

INSPECTION REPORT

THE CHARLES DICKENS SCHOOL

Broadstairs

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118910

Headteacher: Mr A Olsson

Lead inspector: Dr D M J Benstock

Dates of inspection: 6th – 9th December 2004

Inspection number: 268484

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 - 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	968
School address:	Broadstairs Road Broadstairs Kent
Postcode:	CT10 2RL
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R E Hutton
Date of previous inspection:	22 nd February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Charles Dickens School is an 11-16 mixed non-selective secondary modern school. It is average in size, with 968 students. The numbers who leave or join the school at other than the usual time are broadly average. The school is situated in the town of Broadstairs, in Kent, and it draws students mainly from the town itself. A small number of visually impaired students drawn from a wider area are admitted. Entry to the school is after selection procedures where approximately 30 percent of students from primary school go elsewhere to local grammar schools. The school is designated as a 'Kent Specialist School for Mathematics and Computing'. It has gained the Artsmark and Sportsmark awards, has 'Investors in People' accreditation and is a designated 'healthy school'. The overall socio-economic background of students is below average and the school serves students from a mixed range of family circumstances. The proportion of families having experience of higher education is below average but no evidence of overcrowding or similar features of deprivation in students' households is found. The proportion of minority ethnic families in the area is recorded as being considerably lower than average. However, the proportion of students whose home language is not English, at 2.2 percent in 2003, was a bit higher than is found in most schools. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of students identified as having special educational needs (SEN) is above the national average and the percentage with a statement of special educational needs is also above the national average. Standards on entry to the school are well below average overall, reflecting the outcome of the selection process.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology
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2740	Elizabeth Barratt	Team inspector	History SEN
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18261	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design
20767	Jerry Royle	Team inspector	Music
3687	Godfrey Bancroft	Team inspector	Physical education
24887	Yvonne Salmons	Team inspector	French, English as an additional language (EAL)
15462	Cliff Blakemore	Team inspector	Business Studies
15600	Colin Richardson	Team inspector	SEN unit (visually impaired students)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The Charles Dickens School is a good school. It gives good value for money. Students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good and the school provides a good quality of education overall. However, the curriculum is unsatisfactory because the time allocation for religious education is too low and opportunities for students to use ICT in subjects in Years 10-11 are inadequate. Leadership and management overall are good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well in the majority of subject areas, as a result of good teaching. They achieve very well in physical education and German, and also mathematics in Years 7-9.
- Students achieve very well in ICT as a discrete subject but opportunities for using ICT in subjects are limited; older students not opting to do ICT as a discrete subject do not achieve well enough in this basic skill.
- Provision for religious education is good in Years 7-9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10-11, where students do not achieve well enough.
- Achievement is not as strong in some key areas as in others, for example in Years 10-11 in science and geography, and in English through the school.
- Provision for students who are visually impaired is very good, but targets in individual education plans (IEPs) for students with special educational needs (SEN) are often too general.
- Excellent financial controls enhance the quality of management and assurance of best value.
- Opportunities for the professional development of staff are very good.

Since the last inspection overall improvement has been satisfactory. The good quality of teaching has been maintained. The newly appointed headteacher and new subject leaders are now providing fresh vision together with a highly focussed impetus for development and future improvement. The effectiveness of monitoring of teaching has improved well and subject reviews established. Results at GCSE overall are at a similar level to those in 1999, but had risen to a significantly higher level three years ago. Results in National Curriculum tests for Year 9 have not increased as much as they have nationally.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	C	C	D	B

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

The overall achievement of students in the school is good. It is good in most subjects, and very good in physical education and German. It is satisfactory in English. Writing standards need improvement. Achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT across the curriculum and in religious education. Attainment in the 2004 National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students was below the national average overall but above average compared to schools with a similar attainment on entry. Overall attainment in 2004 was similar to 2003 in mathematics and English, but lower in science. The standards seen in lessons and students' written work in Year 9 are below average and in Year 11 they are broadly average. Attainment on entry to the school is well below average so the standards seen indicate good achievement in both Years 7-9 and Years 10-11.

Students' personal qualities, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Attitudes are good. Overall, behaviour is satisfactory. However, a minority of students can cause some disruption in lessons. Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality to lessons is satisfactory. Students' willingness to take responsibility is very good. Participation in sport is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is good. Good teaching is leading to good learning. Teaching is very good in physical education, German and in ICT as a discrete subject. Teachers establish good relationships in lessons so that good learning is encouraged. The range of courses in the curriculum is good but the curriculum as a whole is unsatisfactory because of the problems in ICT and religious education already mentioned. In addition, an audit of the contributions of subjects to support work-related learning has not been carried out. However, extra-curricular activities are good. Arrangements for care, welfare, support and guidance of students are good overall although opportunities to seek the views of students are limited. Links with parents, the community and other educational institutions are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school overall are good. The good leadership of the headteacher and senior staff ensures that there is a strong focus on raising standards and achievement. The positive ethos for learning contributes to good achievement. Leadership of other key staff, including heads of department, is good. Management overall is good and support for new and training teachers is well established. Financial management is excellent. Governors provide good support to the senior leadership team and commitment to the school, but because there are several statutory requirements that are not met (see below), governance is unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very satisfied with the school. They believe that students progress well as a result of good teaching. They are also pleased with the induction processes that help children adapt to secondary education. The inspection team agree that overall achievement of students is good, teaching is good and that good induction procedures are in place for students joining the school. Students are also pleased with the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that students in all years have greater use of ICT in subjects of the curriculum, and in particular ensure that all students in Years 10-11 have equal access and opportunity to develop their skills.
- Raise achievement in religious education, and in science and geography in Years 10-11.
- Improve achievement in English across the school, including literacy standards for students with SEN and the quality of their IEPs.

And, to meet statutory requirements, address the following areas:

- The National Curriculum requirement to use ICT in all subjects.
- The time allocation in Years 10-11 for religious education to meet the requirements of the Kent Agreed Syllabus.
- The requirement to complete an audit of the provision of work-related learning in all subjects.
- Provision of a daily act of collective worship.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall, standards are below average by Year 9 and average by Year 11. Students enter the school with well below average attainment and achievement is good in Years 7–9 and in Years 10–11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE in 2004 were above average compared with those of schools having a similar attainment on entry; Year 9 results were well above the average for students in similar schools.
- Achievement is not always as good in Years 10–11 as it is in Years 7–9. Achievement in religious education is good in Years 7–9 but in Years 10–11 it is poor.
- Students achieve very well in physical education, German and in the applied vocational ICT courses in Years 10 and 11; achievement is not as good in English as it is in most other subjects.
- Many students make unsatisfactory progress with their ICT skills because few subjects are able to offer opportunities for the use of ICT in the learning.
- The percentage of students gaining 5 or more grades A*-C in GCSE has fallen in the past three years.
- Students with visual impairment achieve very well.

Commentary

1. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 in 2004, the overall performance of students, as measured by their average point score, was below the national average. The point scores in English, mathematics and science were all below the national average. The percentage of students gaining Level 5 or higher was below average in English, but broadly average in mathematics and science. Based on performance in the national tests in Year 6, students entered the school with below average attainment in English and well below average attainment in mathematics and science. This indicates that progress from Year 7 to Year 9 in 2004 was broadly satisfactory in English and good in mathematics and science.
2. The overall performance of Year 9 students in 2004 was well above average compared with the results in schools where the prior attainment in national tests taken in Year 6 was within a similar range. It was above average in English, well above average in science and very high in mathematics compared with similar schools.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.7 (31.8)	33.3 (33.4)
Mathematics	34.4 (34.4)	35.5 (35.4)
Science	31.3 (33.0)	33.1 (33.6)

There were 178 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. The overall performance in the national tests in Year 9 is higher than at the last inspection but the overall trend in the results has been slightly below the national trend. In English results have remained fairly constant whilst national averages have increased since the last inspection. In mathematics, results were in decline up to 2001 but have significantly improved in the past two years. In science results in 2004 are the same as they were in 1999 but have fallen slightly from the level in 2003. Boys' results in the national tests in 2004 are very similar

to those of girls in mathematics and science but in English the girls' performance is much better, particularly at the higher levels. This pattern is similar to the national picture.

4. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, the average point score per student (counting the best eight subjects) was below the national average but was above average compared with that in schools where the prior attainment in Year 9 was similar. The percentage of students gaining five or more A*-C grades was well below the national average but close to the average in schools with similar prior attainment. In 2004, students in Years 10–11 made satisfactory progress overall.
5. The average points scores in GCSE and the percentage of students gaining 5 or more grades A*-C have risen since the last inspection. However, there has been a fall over the past three years in both the average point score and the percentage of students gaining five or more grades A*-C, which rose from 31 percent in 1998 to 38 percent in 2001 and then 54 percent in 2002, but has now dropped back to 35 percent in 2004. The statutory agreed target for the percentage of students gaining 5+ A*-C grades in 2004 was not met. The fall is attributed by the school to staff changes over the past two years. Several new staff, including a new headteacher, are now in post and standards seen during inspection are generally higher than those reflected by the recent examinations.
6. In most subjects, results at GCSE were below average in 2004 but often represented good achievement from the standard of entry into the school. Results were well above average and progress very good in German, although this was a selected group of higher ability students. Results were average in design and technology overall. Results were well below average in mathematics, French, history, business studies and science, where notably the percentage of students gaining grades A*-C, having risen initially after the previous inspection, has fallen greatly from 42 percent in 2001 to 25 percent in 2004.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	35 (41)	51 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	97 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	256.3	282.5

There were 174 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. In the work seen in lessons and in the evidence of students' writing, standards overall are below average in Years 7–9. Standards seen in English are below average, reflecting the most recent test results. However, standards seen in mathematics are average, which is an improvement compared with the 2004 test performance. Standards seen are broadly average in Years 10–11, also indicating an overall improvement over performance in recent examinations. They are well above average in German, and above average in design and technology, physical education and in the vocational applied ICT course. Current standards are below average in English, science, geography, French, citizenship and business studies. They are very low in religious education in Years 10–11.
8. Achievement overall in the school is good. Progress is good overall in all year groups, leading to students reaching average standards overall on leaving the school, from a well below average entry. Nevertheless, achievement is not judged very good overall because progress is not even enough. Achievement is not consistently good for all groups of students nor all subjects, and though progress is still good in Years 10–11 it is not as strong as in Years 7-9. Achievement is very good throughout in German, physical education and discrete ICT, where the teaching is particularly stimulating and leadership is very effective. It is very good also in mathematics in Years 7–9. Achievement is satisfactory in English and citizenship in all years.

Achievement in Years 10–11 is not as good as in Years 7–9 in mathematics (where it is nevertheless good), science and geography. Achievement in religious education is good in Years 7–9 but in Years 10–11 it is poor because the time allocation is too low to enable the requirements of the Kent Agreed Syllabus to be met.

9. Overall, students have below average literacy skills although many subjects contribute to teaching basic skills. Speaking, listening and reading skills are generally well developed. Competence in extended writing is lower, and is an area rightly identified by the school for improvement, as it particularly affects progress across the other subjects. Students have average levels of mathematical skill that supports work in other subjects. Competence in the application of ICT is overall unsatisfactory because students do not have sufficient opportunity to use ICT in the subjects across the curriculum. This is partly a result of problems with access to the resources, which are being addressed through the new building programme.
10. The achievement of students with SEN overall is satisfactory. In Years 7-9 students make good progress in improving their reading and spelling ages, and often very good progress in English, mathematics and science. In Years 10–11 support is not always as effective as with younger students. Weaker writing skills limit rises in standards. However, achievement of students with SEN is satisfactory in Years 10-11. Throughout the school the achievement of students having visual impairments (VI) overall is very good because support is very carefully given and other students have a very caring attitude towards the disability. The achievement of students who are gifted and talented overall is good. Students make better progress when the department challenges and stretches them effectively, as in physical education. In the English, mathematics, music and modern foreign languages departments, teachers prepare more challenging tasks, and the gifted and talented students rise to that challenge. In science, art and design, geography and parts of design and technology, the students are not always stretched sufficiently to enable them to explore their particular gifts and talents. Students from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other students because support is readily provided when required.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to learning and relationships are good. They have good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and learn in a positive and tolerant environment. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good attitudes of the majority of students support learning and friendships.
- Students' overall personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, is good and reinforces attitudes and relationships.
- Most students like coming to school, because they are encouraged by teachers and most parents to attend regularly and on time.
- Procedures for addressing the anti-social behaviour of a minority of students are not always rigorously applied by staff.
- Students who have SEN have good attitudes to work and those with visual impairment have very good relationships with support assistants, which has a very significant impact on motivation.

Commentary

11. Most students seek knowledge and respond effectively to stimulating teaching and good classroom management. They behave constructively, pose interesting questions and are keen to participate in discussions. Students enjoy group activities and most are keen to share information and ideas, which ensures that they learn in a cohesive and constructive environment. This was evident in many lessons.

12. Social activities beyond lessons are very well attended. For example, the breakfast club is a very popular meeting place for students who enjoy eating with their friends, sharing conversation and engaging in social interaction with lunchtime organisers. This experience enhances students' personal development - particularly their social and cultural experiences - and creates a very welcoming, trusting and friendly environment, helping students to make a positive start to the day and approach their lessons with enthusiasm.
13. Policy on discipline is clear, implemented well in most lessons and ensures most students are polite, pleasant, friendly and welcoming. Nevertheless a minority of students persistently display lively and occasionally rude and boisterous behaviour. A minority of teachers allow this to disrupt the class and affect learning. It also affects the social environment around the school. In many cases staff deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour and in extreme cases exclude students from school. However, strategies for modifying anti-social behaviour are not always consistently and rigorously applied.
14. The attendance rate and the rate of unauthorised absence in the 2003-2004 academic year were in line with the national average. The school has good procedures to monitor students' attendance and most parents usually co-operate well by contacting the school when their child is absent. Holidays during term time are discouraged by the school but are a factor in the attendance figures. Absences are thoroughly investigated, which enables the school to sustain the level of attendance and promote punctuality. Students say they enjoy coming to school.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.2	School data	0.9
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

15. Students with SEN have generally good attitudes to work and behave well because they recognise the level of understanding and care expressed by teachers. Throughout the school students with visual impairments enjoy their learning, have good relationships with teachers and very good relationships with the teaching assistants (TAs). Staff effectively improve these students' self-confidence and the very good attitudes to learning are a positive outcome of the generally very good support they receive. Students were observed to have good relationships with their peers, both in the VI unit and in mainstream classes. Students learning English as an additional language also have good attitudes to learning and are well integrated into the school community.
16. The spiritual development of students is good and has improved since the previous inspection. In many lessons students reflect on their work, show respect for each other and willingly work in the groups. In a Year 7 religious education lesson, students reflected on the awe of Jesus' resurrection whilst watching a short video. Moral development is good. For example, in science, students discussed the moral issues involved in the disposal of nuclear waste. In the Year 10 and 11 'Choices' course, students talked about the rights and wrongs of divorce. School assemblies enhance this provision by providing a consistent moral message and by celebrating the many and varied achievements of students. Social development is also good. The school emphasises the importance of living together harmoniously and respecting others' views, working in teams and sharing opportunities. This makes a real impact on learning and is reinforced through reflection and through social activities beyond lessons. Cultural development is good and also improved since last inspection. Multicultural issues are raised where the opportunity arises and contributions made by people from other countries are highlighted, for example in history, geography and science.

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	173	6	1
White - Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	4	3	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Information not obtained	711	35	1

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education is good. Good teaching is leading to good learning. The range of courses in the curriculum is satisfactory but inadequate time allocated for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and insufficient opportunities given for students to use ICT in many subjects result in the curriculum being unsatisfactory overall. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are good. There are good arrangements for the care and welfare of students, including appropriate support and guidance. Links with parents, the community and other schools are good.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment of students' work is good and the data is effectively used to support students' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are well planned in many subjects and teachers have high expectations, but the lack of time severely limits learning in religious education.
- Teachers develop supportive relationships in lessons to encourage good behaviour.
- Although modern technology is used well to enhance teaching, students do not have enough opportunity to use ICT themselves in their learning.
- Procedures for setting targets and tracking achievement are good in most subjects but assessment is unsatisfactory in citizenship.
- The quality of homework is too variable and in some cases tasks are not sufficiently worthwhile in that they do not offer enough interest and challenge.

Commentary

17. During the inspection, 113 lessons were observed. In approximately two-thirds, the quality of teaching was good or better and in a quarter it was very good or excellent. Four lessons were excellent and five were unsatisfactory. In the best lessons stimulating tasks captured students' interest and enthusiasm and the capabilities of the higher attaining students were fully exploited. Teaching and learning were very good in physical education. The high level of planning and teachers' expertise in engaging students in demanding activities resulted in students thoroughly enjoying their experience. Teaching and learning are very good also in German and in discrete ICT, where expectations are high and the students respond with great self-determination. Teaching in mathematics in Years 7–9 is very good, in that the National Numeracy Strategy has been very effectively applied to develop skills of clarity of thinking in mathematical ways.

18. Lack of pace, lack of variety in teaching method and insufficient management of behaviour were the main reasons for a few lessons being unsatisfactory. Whilst religious education is taught well in Years 7–9, in Years 10–11 the opportunity to develop the teaching is very limited because insufficient time is allocated for the subject and also many non-specialist teachers are deployed, in some cases for just one period of their teaching commitment.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 113 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (3)	27 (24)	46 (41)	31 (27)	5 (4)	0	0

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

19. Resources, including ICT, are used very well to enhance the teaching in many subjects. Teachers use electronic whiteboards and data projectors, specialist software and the Intranet. However, partly because of the difficulty of access to computers, students have very little, if any opportunity to use ICT in their learning in virtually all subjects of the curriculum. This is a breach of National Curriculum statutory requirements. In the discrete subject of ICT very good opportunities are provided in the learning for all students in Years 7–9, but only for approximately half of the year groups in Years 10–11, i.e. those who choose the applied vocational ICT courses.
20. Learning is good as a result of good teaching. Teachers have a very good level of expertise and have a clear understanding of examination requirements. In the majority of subjects, the teaching methods used are carefully tailored to the needs of students, so that achievement is good overall, irrespective of ability or background. Teachers ensure that relationships with students are good and contribute to the good supportive environment.
21. Homework is used satisfactorily in most subjects but there is too much variation between subjects. This was a concern raised by some parents, who felt that the tasks were not always worthwhile and that homework was not always regularly set. However, there are examples of good use of homework to extend the learning in history, geography, modern foreign languages and business education. Nevertheless, opportunities are sometimes missed to set interesting and challenging tasks that match the needs and abilities of students.
22. The teaching and learning of students with SEN is satisfactory overall. Teaching is often better in Years 7-9 than in Years 10-11. Teachers are well informed about students' individual learning needs and use effective methods to meet these. Overall, students' learning benefits from the good support of teaching assistants (TAs). However, in English, geography and modern foreign languages there is not enough support available to fully assist students in the development of their literacy skills. Throughout the school, the teaching and learning for students with visual impairments (VI) is good. Teachers ensure that students with VI are included in the lesson by using direct questioning and, for any students with additional hearing impairment, ensuring that the radio microphone is working. TAs working with individual students in lessons provide very good support, which enables the students to be totally included in the lessons. Teaching and learning of students who are gifted and talented are good because extension tasks are often well planned to match their individual needs, and additional teaching is provided for these students in extra-curricular activities.
23. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are good and the quality of teachers' marking is good. Ongoing assessments, made in lessons, are used well to respond to students' needs. Teachers make good use of the information gained from these assessments to plan the next stages of students' learning. In the majority of subjects students' progress is also assessed thoroughly at the end of each unit of work. In most subjects teachers work well to ensure that students understand fully how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Often students are very clear about what National Curriculum level they have achieved and exactly what they need to do to attain the next level. Assessment

practice is particularly good in English, mathematics, discrete ICT and German. It is not carried out regularly in citizenship so that students are not sufficiently aware of their progress in this subject. Whole school assessment procedures track progress of students with SEN systematically, but targets in IEPs are not specific or measurable enough to be useful for this purpose. Assessment of students learning English as an additional language is good overall; students' progress is well monitored and documented by the English department. The extent of tracking of progress of gifted and talented students is variable across departments.

The curriculum

Whilst giving a satisfactory breadth of education in Years 7–9 and providing a wide range of course options to meet students' needs in Years 10–11, the curriculum overall is unsatisfactory because it does not meet statutory requirements in ICT and religious education. Enrichment through extra-curricular activities is good. Learning resources are good and accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make insufficient use of ICT in lessons and therefore statutory requirements are not met in this subject.
- The curriculum for religious education in Years 10–11 is unsatisfactory because the time allocation is insufficient to meet the requirements of the Kent Agreed Syllabus.
- A good range of vocational courses is included in the options to meet the needs of students in Years 10–11.
- Provision for students who are visually impaired is good and helped by having dedicated resources; provision is also good for gifted and talented students.
- Students studying a second language in Years 8–9 and those studying the dual award GCSE in ICT do not have the opportunity to attend lessons on PSHE and citizenship due to timetable clashes.
- Extra-curricular activities are good and students participate widely.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

24. The range of subjects in Years 7–9 is satisfactory and is enhanced through additional studies such as drama, and a second modern foreign language for more able students. The curriculum in music is good, with a good range of activities that motivate students. Time allocation to subjects is sufficient to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Satisfactory provision is made for citizenship and planning for personal and social education is sound, with the areas taught mainly through a range of subjects and the 'Choices' course. The curriculum in Years 10–11 has been designed to provide a good range of options to develop the interests of students, for example through vocational courses such as ICT, business and communication systems, performing arts, leisure and tourism and health and social care. Further opportunities are provided in business studies, media studies and photography.
25. The curriculum is unsatisfactory partly, because students have very little opportunity to use ICT in most subjects and none at all in art and music. In addition, in Years 10–11 those who do not choose an ICT option do not have sufficient access to ICT in their courses, and do not achieve well enough. There is not enough time allocated to religious education to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 10–11, and this leads to poor achievement in this subject for students in these year groups. The timetabling of the second language in Years 8–9 and dual award ICT in Year 10 means that these students miss lessons in PSHE and citizenship.
26. Curriculum provision for students with SEN is satisfactory overall and made mainly within departments. Specialist provision for students in Years 7–9 is well planned to meet students' specific learning needs. Withdrawal from lessons carefully minimises disruption to learning. However, the range of support is limited and the provision does not cater as well for students

in Years 10–11 as it does in Years 7–9. Support for students with VI is very good. No students with VI have been disapplied from any National Curriculum subjects. A combination of very good support from teaching assistants and good resources ensures that most class teachers are aware of VI issues. Good and effective use of ICT with VI students results in them being totally included in the school's curriculum. The provision for gifted and talented students is good. For example, mathematics and science challenges, outdoor pursuits and a recent home economics challenge have been well organised. A well-attended summer school course includes music and PE core activities for talented students. Academic mentors are being introduced to work specifically with gifted students. Provision for students learning English as an additional language is good. Effective in-class support is provided by the visiting specialist teacher, and by subject teachers where appropriate. This ensures that these students have as full access to the curriculum as others.

27. Extra-curricular activities are wide and enjoyed by a large number of students. Events include a variety of sporting activities, music, dance, drama and opportunities to use the facilities in the ICT suites. Annual visits to France and exchange visits to Germany enhance students' cultural development and broaden their knowledge of European issues. Regular visits to theatres are supporting students' understanding of examination texts. Good use is made of resources in the local area with visits to Dover Castle and the White Cliffs Experience. The range of activities on offer to students has not been audited and monitoring of attendance for these activities has not yet been formalised.
28. Accommodation is satisfactory. There are good features. For example, some rooms have been refurbished, including the food technology rooms. There is good accommodation for science with modern well-equipped laboratories. Weaknesses in the accommodation include the difficulty of access to ICT facilities, and this is one reason for the insufficient use of ICT in lessons by students. The school is undergoing a very large building extension programme. The plans include new laboratories, drama facilities, classrooms and ICT suites. Overall the school is clean and well looked after. There is little graffiti.
29. Learning resources overall are good. ICT resources are good but not used enough by students. There is a good supply of up-to-date textbooks in most departments. In English, the wide range of available texts contributes to the good reading progress of students. While there is good supply of keyboards, percussion instruments and recording/playback equipment in music, the lack of recording facilities for keyboards reduces students' progress in composition. The library offers an attractive learning environment with a quiet area and access to the Internet. The dedicated resources of the VI unit enable very good support for learning by visually impaired students to be provided. Lesson materials are suitably adapted and there is good access to laptops. The financial control and allocation procedures for resources are good.
30. Year group assemblies are well ordered and provide an opportunity to celebrate the successes of students. They promote moral values. Form tutors have resources to use in registration time, on days when their form does not have an assembly, but not all tutors use them consistently. There is a short period of reflection in full assemblies but the school does not yet provide a daily act of collective worship, which is broadly Christian, sufficient to meet statutory requirements.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care, welfare and safety of students is good. Arrangements for support and guidance of the majority of students are good; they are satisfactory for students with SEN. Students' opinions are valued but the process of seeking and acting upon their views, whilst satisfactory, is not yet well established.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school places significant emphasis on the 'healthy eating' programme.
- Annual reviews for students with statements of SEN give insufficient detail in the guidance on actions needed for improvement. However, support for those with VI is good.
- Arrangements for induction of new students into the school are good.
- Limited opportunities are given to students to express their views or to discuss issues affecting the school.

Commentary

31. The quality of personal care, welfare and well-being for most students is good. Teachers ensure that every child has equal access to the learning opportunities on offer. Relationships between staff and students are based on trust and complemented by good personal support from teachers. This enables most students to develop into caring, supportive and tolerant individuals. A large percentage of students and parents are pleased with the level of care. Students are clear about whom they would approach with problems and the tutorial system gives daily access to information. Teachers use assemblies and social and recreational activities beyond lessons well to inform, advise and support those in their care to develop positive self-esteem. Learning mentors work as positive role models and as a critical friend, to support and give guidance to disaffected students and motivate them to learn. However, not all tutors make effective use of form time to guide students well enough in their attitudes to study and respect for others.
32. Whilst overall the arrangements for giving support, advice and guidance to students are good, the provision for students with SEN is satisfactory. They are well supported by teachers who know them well, and by teaching assistants who also act as mentors to individual students. However, the guidance provided for students with statements of SEN is weakened by the annual reviews not providing enough detail about their progress and the action needed for improvement. Throughout the school, support and guidance for students with VI are good. Arrangements are effective in promoting the students' social development and academic learning. Students appreciate learning alongside their peers, knowing that they have the support of unit staff if and when required. Within the unit, students were observed to have a trusting and comfortable relationship with the staff.
33. The school provides an environment for learning which is safe and secure. Provision for students' welfare is carried out in a sensitive and caring manner and health and safety issues are given priority. There are effective systems in place for investigating, reporting and recording accidents. Students are constantly updated and informed about safety procedures.
34. The school also make effective use of a healthy eating programme, which is implemented by very caring, sensitive and very committed canteen staff and supported by the school community, including governors. The arrangements enable students and staff to make informed choices about what they eat and this provision constructively supports students' physical and emotional development and helps them to learn.
35. The extent to which the school seeks the views of students is limited. Views of students are valued but there are few mechanisms in place for consultation. There is no school council, and surveys are rare. Opportunities for students to make suggestions or exchange information are occasionally given.
36. Students who are new to the school are given a good programme of support to help them settle in. Parents say they are very pleased with this aspect of care. The good links with primary schools ensure that students have good information before joining the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are good links between the school and parents, other schools and the wider community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good partnership with parents and the community is used well to enhance students' education and life experiences.
- Parents make a valued contribution to their children's education through support given at school, at home and through an active parents and teachers association.
- There are very strong links with local sports clubs and associations.
- Good induction arrangements are made when students transfer from primary school.

Commentary

37. The school values its constructive partnership with other schools, colleges and the wider community. Its good links with feeder schools ensure teachers from the school can share their specialist teaching methods and good practice with staff in the primary schools. Work with the college provides good opportunities for some disaffected students in Year 11 to learn alongside other more mature students. The school also has good connections with higher education for initial teacher training. Students in Years 10–11 serve the community through work placements. This opportunity supports students' achievements and provides work-related skills and experience, and allows some Year 11 students to secure full time employment and modern apprenticeships. The good partnership with the Connexions service is instrumental in supporting the school and enables students to make informed choices about the world of work.
38. Most parents support the school through the work of the parents and teachers association (PTA). The association raises many hundreds of pounds for the school community. Funds raised are used to support learning and raise academic standards. The PTA hosts many key events for parents and students, supports recreational events and concerts and enables the school to work closely with parents and the wider community. Parents also support sports events organised by the school and education visits in the UK and abroad. These experiences support learning and raise achievement. Parents also support learning in the home by assisting their child with homework. This helps the students to become more independent and responsible.
39. Most students and parents agree that arrangements for students starting school in Year 7 enable them to settle in quickly and become an integral part of the school community. Indeed, inspection evidence shows that new students adapt to school routines well. Regular meetings between school staff and colleagues in the main feeder junior school assist the transition process. A structured programme of events introduces these students well to school and ensures a smooth transition from primary to secondary.
40. The school also capitalises on its very strong links with sports clubs and organisations associated with sport. Numerous helpers frequently visit the school and offer coaching for various sports, including rugby and netball. As a result, students can serve their school, region and country in a very skilled manner, and learning and achievement are enhanced. This also makes a very positive contribution to students' social development.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall leadership and management of the school are good. Leadership of the newly appointed headteacher is good and senior staff give good support. Overall management of the school is good. The school has not ensured that statutory requirements are met with regard to ICT and religious education, work-related learning and provision of a daily act of collective worship, and consequently governance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership of the headteacher reflects a clear vision and high aspirations for the future development of the school.
- Governors have not ensured that a number of statutory requirements are met, and this is having a detrimental impact on standards.
- Some subjects are exceptionally well led, but arrangements for leadership of religious education are inadequate.
- New teachers are helped to settle in well and all staff are very well supported.
- Leadership and management of the provision for students who are visually impaired are very good.
- Financial management is excellent.

Commentary

41. The overall leadership of the school is good. The headteacher has a very clear vision for improvement and development. He has already initiated changes to raise standards. The senior staff have established roles that currently support school development. However, the areas of work overlap and the structure of the senior leadership group does not have enough clarity for fully delegated responsibility. The leadership has a clear commitment to inclusion of all students but has not ensured that all students have equal opportunities to develop their ICT skills in subject options in Years 10 and 11.
42. Governors give good support and actively challenge initiatives and proposals for development. They work tirelessly on committees to ensure the quality of education for all students is being raised and are increasingly involved in the strategic planning for the future. The governing body is very well led by a committed Chair and has a number of colleagues who give expertise. Governors have a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are aware of the school's approach to the limited provision for a daily act of collective worship but have not fully appreciated that aspects of the curriculum relating to ICT, RE and work-related learning also constitute a breach of statutory requirement.
43. Subject directors vary in their leadership qualities but overall leadership and management of key staff are good. They invariably provide good role models for staff in the departments. Development planning is thorough and supported through many school-based initiatives. Leadership is excellent in German and discrete ICT, and very good in mathematics, design and technology, physical education, and history. It is satisfactory in art and design and citizenship. There is no specific subject leader for religious education as it is incorporated in social studies. This provides a barrier for the subject's development, especially in Years 10 and 11, and so contributes to poor achievement. Management overall in the school is good. The quality of teaching is increasingly well monitored although the rigour with which this is done varies between departments.
44. Performance data, such as test results and assessments made by teachers, is analysed carefully by senior managers. Any weaknesses in performance are identified and plans are put in place to address the problems. Senior managers analyse thoroughly the performance of students from various groups and backgrounds, such as those who speak English as an additional language. However, the performance of students from different minority ethnic groups is not analysed in sufficient detail. Most directors of subjects analyse the data for their subjects in detail. This work is undertaken very effectively in English, mathematics and discrete ICT.
45. The induction of new staff is good and there is a well-structured programme for newly qualified teachers; this involves senior and departmental staff monitoring their overall professional development, welfare and classroom teaching. Teachers new to the school, supply teachers and student teachers are all well supported. Training and development of staff are very good, enabling teachers to pass on to their students their constantly improving subject knowledge.

The school provides effective training opportunities for teachers, support staff, and administrative staff. All training is linked clearly to the school's development plan and provides well for individual teachers' career opportunities. There are sufficient technical and support staff, who efficiently enhance the work of teachers; administrative and site staff enthusiastically ensure the smooth running of the school on a daily basis. The school has a good proven record in staff development, which is reflected in its Investors in People status.

46. The leadership and management of provision for students with SEN are satisfactory. There is good liaison with subject departments, partner primary schools and external agencies. Teaching assistants are appropriately deployed and supported. Line management arrangements are satisfactory in supporting the assessment and tracking of students' progress. The leadership and management of the provision for students with VI are very good. The manager has ensured through providing training that teaching staff are aware of issues. Good plans are in place to produce a framework for VI students with more complex needs and widen relationships with families. However, some targets in students' IEPs are too broad and vague and do not provide sufficient opportunities for identifying criteria for students to show achievement of the targets, and this is limiting progress, for example in improvement in writing, which is a whole school issue. Resources are good, as is the use of ICT, which is used to enhance students' access to learning. The lack of clear overall responsibility for leadership and management, however, results in a lack of clear direction and coherence in the provision made.
47. The school has excellent approaches to financial management, as it did in the last inspection. The surplus in the school's accounts has increased over a period of several years of careful management to provide funds for capital development. In part the larger than usual surplus is to support the need for equipment in the new building. The enlargement of the school has led to demands on these funds to pay for non-contract provision during the current building programme. Monitoring and monthly reports to the governing body are excellent on this and other matters. A notable feature is the management of the school's catering provision. The principles of best value are applied excellently to all purchases made by the school. Management procedures for the control of orders and payments are excellent. Money allocated by grants is used for its particular purpose. The school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,356,557
Total expenditure	3,332,282
Expenditure per student	3,715

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	194,874
Balance carried forward to the next year	219,149

WORK-RELATED LEARNING (WRL)

Provision in work-related learning is satisfactory, but does not fully meet statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum offers a broad range of opportunities for students to study vocation-related subjects.
- Work experience is good and successfully supports and complements school-based work.
- Learning is effectively enhanced through links with the local community.
- The school does not undertake an audit of the contributions of subjects to support WRL as is a statutory requirement.
- There is not yet a coherent careers curriculum in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

48. WRL courses are successfully building upon the Year 10 work experience programme, where good links have been established with local employers. Students value their work experience placement. They understand that it supports and complements the work they do in school and successfully develops an awareness of the world of work. In addition students benefit from special projects such as the planned 'business in enterprise' project that will set personal challenges and improve knowledge and understanding of business. Following the recent appointment of the pre-vocational co-ordinator and on-site residency of the 'Connexions' adviser, careers education provision is improving but it is at an early stage of development. The school is developing a programme of careers education in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 there is a satisfactory programme of study with improved planning and delivery, and students are benefiting from specialist teaching. In lessons students make satisfactory progress in improving self-knowledge of career choices through the use of JIIG-CAL software, though the knowledge of lower attainers of career aspirations and opportunities is limited. Currently the school has not undertaken an audit of subject contributions to WRL, so that management knowledge of the quality of provision is insecure. Few subjects formally plan their contribution to WRL.
49. The school runs a wide range of applied vocational courses in leisure and tourism, business studies, health and social care and ICT. The provision is good; courses are well supported by students and they have been developed to meet the wide range of students' interests in the school. In the leisure and tourism course students gain practical insight into visitor attractions in theme parks and develop inter-personal skills in planning presentations. ICT is well used to research information but difficulties of access reduce the contribution to learning. In the health and social care course students develop design skills in toy manufacture and improve self-confidence through class discussion.
50. The school has well-established links with the local community, such as the Rotary Club, and students benefit from opportunities to improve personal skills through practice interviews. The East Kent education business partnership works very closely with the school to arrange work placements and support educational visits. In addition links with schools and local colleges help prepare students for the next stage of learning.
51. The newly established leadership and management team has made rapid progress in developing Applied GCSE's, BTEC courses and careers guidance and the provision is beginning to have a positive impact on students' attitudes and learning. Management is now aware of the weaknesses identified and is planning to bring about improvement.

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

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very good in establishing an effective team.
- The use of assessment of students' work is very good and helps teachers to plan subsequent lessons.
- Teaching is good overall in Years 7–9 but students' capacity to develop their knowledge and understanding is a barrier to learning.
- There are weaknesses in writing, and students have very few opportunities to develop ICT skills.

Commentary

52. In 2004, National Curriculum test results for students at the end of Year 9 were below average. However, students join the school in Year 7 with levels of literacy below the national average and overall, this represents satisfactory achievement. In the last three years the average point score in Year 9 English tests has remained below average and remained fairly constant, where nationally it has increased. In 2004, GCSE English language and English literature results were also below average. The percentage of students gaining GCSE A*-C grades was low in 1998 and this was a concern at the inspection in February 1999. The results improved significantly from 28 percent in 1998 to 50 percent in 1999, and have fluctuated year to year, to most recently being 45 percent in 2004. Improvement in standards overall is satisfactory.
53. The performance of girls in English in 2004 was above that of boys. Fewer than one out of ten boys gained a higher level in the 2004 National Curriculum test. Boys' performance was lower than girls' also at GCSE. No boys gained an A* grade in GCSE English language or English literature. However, nationally in English boys' averages are lower than girls', and the school picture is not significantly different from the national.
54. Standards of work seen in Years 9 and 11 mirror the test and examination results. Students achieve satisfactorily in Years 7–9 and in Years 10–11. Students with SEN as well as lower attaining students achieve satisfactorily because teachers provide carefully designed learning materials and tasks. Few students are identified as gifted but those that are achieve satisfactorily.
55. By Year 9 and on into Years 10 and 11, students speak confidently to communicate ideas and to give opinions. They can understand the main points of what they hear and respond to listeners. When reading, they understand ideas, themes and characters. They can identify key features. Higher attaining students have the skill to find hidden meaning in the text. The writing of higher attaining students is well organized, clear and correctly punctuated. The writing of more able students is coherent and controlled. The work of lower attaining students is neither organized nor clear. They do not use full stops, capital letters and question marks correctly. Lower attaining students have insufficient control of spelling, punctuation and paragraph construction. At present students underachieve in their use of ICT because they have few opportunities to use ICT in lessons.
56. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, although it is better in Years 7–9, with some excellent lessons being observed. The good teaching in Years 7–9 results in only satisfactory

learning because students' capacity to assimilate knowledge is limited and impedes the learning. However, in one excellent Year 7 lesson seen the inspiring and highly effective teacher's gentle authority ensured that students' behaviour was exemplary and their learning in this case was excellent. All teachers are specialists. They have a very good knowledge of the curriculum, how to teach it and how students learn. Teachers create activities that encourage students to work very well on their own and learn very effectively in partnership with other students. However, the teaching method is not always effective and lesson structure sometimes weak. Time is not always used appropriately to ensure a brisk enough pace.

57. The assessment of students' work is very good and helps teachers to plan appropriate learning activities for subsequent lessons. The marking of formal assessment tasks encourages students by recognising their strengths and setting out clear targets to improve their learning. In order to improve the performance of boys, the subject has introduced media studies to further develop reading skills. New resources have been introduced to appeal directly to boys. Teaching methods and activities have been developed to encourage boys to learn in short steps.
58. Leadership is good overall and very good in establishing a committed team. The subject leader is committed to ensuring the highest possible standards. He has a clear vision for his subject and a strong sense of purpose. His meticulous planning for improvement has helped the subject team to focus on raising students' attainment. Management is good. The subject director monitors teaching and learning annually so that teachers and students receive good guidance on how to improve. The curriculum is very good in Years 7–9 and apart from the lack of students' use of ICT is well developed in Years 10–11. However, formal monitoring of the work of the department is not good enough to generate data to evaluate the initiatives that have been introduced to raise standards.
59. The subject has improved satisfactorily overall since the previous inspection but the good leadership is having an increasing impact on development. GCSE results are higher than in 1998, although National Curriculum test results have not kept up with national performance. Leadership has strengthened and target setting using assessment is very well developed. The department has developed the Intranet to give instant access to its handbook, schemes of work, assessment and student tracking data. The collective strength of the team of teachers gives grounds to believe that the English department's capacity for further improvement is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

60. The literacy framework is in place in English classes. Although the school has an effective strategy for teaching the basic skills of literacy across the curriculum, standards of literacy are below average. All teachers have received training to help them to develop students' reading, writing, speaking and listening. Students are confident speakers and thoroughly enjoy discussions. They read accurately and independently. The literacy coordinator has produced clear and sensible guidance on the main aspects of literacy and on how to deal with spelling, punctuation, grammar and the development of writing across the curriculum. Most subjects make good provision for the development of literacy skills. Teachers consistently place a strong emphasis on the use of technical vocabulary and students use it accurately. In modern foreign languages, teachers highlight the application of correct grammatical structures. Writing frames are provided to support students in their work. The school has rightly identified writing skills as a priority for development. Inspection evidence confirms that there is a need for greater consistency between teachers in developing students' writing.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Higher attaining students make insufficient progress because their learning needs are generally not met sufficiently.
- Teachers do not consistently use the French language in lessons, thus limiting students' development in speaking.
- The department contributes very well to students' progress in literacy.
- In Years 10 and 11, teachers' effective guidance results in students' good progress in writing.
- The students' use of ICT is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

61. In 2004, results in GCSE French were well below average. However attainment on entry was well below average and progress of students overall from entry to the 2004 examinations was satisfactory. Girls' results exceeded those of boys. Results over the past three years show a decline. The substantial and growing proportion of average and low ability students entered for GCSE French has contributed significantly to these outcomes.
62. Standards seen in French are below national expectations in Year 9, and students' achievement overall is good, given the well below standards they have on entry to the school. Lower and average attaining students achieve well because they develop well in reading and writing; however, abler students, including gifted and talented students in the top set and the few abler students in the wide ability groups, do not always make sufficient progress overall, because teachers do not generally provide appropriate tasks to match their learning needs.
63. In Years 10 and 11, standards are below average and students achieve satisfactorily overall although many are working above their target grades and are achieving well. The proportion of abler students studying French is low. Many students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in writing because of teachers' good guidance; they can express themselves simply using a range of tenses and a sound vocabulary. In all years, most students have good attitudes to learning. The achievement of students with SEN is satisfactory overall; many achieve well because of good learning support, but a few with very low levels of literacy have concentration difficulties. Students whose home language is not English and students from minority ethnic groups achieve well as a result of good support materials. Students' use of ICT is unsatisfactory because ICT is not a sufficiently frequent routine component of students' learning.
64. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7–9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. They are good overall. Teachers plan their work thoughtfully, and some use the interactive whiteboard effectively, motivating students to respond enthusiastically. Most students develop well in general literacy, as a result of teachers' clear explanations of how language works. However, teachers do not use French sufficiently as a model for students to copy; this limits students' confidence in speaking. Insufficient provision is made to extend the challenge for higher attaining students, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Assessment is good overall, and has improved since the last inspection; marking is detailed, but National Curriculum levels are not used routinely to give students awareness of short-term progress.
65. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Effective team building, clear vision and good overall departmental planning give direction to the dedicated and knowledgeable teachers. However, schemes of work for Years 7–9 are in need of updating to take account of changes that emerge from curriculum reviews, and good teaching practice is not shared sufficiently. Insufficient provision is made for challenging tasks to meet the needs of higher attainers. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory; although the GCSE attainment has fallen somewhat this reflects the ability of the students choosing the option and good achievement has been maintained. Too few are motivated to take GCSE French in Year 10.

German

Provision in German is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Since the last inspection, improvement in GCSE results has been excellent.
- In 2004, results were well above average and current standards are high.
- Students achieve very well because of very good teaching.
- Students make maximum progress because of efficient use of lesson time.

Commentary

66. In 2004, results in German continued a trend of well above average results. Girls gained higher results than the boys.
67. All students learn French, and from Year 8, the ablest students study German as a second foreign language. In Year 9, standards seen in German are close to national expectations; this represents very good achievement given the short time in which students have studied the language. Students make rapid progress in listening, speaking, reading and writing; they also confidently use the complex German noun forms and word order in, for example, speaking and writing about daily routine. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to achieve very well and reach well above average standards. Written coursework shows students make excellent progress in writing; many can confidently express themselves in a range of tenses, using a wide topic-based vocabulary. In all years, students have very good attitudes to the German language and culture; boys speak confidently in German, and are keen to learn. The few students with SEN, those with EAL, and gifted and talented students all achieve very well; students from ethnic minority groups achieve as well as others. Students' use of ICT is insufficient because there is limited access to school ICT facilities.
68. Teaching and learning are very good. In one Year 9 lesson, the teacher's high expectations and effective planning enabled students to gradually gain fluency in describing their recent holidays. In all lessons, highly efficient use of time ensures that all students make maximum progress, and systematic teaching of grammar supports students' literacy very well. Assessment is very good; marking is detailed and students know how to improve.
69. German is managed and taught by the head of modern languages. Management of German is very good. Leadership of the subject is excellent. The head of department is an excellent role model for students; a clear focus on examination success ensures the well above average GCSE standards are reached. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent; results have risen from below average to well above average, and able students are now fully challenged in their learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management have led to a very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Good teaching has led to the good achievement of students.
- Standards in Year 9 in 2004 were well above average in relation to similar schools.
- The use of the computer-controlled whiteboards needs further development.

Commentary

70. In the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 9 performance was below average compared to all schools nationally but well above average when compared to similar schools, based on students' previous performance in the Year 6 tests. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls in 2004. Performance is rising above national trend. The rise in standards, notably in 2003, is due to the introduction of a new scheme of work and the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. In the 2004 GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 standards were well below average for the number of students with grades A*-C. Standards had dipped slightly in 2003 from those of 2002 and reduced again in 2004, due to the introduction of a different course in Years 10 and 11, and staffing difficulties. Performance was well below the average of similar schools, based on students' previous performance in the Year 9 tests.
71. Standards seen in Year 9 are average. Since attainment on entry to the school is well below average, achievement is very good through Years 7-9. Higher attaining students, for example, solve simultaneous equations by drawing neat, accurate graphs. Average attaining students work out a general rule in algebra for a sequence of numbers. Lower attaining students solve simple equations, helped by well-designed worksheets. Students with SEN, including those with VI, also achieve very well because of the good support received. Students whose first language is not English and those from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve very well, as the language difference is not great enough to be a barrier to the learning.
72. Standards seen in Year 11 are average and are a very significant improvement on the results of 2004. This is due to an improved staffing situation, an increased emphasis on the presentation of students' coursework through staff training and better standards at the start of Year 10. Achievement is good through Years 10 and 11 as average standards are sustained by good teaching. Students find it difficult to develop their understanding of the higher level concepts in the subject. Good teaching is effective in maintaining average standards as the difficulty level of more advanced mathematics makes greater demands on students' learning skills. Higher attaining students correctly solve problems in three-dimensional trigonometry. Average attaining students can solve linear equations accurately. Lower attaining students have difficulties with the comprehension of problems. Standards of literacy are below average. Standards in ICT are average but opportunities for development of skills are too limited. There is no significant difference seen in the achievement of boys and girls. Students with SEN achieve in line with their peers. Students whose first language is not English, gifted and talented students and students from different ethnic backgrounds all achieve well.
73. Teaching is good overall, responsible for the good learning. There was no unsatisfactory teaching seen during the inspection. The strength of the teaching lies in the subject expertise of the teachers, the good planning of lessons and the engagement and encouragement of students in their work. In the very good teaching and learning in Years 7-9 the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has ensured that lessons get off to a very good start, challenging them successfully to think and so learn. The very good planning of lessons in the work set focuses very well on students' needs. Students' attitudes contribute to successful learning. The very good marking of students' work ensures that students know their levels, and what they need to do to improve. Teaching is good throughout Years 10 and 11, responsible for maintaining average standards. Resources are used well in the teaching. Use of computer-controlled whiteboards is not sufficiently developed so that students' visual learning is less effective, particularly in the interpretation of graphs. In a minority of lessons teaching time is not used well enough, the focus of the teaching on students' needs is lost and concentration lapses as a result.
74. Very good leadership and management have led to a very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards and the quality of teaching have improved. The monitoring of the departments' work is very good, particularly the use of assessment. Staff training has focused very well on coursework improvement, the correct priority for the department. Leadership sets

a very good vision for the department's work. Teachers work very hard and very well as a team, supporting each other.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. Satisfactory use is made of mathematics in other subjects. For example, calculations are used satisfactorily in science, citizenship and geography. The use of graphical representations matches expectations in science, citizenship, ICT and geography. Weighing, measuring and costings are used appropriately in design and technology and ICT. Measurement in art and design is good, in the enlargement of pictures for example. Students' spatial awareness develops appropriately through the teaching of perspective in art and in the construction work in design and technology. Students know how to apply the idea of average in science and know the difference between formulae and functions in ICT.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership of the new science director, good student attitudes and the overall good quality of teaching are leading to good overall achievement.
- Results in the GCSE examinations have declined over the past three years, and students are not achieving as well in Years 10-11 as they do lower in the school.
- Good use is made of ICT teaching equipment to enhance students' learning, but lack of access to ICT by students restricts their development of skills.
- Marking of students' written work is regular but assessment is not used enough to ensure students' understanding of how to improve.
- The structure of some lessons does not leave sufficient time for good consolidation at the end.
- An efficient and dedicated technician team gives good teaching support that contributes to students' achievement.

Commentary

76. In 2004 performance of students as measured by their average point score was below the national average and well above the average in schools with a similar attainment on entry. The average point score was not as high as it was in 2003, but allowing for year-to-year fluctuations is broadly similar to that recorded over the previous years since the last inspection. The percentage of students gaining level 5 or higher remained at a similar level but the percentage of students gaining level 6 dropped considerably in 2004 compared with 2003. Girls' results in 2004 were broadly the same as those for boys.
77. Standards seen in lessons in Year 9 are below average. Since students enter the school well below average in science, these standards indicate good achievement. This is due to good teaching and also to the good attitudes that most students display towards their learning. Students demonstrate above average skill in the use of ICT in science. For example, in a Year 8 class studying insulation, careful application of ICT skills enabled students to compare the sound insulation qualities of different materials. They worked well in pairs and were able to discuss what they were doing using scientific terminology and to make simple predictions on the outcome of the experiment. Boys and girls achieve equally. Students with SEN achieve well because teachers understand their additional needs well and make appropriate provision. However, a significant proportion of middle and lower ability students have difficulty in remembering facts and providing scientific explanations and this hinders their progress.
78. Attainment in the 2004 GCSE examination was well below the national average and well below the average in schools with similar prior attainment in Year 9. Having risen in the first couple of years after the last inspection, the percentage of students gaining grades A*-C has fallen over

the past three years, from 42 percent in 2001 to 25 percent in 2004. The fall was partly due to staffing changes and long-term illness, partly due to ineffectively planned revision and partly due to changes in the option choice arrangement between dual and single award science. A new head of department has been appointed and staffing is settled.

79. The standards seen in Year 10 and 11 are an improvement on those indicated in the most recent examination. They are below average but achievement of these students is satisfactory, given their attainment at the start of the course. Planning and observational skills are satisfactory in samples of Year 11 coursework, but evaluation and analysis skills are weak, particularly amongst middle and lower ability students. There is less evidence of ICT being used by students in their work in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7-9, but word-processing and graphical techniques are used well in some coursework presentation. At all levels, achievement shown by students with VI or other SEN is commensurate with others in their classes, as is that of gifted and talented students. There is no significant difference noted between the achievement of boys and girls.
80. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7–9. Teaching is also good in Years 10 and 11 but the limited capacity of many students to assimilate detailed knowledge hinders learning and achievement, though they are nevertheless satisfactory. Levels of scientific literacy are low and students have difficulty in expressing themselves in writing. Good classroom relationships, where students respect their teachers, ensure positive learning attitudes. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of the subject and use the breadth of their knowledge to extend and enhance students' learning, as was seen in a class discussing diffusion in gases and liquids. Class management is good and in two lessons seen where disruptive behaviour of a minority of students was observed, firm action restored re-engagement with the class. Good use of interactive whiteboards and videos enhances students' learning. Lessons are well planned and conducted at a pace commensurate with students' ability, though some instances were observed where insufficient time was left at the end of lessons for a proper summary and assessment of students' understanding.
81. Marking and commentary in students' written work are good and enable students to know how they are progressing. Assessment is used satisfactorily to monitor students' progress. However, while students know their target grades, not enough subject-specific guidance on how these are to be achieved is given. Teachers have good knowledge of individual learning needs, especially those of students with VI and other special needs, and co-operate well with support assistants to ensure learning is as good as for other students.
82. Leadership of the department is now good. Under a newly appointed director of science, staff work well together, and are committed to raising standards. All members of the department, including technicians, benefit from opportunities provided for personal development. Management is satisfactory. Good teaching practice is shared, but regular monitoring of teaching and scrutiny of written work has still to be established. Learning support outside the timetable is limited to booster classes, with very few opportunities for students to extend their scientific experience through visits and outside speakers. Records of students' performance are comprehensive but are not yet fully available on the department's database. This has temporarily reduced the effectiveness of assessment for informing the curriculum and students' progress.
83. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards in Year 9 are at a similar level to those of 1999, although the percentage of students gaining higher grades has fallen. GCSE results are lower than they were at the last inspection. Staff changes and a new head of department are having a positive impact on teaching and achievement. The inconsistency of practical work referred to in the last inspection report has been addressed by new schemes of work. Links are gradually being established with feeder schools to ensure continuity of the curriculum in Year 7, which was an issue at the last inspection. Laboratory accommodation and resources overall are good, but there is a lack of individual access for students to ICT which limits their development of skills and restricts their independent learning. A dedicated

team of technicians provides very good support in the department, and this contributes to students' achievement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

ICT as a subject of the curriculum (discrete ICT) was inspected in full and provision made for ICT across all subjects of the curriculum was also inspected in detail.

Information and Communication Technology (Discrete ICT)

Provision in discrete ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in ICT are improving rapidly, especially in Years 7, 8 and 11.
- Very detailed planning, preparation and presentation of discrete ICT lessons give very good support to non-specialist teachers and the learning of all students.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' commitment to the subject.
- Monitoring of the progress of students in discrete ICT is very detailed and rigorous, with excellent features.

Commentary

84. Standards seen in the work of students in Years 7–9 are below average but very good achievement is being realised during their first three years in the school because by Year 9 standards have risen very markedly from being very low on entry in Year 7. Achievement of students with SEN and those who are gifted or talented is similarly very good. Consequently, many students elect to pursue specialist vocational ICT courses in Years 10 and 11 and the related ICT-based courses in business and communication systems.
85. In 2004, candidates followed a vocational double-award GCSE ICT course with the option of an additional third vocational award of business and communication systems GCSE. In the vocational ICT course, 44 percent of entrants gained A*-C grades, which is below the national average. In the business and communication systems GCSE course, 52 percent gained A*-C grades. GCSE results in the most recent years have shown a marked improvement despite significant changes in the school's courses and staffing for ICT.
86. The standards seen in the discrete courses in ICT in Years 10 and 11 are above average and reflect very good achievement for those students who choose the options. Work seen in class and kept on the school's server as a record shows that students' skills and understanding are being very well established and continuing to develop. These results represent an exceptional transformation and improvement. A significant proportion of students do not choose an ICT option and for them progress depends on the contribution made in other options, which in some subjects is very little.
87. Since the last inspection, much has been done to raise standards in the discrete ICT courses. Refurbished accommodation and new equipment have made significant contributions. The number of computers in the school is now high and continues to rise. A new director of ICT, appointed 15 months ago, is a qualified specialist physics teacher with substantial expertise as a software developer. Together with the very expert and experienced technical support staff and a committed team of 14 non-specialist teachers, very good quality resources are well deployed to meet the rigorous targets towards which the school is now making rapid progress.
88. Teaching and learning in all years are very good. Teachers have a determined and shared commitment to raise, develop and sustain the highest quality of teaching and learning. This has been undertaken in the context of wide-ranging changes to this department's organisation, staffing, accommodation and resources. Very high standards are expected and rapid progress

is well supported and challenged by the consistently high commitment of determined staff, led by a very expert subject director. Detailed schemes of work and lesson planning, preparation and presentation, using laptops, desktops and digital projectors, capture and sustain students' interest and commitment. Students' skills, knowledge and understanding are rapidly increasing throughout all years, giving greater confidence to all who later elect to follow examination courses.

89. Leadership of the subject of ICT is excellent. The director shows very clear vision and is dynamic in subject development. Management of the subject as a whole is good. Organised in mixed ability groups, students in Years 7-9 follow a common programme for one hour per week with an additional hour in Year 8. Basic keyboarding skills are firmly established and reinforced in units of work that give students growing confidence. The school's intranet carries very detailed lesson plans, available to students and staff, with resources that are exceptionally well matched to support non-specialist teaching and students' needs. The school has made very good use of specific funding initiatives, including National Grid for Learning, voluntary contributions received from charitable funds and trusts, and grants from the DfES, LEA and local businesses in the area.
90. Students understand that ICT has an important contribution to make to their literacy, numeracy, citizenship and general education. They comment positively upon their increasing achievements and growth in self-esteem. ICT is taught as a discrete subject in all years although students in Years 10 and 11 who do not choose it have no regular access to it. Improvement since the last inspection in discrete ICT is very good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

91. The school has installed digital projectors and laptops or desktops for the use of teachers in English, mathematics, science, ICT and some other subjects. The inspection team found little evidence of students' own use of ICT in lessons across the full range of subjects in the National Curriculum, with the exception of discrete ICT.
92. Teachers of English and mathematics contribute to both the discrete ICT curriculum and to extensive use of the available data projection facilities in their own areas. This promotes literacy, Internet research and students' increasing facility in the drafting and presentation of work, using word-processing and increasingly sophisticated PowerPoint presentations. In mathematics, lower attaining students gain the advantage of the role of the numeracy coordinator in the department's teaching. However, higher attaining students have little or no access to ICT in their mathematics lessons. Science makes good use of available ICT facilities in specialist teaching and learning, for example in data logging and monitoring.
93. In other subjects, similarly limited access remains an issue for many teachers and virtually all students. However, exemplary use is sometimes made of ICT. For example, in lesson preparation and presentation computers are used well in conjunction with data projectors in lessons in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design, geography, history and design and technology. In the last of these, control systems and computer-aided design (CAD) are well demonstrated but monitoring and manufacture are generally denied to students. A little use is made of ICT in lesson presentation in modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education but none in music. In none of these subjects is it generally available to students and therefore music, in particular, fails to meet its longstanding statutory requirements. It remains underdeveloped or unused in personal, social and health education and citizenship.
94. There has been little improvement in cross-curricular ICT since the last inspection. The newly appointed headteacher has taken personal responsibility for the strategic planning and development of ICT across the curriculum - a responsibility that no individual member of staff has hitherto had. There are extensive plans for the imminent development of five new ICT suites in the building programme due to be completed in the spring of 2005. Students' access to ICT across the curriculum is limited and does not meet statutory requirements.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision for geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at GCSE showed good improvement in 2004, but achievement in Years 10-11 remains weaker than in Years 7-9.
- ICT is used well in preparing and presenting lessons.
- Assessment criteria are used well in setting learning objectives.
- Lack of time in Year 9 affects the recruitment of students to study the subject in Years 10-11.

Commentary

95. Standards seen in geography are below average in Year 9. This represents good achievement from their entry to the school, when their attainment in geography was well below average. Students' work shows considerable improvement in presentation during these three years and students of all abilities show good gains in understanding of human and physical processes and the patterns that are produced by these processes. However, the students' attainment remains below average. Their confidence in their own knowledge of place and their application of geographical skills is lower than expected.
96. Results in 2004 at GCSE were below average. Standards seen are below average and show satisfactory achievement in Years 10-11. This is confirmed in scrutiny of work and in lesson observations. Boys' achievement is similar to the girls'. Students with additional educational needs achieve as well as other students. They are well supported through differentiated work, with further additional support coming from teacher input. Higher attaining students are well supported with additional differentiation and extensions tasks.
97. Although the time allocated to the subject over Years 7-9 is adequate, it is reduced to one lesson per week in Year 9. This is not the case for all other subjects. Geography is not a popular option for study in Years 10-11. In 2004, the number of students choosing to study the subject was reduced by 50 percent to accommodate the introduction of a leisure and tourism course and for elements of citizenship to be included in other humanities subjects.
98. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are good in Years 7-9. Lessons are well planned and teachers maintain a good pace. Opportunities to develop students' citizenship and aspects of spiritual, social, moral and cultural education are well taken. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 10-11. The pace of the lesson is sometimes too slow and objectives are not shared. There are few opportunities to gain access to ICT suites with the students, but teachers are keen to use ICT and interactive whiteboards and projectors are used well to prepare and present information to gain and hold students' interest in lessons.
99. Assessment criteria are integrated into learning objectives. Assessment is thorough. Work is regularly marked to National Curriculum level descriptors in Year 7-9 and to GCSE grade criteria in Years 10-11. Results of assessments are used to track students' achievement and ensure progress is being made. However, where teaching is less strong, students' immature attitudes lead to poor behaviour.
100. Geography is well led and managed. The subject leader has good vision of how to improve the subject and shares this well with other teachers. Teaching is regularly monitored and peer monitoring is used to share good practice. Assessment information is used well in setting targets for students. A coursework club is offered to students regularly after school. This is run in an ICT suite to give students access to the Internet and to help with presentation.

101. Since the last inspection there have been improvements in results at GCSE. Field study has been increased and there is now much more use of enquiry in the curriculum offered. The quality of teaching has improved. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving but are sometimes lowered by weaknesses in written work.
- Students achieve well because of good and, in many lessons, very good teaching.
- Assessment is thorough but not always used sufficiently well to track students' progress.
- Marking is done regularly but does not always give clear enough guidance for improvement.
- The department is very well led and is deeply committed to improvement.

Commentary

102. In Year 9 standards are below average overall, but those reached by higher attaining students are average, and sometimes above average. GCSE results have been well below average in recent years and fell to being very low in 2004. Current standards are much higher. The work seen in Year 11 is broadly average. Students' attainment in history on entry to the school is well below average and all, including those with SEN, achieve well throughout the school. Boys and girls achieved equally well in the work seen during the inspection.
103. The recent improvement in standards results from improved teaching and a determined drive to raise attainment. Historical skills develop well, especially those of analysis and the critical interpretation of evidence. Year 9 students enjoyed the challenge to analyse evidence about working conditions in 19th Century coalmines, relishing the task of highlighting emotive text to be used in presenting interpretations with a particular bias. Most students have sound and, in the case of higher attaining students, good knowledge and understanding. Year 11 students, for example, had a good grasp of the multiple causes and impact of Hitler's rise to power. Oral work is often stronger than written work. The standards achieved by some Year 11 students are lowered by weaknesses in structuring GCSE essays. In all years, the standards achieved by some average and lower attaining students are lowered by insufficient detail and explanation. Literacy skills are competent, and numeracy and ICT skills are used well in research and presentation.
104. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Lessons are clearly focused, brisk, purposeful and well planned. The teachers' clear presentations, enhanced by the use of PowerPoint, stimulate students' interest in evaluating evidence. In one lesson Year 10 students responded very well in analysing evidence to explain why women failed to gain the vote between 1900 and 1914. Learning in this lesson, in common with all others, was focused on a key question, strongly promoting analytical skills. Learning thrives as a result of very good classroom relationships. Behaviour management is very good. Work is well matched to students' learning needs. Approaches are often highly interactive, thoroughly involving students in their learning. But questioning is not always challenging enough in requiring students to explain and develop their answers fully, and in many lessons there are not enough opportunities for them to deepen their understanding through discussion. Students are well prepared for GCSE examinations. Homework is useful in extending work in lessons. Work is marked regularly but not all marking provides sufficiently detailed and specific guidance for improvement. The very good procedures for assessment provide a very secure basis for tracking and measuring students' progress, but data is not always used systematically for this purpose.
105. The improving standards are the result of the very good leadership. The subject director provides a strong lead and teachers have a shared commitment to improvement. Management

is good, provision is kept under review and planning is well informed by assessment. The curriculum is enriched by visits and other activities including the making of artefacts. Students enjoy history. Teaching and learning are monitored but not sufficiently rigorously to ensure consistency in teaching. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in sustaining good teaching, learning and curriculum provision.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Insufficient time is provided in Years 10-11 to cover the requirements of the Kent Agreed Syllabus.
- Students achieve well in Years 7-9 because of good teaching and their good attitude to learning.
- The department's management gives very good support to the many teachers who teach the subject.
- Not all students in Year 10 have access to religious education teaching.
- The department is very inclusive in Years 7-9.

Commentary

106. Standards in Years 7-9 are below average but since the standard of their literacy is below average and basic knowledge of religious education at the start of Year 7 is well below expectations, students' achievement in Years 7-9 is good. The standards seen in Years 10-11 are very low and achievement in these years is poor. This is because the time allocation for the subject is too low to meet the requirements of the Kent Agreed Syllabus and therefore to meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is unsatisfactory in the school as a whole.
107. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7-9. Students work well orally in their lessons. They take part enthusiastically in the variety of activities provided, which appeal to different learning styles. Teachers use the interactive whiteboard very well to engage students. Homework is used well to expand learning and, in response to one homework set, students produced excellent models of a Hindu shrine. Assessment is good and students are aware of the levels at which they are working and understand what they need to do to progress. Teaching in Years 10-11 is much more variable because many different teachers teach the subject, some of whom are not specialists. One lesson with unsatisfactory teaching was seen. However, acquisition of knowledge and understanding of RE in Years 10-11 is poor overall, mainly because overall the time allocation is too small for any depth of consideration. In discussion, Year 11 students were able to show hardly any knowledge and understanding of the religious aspects of the topics they had studied.
108. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is no specific subject leader for religious education as it is incorporated in social studies. Teachers outside the subject department are deployed according to availability to teach religious education and some teachers only teach a single period of it each week. However, the subject director's leadership shows a clear vision for the subject and commitment to proper establishment in all years and to its development. The management of the subject as far as is possible is very good. The schemes of work are of good quality and lesson materials offer very good support to teachers. Work is scrutinised and planning is discussed within the departmental meetings. Teaching quality is monitored as much as possible through lesson observations. Assessments are moderated and teachers keep detailed records to track students' progress.
109. The learning support assistants work very well with the teachers to ensure that all students can access their work. Teachers encourage students to use a variety of techniques to ensure they

can record their learning, including mind maps, pictures, Braille and writing. Students in Years 7-9 show a good attitude to their learning and behave well. The subject also contributes strongly to their spiritual and moral development.

110. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because teaching arrangements have not changed. The department has ensured that the detailed study of world religions is covered in Years 7-9 but has inadequate time to do so in Years 10 and 11.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High expectations by teaching staff raise the motivation of students.
- Good relationships contribute to good student achievement.
- Good teaching is leading to good learning.
- Assessment practice does not sufficiently include the use of all available data.
- Computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) do not sufficiently include three-dimensional work.
- Achievement in resistant materials is too low.

Commentary.

111. In 2004 GCSE results in design and technology were average overall. In food technology, results were well above average, in graphics average, in textiles below average and in resistant materials well below average. Girls' performance is higher than that of boys in most areas. Students generally exceed their target grades in design and technology.
112. Current standards in Year 9 are average overall. Attainment on entry is below average. This represents good achievement. There is a significant amount of work that is above average across all areas of the department, for example in the electronic key fob project in Year 9 and also in textiles where the influences of different cultures were explored in designing. These projects showed very good standards of presentation including graphical and written work. An equally significant amount of work is not as good as it shows weaker presentation, written work and incomplete tasks. Students with English as an additional language, SEN and VI achieve as well as others, as seen in the electronic key fob project exercise, because of good support.
113. Current standards in Year 11 are above average overall. They are above average overall in food technology and in graphic products. They are average in textiles and below average in resistant materials although standards have improved in this aspect. Achievement is good overall, but still too low in resistant materials compared with other design components. Very good work was seen in the food outlet project in graphics and in the healthy eating dessert project in food technology. Good development of ideas was seen in the soft furnishing exercise in textiles. These projects showed good use of ICT, good research and good evaluations. Weaker work has generally poorer presentation, work not complete, over reliance on commercial material for research and insufficient volume of work. Students with SEN achieve well and make good progress. Literacy skills are well supported in all lessons. Students can manage the numeracy skills needed well and the use of ICT is generally appropriate in students' work.
114. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In the majority of lessons learning is increased because of the varied teaching styles used. Good subject expertise, high expectations, good planning and good use of time and resources are some features of these lessons. A Year 10 graphics lesson increased students' learning and understanding about

rendering solid objects from a light source, and in a Year 11 food technology lesson students increased their practical skills considerably under test conditions as part of their coursework. A minority of lessons are not as good; they are sometimes too teacher directed, have slower pace or students are off task and lack concentration. All staff use good questioning skills to reinforce learning and most students respond well to the expectations placed on them in this subject area. Marking is usually helpful and supportive and homework set and marked regularly.

115. Leadership is very good. There is very good vision and direction of the subject areas and provision of a very good role model for other teachers. Management is good. Monitoring of teaching is actively undertaken but performance data is not used enough to influence the planning. Assessment procedures are good but National Curriculum levelling can be too generous. Day-to-day communication is good. Not all data is used to track student progress at present and three-dimensional CAD/CAM work is not developed fully.
116. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed well overall but 'systems and control' is not fully developed, although improved. Examination performance has improved over time and current standards are above average overall. Display of work is good and standards of displays of practical work are usually good. Technician support has increased, and a full-time support teacher or assistant is attached to the department. Schemes of work have been revised to meet timetable changes. Materials still have to be prepared in a workshop and there is still no departmental office for meetings or storage.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design and music were inspected in full. Drama, performing arts and dance were sampled.

117. All students in Year 9 have one lesson of **drama** a week. Both Years 10 and 11 have a small GCSE drama group. Students are very enthusiastic about the subject, and it makes a very good contribution to their personal development. In the lessons observed, learning was very good because the teachers planned their use of time very well and their specialist subject knowledge enabled them to explain and challenge students effectively. In a very good Year 9 lesson students invested a lot of creative and physical energy. They worked at a very good pace, collaborated very effectively and worked very productively to construct and rehearse their pieces.
118. One Year 10 **performing arts** lesson was observed. Learning in this lesson was very good because the teacher had very good subject knowledge. He demanded commitment from the students. He made the lesson interesting and challenging. Consequently, students invested a lot of creative and physical energy in their learning. They worked at a very good pace, collaborated very effectively and worked very productively to construct and rehearse their pieces. Self, peer and teacher assessment was very useful. It helped students to concentrate very closely on group relationships and the intention of the pieces that they were creating.
119. One Year 10 **dance** lesson was observed. The subject was introduced in 2003 and the current academic year is the first in which Year 11 students will do the GCSE examination. A specialist teacher of dance teaches the subject. The quality of teaching and learning in the observed lesson was very good. During the lesson students made very good progress and their achievement in mastering the complexities of performing a 'mirror' dance routine, with a partner, was good. However, many students have little previous experience in the subject and the quality of work in the lesson observed indicated that standards are below average.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, in particular in Years 10 and 11, leads to good achievement.
- The positive attitudes and very good behaviour of students in Years 10 and 11 enable students to work in a positive, industrious, but relaxed environment.
- The attitudes and challenging behaviour of small groups of students in some lower school lessons are not effectively addressed by the teacher and progress is slowed down for all students in those lessons.
- GCSE examination results in 2004 fell significantly below national averages, after a steady upward trend in recent years.
- The department is well managed by a director who has made significant improvements since her recent appointment.

Commentary

120. The art department has been through a very difficult year, which has seen the departure of both the subject director and the class teacher and a significant fall in GCSE examination results. Boys' results fell particularly low. Major timetabling changes in 2003 caused bad feeling that eventually led to the departure of both members of the department. An analysis of the GCSE results has shown that boys in particular suffered from the difficulties faced by the department. The new director and class teacher have worked hard together to raise standards in the current year, rebuilding a curriculum that had shown significant weaknesses in previous years, and making the monitoring and assessment systems more rigorous. Evidence in lessons shows that their efforts have been rewarded with rising standards and more thorough approaches to contextual work in art.
121. Students generally achieve well in lessons, in particular those in Years 10 and 11. Their application to work and their background contextual studies are leading to course work that is varied and interesting, and to a standard in line with national expectations. They have explored large-scale constructions from observational drawing and have manipulated photographic images on the computer. Students in Years 7-9 are taught basic art skills through a well-planned scheme of work that introduces them to important artists and their work, whilst it challenges their ability to use a good range of media in both two- and three-dimensional studies. Students who have SEN and others with additional educational needs, including the more talented, achieve as well as others in their classes, although there is insufficient challenge to fully stretch the most able amongst them. Students who have severe visual impairments achieve very well, because of the high quality of focussed support for them in lessons.
122. The quality of teaching is good overall. Students achieve well as a result. Teachers have a very good command of their subject, have generally good relationships and teach with confidence. Teaching in Years 7-9 is weakened by the lack of effective strategies for dealing with the challenging behaviour of small groups in some lessons. Teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and this is shown in the very good attitudes of most students, in particular those in Years 10 and 11. However, the larger groups of students in earlier years present problems that require a more determined and consistent approach from the teacher. Teachers use very good class self-evaluation sessions to build students' self-confidence and critical skills. Although homework is not rigorously used to extend students' learning, all work is marked and individual progress over time is tracked to National Curriculum or examination criteria.
123. The director has shown good management skills in her first term, rebuilding the schemes of work, improving resources, introducing rigorous assessment procedures and analysing the weaknesses in the department so that it can move forward. Her leadership is satisfactory and she has felt it necessary to move on to make way for a leader who can deal more resolutely with the challenging behaviour in lower years. The department has made a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' good practical skills are contributing to their creative skills.
- The emphasis on practical skills in Year 7 and the good quality teaching are contributing positively to students' good achievement.
- Listening and appraising skills are not so well developed.
- The lack of suitable recording facilities on keyboards is slowing students' progress.
- ICT is not used enough to support students' learning.

Commentary

124. The 2004 GCSE music examination results were below the national average. These are, however, an improvement on previous results and show an upward trend.
125. Students join the school in Year 7 with overall below average understanding, having had limited opportunities to compose their own music. However, with the benefit of good teaching and the emphasis on developing students' performing skills, achievement is good, students reaching average standards in Year 9. Students' performance skills are well established; they perform with confidence a range of different musical styles. Students have a good understanding of primary chords, using them with accuracy to support their well-established compositions. Although students have listened to different styles of music their overall understanding is weaker than their performing skills because a greater emphasis is placed on performance in the teaching.
126. In Years 10 and 11 the good achievement continues, students in the GCSE groups reaching the expected level at this point in the academic year. Compositions are developing well, students using their sound knowledge of composition devices to effectively support their creative progress. The achievement of students with SEN is good. They are fully involved and integrated into the lessons.
127. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good practical expertise, using their skills successfully to demonstrate different styles of music, which contributes positively to students' understanding. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is infectious. Students respond positively to this approach and are anxious to succeed. During lessons teachers move around the class effectively, keeping students on the task, helping and advising them. This develops their skills, leading to good learning. Teaching and learning are most effective when there are starter activities at the beginning of lessons. This was very evident in a Year 7 class. Here the activity, playing a Christmas melody on xylophones and glockenspiels, quickly engaged students' interest, contributing very positively to their recognition of notes and development of rhythmic and ensemble skills. On the odd occasion when learning was less effective, the explanation of the task at the beginning of the lesson tended to be too long, resulting in students becoming restless.
128. Leadership and management are good. The head of faculty has a clear vision about the future development of the subject and the need to maintain and raise standards. The frequent evaluation of teaching and the reviewing of the programmes of study are contributing positively to the raising of standards.
129. The limited facilities on the keyboards for recording students' work are slowing progress. Work that has been completed in lessons cannot be saved for future occasions and, as a consequence, time is spent redoing this work. Although the use of ICT is clearly identified in the programmes of study, use is limited due to the lack of appropriate hardware and software. The extra-curricular activities are good, providing good challenge for the musically gifted

students. A particular strength is the keyboard band, which is contributing positively to students' keyboards skills.

130. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards in the GCSE groups have improved and students' performing skills have been maintained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Students have very good attitudes to their learning in response to high expectations.
- Strong links with local clubs and the community benefit gifted and talented students.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

131. Standards in Years 9 and 11 are above average and students achieve very well. The percentage of A-C passes in the GCSE examination in 2004 was below average. This was because the year group contained a higher percentage of lower attaining students than usual. In the years leading up to 2004 standards in examinations were consistently above average. An analysis of the work of the current Year 10 and 11 students indicates that standards will again be above average in 2005. Improvement since the time of the last inspection is good.

132. Very good teaching and learning enable students to achieve very well. Teachers provide students with clear information about what they are going to learn. They also work very effectively to help students to evaluate own performance and that of others. This ensures that students understand how well they are getting on and know what they need to do to improve. In all lessons students are provided with very good opportunities to acquire, improve and apply their skills. This was evident during the inspection in Year 8 girls' gymnastics, Year 10 girls' badminton and Year 11 girls' weight lifting. In all these lessons students learned very well because of the teachers' very good subject knowledge.

133. Students respond very well to the high expectations, well-established traditions and excellent ethos of the department. Students often arrive at lessons to be greeted by inspirational audio-visual presentations. These presentations set the tone for their learning. Students are expected to have the correct kit. In rugby, for example, students have the correct footwear and wear mouthguards. Students respond very well by working very hard. Many lessons are typified by the speed at which learning takes place and by students' thoughtful responses to teachers' questions.

134. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and the school provides a curriculum that meets the needs of all students well. Students are taught in single gender groups and are set, by ability, from the beginning of Year 8. Two hours of lessons are available, each week, for all students. This organisation of the curriculum is very successful, enabling students to learn very well. Extra-curricular provision is very good. The school achieves considerable success in competitions against other schools and a good number of students represent the school in district, county and regional competitions. The school has very effective links with local clubs. These links enable the needs of gifted and talented students to be met very well. Students benefit greatly from the tuition provided by visiting coaches. An example of this is the very good coaching provided by members of Thanet Wanderers Rugby Union Club.

BUSINESS

Business studies was inspected in full, and courses were sampled in health and social care and leisure and tourism.

135. One **health and social care** lesson was sampled from each of Year 10 and Year 11. Teaching was satisfactory in one lesson and good in the other. Lessons were well planned and teachers demonstrated good knowledge of health risks and infant intellectual development. Standards were below average, but students responded well to challenging questioning and readily joined in discussion. Visually impaired and other students with SEN were well supported. Students in Year 11 were able to draw on their experiences working in pre-school playgroups. Choice of materials and shapes in their designs for infant toys showed they had a good understanding of ways to stimulate infant intellectual development. In both years, good use of video film gave students an opportunity to develop their oral and listening skills.
136. Two lessons in **leisure and tourism** were observed, one in Year 10 and one in Year 11. Students were achieving well because they were motivated to learn about business studies in a real context. Standards seen were below average in Year 11 and showed satisfactory achievement in gains of knowledge about non-verbal communication. Standards seen were average in the Year 10 and students were achieving well. Good use was being made of ICT in this subject to research an assignment on the merits of theme or leisure parks. Good features of the teaching seen included the teacher's good knowledge of this vocational area and very good class relationships. As a result most students, particularly in Year 10, showed positive views on the course.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because they are well taught.
- The good assessment systems enable students to know how well they are doing.
- Students enjoy learning because lessons are relevant to the business world.
- There is insufficient planning to meet the different learning needs of students.
- Not enough use is made of the business community to support learning.

Commentary

137. Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were well below average, although performance at grades A*-C was higher than expected. Girls achieved higher than boys did but students did less well in business studies than in their other subjects. The results were lower than in 2003.
138. In Year 11 standards are below average. This represents good achievement given the students' standards on entry to the course. Students know how business is organised and their understanding is improved through study of firms such as McDonalds. They gain knowledge of terms and draw basic graphs to show how price is affected by demand and supply of goods. Standards of many students, however, are reduced by inaccuracies in plotting information. Higher attaining students use number well, whilst lower attaining students achieve well when given support. The main difficulty for many students is the inability to recall factual knowledge in examinations and they do not use examples enough to develop answers. The quality of written work is reduced by grammatical errors. Students make good use of textbooks to support home learning but ICT is insufficiently used to develop research skills.
139. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Students benefit from being taught by experienced teachers. Explanations are clear so that students understand key business concepts and achieve well as a result. Lessons are enjoyable because teachers make regular use of 'real'

business to explain theoretical study, but learning is reduced when students fail to use examples in assignments. Students' work is well assessed with clear summary evaluation and guidance about how to improve. However, teachers do not plan well to meet the needs of all students so that lower attainers struggle with tasks and higher attainers are not always extended enough. Visually impaired students do well because resources are customised for them and enable them to do well in written work. Teachers make good use of resources; they regularly set appropriate tasks for homework and this encourages self-reliance. The aims of lessons are clear but on occasions weaknesses in timing mean that learning outcomes are not consolidated at the end of the lesson.

140. The leadership of business is satisfactory and management is good. The faculty improvement plan is comprehensive but gives insufficient focus about areas for the development of business studies. Planning is well linked to whole school issues, except for the need to plan and deliver work-related aspects of learning and citizenship. Information about how success will be measured is generalised. The schemes of work are current and the arrangements to assess students' progress are good. The curriculum is satisfactory, but not enough use is made of the business community to support learning. There was no report at the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship was inspected in full. Personal, social and health education was sampled.

141. Planning for **personal, social and health education (PSHE)** ensures that all required elements, including sex and relationships education, are covered. Good use is made of external resources. Good opportunities are provided through extra-curricular activities to further develop personal and social skills. The positive attitudes instilled by teachers through caring relationships also make a good contribution to personal development. However, some timetabling arrangements result in a significant number of students not having the same opportunity as others in their access to the PSHE programme. In particular those students in the top set in Year 8 and Year 9 are timetabled for the second language at the same time as the PSHE lesson. Furthermore, those who take the double option in applied ICT also miss the PSHE/citizenship period in Years 10 and 11 due to the timetable arrangements.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Plans for the delivery of citizenship are detailed in some subjects, and here teaching is good.
- Students' work is not assessed so students do not gain credit for all that they do.
- Not all students follow the discrete courses, and achievement is not as good in these cases.

Commentary

142. Citizenship is taught through PSHE and subjects across the curriculum. A detailed audit has been carried out to ensure this work is identified. Minor gaps left in this provision are covered in the discrete course. Students were seen to be meeting many of the elements of the attainment target for each key stage. These are extended through their extra-curricular activities, but standards are below average overall. Many students show immaturity in their attitudes towards learning and in their behaviour in discrete lessons. However, students' understanding of citizenship is below average when they enter the school and achievement is satisfactory overall.
143. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good, the citizenship elements are identified in schemes of work and lesson plans, for example in art and design, English, modern foreign languages and humanities subjects. In these lessons teachers display good subject

knowledge, identify the citizenship being taught and engage the students in their learning. In physical education, community links are exploited to help students make the transition to local clubs. In subjects where citizenship is not planned in as much detail, such as science, design and technology and music, opportunities for students' development are missed.

144. In citizenship lessons, teaching is satisfactory overall. There are examples of good teaching, for instance in a lesson seen in Year 10 where students were studying charities. A lively introduction by the class teacher held the students' attention. The teacher's good knowledge of the subject helped to direct students' contributions to discussion and ensured that all students made valuable contributions. There was good pace and the students made good gains in knowledge and understanding. In other lessons students made less progress where presentation did not capture their imaginations. In these lessons the students displayed immature attitudes and teachers had to attend to behaviour. This slowed the pace of learning.
145. The leadership and management of citizenship are satisfactory. The detailed audit, undertaken by the subject leader for citizenship, has allowed for planning of citizenship education in subjects across the curriculum and in the discrete course. Year leaders monitor the teaching of the discrete course and the quality of planning, as it is taught in conjunction with the PSHE programme. Some students miss elements of this programme because lessons are timetabled at the same time, and this hinders their achievement. There is no formal assessment of students' attainment. Students are not given credit for the citizenship they are developing within and beyond the school's curriculum.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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