid improvement. They were above average overall, in 2002, in relation to similar schools.
- Teaching is consistently good throughout the school and students achieve well.
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, very well supported by senior staff has led to rapid improvement.
- A high quality learning environment which uses the latest information and communication technology (ICT) equipment very effectively to support students' learning.
- Literacy standards are weak for a number of students and act as a barrier to their learning.
- The school cares for and values students and meets their needs very well.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent and does not always set clear targets to help students improve their work.
- The unsatisfactory attitudes of some lower-attaining students affect their learning.
- The school has excellent links with the local community.

**The school has improved significantly since its last inspection.** Weaknesses that were holding the school back have been dealt with effectively. The quality of teaching and learning has improved and this has led to a significant improvement in standards by the end of Year 11. The school is meeting statutory requirements for religious education and has put a structure in place to provide a daily act of collective worship. The school community shares a strong commitment to further improvement.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

### Students achieve well throughout the school.

Standards have shown improvement in Year 9 tests. Whilst standards are below average overall this represents good achievement overall. In 2002, students achieved at least as well as they should have done in relation to their previous results in science and much better than might have been expected in mathematics. English results were much worse than might have been expected, however, the most recent results show significant improvement. Inspection evidence showed very good achievement in mathematics and ICT. GCSE results have shown considerable improvement. They were average overall in relation to all schools nationally and above average when compared with other modern schools. Current standards are similar. In 2002 students achieved better than might have been expected in relation to their previous results. Inspection evidence showed very good achievement in ICT and business education. Overall, students following vocational courses achieve very well. In the sixth form students achieve well in relation to their previous results. In subjects

inspected in depth, students' achievements were at least good and very good in art and design and physical education and excellent in business education.

**Students are confident, friendly and proud of their school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, overall.** The vast majority behave well and have positive attitudes towards school. Attendance is average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school is providing a good education for its students.**

**Teaching is consistently good throughout the school.** This enables students to learn effectively and achieve well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and prepare students well for examinations and this has a positive impact on results. Work is carefully planned and teachers make very effective use of ICT to make lessons interesting and maintain students' concentration. In almost all lessons, teachers provide work that meets students' needs. However, in a very few, teachers did not deal firmly enough with the immature behaviour of a small minority which limited the learning of other students. Overall, the development of students' literacy skills is satisfactory. However, the weak literacy of some students acts as a barrier to their learning. Students' work is marked regularly and the information used by teachers to help plan future work. However, teachers do not always provide students with guidance on how they can improve their work.

The curriculum is good and the introduction of vocational courses is helping to meet the needs of all students. The quality of support and guidance provided for students is very good. The school has a very effective partnership with parents. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. The school has developed excellent links with the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management of the school are very good.** The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is well supported by the senior management team and governors. They have been successful in bringing about improvement in many aspects of the school's work. The school has become increasingly popular, standards and teaching have improved and the learning environment is now of high quality.

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

Parents are supportive of the school and value the education and care that their children receive. Both at the meeting held prior to the inspection and in questionnaire responses parents were overwhelmingly positive about the work of the school and how it has improved. Students appreciate the opportunities provided by the school and are very positive about the quality of teaching they receive. In the questionnaires returned some expressed concern about behaviour and bullying. However, in discussion students were confident that bullying was dealt with effectively. Sixth form students feel the school is well run and were positive about almost all aspects of the school's work.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Ensure the consistent application of strategies for improving literacy standards throughout the school.
- Ensure that marking is of a consistently high standard and sets clear targets to help students improve their work.
- Improve the attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of lower-attaining students to enable them to learn effectively.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT HERNE BAY HIGH SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is **good**, as is its cost effectiveness. Provision for post-16 students has improved considerably since the previous inspection when it was in its infancy. Numbers, particularly in Year 12, have continued to increase. The new sixth form accommodation provides both a high quality learning and social environment. The great majority of students in the sixth form are from within the main school. Management of the provision is effective and has ensured the broadening of the curriculum on offer in order to meet the needs of the full ability range of students. Though standards in many subjects are below the national average, analysis of results clearly shows that students' achieve well in relation to their GCSE results.

### Main strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and results in good achievement.
- Improved breadth of curriculum and enrichment activities.
- Very high quality of the learning environment.
- Students have positive attitudes towards the school and learning.
- Leadership and management are good and have led to numbers increasing.

### 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	Provision in English literature is <b>good</b> . Teachers show good subject knowledge and students <b>achieve well</b> . One French lesson was sampled. The quality of teaching and learning was <b>good</b> .
Mathematics	The quality of provision in mathematics is <b>good</b> . Teaching is <b>good</b> and students <b>achieve well</b> .
Science	Provision in biology is <b>good</b> . The quality of teaching is consistently <b>good</b> and students <b>achieve well</b> at advanced level. One Year 12 physics lesson was sampled, which was <b>good</b> and students <b>achieved well</b> . In the Year 12 chemistry lesson the teaching was <b>good</b> . In human biology the teaching was <b>good</b> and students showed positive attitudes.
Information and communication technology	One Year 12 ICT lesson was sampled. This was an <b>excellent</b> lesson with <b>very good</b> learning and achievement.
Humanities	One Year 12 lesson was sampled in history. The quality of teaching and learning were <b>good</b> and students <b>achieved well</b> . One Year 13 religious studies lesson was sampled. Teaching was of <b>good</b> quality.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is <b>very good</b> . Results at GCE A-level are a strength and achievement is <b>very good</b> . The quality of provision in media studies is <b>good</b> . Teachers know their students very well and students <b>achieve well</b> . Two Year 13 art graphics lessons were sampled. In one lesson teaching and learning were <b>good</b> and in the other, <b>very good</b> . Challenging teaching resulted in <b>good</b> and <b>very good</b> achievement. Two performing arts lessons were sampled. Teaching and learning were <b>good</b> . Two lessons were observed in music technology. Teaching and learning were <b>very good</b> .

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in leisure and tourism is <b>very good</b> and students <b>achieve well</b> . Teaching and learning are <b>good</b> . Provision in the community sports leader awards (CSLA) course is <b>excellent</b> . Teaching and learning are <b>very good</b> and the course makes an <b>excellent</b> contribution to students' personal development. In the Year 13 physical education theory lesson sampled teaching and learning were sound, meeting well the syllabus requirements. In the leisure and recreation lesson sampled, the quality of teaching and learning was <b>very good</b> . In the travel and tourism lesson sampled students' learning was <b>good</b> as a result of effective teaching.
Business	Provision in the AVCE business course is <b>excellent</b> . <b>Very good</b> teaching supports very effective independent learning. Very good working relationships create a positive working atmosphere and students' achievements are <b>excellent</b> .
Health and social care	One lesson was sampled in health and social care. Teaching and learning were <b>good</b> . Well-planned activities and good use of time led to all students <b>achieving well</b> .
General education	Three personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and one general studies lesson were sampled. Teaching and learning were <b>good</b> .

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

## ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

**Very good quality advice, guidance and support is provided for students.** Students feel well supported and they are confident that there is always someone to talk to should they need help or advice. Students are kept well informed as to their individual progress and what they need to do next through regular liaison with staff. Good relationships exist between students and their tutors. Students receive appropriate advice on careers and further education opportunities.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

**Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.** The headteacher has a very good overview of the sixth form and delegates responsibility for running it to three senior staff. These three managers compliment each other well, which results in the academic and pastoral work of the sixth form being well co-ordinated. Leadership of subjects in the sixth form is very good. The governors are committed to the sixth form and are aware of its strengths and weaknesses.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Overall, students are positive about their education and enjoy being in the sixth form. They are particularly pleased with the quality of teaching, staff expertise and the accessibility of teachers to help if they have difficulties with their work. Though some initially suggested dissatisfaction with well-informed advice from the school in terms of careers, later discussions with the inspection team showed this not necessarily to be the case. There was also some dissatisfaction with the range of enrichment activities on offer. Later discussion showed this to be related to the lack of sports teams in the sixth form. A quarter of the respondents felt that the school did not fully seek and respond to their views. Further analysis of their responses showed this was as a result of decisions taken as to what kind of clothes they were not to wear in school. Nevertheless, all respondents said the school was well run!

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in, subjects and courses

The school is situated in Kent, where there are selective schools. Over 25 per cent of students in the local area are offered places in selective schools. This results in the school not recruiting students from across the full range of attainment. Students' attainment on entry has shown some improvement but overall is **well below average**. Both in national tests at the end of Year 9, and GCSE examinations, results have improved at a rate faster than that seen nationally. Students' achievements throughout the school are **good**, although standards are generally below average. The school has won a government achievement award in recognition of recent improvements.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards show significant improvement.
- The most recent GCSE results show continued improvement.
- The most recent end of Year 9 national test results in English show significant improvement.
- Students achieve well throughout the school.
- Students use ICT well to support their learning and standards in ICT are well above average at GCSE.
- In the sixth form, standards are well above average in art and design and business education.
- Literacy skills are weak for a number of students and this acts as a barrier to their learning.

#### Commentary

1. At the time of the inspection, early in the school year, although the school's 2003 results were available to inspectors, national data were not available to enable comparisons to be made with other schools. For this reason inspectors used 2002 test and examination results for detailed comparison.

2. Results in the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, showed that students made the most progress in mathematics, where standards achieved were well above those of similar schools. In science, they were in line with those of similar schools. In English, they were well below; however, the most recent results show significant improvement. The performance of boys and girls is broadly similar. Whilst standards are below average this represents good achievement overall. Students achieve particularly well in mathematics. In ICT, standards are above average and students achieve very well. This is because work is very well planned and captures the interest of students of all levels of attainment.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.4 ( 28.6 )	33.3 (33.0 )
mathematics	33.6 ( 33.1 )	34.7 (34.4 )
science	31.4 ( 32.2 )	33.3 (33.1 )

*There were 251 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

3. GCSE results are above average when compared with other secondary modern schools. The proportion of students gaining 5 or more GCSE A\*-C grades and 1 or more A\*-G grades was average. A well above average proportion gained 5 or more A\*-G grades. The 2003 results show continued improvement in many subjects. Students achieved well in relation to their performance in national tests at the end of Year 9. Current standards are similar and in almost all subjects students achieve well. Standards are well above average in ICT. Students achieve particularly well in ICT and business education. Overall, students following vocational courses achieve very well. In citizenship, students' achievements are satisfactory. This is because limited curriculum time is available for the

GCSE course and work is not always well matched to students' prior experience. In history, students' achievements are satisfactory. This is because students who have weaker literacy skills find reading the text provided difficult and answering questions, too challenging, without additional help.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	41.1 ( 24.8 )	49.9 (48.4 )
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95.0 ( 93.1 )	90.9 (90.9 )
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96.0 (95.0 )	96.0 ( 96.0 )
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	38.1(32.2 )	39.8 (39.0)

*There were 219 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. Students with special educational needs achieve well, overall, throughout the school. Students with statements achieve very well, because their support is well targeted. Some lower-attaining students, particularly boys, do not achieve well enough because of their behaviour.

5. The school has put in place a very good strategy for identifying, making provision for and monitoring the achievement of students who are gifted and talented. The strategy is beginning to have a positive influence on the teaching of more able students in subjects such as mathematics and art and design, and on sporting prowess through extra-curricular activities such as the Youth Sports Trust multi-skills club.

6. The achievement of students with English as additional language, which includes the current small number of refugee students, is well above average. They respond very well to specialist support teaching and to a general awareness of their needs. In the 2002 Intermediate GNVQ examination, a student who had entered the school with limited English achieved a merit mark in leisure and tourism. Students have achieved successes at all levels of assessment. A number have obtained very good GCSE passes in their heritage languages – for example in Persian. However, the school does not yet formally monitor results by ethnic grouping. This is not in line with recommended practice.

7. Students join the school with literacy skills that are well below average. The school has worked to develop a whole-school approach to the teaching of literacy. Students' literacy skills do improve as they progress through the school. However, in many subjects weaknesses in their literacy skills do act as a barrier to learning. The school has recognised the need for a more concerted approach and this forms part of the school improvement plan. Students have satisfactory numeracy skills which develop well as they progress through the school. Most departments have plans for the development of numeracy. Students' ICT skills are developed very well throughout the school. They show confidence and competence using a range of applications. This has a positive impact on the standards they attain in other subjects of the curriculum.

**Sixth form**

8. Since the last inspection, the number of students and range of courses have increased considerably. However, the numbers in Year 13 taking A-level courses remains relatively small. This is because a number of students have attained GCSE grades which make it difficult for them to cope with work at an advanced level in Year 13. However, the school has introduced a number of vocational courses which are proving successful and meeting students' needs well.

9. Staff plan work carefully to meet the needs of students' wide-ranging attainment who consequently achieve well in relation to their previous results. In subjects inspected in depth, standards were well above average in art and design and business education. Overall, students' achievements were good. They were very good in art and design and physical education and excellent in business education.

10. Students' skills in responding to questions and participating in discussion develop well. A number of students have weaker literacy skills and this slows down their progress. For example, in English technical errors in written work and the limited vocabulary of a number of students makes it difficult for them to express themselves clearly. Students are very competent users of ICT and they use computers effectively to help them with their course work.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	85.9 ( 91.5 )	89.4 ( n/a )
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	17.3 ( 18.3 )	30.5 ( n/a )
Average point score per student	181.7 (199.2)	263.3 ( n/a )

*There were 41 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

**Students' attitudes, behaviour, attendance and punctuality**

Students' attitudes, values and behaviour are **good**. They arrive punctually for school and their attendance is satisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students enjoy coming to this school and have good attitudes to their work.
- Most students behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Bullying is dealt with well.
- The school provides well for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- "Mini-community" assemblies stimulate students to be reflective and are of high quality.
- Punctuality is good.
- The behaviour of a small number of lower-attaining students affects their learning.

**Commentary**

11. Attendance at the school is similar to other schools nationally. Most students say they enjoy coming to this school and punctuality in the mornings is good. Staff work hard to promote and improve attendance in the school.

**Attendance**

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.4	School data	0.1
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

12. Students are clearly proud of their school, its reputation and facilities. Most take part enthusiastically both in lessons and in the many extra-curricular opportunities provided for them. Most students behave well in classrooms and around the school. They are confident and friendly with visitors and keen to talk about school life and their work. A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 are less enthusiastic about school and this has had a negative effect on both their behaviour

and academic progress. Students say that although minor incidents of bullying do occur at the school, these are dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Relationships are good in the school and there are opportunities for older students to support younger ones. For instance, Year 13 students were recently assigned a Year 7 tutor group each to support during their first week at the school. This scheme worked well and the younger students spoke highly of the kindness shown to them. The very positive ethos of the school inspires students and makes them want to do well. All staff have high expectations of students' behaviour and use appropriate strategies to manage any problems. Most students respond to this positively resulting in the good behaviour overall in the school. The school has a clear commitment to ensure that all benefit from being included in school life. Despite the school's best efforts five students were excluded permanently in the year prior to the inspection for a variety of reasons.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of students*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1228	30	5
White – Irish	5		
White – any other White background	3		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1		
Mixed – White and Black African	6		
Mixed – White and Asian	4		
Mixed – any other mixed background	20		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2		
Black or Black British – African	1	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese	4		
Any other ethnic group	1		
No ethnic group recorded	98		

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

13. The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well. Assemblies are carefully planned to contain a spiritual element and students are regularly encouraged to reflect on their own, and others, lives. Students are constantly encouraged to think of others, both in the school and in the wider community. Through the religious education curriculum they learn about a range of other beliefs. The strong ethos of the school ensures that the difference between right and wrong is clearly understood. This is made particularly clear in personal social education lessons where such issues are considered and discussed. The introduction of 'mini-communities' across the school has also brought together students from every year group to reflect on moral and social issues at assemblies and also through shared charity fundraising events. The school provides sound opportunities for students to experience their own and other cultural traditions. This area is being developed to provide more visitors from other faiths and cultures to the school.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

#### **Mini-community assembly**

The assembly, which is for students of all years, opens in a calm and reflective manner, with soothing music. The students are reminded of the prevailing ideas behind the mini-community system, to learn about the way in which other people live in the world and to work together to make a difference. Students are left in no doubt of the school's belief in them, both as individuals and as a community. The concepts of faith and doubt are then introduced powerfully, alongside the levels of commitment required to make that difference. A film clip of Terry Waite is used as an example of one with a strong faith, which had sustained him over his years of imprisonment. The film explores graphically Waite's situation and recounts the actions of one British woman who sends him a postcard inscribed: 'We are thinking of you.' Remarkably, the postcard reaches Waite, the only contact he has with the outside world in over four years. The film is concise and very moving and all the students are absolutely engrossed. Conclusions are drawn about the unknown effects of small acts of kindness and the students are invited to listen to a song, entirely appropriate, which is the prelude to a short time of prayer or reflection. Meanwhile an excellent PowerPoint presentation reminds students about the organisations and causes the school has supported. The orchestration is magisterial. This is a moving experience for all: a marvellous and supportive occasion which stimulates individuals into personal reflection yet also emphasises the importance of a community of faith and trust. Throughout, students sit in absolute silence, completely transfixed. This is a wonderfully uplifting start to the day.

#### **Sixth form**

14. Students are keen to do well and are appreciative of all the school has to offer them. Their behaviour is good and their attitudes to their work positive. Students are mature and speak confidently. They show consideration of others, particularly younger students at the school. For example, the recently set up peer mentoring system has been well supported by these young people to provide support to younger students who would prefer not to speak to adults about a problem. Most students attend well and arrive punctually to lessons. The sixth form council gives students a chance to have their say on issues around the school.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are good, as is the curriculum, with a number of strong features which enhance the provision. The quality of accommodation and resources is **very good**. Very good arrangements are in place for students' pastoral guidance and support and the school has a very good partnership with parents. **Excellent** links have been developed with the community.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. The quality of marking is inconsistent and does not always give students guidance on how to improve their work further.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic.
- Very effective use is made of resources, particularly ICT to support students' learning.
- Lessons start promptly and time is used effectively.
- Lessons are very well planned with short focused tasks which engage students' interest.
- Teachers use a range of teaching techniques to develop students' knowledge and skills.
- Support staff make a valuable contribution to students' learning.
- Some lessons lacked sufficient pace, and in a very few lessons the teachers did not manage the misbehaviour of some students effectively.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent.

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 ( 2%)	52 ( 25 %)	97 ( 48%)	48 ( 24 %)	3 ( 1 %)		

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

### Commentary

15. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The percentage of satisfactory or better teaching has increased from 86 per cent to 99 per cent. Three quarters of the teaching was graded as good or better and over a quarter was very good or excellent. In the sixth form 36 per cent was graded as very good or excellent. Teaching was consistently good even though a significant number of staff were only in their third week of teaching at the school. The considerable efforts made to recruit appropriate staff are having beneficial effects on teaching and learning across the school. The high level of good and very good teaching is a major factor in the success of students.

16. Students were very positive about the quality of teaching they receive. In questionnaire responses both students and parents expressed the view that staff had high expectations. Overall, teaching was at least good, in all subjects. It was very good in ICT and business education and satisfactory in citizenship in Years 10 and 11.

17. A particular strength is teachers' subject knowledge and the enthusiasm they show. Teachers are keen to share what they know and they prepare students well for examinations. In the good or better lessons throughout the school teachers make the work interesting and relevant. For example, in a Year 9 geography lesson the teacher used music and a slide show with video clips and advertisements to set the scene for a lesson. After watching the presentation, students were asked to consider the economic and environmental costs of producing some of their favourite clothes. The work was carefully related to their own experiences and was effective in enabling them to develop understanding of a range of economic and environmental issues. In many lessons, teachers make very effective use of ICT resources such as interactive whiteboards to present new ideas. For example, in a Year 8 French class the teacher used a range of slides with questions and images very effectively to develop students' vocabulary and speaking skills. The activities were short, which kept students' interest, and the teacher was able to check students' recall and understanding by

showing the slides in a different order. The slides engaged and maintained students' interest throughout the lesson.

18. Time was used to very good effect in the best lessons. Teachers expected students to settle quickly and got lessons off to a brisk start. The aim of the lesson was shared, at the outset, so that students were very clear about what they needed to complete and what they were going to learn. For example, in a Year 10 ICT lesson a concise introduction was given. The teacher then used a high-speed question and answer session to engage students and check their recall of previous work, before introducing the background to a new assignment. Work was very carefully planned and lessons had a clear structure with short well-focused tasks which maintained students' interest. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson, on persuasive writing, clear timescales were given for the completion of work. Students then read out and discussed their writing. During the lesson, students were given a lot of praise and feedback which encouraged them to sustain their efforts. At the end of the lesson students reviewed what they had learned and thought about how they would apply this to producing a brochure during the next lesson.

19. A range of teaching techniques, such as paired work and discussion, is used to develop students' knowledge and skills. For example, students are expected to prepare short presentations to the class. An example of this was seen in a Year 10 leisure and tourism class. Students worked in pairs developing arguments about why government money should be spent on various forms of leisure activity. Then they presented their ideas to the rest of the class. Students found speaking to the group daunting. However, they all succeeded and the teacher skilfully led a discussion and evaluation on what makes a good presentation. This made students think about how to improve their presentation techniques.

20. Some of the features of the good and very good lessons were present in the satisfactory lessons. However, in these lessons the pace tended to be slower and work was not always well matched to the needs of the students. This happened more frequently with lower-attaining groups. In the very few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, teachers did not deal effectively with the disruptive behaviour of a small minority of students and this slowed down learning for the whole class. Teachers tended to shout over the voices of students which led to confusion over what they were to do and too much time was wasted.

21. Most teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of their students very well. All teachers have extensive details of the attainment of each student in order to check progress in class and teachers are good at identifying individual needs. In the majority of lessons, teachers review the work covered with well-managed question and answer sessions and are able to gauge understanding and students' knowledge. Teachers mark students' work regularly. Some teachers give detailed comments when returning work which provide students with clear guidance on how to improve further. These targets are followed up to check students' progress. However, this is not consistent across the school. The school has recognised this and this aspect of the assessment process forms part of the school improvement plan.

22. In Years 8 and 9, students are placed in ability sets and this has proved effective in raising standards. It allows teachers to plan their lessons to meet students' learning needs. However, there are insufficient planned withdrawal lessons to teach specific skills, such as reading, to those whose literacy skills do not improve through mentoring support, and the extra-curricular homework club. As a result the achievement in subjects of some students with special educational needs is less than it could be because of their weak literacy skills.

23. The allocation of support staff to subject departments is in line with the Code of Practice for special educational needs. The strategy is proving successful in supporting students' achievement. Support staff get to know their teaching colleagues well and acquire detailed knowledge about the schemes of work. The work of support staff is good. Their knowledge, skills and understanding about special educational needs, their explanations to students, and their awareness of the needs of individual students are very good. They take great care to establish good relationships with students, for example through the very effective mentor system. They are highly valued by the students, and by teachers.

24. Specialist support teaching for students with English as an additional language is good. In other lessons, mainstream staff showed good awareness of students' needs and had strategies to deal with them.

### **Sixth form**

25. In the subjects inspected in depth in the sixth form there were no significant weaknesses in the teaching. Strengths were similar to those found in the rest of the school. Very good teaching was seen in art and design, business education and ICT. A relative weakness in mathematics was the lack of opportunity provided by teachers for students to discuss their ideas with each other and develop their thinking skills.

26. Students in the sixth form benefit from the same good assessment procedures seen in the main school. Each individual student's attainment record throughout their school career is used to predict their grades for AS and A-level. Subject teachers closely monitor the students to ensure that they are making satisfactory progress throughout their course.

27. Teachers mark assignments and other work in great detail. They often add constructive comments that indicate what students need to do to improve. Students appreciate this support and guidance. They are aware of their target grades and their progress.

### **The curriculum**

The curricular opportunities, including enrichment and extra-curricular activities, offered to students are **good**. Accommodation and learning resources are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school offers a broad and wide-ranging curriculum.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for all students and is regularly reviewed.
- The inconsistent implementation and monitoring of the literacy strategy.
- The school is fully staffed with very good specialist teachers and support staff.
- The accommodation is very good, with some outstanding features.
- Overall, the resources for learning are very good; many are excellent.
- Effective use has been made of additional funding to enhance the learning environment.
- A strong commitment to the local community and life-long learning in the area.
- Shortfalls in the number of multicultural contexts in English, and the range of books available for students with special educational needs.

### **Commentary**

28. The school has made good progress in tackling the curricular weaknesses identified by the previous inspection. The governing body, headteacher and senior management team have established a strong vision founded on developing relevant learning opportunities for all students, matched to their aptitudes and abilities. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and provides equally for boys and girls of all abilities, aptitudes and backgrounds. Time allocations for subjects broadly match those usually found, except for physical education which is higher than normal because of Sports College status. This provision of extra time enables students to make good progress in physical skills.

29. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum provides for all the subjects of the National Curriculum as well as religious education, dance, drama and PSHE. Statutory requirements are fully met. The school has a strong commitment to provide an interesting and relevant curriculum for its students. Emphasis is placed on improving students' skills in literacy and numeracy, and particularly in the use of ICT. Overall, the strategies for teaching literacy skills are satisfactory. A literacy co-ordinator is responsible for the regular assessment of students' reading skills. However, the weak literacy skills of a number of students act as a barrier to their learning and the school has identified this as an area

for development in its improvement plan. Most departments have policies for the development of numeracy.

30. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is innovative and is evolving rapidly. A wide range of courses is offered to ensure opportunities are matched to the aptitudes and abilities of boys and girls at this stage. As well as GCSE and GNVQ examination courses, alternative accreditation is provided for those students who find the full range of examinations difficult. An alternative curriculum, 'Voices', is provided in conjunction with partner institutions. A very good and successful feature of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is the emphasis given to vocational courses. The GNVQ courses in information technology, business studies and leisure and tourism are popular and successful, demonstrating the school's intention to provide students with relevant work-related experiences.

31. The school is committed to equality of opportunity for all students and makes very good provision. Different groups of students are identified to ensure their curriculum needs are met. Initiatives are in place including plans to extend the curriculum and provide challenging work for those with exceptional talent or very high overall attainments. The policy of the school is to identify students with marked aptitudes and to use different approaches to teaching and learning. In Years 7 and 8, there are accelerated learning groups for gifted and talented students. Good provision is made in these groups to extend students' thinking skills and develop their independence as learners. Students who are losing interest in school or have behavioural difficulties are identified early and where necessary alternative strategies are used to help them learn. Regular meetings of the pastoral team are used to identify those with personal difficulties and make sure that they are included in all aspects of school life.

32. All students with special educational needs have full access to the National Curriculum and all statutory requirements are met. The provision for students for whom English is an additional language is very good and there has been development work involving learning support assistants and groups of teaching staff. Guidance notes have been produced for teachers.

33. The PSHE curriculum is well planned and taught by form tutors in Years 7 to 11. The programme includes drugs, sex and relationships education, and incorporates many elements of citizenship. Citizenship has been introduced alongside the concept of 'mini-communities'. This means that students of all ages are able to work on charity and community-based projects. The careers education and guidance programme is good, forming part of the personal and social education programme in Years 9 to 11. It is well constructed and is strongly supported by Connexions staff who offer careers advice interviews to all Year 11 students, provide drop-in facilities and attend parents' meetings. All Year 10 students undertake two weeks of work experience, the preparation, staff visits, feedback and evaluation contributing to the success of the experience for students. A wide range of outside speakers and agencies are used to support and enhance the overall provision.

34. A very positive feature of the curriculum is the school's strong commitment to the local community and to the development of life-long learning in the area. Links with the community are developing very well, and are particularly strong in the out-of-hours learning project that takes place on Friday evenings and Saturday morning. The school provides academic mentoring for students in Years 10 and 11. Targeted students in Years 10 and 11 have external mentors to improve their motivation and organisational skills.

35. The community contribution to the curriculum is good and is represented by work experience and visits in many subject areas. Good pastoral links with the partner schools are being actively developed for the improvement of curriculum continuity.

36. The extra-curricular provision is good. A wide programme of activities is in place and many students take part. Parents appreciate the time teachers give to these activities and this work does much to extend learning experiences. The provision has some outstanding features. The contribution of sports and performing subjects is excellent with many performances and concerts. In 2002, the school's production of My Fair Lady involved over 100 students. The recent Celebration of

Dance evening and Arts evening are further examples of the strength of the arts in the school. In addition, many subjects provide extra lessons for coursework and revision. A very good range of extra-curricular sports is offered and participation rates are very high. The school has won Sportsmark distinction. Those involved are very committed. In 2002, the girls' under 16 basketball team reached the county finals. In addition, the Year 7 athletics team were district champions.

37. The impact of the Sports College initiative is a key element in providing enriching opportunities for students. This together with provision for dance and performing arts has allowed the school to develop physical performance as an educational activity and recreational opportunity, for example in outdoor and adventurous activities. The Duke of Edinburgh award scheme is well established and other links have been formed with Active Sports and Heron Outdoor Pursuits; this facilitates climbing, sailing and canoeing. There are strong links with a wide range of local sporting clubs. As part of the county plan, the school is continuing to develop strong links with partner institutions through the Schools' Sports Co-ordinator Scheme.

38. The match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the demands of the curriculum is very good. The newly qualified teachers are having a very positive impact on standards of teaching. The specialist school and Sports College status has enabled the appointment of expert teachers in a wide range of sports coaching and outdoor education. This has facilitated good participation in sports, and encouraged many additional enrichment activities. Teaching assistants and technicians are well deployed and support teachers well. Administrative staff are used very well and reduce teachers' workload considerably.

39. All areas of the accommodation and resources are very good; many are outstanding. This is having a high impact on raising the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

40. The accommodation is now very good overall. The long-term programme of refurbishment is almost complete. The suites of new specialist rooms for ICT, business and vocational studies, music, modern foreign languages and the new learning and resources area are outstanding. These new facilities offer students very good curriculum opportunities in music, dance, drama, media, ICT, and business studies. A new examination hall allows for assemblies to take place. All of the new buildings have access for people with disabilities. Effective use of funding from specialist sports status, New Opportunities Funding and the Leadership Incentive Grant has enabled these developments to take place.

41. Since the last report sports facilities have been considerably enhanced. These latest additions to the very good existing facilities enable a very wide programme of all the major sports to be taught. Many associations now use the school's facilities to offer good extra-curricular opportunities that include roller dance, gymnastics, hockey and climbing.

42. As a result of investigative work done by students, improvements have been made to the canteen facilities to incorporate a Healthy Eating Centre that offers a well-balanced meal.

43. The resources for learning are very good, overall; many are excellent. The school has invested very highly in the use of new technologies. Students have significantly better access to computers than the national average.

44. Art and design and religious education were the only areas seen during the inspection to have less easy access to ICT for students. The resources for using ICT in information technology, business studies and music are excellent. The rapid growth in e-learning is being pioneered by teachers developing CD ROM learning materials for students to use between home and school. Teachers have access to laptop computers to prepare lessons and learning materials that can be used on interactive whiteboards. This makes lessons interesting, relevant and challenging.

45. Shortfalls were seen in the number of multicultural resources available in English, and the small range of books available for students with special educational needs. Religious education and

technology missed some opportunities to use the local resources in the community that could enhance the curriculum.

## **Sixth form**

46. The quality and range of learning opportunities in the sixth form are good. Students can choose from a range of AS level subjects, most of which proceed to A-level. AVCE courses in business education (single and double award), leisure and recreation (single award) and travel and tourism are popular with students. Intermediate level GNVQ courses in health and social care and leisure and tourism are available to students in Year 12. In addition, students are able to take the community sports leader award.

47. The curriculum is well planned to allow students to follow a coherent programme of study. Prior to entry to the sixth form, students are provided with a good level of information and guidance in the selection of their options. Parents' concerns about the limited range of enrichment activities available in the school have been met by the use of Wednesday afternoons for enrichment activities.

48. All students follow general studies courses and some choose to go on and take the AS level examination. A well planned programme for PSHE is delivered through a modular course. The school makes good provision for the teaching of key skills.

49. Teachers are well qualified and experienced to meet the demands of the sixth form curriculum. The new sixth form common room, study and tutorial areas are now completed to provide a very good learning and social environment for post-16 students. The new performing arts centre has enabled the establishment of a new A-level GCE music technology course using professional digital studio sound equipment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The school takes **good** care of its students and ensures the safety of all. It provides **very good** support, guidance and advice and values and acts upon students' views.

## **Main strengths**

- The school takes good care of its students.
- There are effective procedures for ensuring the health and safety of all.
- Very good personal support is provided for students.
- Relationships are very good between staff and students.
- Good arrangements are in place for students' induction in to the school.
- The school's councils ensure that students have a chance to have their say.

## **Commentary**

50. Staff take good care of students who say they feel safe and supported in the school. Good procedures are in place for ensuring the safety of all. The many new buildings have been carefully planned with health and safety in mind and thorough safety checks regularly take place. The pastoral system in the school is strong and well organised. The very good relationships between staff and students ensure that students always have someone they can talk to. The recent addition of a student reception area works very well ensuring that students can get help and advice quickly. The heads of year and tutors offer a range of support to those students who need it. The additional personal support provided by the school counsellor, nurse and student welfare manager, (described by the students as 'the school's policeman') are also used well and appreciated by the students. In addition, the recently established peer-mentoring scheme will now enable students to speak to specially trained members of the sixth form if they would prefer to. Parents are quickly contacted if there is a pastoral problem and they show support for any actions the school may take. Those students experiencing more serious problems which may be affecting their behaviour and overall progress, receive very good support from the school. The Connexions service works well with small groups of these students, as well as providing good career guidance to all older students.

51. The additional Active Vocational Skills Programme is a strength of the school.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

##### **The active vocational skills programme**

This outstanding programme has been devised to support students in Years 10 and 11 who are struggling with school life and the pressures of the academic curriculum. Over a period of two years they take part in a range of active and vocational activities, ranging from orienteering and canoeing to sampling a range of practical courses at a local college and spending a day with the Army. Every activity is very carefully planned by the very dedicated head of Outdoor Education to build up these students' confidence and social and leadership skills, as well as preparing them for the world of college and work. Overseen by very skilled staff, all of these students, some of whom had been in danger of exclusion from the school, have made rapid progress by the end of the programme. As one Year 11 student commented, 'Doing this had made school so much more enjoyable, I now feel confident about the future'.

52. New students to the school are happy with the induction arrangements provided for them. As a result they settle quickly into school life and its routines. Students are given very good information and guidance regarding the progress they have made and what they need to do next. Students have their chance to give their opinions about the school and how it could improve. The year councils are valued by students who feel that their views are taken seriously and that they really do help them to make a difference around the school.

53. The Learning Support Unit, in very good, new accommodation, is an effective means of support for many students with special educational needs. In particular, the before school, lunch time and after school homework club, managed by support staff, is very effective provision, and is very popular. Students particularly like the calm atmosphere, and the opportunity to use the large number of computers which are available. Assessment in terms of the Code of Practice is good. The provision required in statements is fully made.

54. Students with English as an additional language are well supported. Their competence and progress are assessed termly and they all have individual language development plans.

#### **Sixth form**

55. The support, guidance and advice students receive is very good and helps them make informed choices about their personal goals and futures, whether to go on to further education or into employment. The guidance is impartial and draws on what is available locally and further afield. Students are helped in these decisions by the team of mentors, counsellors and careers consultants that make up the Connexions team. For students enrolled on vocational courses there is an added advantage of being able to use real situations and work experience as part of their coursework.

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

The school has **very good** links with parents and other schools and colleges. It is held in high regard by the local community.

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

- The school continues to foster very good links with its parents.
- Parents receive good information about the school.
- Links with families of students learning English as an additional language are good.
- Reports do not give clear information on how students are progressing or guidance on how they can improve.

## Commentary

56. The school continues to foster very good links with parents who value the education and care that their children receive. The school is highly regarded by the local community with increasing numbers of parents choosing to send their children to it in preference to grammar schools outside the town. Parents are kept well informed about the school's work through an impressive range of leaflets and attractively presented, regular newsletters. Consultation meetings for parents are held regularly with written reports issued in the spring and summer terms. These reports, although providing satisfactory information for parents, are not in a format that is easy to follow. In addition, they do not clearly state how students are progressing or give sufficient guidance on how they can improve.

57. The school brochure and governors' annual report for parents are detailed and informative. Their content meets all the legal requirements set for them. Parents' views on the school are sought and valued. Most parents are satisfied with the schools complaints procedures and are able to talk to someone promptly if there is a problem or concern. The school's Friends Association is well organised and arranges regular fundraising events. Attendance at these is good and raises considerable funds for the school each year.

58. Contact with families whose first language is not English is good. Although limited time is available, the specialist support teacher makes home visits, interviews parents and undertakes community outreach work.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **very good** and the leadership offered by the headteacher is **excellent**. The governance of the school is good and the leadership of other key staff is very good.

### Main strengths

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher has resulted in a much-improved school.
- Schools of learning are well led and managed.
- The governing body has a clear view of its role and a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- A very good performance review system provides a good basis for raising standards further in the schools of learning.
- Provision for the professional development of staff is very good, as are arrangements for the induction of new staff.
- The school has clear links between financial planning and educational priorities.
- Prudent financial management has enabled the school to support capital projects but not at expense of curriculum.
- The school manages its resources very well and provides good value for money.

## Commentary

59. The governance of the school is good. An experienced governing body provides a sense of direction for the work of the school and, through its main committees, acts as a critical friend, offering support and challenge. The chair has a good grasp of the schools strengths and weaknesses, as do the main committees. The governing body has good involvement in whole school strategic development and monitors well the work of the headteacher. There is a clear focus on the need to raise standards even further. As a result of their strategic influence and effective working relationships with the headteacher, the school has developed considerably since the previous inspection. Their influence and support has been of particular note in the development of post-16 provision and the school attaining specialist Sports College status. The governing body has been instrumental in dealing with the issues raised in the previous inspection and in ensuring statutory requirements are met.

60. Leadership is dedicated to improving standards and achievement in all aspects of the school's work. In particular, the excellent leadership of the headteacher has resulted in a much-improved school. Accommodation has vastly improved and further works are in progress. Specialist Sports College status has raised the profile of the school, not only in the locality but also within the local education authority. The proportion of students attaining A\*- C grade passes at GCSE has continued to improve. Good provision for post-16 students has resulted in greater numbers opting to extend their studies into year 12.

61. An ethos of 'What can we do to be even better?' is indicative of reflective and self-critical leadership. As a result of this the curricular management of the school has been organised into schools of learning. Heads of these schools of learning have been given the autonomy to develop these into 'specialist' subject areas with a clear focus on strengthening the quality of teaching and learning. This is improving standards and the quality of achievement throughout the school. The mathematics department, for example, is a beacon department within the local education authority. This new structure is also providing leadership development throughout the school for a wide range of staff. The quality of leadership, in many subject areas, for example, is now good or very good. Regular evaluation of provision within schools of learning takes place. There is a clear vision of the school in the future and all staff know what they are working towards. The great majority of teaching is effective but leaders are not complacent, steps are taken to ensure further improvement. The school provides well for the wide ability range of students, including those who do not respond well to the school. The school has a deservedly improving reputation within the local community it serves, now being oversubscribed in Year 7.

62. The effectiveness of management is very good. Managers are committed to enabling the school to achieve its vision and strategic aims and objectives. It places a high priority on appointing high calibre staff, providing continuing professional development opportunities and deploying them to their particular strengths and to best effect. This has, for example, enabled departments to flourish and expand thus broadening students' learning experiences, improving standards and raising achievement. All staff are very clear about their roles, responsibilities and personal objectives. Very good performance management procedures ensure that staff are supported and have access to training that is relevant to their needs. Target-setting and the monitoring of achievement are well embedded; schools of learning carry out detailed analyses of results of tests and examinations and produce an action plan for improvement. Policies for planning, assessment, behaviour and special educational needs are implemented consistently across the school. Processes and procedures are regularly reviewed and delegation of autonomy to schools of learning has encouraged staff to take initiative. There is a strong emphasis on raising standards throughout the school. Management is supportive and ensures accountability.

63. The school values all staff and has gained Investors in People status. The induction of new staff is very good. A very good programme for newly qualified teachers is in place, which can also be accessed by more experienced staff if required. The school successfully operates a "buddy" system to support new staff. Continuing professional development is very good. All departments are allocated funding on a per capita basis and additional sums are made available to meet other identified needs. The school organises high quality training in a number of areas in twilight sessions. The provision for training in ICT is very good and has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The school has a very strong commitment to initial teacher training. This year it will be receiving seven post graduate students from the local university.

64. Every effort is made by the school to ensure that high quality staff are appointed. The school has had some difficulties recruiting staff for middle management posts and has consequently made several internal appointments. All of these have been successful because of the structured support provided. Much has been done to reduce the administrative workload of teachers, to enable them to focus on classroom teaching. A wide range of administrative tasks is now carried out effectively by non-teaching staff.

65. The school manages its finances very well. The annual planning cycle is closely allied to priorities in the school improvement plan. Governors, the school's executive team and the Bursar are all involved in producing both the annual budget and a longer-term strategic plan. The ability to plan strategically and manage finances prudently has enabled the school to contribute to the several capital projects which have been undertaken during its period of expansion. This has not been done at the expense of the curriculum however, as departments are all well funded and manage their budgets effectively. The sixth form is cost-effective and is not subsidised by the main school. Specific grants are used very effectively.

66. The bursar and his team administer the school's finances very effectively. The most recent external auditors' report (June, 2003) was very complimentary to the school. Its only recommendation was that the Finance Manual be updated. The school has this in hand. A local education authority control visit in March 2003 raised a number of minor issues which have mostly been dealt with or are in hand. Principles of best value are fully understood and routinely applied to financial management. The school has made very effective use of specialist external consultants to manage its capital projects and there is a constant drive for efficiency and best value both at major spending level, where tendering processes are employed, and in the day-to-day administration and monitoring of spending.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,656,945	Balance from previous year	271,014
Total expenditure	4,521,583	Balance carried forward to the next	406,376
Expenditure per student	3,313		

## Sixth form

67. Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a very good overview of the sixth form and delegates responsibility for running it to three senior staff, two of whom are members of the senior management team. These three managers complement each other well, which results in the academic and pastoral work of the sixth form being well co-ordinated. The team of form tutors is well managed and provides good support to students.

68. There is a vision statement for the sixth form and some references to the development of the sixth form are made in the school development plan. There is no separate development plan for the sixth form, however. The leadership of subjects in the sixth form is very good. The governors are committed to the sixth form and aware of its strengths and weaknesses.

## The effectiveness of community provision

### Main strengths

- The school has worked hard to build up excellent community links.
- There are very good partnerships with local schools.

### Commentary

69. Through the school's specialist Sports College status, outstanding links have been forged with the local community. As a part of this scheme, the school now has four secondary and up to 30 primary schools as partners. Overseen by the school's community development manager, local sports teams and other organisations make good use of the school's facilities. The provision of sports and outdoor activity courses as well as those on coaching and refereeing are very popular. Teacher training in sports is provided and the school recently hosted the basketball trials for the Kent Youth Games.

70. In the school holidays an impressive range of courses and schemes are made available for children of all ages as part of a local initiative. Good use is made of the local area for students take part in regular curriculum visits, for instance to local theatres and places of historical or geographical interest. A good range of other trips to museums and art galleries in London is also provided.

71. Very good partnerships exist with other local schools. Information on pupils' progress, including those with special educational needs, are transferred efficiently and this adds to the smooth transition of new students. Pupils from the local primary schools use the school's many sports and arts facilities for out-of-hours learning and science and ICT workshops have been held for younger children.

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

### SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

##### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of English is consistently good.
- The achievement of the vast majority of students is good.
- The department works well together and is already benefiting from the knowledge and enthusiasm of new members of staff.
- Teachers show very good subject knowledge.
- The weak literacy skills of some students hinders their learning.
- The schemes of work lack focus and the range of texts offered is narrow.
- The systems for monitoring and target-setting are insufficiently rigorous.
- The unsatisfactory attitudes of some lower-attaining students, particularly boys, are affecting their learning.

##### Commentary

72. Year 9 test results in 2002 were well below the national level. Boys and girls perform similarly. The results for Year 9 students in 2003, however, show a greatly improved picture. There has been a rise in the GCSE English results over the past five years, although they are still below the national average. GCSE literature results are also below the national average. Boys perform less well than girls in both subjects.

73. The standard of work seen was well below average for younger students but shows improvement as students progress through the school to below average in Year 11. Between Years 7 and 9, students complete a substantial body of written work. Higher-attaining students in these years can write accurately and use words precisely. They are working above the national average. Lower-attaining students find it difficult to write accurately and those with the poorest literacy skills are not progressing at the same rate as their peers. Schemes of work lacked variety, particularly in multi-cultural literature and in media and other non-fiction texts. By Years 10 and 11, students are writing more fluently and in a more sustained fashion. Creative writing is entertaining and often well-constructed. Coursework titles are not always designed to elicit the best responses, sometimes lacking the focus needed for the highest grades.

74. The achievement of students in Years 7 to 11 is good. The standard of students' writing when they join the school is well below average, as their work early in Year 7 shows. By Year 11 they have made good progress relative to that standard. This good achievement is mainly due to the good and consistent teaching they receive in English lessons. The department has recruited new staff, who

have a good range of skills and will help the new head of department to improve standards further. Teachers show great persistence in the way they encourage students to improve. Very good relationships were seen in almost every lesson, ensuring a good working atmosphere, with plenty of positive comments and praise. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and the content of lessons usually challenges students suitably and enables them to make progress. The few less successful lessons are not planned so judiciously and the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority affects adversely the achievement of the class. Seating arrangements are not always conducive to good learning. In the great majority of cases however, learning aims are shared with students. Teachers explore good examples with their classes and provide them with other practical ways of improving their writing. In general, however, students' oral work is better than their written work and a skilful use of questioning enables students to achieve well in this area. In the best lessons students are given extended opportunities to discuss in groups, testing their ideas against others, to which they respond with enthusiasm. In a few lessons not enough time is given for students to explore their own responses and opportunities are sometimes missed to extend more able students. ICT is used well by the department to help students to achieve.

75. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The department works well as a team and a good working atmosphere has been created. Staff are committed to the welfare of students and to their academic improvement. The new head of department, appointed from September, has made an immediate impact and has a clear understanding of strengths and areas for development. Procedures are generally clear within the department although there is a lack of rigour in some areas; target setting is insufficiently formalised, for example, and marking and assessment are not monitored closely enough.

76. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teaching has improved and standards have begun to rise. Schemes of work do still need to be adjusted and there could be higher expectations of some groups, particularly lower-attaining boys.

### **English language and literacy skills**

77. Overall, the standard of English language and literacy skills is below average. When students join the school, their literacy skills are well below average.

78. There has been a whole school approach for many years and attempts have been made to make the teaching of literacy important in all areas. Advisory teachers and consultants have been used to help the school improve standards. Training has been given to all staff in an attempt to raise the profile of literacy and all schools of learning have appropriate targets on their improvement plans with clear outcomes. A high turnover of staff has made it difficult to ensure a consistency of approach to the teaching of literacy.

79. Good practice was seen in several areas. In a Year 11 graphics lesson, lower attainers were supported in their writing with key words and phrases, which gave them the confidence to write at greater length. In a similar way, text frames were used in ICT. Subject vocabulary was brought to the fore in several lessons, including mathematics and history, where it was used specifically to prompt understanding. Key words tend to be displayed prominently in many areas, including mathematics, but could be used more in others, such as science. More sustained attempts to improve literacy were more difficult to find and errors in writing are not corrected consistently by all teachers. There are weaknesses in the writing of many students, particularly, but by no means exclusively, in that of lower-attaining boys. Nationally recognised tests show that these students often have a much higher non-verbal than verbal score and until literacy levels rise across the school further improvement will undoubtedly be inhibited.

80. Overall, the provision for literacy is satisfactory, but it is one of the key issues for the school and forms part of the school improvement plan. There is plenty of good practice, but improvements are needed. For example, the catch-up programme for those in Year 7 who come into the school below the national standard is not being used effectively.

## Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

### Main strengths

- Good teaching in both languages.
- Very good subject knowledge and linguistic skills of teachers.
- Very good use of ICT.
- Excellent accommodation and resources.
- The very good leadership and management.

### Commentary

81. Results in GCSE French in 2002 were well below average. In 2003 results rose and there has been a steady, sustained increase in French results. Girls performed better than boys. In 2002 results in Spanish were well above average. The entry was nearly all girls. No students were entered for Spanish GCSE in 2003.

82. By the end of Year 9, students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in French and Spanish are average. They understand lessons mainly in the foreign language and pick out details from recordings. Their pronunciation is generally satisfactory, but some students' French is quite anglicised. Many students read out loud with confidence. Many read short texts on familiar topics and higher attainers write letters and descriptions using present future and past tenses, when properly supported. By the end of Year 11 standards in French and Spanish are also average. Many understand quite lengthy recorded texts on familiar topics and describe events such as their work experience. Students have a satisfactory understanding of French and Spanish grammar and write letters and compositions containing a good range of vocabulary. Students' achievement in both languages is good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11.

83. Teaching and learning are good in both languages from Year 7 to 11. Teachers plan lessons well and make lesson objectives clear to students. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and very good linguistic skills, which provide very good models for students. Lessons are made up of a logical sequence of activities, which enable students to learn effectively. Very good use is made of ICT, which stimulates and motivates students to learn. Students are attentive, keen to participate in oral work and settle down quickly to writing and reading tasks. Attitudes and behaviour are very good. On a few occasions, some students did not concentrate fully for short periods of time.

84. The leadership and management are very good. The head of department monitors standards of teaching and learning effectively. There is a strong commitment to raising standards of attainment. The teachers work well together and share ideas and materials. There has been very good progress since the last inspection.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is good.
- Test results at the end of Year 9 are well above those of similar schools.
- Positive relationships between staff and students.
- The good progress students make in mathematics.
- Insufficient opportunities are provided to develop student-thinking skills.
- Marking does not consistently provide students with clear guidance on how to improve.

### Commentary

85. By the end of Year 9 in 2002, the percentage of students gaining the expected level 5 in the national tests was in line with the national average for all schools and well above those of similar schools. When students' attainment at the end of Year 6 is taken account, the results show that students achieved very well. The proportion of students who gained the higher level 6 at the end of Year 9 has improved this year.

86. In 2002, the proportion of students gaining a GCSE A\* – C grade was the below the national average but the trend is upwards and the most recent results show real improvement.

87. Standards have greatly improved since the last inspection. Overall, students achieve well and they show a positive attitude to the subject.

88. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships between staff and students are very good and the overwhelming majority of students show a genuine willingness to learn. In a Year 7, lesson students were endeavouring to derive the  $n$ th term of a sequence. In doing so they were not afraid to offer suggestions without fear of failure. This created a positive learning atmosphere in which the teacher established good working practices. The department reinforces this atmosphere by its organisation, display and the way students are valued. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. The department has good teaching assistants and their work makes a positive contribution to the learning experience of students.

89. The presentation of students' work is very good and covers a wide range of topics at all levels. Teachers emphasise the importance of presenting work neatly showing how answers have been calculated. This high level of expectation from staff helps to promote students' achievement. The curriculum has depth and students are able, and expected to, experience difficult problems. Year 11 students were asked to solve difficult algebraic functions by iteration and two girls who initially found the work very hard were thrilled when they mastered the topic with apparent ease. As one student said "This is well easy".

90. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is good and enhanced by the numerical warm ups at the start of lessons which are linked to lesson objectives and help consolidate learning. Where ICT was used it was very effective. Teachers used the new white-board technology well and in all cases it enhanced learning. For example, in one lesson a very imaginative game of 'pairs' using the whiteboards helped reinforce algebraic and geometric concepts.

91. Much of the interaction in lessons was between teacher and student and few instances were observed of students discussing mathematical ideas between themselves, when they did so they learnt more. The department is strong enough to give time to reflective conversations and a more problem solving approach to learning which will in turn enhance mathematical thinking. In a small number of lessons that lacked challenge the behaviour of a minority of students deteriorated. In these lessons, the pace was too slow and students were not stretched, often wasting time waiting for the teacher to set them more work. The way books are marked is not consistent. The best marking had supportive and formative comments in them, others were not regularly marked or had cursory ticks.

92. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The department works as an effective unit that has raised standards and is prepared to look at innovative ways to support the students. The department is very well resourced. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teachers' planning has improved and this has led to higher quality teaching and an improvement in standards. Strengths within the department have been recognised by the local education authority who regard it as a model of good practice.

### Mathematics across the curriculum

93. All departments, except science and English, have developed plans to improve numeracy skills and some good work has been done in a number of areas, such as design and technology and geography. The teaching of basic skills in mathematics is good. The numeracy strategy is being implemented with numerical warm ups at the start of mathematics lessons linked to lesson objectives which helped consolidate learning.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is consistently good linked to good classroom management.
- The achievement of students is good.
- The management of the department is good.
- The staff are well qualified, enthusiastic and teach their specialist subjects.
- The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good.
- The accommodation and resources are good.
- The low literacy skills of some students restrict their learning.
- The attitudes of some lower-attaining students, especially boys, are unsatisfactory.

## Commentary

94. End of Year 9 national test results were below average in 2002. They were in line with those of similar schools and have risen since the last inspection. GCSE results have also risen over the past five years but were still below the national figure in 2002. They showed a further significant rise in 2003.

95. The standard of work seen was below the national average in Years 7 to 11. The higher-attaining students were producing work above the national average, as shown by their responses on atomic structure. The lower-attaining students in Year 9 could only describe acids and alkalis in very basic terms. The standard of work seen in Year 11 was wide ranging with the higher-attaining students producing work above the national average with some of the lower-attaining students producing work well below the average.

96. In Years 7 to 11 the achievement of students, overall, is good. The students join the school with standards that are well below the national average. By the end of Year 11, they have made good progress and attain standards that are below the national average. This achievement is due to the consistently good teaching and learning that takes place with these students. Lessons are well planned by teachers who have a good subject knowledge and follow agreed set routines that ensure the lessons run smoothly and efficiently. In the most effective lessons, the teachers have good classroom management skills and good relationships with the students. This gave rise to a pleasant co-operative atmosphere and the students applied themselves well and made good progress in these lessons. In the less successful lessons some students, mainly the lower-attaining boys, including some with special educational needs, were not always attentive and this limited their progress. The achievement of a few students was unsatisfactory due to poor literacy skills that hampered their writing and understanding of the topic being covered. Students with English as an additional language make good progress.

97. The management of the department is good. The head of department was only appointed in September and has taken the existing good practice as a starting point. The teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic. Inexperienced teachers need further support and guidance to improve their classroom management, particularly of lower-attaining students. The team share a commitment to improve standards. At present there is no coherent policy on numeracy within the subject area and this is a weakness. The department's assessment procedures for students' attainment and progress are good. However, the marking of work does not clearly indicate to the majority of students how they can improve. The accommodation and resources for the department are good, especially the availability of computers and other modern technology such as interactive whiteboards which are used effectively.

98. The improvement since the last inspection is good especially in the areas of teaching, attainment and assessment.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communications technology is **outstanding**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Outstanding

## **Main strengths**

- Students achieve very well in ICT because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Students in Year 11 have well-developed independent learning skills as a result of very good teaching and the use of e-learning systems.
- ICT is being well used across the whole school and it is having a significant impact upon students' achievement in many subjects.
- Leadership and management are very good.

## **Commentary**

99. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were well above average. Girls performed much better than boys overall. Results in the 2003 examinations were not as high as the previous year but were still well above the average for the school.

100. By the end of Year 9, students' standards of ICT capability are above average; this represents very good achievement given students' standards upon entry to the school. Students' have total confidence in managing their files on the computer network and use a variety of software tools effectively. A good example of this is the band project in Year 9, where students investigate the design, marketing and presentation of a new music CD. This project draws upon the main strands of ICT knowledge and reinforces and extends the knowledge that students have acquired through Years 7 and 8. Students' work is thoughtfully presented and thorough. Through the use of spell checkers and software that audibly reads back their work to them, students' literacy is being greatly improved. By the end of Year 11 standards are well above average. Students' on both the GCSE and GNVQ courses have very well developed ICT skills across a range of applications. In addition to the traditional skills of presentation, data manipulation and modelling, students make effective use of the Internet and compile and edit web pages using HTML programming.

101. In Years 7 to 9 students benefit from knowledgeable and committed teachers and the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are always lively and well paced and have clear learning objectives. Students are actively engaged in the lessons that capture the interest of students of all abilities; students with special educational needs learn at a rate that is similar to all other students. Positive learning environments are created by the very good attitude and behaviour of the students and the purposeful relationships between students and teachers.

102. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their own knowledge and experience to challenge and extend the learners. Students benefit from the high expectations set by teachers and respond positively to the challenging activities. Assessment is used effectively to motivate students and to set targets for future improvement. However, the most remarkable feature of the teaching is the capacity that students have developed for independent learning; as a result of consistently very good teaching and the excellent e-learning support materials, students have the ability to apply knowledge and understanding effectively.

103. Leadership and management are very good. The strength of the leadership and management is reflected in the understanding, commitment and shared vision of the team. The strong team ethos and commitment to continuous improvement has enabled the subject to achieve its high standards. As a result of the focus on raising attainment and a commitment to high standards, outstanding progress has been made since the previous inspection.

### Example of outstanding practice

#### The development of high quality e-learning support materials is developing students' capacity for independent learning.

The most remarkable aspect of the students studying both GCSE and GNVQ ICT in Year 11 is the extent to which the teaching that they have received has developed their capacity for independent learning. Central to the approach adopted by the school is a high quality e-learning study guide, designed to enable students to achieve the highest standards in their coursework assignments. Provided on a CD that students can take home for further study, the learning materials are closely tied to the GCSE course students are following. Designed with a clear focus, the study guide provides a clear step-by-step approach to achieving full marks. The study guide is based around an easy to use PowerPoint presentation that prompts the students to answer questions, consider their responses and to check their own learning to ensure that they have fully met all the requirements for success. Packed with examples that have been annotated to clearly exemplify standards, this wonderful resource extends learning into the home and enables students to continue their learning under their own steam, using a medium that is so familiar to them.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

104. Since the last inspection, the school has made a substantial investment in computers and related technology, which has resulted in a ratio of computers to students that is well above national expectations. In many subjects the use of interactive whiteboards is making lessons more exciting and captivating for students enabling the teachers to bring the Internet into the classroom. In subjects such as music, new computer technology is enabling students to generate and record exciting musical compositions and in business studies, ICT is a significant strength of the department. The impact of ICT is being seen throughout the whole school, it is improving teaching as teachers use the technology to bring lessons to life and it is improving the achievement of students because of the confidence and capability that they now have to access, present and record information.

### HUMANITIES

#### Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching.
- Lessons make very good use of ICT to provide stimulating work.
- Very good subject leadership has enabled improvements to be made in teaching.
- Teachers are well qualified and keen to teach geography in a lively and interesting way.
- Low literacy skills hold back learning for some students.
- There is some very good marking but this is not consistent across the department.

## Commentary

105. In 2002 at the end of Year 9 students' results were below the national average. This was also true at the end of Year 11 where GCSE results were well below the national average. However, the results in 2003 are very much better.

106. Students enter the school with a level of geographical skills and understanding which is well below average. Their improvement to a level below average by the end of Year 9 reflects good achievement and good teaching. Often students can give correct answers orally but have difficulty expressing their ideas in writing. Their work is frequently brief and arguments are not well developed. Lower-attaining students have difficulty in identifying and marking countries on a map. Higher-attaining students can identify and explain differences between countries of the more and less economically developed parts of the world and recognise some of the impact that development has on the environment. By the end of Year 11, there is also good progress, particularly in coursework, and higher-attaining students produce work above the national average, but weaknesses in literacy skills mean that the standard of many students is still below the national average.

107. The quality of teaching and learning is good and at times very good and excellent. Where students are actively involved in short, structured tasks, lessons have a good pace and students learn very well. In the most effective lessons, the interactive whiteboard is used to convey a wide range of geographical material. It is a powerful teaching aid and drives the lesson forward. Simulations and problem solving activities are also used very effectively. Where lessons are not so well planned and tasks not so well defined, learning is only satisfactory. Students' work is marked regularly and there is some very good practice which gives good guidance for improvement, but at present this is not consistent across the department. Fieldwork is developing and the coastline at Reculver provides an easily accessible resource for Year 11.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

#### **Year 9 geography with students of mixed ability**

Students walked in purposively as the pop song "Dedicated Follower of Fashion" was playing and slides of fashion logos appeared on the interactive whiteboard. The scene was set excellently. The aims of the lesson became clear and the students were hooked as they were asked what fashion meant to them. The lesson continued at a cracking pace as the students used outline figures to draw themselves in their fashion clothes and then explain why they chose certain brand names. They enjoyed this and worked with care. Next, photographs of adverts provided prompts for a discussion on the appeal of different adverts for different audiences and the analysis was carried a stage further as the students independently evaluated the impact of the manufacture of different products – on the environment, on the people and on the economy. They found these more abstract arguments difficult and to help, the teacher provided an analytical framework and challenged students to express their thoughts. All were engrossed in the discussion which followed as the students began to question values and the social, economic and environmental costs of producing some of their favourite clothes. They were reluctant to leave as the lesson ended and discussions continued as they left the classroom. This lesson was highly effective in enabling students to understand economic, social and environmental issues related to manufacturing.

108. Leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has a clear vision of the future of the department and has brought about major changes in syllabuses and teaching methods. Management is also very good. Expertise and teaching resources are shared very well and the department has high expectations of itself and the students. The department has made very good improvement since the last inspection.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good subject knowledge of teachers.
- Good relationships with students.
- Good progress in Years 7 to 9.
- Inconsistent GCSE results.
- Planning does not focus sufficiently on what students are expected to do, how to assess this, and how to support students' achievement.
- Students are not engaged sufficiently in their own learning activities.
- The weak literacy skills of some students.

### Commentary

109. Results of the teacher assessments in 2002 were below the national average. Results at GCSE show some fluctuation. They showed improvement in 2002, although they were well below the national average and results in 2003 are similar. Students make good progress in history in Years 7 to 9. There has been some underachievement in Years 10 and 11, however, current standards show improvement and students are achieving satisfactorily.

110. Standards at the time of the inspection were below expectations for students in Years 7 to 9. In one lesson seen, higher-attaining students were able to follow up whole class reading and discussion of issues in the textile industry in the nineteenth century, and clearly explain the impact of faster spinning machines. In written work seen, higher-attaining students were able to observe and comment sensibly on photographic sources, suggesting clearly what factors might affect their reliability. Most middle-attaining students were restricted to simple observation, and like lower-attaining students were hampered by their quality of writing, although in oral work in class they were seen to have more understanding.

111. Students in Year 11 were working below expectations. In the teaching seen, looking at different perspectives of the main participants in the Irish question, all students showed some understanding of how myths can develop and last through time. Higher and some middle-attaining students were able to make relevant notes from a text on the issues at stake in Ireland. Some middle and lower-attaining students found reading the text provided, and answering questions, too challenging without additional help and this was a barrier to their learning.

112. Overall, teaching and learning seen through the inspection were consistently good. Teachers' planning, strong subject knowledge, and good relationships with students, resulted in students achieving well in lessons. This was seen most effectively in a higher-attaining Year 8 class studying the poor in Tudor England. Following reading and discussion of source material, all students were able to analyse the sources and write a brief report. The teacher provided support for writing when necessary, and encouraged students to reflect on other students' work and how to improve it. In some lessons seen, students were less involved in their own learning. For example, in a Year 11

class observed, students were teacher led for much of the lesson. Although many were able to participate in class discussion, there was little opportunity for others to show what they had learned, or to be more active in their learning. Higher and many middle-attaining students benefited from this lesson, but some middle and lower-attaining students would have gained more from more short term activities that helped them to model answers and demonstrate learning gained.

113. Overall leadership and management of this department are satisfactory. Resources and accommodation are good. Opportunities for enrichment include the use of ICT and the library. Currently, the monitoring of teaching does not have sufficient emphasis on planned student outcomes, and teacher assessment of these, especially in Years 10 and 11. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

### Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning means that students make good progress from a low starting point in Year 7.
- Leadership is strong and clearly focused, supported by an effective and dedicated team.
- Innovations in examination courses are leading to rising standards.
- There is still little curriculum time allocated, particularly in Years 7 to 9, to enable students to improve their learning further.
- Religious education makes a significant contribution to students' personal development.

### Commentary

114. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below average. This is in line with what might be expected considering students' prior attainment. In the 2002 GCSE examination, the number of students gaining A\*-C grades almost doubled, which, reflects the hard work of both the department and students. Results in 2003 showed some decline, however, a higher proportion of students were entered for the examination.

115. By the end of Year 9 standards are below average, overall. Students make good progress from a low starting point in Year 7, where students come into school with poor English skills and a very disparate experience of religious education. By the end of Year 11, students have made significant improvements and gain creditable results in both long and short courses in GCSE. Higher achievement is limited, despite the good teaching, by the lack of curriculum time allocated to religious education compared to other humanities subjects.

116. The quality of teaching and learning is good with some strong features. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to extend students' learning effectively. Lessons have clear learning objectives and these are revisited to check what students have learned. A stimulating environment and good use of resources help to reinforce students' learning. During lessons, teachers monitor students' work, encouraging and supporting them effectively. Well-developed relationships create a positive atmosphere, where students feel valued, and which helps them to learn well. A few lessons are formal and lack inspiration, where teachers rely on a narrow range of teaching methods. Higher-

attaining students are not sufficiently challenged in a few mixed ability classes, and this restricts chances to extend their learning.

117. Very good leadership ensures that the department has a clear view of how it is going to develop further. This is complemented by a strong team ethos by dedicated specialist teachers, resulting in a clear focus on raising standards and improving provision for the students. Good management ensures that teaching is monitored to ensure effectiveness, and that students are regularly assessed. This is not always used effectively to check progress over time.

118. The curriculum is delivered with a very small time allocation, seventeen per cent less than the recommended time in the locally agreed syllabus, and less than other humanities subjects, which means students receive only one lesson per week. The impact of the good provision made by the department and the status of the subject overall is lessened by this and other smaller omissions such as having no named 'slot' in the homework diary. Visits and visitors are not used sufficiently to bring the curriculum alive for students and enhance learning through practical experiences.

119. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The key issue of time allocation raised in the last inspection has been improved significantly, although some issues remain. The introduction of further examination courses has expanded the opportunities for students to study religious education further. The appointment of a team of specialist teachers and full-time head of department has significantly enhanced the quality of opportunities provided by the department.

## TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good improvement in standards and results.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Relationships between staff and students are good.
- Some GCSE coursework does not sufficiently link to the commercial world.
- Teaching is not monitored closely enough to ensure good achievement in all areas.
- Some opportunities to use ICT are missed.
- Accommodation, resources and curriculum opportunities are very good.

### Commentary

120. Students join the school with standards that are well below the national average. By the end of Year 9 the results in 2002 were above the national average. The standard of work seen in lessons, however, was average. The teacher's assessments indicate a good improving trend. The girls are doing better than the boys; this is typical of the national pattern. In this school however, the gap between the girl's results and the boy's is less than usual. Students make very good progress overall.

121. GCSE results have risen significantly over the past five years in all areas of design and technology. In 2002 the A\*-C results were below the national average. A further improvement in

resistant materials and textiles results was seen in 2003, however, food and graphics results showed some decline. The gender gap in the results A\*-G is less than the national gap.

122. In Years 7 to 9 the achievement of students is good. Students currently make good progress because of the good teaching and relationships. A small minority of boys and girls do not make full use of the opportunities offered and do not make such rapid progress.

123. GCSE students are making satisfactory progress in lessons. In resistant materials students were capable of using a wide range of materials and processes, including casting, and fabrication of metal and timber. The practical work achieved by Year 11 students in this area of the subject in the 2003 examination is of a very good standard. Students with special educational needs are able to make good progress due to the supportive work by teachers and learning-support assistants who have a clear idea of their individual needs.

124. Overall weaknesses were seen in areas of GCSE portfolio work when opportunities were missed to incorporate the use of ICT to help raise standards. Students are not linking the specification of products to their evaluative thinking. When choosing the starting points for their 2002 coursework many students missed the opportunity to use the resource of the local community.

125. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from the good curriculum planning and teaching materials. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use resources including, laptops and interactive whiteboards to make learning interesting. To support weaker students, the school of learning has developed a good introductory unit that improves literacy, numeracy and illustration skills. The computerised monitoring and reporting system, gives parents accurate information about the progress of their child, and explains the next steps required to progress.

126. During the inspection, good GCSE teaching was seen in food technology and resistant materials, where the respectful atmosphere established by the teachers enabled the students to use a wide range of equipment and tools independently. In the less successful lessons the students did not use tools with sufficient care or use ICT sufficiently.

127. Leadership, management, and organisation are good. The subject has very good accommodation and resources. Areas requiring further development have been clearly identified. However, teaching is not monitored closely enough to ensure good achievement in all areas. The team works regularly in the evenings to offer students extra opportunities.

128. Since the last report, the school of learning has made good improvement, especially in results at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

129. Lessons were sampled in drama and dance, but insufficient work was seen to form overall judgements about provision in the subjects. Students in Years 7 to 9 take drama as part of the curriculum and are able to choose a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in drama in 2002 were well below average. Attainment in Year 11 drama lessons is variable but overall below average. However, students make satisfactory progress across the key stage.

130. The teaching and learning observed in drama was satisfactory. However, students' drama work in Year 8 is understated and the pace slow. Students in a Year 11 drama lesson worked well in groups but again students tended towards understatement. Teacher expertise is sound and lessons are well planned. Students work well in groups and enjoy performing. Their attitudes and behaviour are good.

131. Students in Years 7 to 9 take dance as part of the curriculum and are able to choose a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. Dance was introduced as part of a performing arts initiative and is becoming an increasingly popular subject. GCSE dance was recently introduced and students will take the examination in the next session.



132. Teaching and learning observed in dance was good, overall. Students join the school with below average skills in this area but make rapid progress. Lessons are very well planned and students clearly enjoy the physical nature of the activity. Teacher expertise is good and as a result students develop a thoughtful approach to the subject.

133. The school has good facilities for performing arts including a purpose-built dance studio. Schemes of work are appropriate and the work of the students regularly assessed. The department contributes strongly to the extra-curricular provision in the school, in arts evenings and regular school productions.

### Art and design

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improving standards in Year 11.
- Good teaching that leads to good achievement, particularly in ICT.
- Very good leadership reflecting a very clear vision and plans for improvement.
- Too little time is given to the subject in Years 8 and 9.

### Commentary

134. Results in GCSE examinations dipped significantly after the last inspection and there was underachievement by both boys and girls. In 2002 GCSE results were well below average. However, the latest results showed a marked improvement. Standards currently suggest the trend is continuing to rise with more students on track to achieve the higher grades than previously.

135. Standards on entry are well below expectation and students achieve well in Years 7 to 9, in relation to their starting points. Current standards at the end of Year 9 are below average. Once work routines are established and understood their mastery of basic drawing skills and techniques fosters confidence and leads to good quality work. However, the skills students learnt in Year 7 are not sufficiently sustained and practised in Years 8 and 9 because too little curriculum time is allocated to the subject. This hampers their progress and leaves students unprepared for the rigours of examination courses. Presentation of work and use of sketchbooks is weak in Year 9. As a result a lot of time is spent reinforcing research skills and introducing students to different working processes in Year 10. Independent decision making is something many struggle with and they rely too much on teachers telling them what to do next. Nevertheless, by Year 11 achievement is good, and whilst current standards are below average they show improvement. Notable examples include computer-generated work, for example using animation programs and paintings inspired by the work of Hundertwasser. Use of computer programs, for research and to manipulate images, is a particular strength and contributes significantly to the improving standards.

136. Students learn well because teachers motivate them and have high expectations. They set interesting projects and plan them well. Students are pushed very hard to develop, and in some cases relearn, the basic drawing and research skills encountered in previous years. For example,

the emphasis on sketchbooks is successfully raising standards in examinations. Teachers constantly question and use a technical language in order to improve students' literacy skills. Nevertheless, too few opportunities are created for students themselves to speak at length, either as a way of helping them clarify and deepen their understanding or for teachers to check their level of understanding.

137. Leadership is very strong and helping to drive through improvements and the subject area is well managed. Staff show a very high level of commitment and shared responsibility and determination to systematically tackle the identified weaknesses in observational drawing and standards of critical skills. They give generously of their time, to keep up-to-date with computer technology, take students on trips and run extra classes after school.

138. Improvement since the last inspection has been sound, however progress made in the last year has been better than this. Response to the recent fall in GCSE results has been swift and very effective.

### Music

Provision in music is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Exceptional use of computers to support students' learning.
- Good teaching.
- Excellent resources.
- Very good accommodation.
- Good departmental management.
- Provision for instrumental lessons is modest.
- The literacy skills of some students are weak and hamper their learning.

### Commentary

139. GCSE music results in 2002 were just below average. Results in 2003 are broadly similar. However, music is a popular subject and the actual number of students achieving upper grades is greater than found in many schools. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls.

140. Students' attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average and they achieve well in relation to their starting points. Achievement by students with special educational needs, and gifted-and-talented students, is satisfactory. At the end of Year 9, all students are able to use computers for music very well. Keyboards are used with competence for performance and for composition. Students build on their ICT skills. Appraising skills are below average but variable; students develop some suitable musical vocabulary with which to describe and appraise the music they hear, but this area of musical literacy is not well developed.

141. By the end of Year 11, students are fluent in the use of music technology and reach high standards in composition and performance. Students' musical and general literacy is less good and this tends to have a negative effect on attainment in those areas requiring written rather than practical skills. Current standards are below average, however, overall they achieve well.

142. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from knowledgeable and committed teachers. Care is taken to relate tasks to previous learning; lessons often have a range of tasks and energetic pace. This helps to consolidate student learning and maintain interest. Teaching embodies thorough preparation, a range of teaching styles, interesting work, good pace and organisation. Lessons in Years 10 and 11 successfully build on previous attainment. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on composition, student performance was closely linked to the development of computer skills. Teachers use an inclusive approach that encourages all students to participate fully and thereby gain in confidence. Teachers ensure that at all stages students have opportunities to develop most necessary musical skills. Computer work is outstanding.

143. There is a modest provision of instrumental teaching. The number of students taking lessons in school is below average in relation to the size of the school. The visiting instrumental teachers make a satisfactory contribution to the curriculum and their work is managed and carefully integrated into the work of the department. Students have, as yet, had few opportunities to take instrumental grade examinations and this has a negative effect on student progress.

144. Leadership and management are good. The long-term monitoring, assessing and recording of students' work are good. Teachers analyse attainment across the range of skills taught in music lessons and have begun to consider this information to extend the work offered to students of differing attainment. Teachers are committed to high standards. The department has excellent equipment with good instrumental stocks. Computer resources are excellent; all are connected to electronic keyboards and recording equipment. Accommodation is very good indeed and suitable for all musical activities.

145. There is some variety of extra-curricular activities in music. Committed students are involved across a range of music making. There are no large instrumental or vocal groups to which students can belong but the annual musical production involves large numbers. The performing and composing work of students is appropriately celebrated in musical events. Such opportunities have a strong impact on the cultural and social development of students; they also contribute to the prevailing ethos of the school.

146. There has been good improvement since the last report. The main issues from the previous report, concerning accommodation and pace, have been resolved.

### Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11 core	Year 11 GCSE
Standards	Average	Average	Well below average
Achievement	Good	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good	Good

Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Very good

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good quality of teaching and learning that results in good achievement.
- The proportion of students attaining A\*-C grade passes at GCSE is improving.
- Curricular and extra-curricular provision is very good, a particular strength being the outdoor and adventurous activities available.
- There are excellent sporting links with the local community and other schools.
- Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are not effectively moderated.
- The quality of marking of GCSE work is inconsistent.

## **Commentary**

147. Results in the GCSE examination were well below average in 2002. Provisional results in 2003 show a ten per cent improvement in the proportion of A\* to C grades passes. This continues the rising trend over the last three years. Far fewer girls than boys take the course, hence it is not possible to comment realistically on gender differences.

148. By the end of Year 9 standards are average for the majority of students. Boys have a secure knowledge and understanding of defensive tactics in basketball. Girls are developing their range of shots in badminton but there remains a tendency for many to simply return shots to an opponent rather than trying to make them move. Achievement is good because standards on entry were below what was expected for their age. By the end of Year 11 standards are average. In badminton, most boys and girls have a secure grasp of the rules for doubles play and the more capable have a good stance and use power in their strokes to good effect. In their dance-focused fitness lessons, girls plan their own routines well. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is also good. Standards in the Year 11 GCSE theory course are below average. This is mainly due to weaknesses in students literacy skills which limit their progress in written aspects of the course. In their climbing lessons students are developing the required skills well. Individual students from across all years have gained representative honours at district and county level. The Year 7 athletics team and the girls' under-16 basketball team are current district champions.

149. The quality of teaching and learning is good across all years. Teachers have a very good command of the activities being taught. The good quality teaching is typified by pace, purpose, progression and challenge. Teachers insist constantly on high standards of behaviour. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good, which helps create a positive learning atmosphere in lessons. All groups of students are therefore able to make good progress in their learning. Teachers circulate well in lessons, which helps keep students on task. Teachers' effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes students aware of their capabilities. On occasion, however, students have insufficient structured opportunities to be involved in peer evaluation and coaching – this would deepen their knowledge and understanding even further. The quality of marking of GCSE theory work is inconsistent and students are not always being told what they need to do to make further progress.

150. The head of the physical education school of learning has only very recently joined the school; hence, it is not possible to comment on the quality of leadership. The department is managed well – issues for improvement having already been identified. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection, particularly in staffing, accommodation, resources and increased curricular provision.

151. All students in Years 7 to 11 have the opportunity to participate in two hours quality sporting activity per week. The great majority of this time is formally timetabled and there is also a very good range of extra-curricular provision to broaden students' learning experiences further. Curricular provision has also been improved for post-16 students, particularly those in Year 12.

## BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

152. It was only possible to sample one lesson of the newly-introduced leisure and tourism course and insufficient work was seen to form an overall judgement about provision in the subject. Students' standards of work seen were in line with course expectation and they were all targeted at VGCSE grades A\* to C. In the lesson, they worked well independently, making good use of ICT to produce materials for presentation. They used a wide variety of techniques, showing good levels of confidence and competence. They worked with levels of interest and concentration which enabled them to achieve well.

153. Teaching was good: the lesson was well planned, with learning outcomes clearly identified. A good range of activities maintained students' interest and the interactive whiteboard was well used as a teaching and learning aid. The teacher ensured that all students remained involved and demonstrated good subject knowledge during discussions. Although students' presentation skills are still at an early stage of development, good use of questioning helped them develop their speaking skills. The lesson ended with a summary and a good discussion of what makes a good presentation.

### Business studies

Provision in business is **excellent**.

	Year 11
Standards	Average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since last inspection	Excellent

### Main strengths

- Students' achievement is very good.
- Very good teaching and learning.
- Vocational and real world context and opportunities are used very effectively in the teaching of the subject.
- An ethos which enables all staff to teach to their strengths within a common successful framework.
- Excellent improvement in provision in recent years.
- The very good ICT resources for the development of independent learning.
- The very good relationships creating positive working environments.
- Excellent leadership and management.

### Commentary

154. Results at GCSE in 2002 were below the national average. Results in 2003 showed a significant improvement. Standards seen during the inspection show improvement and were broadly average. Achievement is very good due to the very good teaching and learning. The school's data shows students consistently outperformed their predicted grades. All students either met or exceeded their predicted GCSE results.

155. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge, which is communicated effectively and at a fast pace. The key to the very good achievement seen is the very good relationships, which enable independent learning to flourish in a very supportive environment. A range of strategies is employed to suit different types of learners. A particularly effective feature is the requirement for students to apply their new learning to examination

questions. The e-learning provision is excellent. The course is well planned and very well resourced. This all helps to motivate students leading to the productive relationships. The teaching observed was never less than good and usually very good. Assessment is very good and students are assisted to produce high quality work.

156. Year 11 coursework demonstrated a variety of ICT skills and showed the results of research from a good variety of sources. Most students were discriminating in their use of information and could justify their conclusions by selecting relevant data and applying relevant concepts to arrive at their judgements, for example when investigating the possibilities of starting up a new business. In preparation for this, very good whole class teaching enabled students to quickly understand the difference between start-up costs and running costs when setting up a business. Students were proficient in using the Internet for relevant research. Students also used a dictionary without prompting showing that good routines had been established for aiding literacy.

157. The course is continuing to evolve for example, the development of opportunities to implement the vocational and applied aspects of the course. There exists an ethos, which enables all staff with varying levels of experience to teach to their strengths within a common successful framework. Excellent improvement and the impact of e-learning, together with the consistently high quality of teaching and learning, make leadership and management excellent. ICT is used very effectively to provide easily accessible resources for students. In addition to the use of data projectors and interactive whiteboards, whole courses are supported electronically with detailed course guidance. Improvement in recent years has been excellent, seen in results and brought about by the rigorous course, focusing on the vocational context and independent learning.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Citizenship

Provision in citizenship overall is **good**.

	Years 7, 8, 9,10, 12 & 13	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for the subject.
- Overall, students achieve in well because work in PSHE/citizenship lessons is well structured and lessons are well taught.
- Very strong central planning, which supports the large team of non-specialist teachers delivering the subject.
- The positive atmosphere, environment and working relationships in lessons.
- The structure of the GCSE short course does not make the best use of the limited lesson time available for this option.
- The monitoring and co-ordination of citizenship opportunities in other subjects is underdeveloped.
- Recorded work is not marked regularly and assessment procedures are underdeveloped.

## Commentary

158. A very good programme is in place for Citizenship/PSHE throughout the school but citizenship opportunities are less well developed in other subjects of the curriculum. The recently introduced GCSE short course for citizenship is being developed, but currently the limited time available is not used to best effect.

159. Overall, students attain good standards in citizenship lessons, and through the opportunities provided by working within 'mini-communities'. However, standards in the GCSE examination option are below expectation. Students are mostly enthusiastic, take an interest in their work, and achievement overall is good, although more limited in the GCSE examination option.

160. Students have good opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding about their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society. Many show this in their discussions with one and other, with teachers, and with other adults. As students move through the school they develop their skills in justifying their opinions about social issues orally, in writing and through slide presentations using computers. They use their knowledge and skills effectively to research issues and plan change that would help the local and wider communities. For example, students work very well in their 'mini-communities', to study the lives of peoples in other continents. They raise money to support international organisations and develop good levels of understanding about the ways in which they, and others, can help to improve the quality of life. Students of all levels of attainment have very good opportunities to take part in a progressive programme of PSHE, which is rich in opportunities to develop their citizenship skills and this enables them to understand, and contribute to, the organisations and structures within their own communities. As a result overall achievement is good.

161. Teaching of the PSHE/ citizenship programme is good but for the GCSE course it is only satisfactory. The centrally planned programmes of work support the large team of non-specialist teachers who deliver the PSHE/citizenship lessons and as a result, lessons are well structured. Teachers use time effectively, use a range of teaching methods and have suitably high expectations of students and their work. Students show high levels of commitment to their work and have good opportunities to engage in a range of learning activities, which extend their knowledge and learning skills. They show good levels of concentration, work well in groups, and have opportunities to apply their writing, speaking, listening, and computer skills. However, recorded work is not marked regularly and procedures for assessing students' work are not fully developed. Teaching and learning within the recently introduced GCSE short course is only satisfactory. Although teachers' knowledge is strong and a variety of learning activities take place, students' work is not always sufficiently matched to their prior experience and does not make the best use of the limited time available for this short course.

162. Leadership and management of citizenship across the school are very good. The vision and implementation of opportunities for citizenship are very good in both the PSHE/citizenship and the 'mini-community' programmes. The well organised and supported programmes of work, together with the effective co-operation and contributions of the teachers who deliver the lessons, means that students are developing a good understanding of citizenship. Progress since the last inspection has been good. However, the monitoring and co-ordination of citizenship opportunities in other subjects of the curriculum are underdeveloped and improvements are needed to the GCSE short course.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design (fine art)	14	92.9	90	50	42.7	44.3	39
Art and design (graphic design)	7	85.7	n/a	0	n/a	24.3	n/a
Biology	14	35.7	81.6	0	33.2	10.0	33.2
Computing	6	83.3	72.8	16.7	20.6	25	28.5
Design and technology	7	85.7	89.2	0	32	21.4	35.7
English literature	5	60	94.4	0	37.9	12	38.9
French	3	33.3	n/a	0	n/a	10	n/a
General studies	7	85.7	78.6	0	25.7	25.7	30
History	8	12.5	91.8	0	37.2	3.8	37.8
Mathematics	2	100	n/a	0	n/a	25	n/a
Media studies	27	88.9	n/a	0	n/a	24.8	n/a
Performance studies	15	66.7	n/a	13.3	n/a	18.7	n/a
Physics	4	50	82	0	36.2	15	34.3
Sports/ PE studies	3	66.7	88.2	0	27.7	23.3	33.8
Religious education	11	91	n/a	18.2	n/a	30.9	n/a

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	100	96.1	57	48.7	100	85.1
Art and design (graphic design)	7	100	n/a	42.9	n/a	97.2	n/a
Art and design (fine art)	5	80	n/a	40	n/a	76	n/a
Biology	2	100	n/a	50	n/a	100	n/a
Computing	5	80	n/a	40	n/a	72	n/a
English literature	8	87.5	98.5	0	43.7	47.5	84.3
History	8	75	97.1	0	41	35	81.2
Mathematics	2	100	n/a	0	n/a	60	n/a
Media studies	14	92.9	n/a	7.1	n/a	58.6	n/a
Performance studies	4	100	n/a	0	n/a	55	n/a

Religious Studies	3	100	n/a	0	n/a	60	n/a
Business –6 unit	5	100	87.1	40	16.5	68	60.1
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Number entered</b>	<b>% gaining grades A-E</b>		<b>% gaining grades A-B</b>		<b>Average point score</b>	
Business – 12 unit	3	100	87.1	0	16.5	66.7	60.1
Leisure and recreation- 6 unit	1	100	85.6	0	9.8	40	55.1
Leisure and recreation – 12 unit	9	100	85.6	22	9.8	66.7	55.1
Travel and tourism-12 unit	1	100	n/a	0	n/a	60	n/a

### **Level 2 vocational qualifications**

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Health and social care	5	100	n/a	40	n/a	0	n/a
Information technology	13	100	n/a	15	n/a	0	n/a
Leisure and tourism	11	82	n/a	9	n/a	0	n/a

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus subject was English literature. French was sampled in the sixth form. One Year 12 lesson was seen. The lesson was very well prepared and lesson aims were made explicit. The teacher had very good subject knowledge and native speaker fluency. Students were motivated and committed and keen to participate in all aspects of the lesson. Students had good listening skills and several communicated easily in French, although some were more hesitant. Students reading skills were good and many could read an authentic text with ease. Their knowledge of grammar was more limited, however. Their achievement in the lesson was good.

### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

Standards	Below average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### **Main strengths**

- The teaching of English is consistently good.
- Teachers tailor the work to fit the students they teach using a variety of approaches.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge.
- Students achieve well in coursework.
- Students receive good support throughout the AS and A-level courses.

## **Commentary**

163. A-Level and AS English literature results in 2002 were below the national average. The most recent results are similar. Results have been below the national average since the last inspection. A significant number of students attain grades at GCSE which suggest that they will find it difficult to cope with work at a higher level. Low literacy levels in the main school mean that few join the course equipped to deal with the complexities of a literature course. The writing of many of the students is well below national standards when they join the course and their early work confirms that view. They have plenty of ideas about character, but are less clear about impact and effect, and find it difficult to get beyond incident and event. The issue of literacy is paramount, however, and technical errors and a limited vocabulary make it harder for them to express themselves. The work of higher-attaining students throws this into sharp relief.

164. In spite of their low attainment, however, the achievement of students in English literature is good when related to their previous results. This is because of the good teaching they receive and their own determination to achieve. Teachers know their subject and their students very well and adopt a suitable approach in preparing and delivering lessons which challenge but are also accessible. This was seen in a lesson looking at the first few chapters of "Captain Corelli's Mandolin". Teachers match texts, tasks and teaching to the previous attainment and learning needs of the students, which gives them a better chance of success. From the very start of the course teachers attempt to give students confidence in their ability to tackle the subject, encouraging them to develop and express a personal response to literature through their own reading. They introduce texts in a sensitive and thoughtful way, providing very supportive information on their background and using questioning and group work creatively to ensure that students can achieve. As a consequence, from the start of Year 12 students make significant contributions to oral work, expressing their viewpoints clearly and confidently. They are given extensive support in structuring their own written responses. By Year 13, students have developed in greater depth the skills of speculation and analysis and their presentational skills have improved. In written work, specific learning outcomes are planned for well, with the important assessment objectives at the forefront. Students are taught to write clearly and effectively and their essays show a clear understanding of how to structure an argument. Higher-attaining students show confidence in their handling of more complex ideas. While lower-attaining students make a more limited response, and are often unsure about more difficult concepts, they achieve well because marking and assessment is thorough and informative, encouraging them to improve. Texts are chosen carefully to help students to develop the ability to explain and clarify the relationships and comparisons between them. Teachers attempt to challenge students, as seen in a lesson preparing for the study of Carol Ann Duffy's poetry, where students were being introduced to different schools of literary criticism. The students' lack of a more sophisticated vocabulary is also tackled in a determined way, with teachers looking to improve this all the time, both in general terms and in the teaching of relevant literary terms.

165. The strength of the leadership and management lies in a shared commitment to the students' academic welfare and development, the careful monitoring of their achievement and the offering of appropriate advice about how to improve and succeed. Students express their appreciation for the clarity of such advice provided for them, both before and during the course. They also appreciate the time given to them by teachers, which makes them feel more confident in a subject few of them find easy. The number of students attracted to the subject is increasing, although the number staying on to Year 13 varies.

166. Despite the fact that examination results are still below the national average, improvement in the subject has been good. The department has become established since the last inspection and students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

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

167. Overall, the standard of English language and literacy skills in the sixth form is below average. When students join the sixth form, their literacy skills are well below average. Therefore, they make good progress in this area relative to their prior attainment. Teachers know their students well and are able to give sound advice to individuals on how to improve their writing.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall.
- The positive relationships between staff and students.
- The good progress students make in mathematics.
- Teachers' subject knowledge enables them to plan effectively and to give clear explanations.
- Insufficient opportunities are provided for developing student-thinking skills.
- The scheme of work requires improvement.

### Commentary

168. The inspection covered the courses in MEI A-level mathematics and AS-level mathematics provided by the school. Modules are offered in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics.

169. The numbers of students studying A-level is small and insufficient to make any comparison with national figures. Students, however, achieve well bearing in mind their prior attainment. The small numbers of students entered for A-level mathematics in previous years achieved well.

170. Standards seen indicate that they are at the nationally expected levels for students following the course. Students' statistics coursework was of a satisfactory standard, well marked with positive guidance on how to improve. Students initially find the pure mathematics more challenging, particularly those with an Intermediate background, but value the extra support given by staff to overcome these difficulties.

171. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. They demonstrate positive attitudes to their work and are prepared to admit when they do not understand and ask for further explanation. The quality of relationships between students and staff is a particular strength. This was particularly shown in a lesson to calculate correlation coefficients. The teacher made a board error involving the placing of  $1/n$  outside the square root sign. One student was particularly focused on the implications of this and it created some very good discussions and positive thinking. The student showed real skill in evaluating the error and its consequences. The teacher handled the mistake well and it did not affect the establishment of the concept.

172. The standard of teaching and learning is good, overall. Teachers' good use of reflective questioning techniques consolidated previous knowledge and prepared the ground for new work. However, conversations were invariably between teacher and student. Only one problem solving situation was observed (discovering the purpose of the ! button on a calculator). Overall, teachers do not create enough opportunities to develop student-thinking skills. Teachers' subject knowledge enables them to plan effectively and to give clear explanations. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, the teacher's detailed explanation ensured that students gained a very good understanding of logarithms. The lesson built on students' previous learning experiences (the principle of inverse being a reflection in  $y=x$ ) and was well understood by the class. Occasionally, the choice of a difficult example hindered understanding of underlying principles, as in a Year 12 lesson on equations where the solutions were inexact. Teachers set and insist on high standards of presentation. Students work

hard and remain well-motivated and on task for the whole lesson, even if they experience difficulties. Homework is set and marked regularly.

173. The subject is well led and managed. Very good procedures are in place for assessing students' attainment and progress and for setting targets. Students know how well they are doing and this contributes to the progress they make. However, the scheme of work does not provide sufficient guidance to staff on effective teaching and learning strategies. The department is aware of this and it features as part of their development plan. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

174. Students' mathematical skills are satisfactory. They are able to apply numerical techniques in a variety of situations to support their work in other subjects.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus was on biology but physics, chemistry and human biology were also sampled. In physics, the one Year 12 lesson seen was good and the students achieved well being supported by a very enthusiastic teacher. In the Year 12 chemistry lesson, the teaching was good and the students have settled in well to the new course. In human biology, the teaching was also good with the students showing a good attitude to the subject.

### **Biology**

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Management	Good
Progress since last inspection	Good

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well at A-level.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Students share very good relationships with teachers.
- There is a team of enthusiastic specialist teachers with a shared commitment to the success of the students.
- The achievement of all AS students must be raised.

### **Commentary**

175. In 2002, a small number of students took GCE A-level. Results were at the national average and were similar in 2003. Data for each individual student from these years shows that a majority of the students reach their potential grades and in many cases exceed them. Attainment at A/S level is lower than at 'A' level and this is due to the fact that some lower-attaining students find the work particularly difficult. Overall, achievement is good especially in Year 13 where most students achieve their predicted grades. In Year 12 the achievement is satisfactory.

176. The work seen in lessons and in their folders indicates that these standards have been maintained. Year 12 students showed a good understanding of some biochemical processes. The work of Year 13 students was at the nationally expected level. These students were able to recall detailed aspects of nerve and hormonal responses.

177. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This results in most students learning the topics effectively and making good progress in lessons. The lessons observed were delivered with

enthusiasm and by teachers who had good subject knowledge. In the Year 13 group, the two students benefited from the fact that the teacher could offer almost personal tuition and support. The much larger Year 12 group were of a much wider attainment range and not all students were actively engaged in the class discussions. This resulted in some students making more progress than others. Modular tests and homework are marked in great detail, with many constructive comments that help the students improve and clearly indicate their attainment.

178. There are very good relationships between the teachers and students as well as between the students themselves in both Years 12 and 13. This gives rise to a very pleasant co-operative working atmosphere in lessons. In discussions, students appreciated the support and guidance given by the teachers and the fact that the teachers were prepared to help and assist.

179. The management of the department is good. The recently appointed head of subject is determined to raise attainment to an even higher level by ensuring all students reach their potential. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

180. One Year 12 ICT lesson was sampled. This was an excellent lesson with very high learning and achievement because of the clear teaching conducted at a brisk pace.

### Information and communication technology across the curriculum

181. The provision for ICT across the curriculum at post-16 level is very good. In many subjects teachers using the new interactive whiteboards are bringing lessons to life. Students' ICT capability is very good and they use their ICT skills well across all subjects. In particular, results in music have improved as a direct result of the skilful use of new computer generated sound and recording systems. Students make particularly good use of the Internet for research purposes and they use computers regularly to give multimedia presentations. Overall, the use of ICT is having a positive impact upon standards throughout the sixth form.

## HUMANITIES

182. One Year 12 lesson was sampled in history. The quality of teaching and learning was good. Students were achieving well in relation to their prior attainment and responded with interest and enthusiasm. One Year 13 religious studies lesson was also sampled. Good quality teaching and learning with well-planned and assessed work helped students improve.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

183. The focus subjects were art and design and media studies. Two Year 13 art graphics lessons were sampled. In one lesson teaching and learning were good and in the other, very good. Challenging teaching resulted in good and very good achievement. Two performing arts lesson were sampled – one in dance and one in music. Teaching and learning were good and students clearly enjoyed their involvement. The provision in music caters for ten students following music technology courses; seven students at AS level, three students at A- level. AS level music results in 2002 were broadly in line with the national average and represent very good progress in relation to candidates' attainment in GCSE music.

### Art and design

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

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good

Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

## Main strengths

- The very good A-level results.
- Students' very good achievement.
- Teachers' very good expertise across a range of art and design disciplines.
- Students' very good use of computers for research and image manipulation.
- Work journals contain mainly detailed notes and descriptions rather than critical and analytical comments.

## Commentary

184. The school offers courses in three dimensional design, graphics and art and design. All courses were observed. In 2002, the combined result for A-level subjects were well above the average and achievement by male and female students was very good. Students did significantly better in art and design than in their other subjects. Over half attained the higher, A and B, grades.

185. Standards in current A-level groups are well above average but considerably lower in Year 12. Some students have started the AS courses with very limited skills, having not studied art since Year 9. Most are making very good progress, albeit from these very low starting points. A few struggle to keep pace with the work and expectations. A structured foundation course, where students are introduced to unfamiliar materials and are taught practical skills and techniques, provides a suitable basis for individual work, later in the course. By Year 13, students are independent and able to manage their time well. Digital cameras, computers and scanners are used with creativity and imagination in combination with drawing or painting to give layers of images. Overall, standards of practical work are generally higher than skills of analysis and criticism. Students' work journals and sketchbooks contain mainly descriptions - of their own and others' work – rather than in-depth analysis and evaluation.

186. Class teaching and one-to-one tutorials are very effective in A-level classes. In the most effective lessons teachers questioned and drew from students very detailed accounts of their work to date and their plans for further work. For students these discussions served to consolidate learning and challenge them. For teachers they provided an opportunity to monitor standards and work rates and fine-tune their plans for future lessons. Students spoke confidently about their work and progress and had a very good understanding of what to do to raise their achievement. In Year 12, learning was most effective where students based their work on real things, rather than pictures or relying on their memory. Teachers are skilled practitioners with very high levels of expertise in a range of arts disciplines. This is reflected in the breadth of the work undertaken by A-level students, where teaching and learning are particularly strong.

187. Leadership and management are very good. Teamwork is very good with a shared vision for post 16 courses, together with a well researched plan to tackle weaknesses in drawing and critical analysis. There is a good understanding of shortcomings further down the school and the need to ensure students are better prepared for advanced level work in the 6<sup>th</sup> form. In the short term the action being taken to raise standards is effective and helping students achieve their personal goals.

188. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## Media studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

Standards	Below average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Progress since last inspection	Good
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### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The teachers have good subject knowledge and students achieve well.
- The material teachers chose to use is relevant and accessible.
- A strong emphasis on practical work which motivates students.
- The students receive good support throughout, which they recognise and value.
- Resources are excellent.
- Media Studies attracts more students than any other A-levels.
- A minority of students are passive in oral work and seemingly disengaged.

### **Commentary**

189. AS and A-level media results were below the national average in 2002. The most recent results are similar. Results have been below the national average since the last inspection. A significant number of students attain relatively low grades at GCSE, suggesting that they will find it difficult to cope with the standard of written work required at A-level. For many one year students in Year 12 media studies is their only AS subject and the quality of their written expression tends to be well below national standards when they join the course. Teachers are therefore challenged to raise the standards of written work while at the same time developing students' practical skills to enable them to make the most of any talent they have in this area.

190. Despite their low attainment, students' achievement is good when related to their previous results and in 2002 they achieved well beyond what might have been expected. Students develop a range of knowledge and practical skills which results in very good achievement in coursework. Attainment in the practical side of the subject does tend to be higher than in the written side and some outstanding video work of almost professional quality is produced using the excellent resources available. This reveals expert knowledge and is testament to the enthusiasm and expertise of students and their teachers. Students have understood thoroughly the conventions and techniques of such texts as the rock video and the film trailer. The written work of Year 12 students shows further enthusiasm for the texts studied and some developing knowledge of character, plot and location markers. Responses can lack depth, however; arguments are undeveloped and students are prone to describe rather than analyse. Year 13 extended essays show clearer engagement with the texts studied; coursework titles address the key concepts and are well suited to the candidates. Students have researched thoroughly and structured their work appropriately. Many can use technical vocabulary with understanding and select judicious examples.

191. Teaching and learning are good throughout the course. Teachers know their subject very well and are confident in its delivery. They also understand the nature of their students very well and provide a great deal of supportive material which students can use to explore their own responses. Some good teaching was seen in an introductory module on media concepts, where more good use was made of the excellent facilities now available to the department in showing contrasting clips of 'The Longest Day' and 'Saving Private Ryan'. Most Year 12 students are already showing an interest in the subject, developing the ability to draw instructive comparisons between media texts and making pertinent responses in class. They are achieving well. A minority of students are not so focused, however, and teachers find it more difficult to engage them successfully. By Year 13, students are very confident in presenting their own ideas to the class and in defending their choices; they are able to speculate and analyse and they are more confident with technical terms. They are helped to achieve well through thorough and informative marking and assessment.

192. Leadership and management are good. Teachers have a shared commitment to the students, who value the information provided for them. They also appreciate the time and advice offered to them in areas such as their practical work. The department monitors students' achievement and provides appropriate advice about how to improve and succeed. The department has become established firmly since the last inspection, with the number of students attracted to the subject increasing dramatically over the past few years, although a significant number leave the sixth form at the end of Year 12. Resources are excellent.

193. Despite the fact that examination results are still below the national average, improvement since the last inspection has been good. Students achieve well, considering their often very low starting point.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

Leisure and tourism and the community sports leaders awards course (CSLA) were the focus subjects. In the Year 13 physical education theory lesson sampled teaching and learning were sound, meeting well the syllabus requirements. In the leisure and recreation lesson sampled, the quality of teaching and learning was very good giving rise to very good participation in discussion. In the travel and tourism lesson sampled students' learning was good as a result of effective teaching.

### **Physical education**

Provision in the Community Sports Leaders Award (CSLA) course is **excellent**.

Standards	Average
Achievement	Very Good
Teaching and Learning	Very Good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent

### **Main strengths**

- Learning is very good as a result of very good quality teaching.
- The excellent contribution to students' personal development.
- The opportunities provided broaden students' learning experience and enable them to work with other students from a partner grammar school.
- Excellent leadership and management of the course.

### **Commentary**

194. Standards of work seen are average at this early stage in the course and students are achieving very well. Over the last two years numbers have increased and 80 per cent of students have passed the course. Students are developing their interpersonal and communication skills very well, which is essential for the work they will be doing with primary school children as the course progresses.

195. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teacher has an excellent knowledge and understanding of the syllabus requirements. Pace, progression and challenge are particular strengths and as a result students make very good progress. As a result of the quality of tasks set, students work very collaboratively and are very supportive of one another. This enhances considerably the quality of the learning atmosphere. The teacher's effective use of praise and constructive criticism makes students aware of their capabilities. On occasion, however, assessment of students' progress in key skills areas such as communication is not sufficiently clear.

196. The CSLA course is taught through the outdoor education department. Leadership and management of this provision are excellent and the provision itself broadens extensively students' learning experiences. It is well matched to the wide ability range of students in Year 12. The provision for CSLA was not reported upon at the time of the previous inspection; hence it is not possible to comment on improvements since then.

## Leisure and tourism

Provision in leisure and tourism is **very good**.

Standards	Average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good.
- Teaching is consistently good: teachers show both expertise and enthusiasm.
- ICT is very well used in teaching and learning.
- Relationships are excellent.
- The structure and aims of the course sit well in the school's inclusive ethos.
- A minority of students are not always sufficiently focused and motivated.

### Commentary

197. The one-year Intermediate GNVQ results in 2002 were in line with national averages, but improved in 2003. The overall incidence of success since the course was introduced in 1999 has been good – only two of a total of 44 students failed to gain a pass grade and about one in three attained a merit grade. Many students enter the course with modest GCSE results, but the school's analysis shows that they achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. The retention rate on the course is very good. Many students go on to the AVCE courses in leisure and recreation or travel and tourism.

198. The standards of work of current students are in line with course expectation at an early stage of the year. They have made the transition to advanced study well and show good progress in their grasp of key concepts, their ability to analyse and discuss issues related to, for example, customer services, and very good capability to use information and communication technology to support and enrich their learning. In one lesson seen, students were preparing PowerPoint presentations on the local area. Students with special educational needs or whose first language is not English make good progress consistent with the rest of the group. Students' overall achievement is good.

199. The consistently good or better quality of teaching is a key strength. Teachers show very good subject expertise which they convey with enthusiasm in well-planned and structured lessons from which students learn well. ICT, notably the interactive whiteboard, is very effectively used. Students are well managed and the quality of relationships is excellent. Students themselves engage with their work and generally show good levels of motivation and a mature attitude to study. A minority still need occasional refocusing. They work well together and their knowledge is reinforced effectively through interactive question and answer work and lively plenary sessions. The very good assessment of their work gives them clear guidelines as to how to improve.

200. The course is very well planned and structured to be responsive to students' needs. It offers students a valid free-standing qualification, but also opens up the possibility of access to more academic courses, which many follow successfully. The course thus sits well in the school's inclusive ethos. The cohesive teaching team is very well led. There is good evaluation and analysis of performance and much mutual support. There is very effective line management within the overall school of learning. Leadership and management are very good.

201. The course was not introduced at the time of the last inspection, so it is not possible to report progress. What is certain, however, is that the department and its high expectations are making a significant contribution to the quality of educational experience provided in the sixth form.

## BUSINESS

### AVCE Business

Provision in AVCE business is **excellent**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and Learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since last inspection	Excellent

### Main strengths

- Student achievement.
- Very good and sometimes excellent teaching.
- The vocational and real world context and opportunities in the teaching of the subject.
- An ethos which enables all staff to teach to their strengths within a common successful framework.
- The improvement in provision in recent years.
- The ICT resources for the development of independent learning.
- The very good relationships creating positive working environments.

### Commentary

202. Students enter Year 12 with GCSE scores that are generally below average for advanced level study. Results at AVCE in 2002 were well above the national average and standards seen during the inspection were still well above average, which for this group of students represents excellent achievement. This is due to the very good teaching and learning. Data shows that in 2003, all students either met or exceeded their predictions sometimes by as much as four grades.

203. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge, which is communicated effectively and at a fast pace. The key is the very good relationships, which enable independent learning to flourish in a very supportive environment. A range of strategies is employed to suit different types of learners. The e-learning provision is excellent. The course is well planned and very well resourced. The teaching observed was never less than very good and sometimes excellent. For example in one lesson on the promotional activity of business, there was very good use of a selection of everyday shopping products, such as cereal boxes. This enabled students to make clear connections to how a product links to sales promotion through activities such as illustrating a package with a Lego toy. The teacher picked up on real life situations as they arose, for example discovering that many in class did not eat breakfast and challenging their life style. A powerful video clip was used to demonstrate how the advertising campaign for the "fuse" chocolate bar was created. This illustrated clearly the theory taught in the lesson. Inspirational teaching drawing on the students' own experiences and taking opportunities to address issues from citizenship and PSHE using powerful examples from the real world led to excellent learning. In other lessons also, the applied and real world nature of the course enabled very effective links to be made to social, moral and citizenship issues and involved thought around ethics. Assessment is very good and students are assisted to produce high quality work. A particularly effective feature is the requirement for students to apply their new learning to examination questions. Students feel very well supported through constant informal feedback and regular formal tutorials.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

#### **Year 13 AVCE business lesson**

In one Year 13 AVCE business lesson on the promotional activity of business, the objectives and context of the lesson was quickly explained using helpful PowerPoint slides and a data projector. There was then very good use of a selection of everyday shopping products, such as cereal boxes. The teacher gained the class interest by talking about going shopping the previous night bringing the incident to life by telling them about his family and using humour. The recounting of a conversation with his four year old son (who the students at first thought was eighteen) enabled clear connections to be constructed as to how a product links to sales promotion through activities such as illustrating a package with a Lego toy. The teacher picked up on real-life situations as they arose, for example discovering that many in class did not eat breakfast and challenging their life style. A powerful video clip was used to demonstrate how the advertising campaign for the “fuse” chocolate bar was created. This illustrated clearly the theory taught in the lesson. Inspirational teaching drawing on the students’ own experiences and taking opportunities to address issues from citizenship and personal, health and social education, using powerful examples from the real-world led to excellent learning. The interactive whole-class teaching involved everyone in the group and took up the first half of a double lesson but did not seem nearly as long. This was quickly followed by students consolidating their understanding through working in groups on a written task while the teacher gave individual tutorials to students giving well focused feedback on their work and how they could improve. Throughout the lesson the pace was phenomenal.

Inspirational teaching enabling students to make clear connections between their real-life experience and academically rigorous business concepts preceded students’ enthusiastic engagement with independent learning giving the teacher the opportunity to provide detailed personalised feedback and encouragement, produced an excellent lesson.

204. The course is continuing to improve as the successful formula is further developed. This includes the embedding of a wide range of opportunities to implement the vocational and applied aspects of the course, using the local business environment as a powerful resource for learning. During the inspection week, Year 12 students were effectively learning through building upon the previous week’s well planned visit to Tesco, while for Year 13 students the law was brought to life as they prepared for their visit to Canterbury law courts. There is an ethos, which enables all staff to teach to their strengths within a common successful framework. There is very effective use of ICT to provide easily accessible resources for students. In addition to the use of data projectors and interactive whiteboards, whole courses are supported electronically with detailed course guidance. Students value all their teachers very highly. Excellent improvement and the impact of e learning together with the consistently high quality of teaching and learning make leadership and management excellent.

### **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

205. One lesson was sampled. Teaching and learning were good. Well-planned activities and good use of time led to all students achieving well.

### **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

206. Three PSHE lessons and one general studies lesson were sampled. Teaching and learning overall were good. Lessons were well structured and students were given opportunities to develop and express their views.

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

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

