

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **CLARENDON HOUSE GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

Ramsgate

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118809

Headteacher: Mrs J. Bennett

Lead inspector: Dr Norma Ball

Dates of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> November 2004

Inspection number: 268781

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18
Gender of students:	Female with co-educational sixth form
Number on roll:	831

School address:	Clarendon Gardens Ramsgate Kent
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Postcode:	CT11 9BB
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Telephone number:	01843 591074
Fax number:	01843 851824

Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Edith Adam

Date of previous inspection:	8 <sup>th</sup> March 1999
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## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Clarendon House Grammar School is located in the centre of Ramsgate. It is a popular and over-subscribed school that draws students from a wide area. Many rely on trains and buses to reach school. The school is smaller than other secondary schools. There are 579 girls on roll aged 11 to 16 years and in the sixth form 199 girls and 53 boys. Boys and girls join the sixth form from other local selective and non-selective schools. The sixth form is larger than average. The school population is stable and the proportion of students joining or leaving the school part way through a school year is low. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds, but overall the social and economic circumstances of students are more advantaged than average. Their attainment when they come to the school is well above average. A small proportion of students (approximately 1.9 per cent) are from ethnic minority backgrounds and none of these is at an early stage of learning English. A below-average proportion of students is entitled to free school meals and the proportion of students with special educational needs is also below the national average. The students' needs relate mainly to social, emotional and behavioural needs and also dyslexia, visual, hearing and multi sensory impairment. In September 2004 the school achieved specialist language school status. Four-fifths of students continue into the sixth form and, at the end of Year 13, nearly all students continue on to some form of higher education. All students joining the sixth form follow A-level courses.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
9391	N. Ball	Lead inspector	
9271	S. Ward	Lay inspector	
23487	P. Kitley	Team inspector	English; sixth form English literature; English as an additional language
6138	K. Page	Team inspector	Mathematics; sixth form pure mathematics and mechanics
30433	C. Corp	Team Inspector	Science; sixth form chemistry
32785	W. Allt	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology; sixth form information and communication technology
25377	L. Brown	Team Inspector	Art; sixth form art and design
8076	T. Bendall	Team Inspector	Design and technology
25073	S. Jordan	Team Inspector	Geography; religious education; sixth form geography
18663	P. Burchell	Team Inspector	History; citizenship; sixth form history
27058	K. Cannon	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages; sixth form French
32269	R. Butler	Team Inspector	Special educational needs
20767	J. Royle	Team Inspector	Music
30800	B. Colley	Team Inspector	Physical education; sixth form sociology

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Clarendon House Grammar School is an effective school** providing good value for money. Students enter the school with attainment that is well above average and the school does well to maintain this high standard. The quality of teaching is good and students show very positive attitudes to their work, particularly in the sixth form. The result is that they achieve well and very well in the sixth form. The school has a very good ethos, with a strong emphasis on caring for the individual and promoting personal development. Leadership and management of the school are good, with strengths in the continuing development of the language college initiative. The current accommodation is unsatisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Students' very good behaviour and relationships contribute well to their achievement
- Interesting lessons and a wide range of extra-curricular activities motivate students to learn successfully, despite some inconsistencies in using assessment to plan lessons
- The school cares for students well and provides effective support and guidance
- The school's specialist language college status enhances students' learning opportunities through the good range of language options and the richness of links with other schools and colleges locally and abroad
- The accommodation is inconvenient and cramped
- In some subjects, students do not have enough access to information and communication technology (ICT), and statutory requirements for this are not fully met in years 10 and 11

**There has been good improvement since the last inspection.** Standards have risen and almost all of the previous weaknesses have been resolved. Lessons have clear objectives and procedures for assessment have improved, although the use of assessment is still inconsistent. Governors now have a clear strategic view of the school and are involved well in planning and development, which is helpful to senior managers. All subjects of the National Curriculum now have sufficient time; five years ago there was a shortfall in design technology, physical education and religious education. There remains a weakness in ICT in Years 10 and 11.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Students' achievement is good overall.** They achieve well in the main school and very well in the sixth form. Students come to the school with attainment that is lower than many other grammar schools and achieve well throughout their time at the school. The results in the end of Year 9 national tests in 2003 were very high compared with national figures, in the top five percent of all schools nationwide. When data is interpreted which takes account of the students' entry standards at the age of eleven, achievement was satisfactory in 2003. Students did much better in English than in mathematics and science compared with similar schools. The trend in Year 9 national assessments is a little below the national trend of improvement. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average and students achieve well in lessons. Students in Years 10 and 11 sustain good achievement. They did well at GCSE in 2003, considering their national assessments at the age of fourteen. The proportion gaining five or more grades A\* to C was above average compared with similar schools. There was some underachievement at the highest level at A\* and A. The trend in GCSE results is similar to the national trend of improvement. Current standards in Year 11 are well above average and are particularly high in geography and religious education. Standards are well above average in most of the sixth form subjects that were a focus for inspection.

**Students' personal qualities are very good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.** The very good attitudes and behaviour of students contribute to their achievement. Attendance is very good but punctuality to lessons is unsatisfactory and the dispersed nature of the school site contributes to the problem. Students' personal development is promoted well and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision has improved since the last inspection.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Teaching is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form.** Lessons are lively, with teachers using a good range of strategies, providing good challenge and helping students learn well. The planning of some lessons does not take enough account of assessment information and so work does not always match the needs of all students in the class. Most students are keen to learn and work hard. Students are well supported and their views are valued. A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities greatly enriches the learning experiences of all students. The ICT curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is not sufficiently well planned and those students not following an examined course do not cover all elements of the subject. Support staff contribute well to teaching and learning, but the time available for their support is insufficient in design and technology and the special educational needs department. The accommodation inhibits the effectiveness of teaching. Small rooms limit the range of teaching styles and activities. Movement between the buildings is time-consuming and results in a significant loss of lesson time. Links are good with parents and the community and very good with other schools and colleges.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are good overall.** The headteacher and senior managers have a clear sense of purpose. Under their good leadership, language college status has been achieved and is developing well. New initiatives and policies, such as the assessment policy, are beginning to have an impact. The lack of a clear plan for developing student support and monitoring is a weakness in the leadership of special educational needs. The quality of middle management is good in most respects. Several departments have undergone a number of staff changes but new leaders are building on the strengths of their departments effectively. Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Their contribution to the school's strategic planning and financial management is good. They have not ensured that statutory requirements are fully met in relation to ICT and daily collective worship. Governance is satisfactory overall.

## **PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS**

Parents are pleased with the education that the school offers. They feel that their children like school and achieve well because they are well taught and expected to work hard. The inspectors agree. Concerns felt by some parents about how well they were informed about their children's progress are not supported by the evidence of the inspection. Students are generally very happy in a school that caters for them well, whatever their backgrounds or needs. They appreciate that they are well taught and expected to work hard. A number of students expressed concern about bullying but felt that any incidents were dealt with well.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Ensure the consistent use of effective assessment
- Strengthen measures to improve students' punctuality to lessons
- Continue to press for improvements to the accommodation

and to meet statutory requirements

- Ensure that all students in Years 10 and 11 receive their full entitlement to ICT
- Provide a daily act of collective worship

## THE SIXTH FORM

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The sixth form is very effective.** Students' A-level results have been well above the national average for the two years up to 2003 and were similar in 2004. Overall achievement was very good in relation to the above average standards on entry. Current standards are well above average and students are achieving very well. They are highly motivated. The sixth form is well led. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and students are offered very good levels of support. The wide range of GCE courses meets the needs and aspirations of the students well. The larger than average sixth form attracts students with a diversity of background from a wide area. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the sixth form is very cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- Work is matched carefully to students' needs and so they learn very well
- Students value highly the support and guidance they receive from knowledgeable and committed teachers
- Students' involvement in the school community develops a strong sense of independence that prepares them well for life beyond school
- The unsatisfactory accommodation restricts class activities and makes learning less interesting in some classes where space is limited

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Only the following sixth form subjects were inspected in depth.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>English literature: very good.</b> Teachers' very good subject knowledge, enthusiasm for literature and high expectations enable students to learn very well. Achievement is very good. <b>French: very good.</b> Teachers have very good linguistic expertise, which leads to students using a wide range of vocabulary in topical discussions and achieving very well.
Mathematics	<b>Pure mathematics and mechanics: good.</b> Teaching and learning are good. Teachers, who have very good subject knowledge, challenge students of all abilities. The limited use of ICT slows progress.
Science	<b>Chemistry: satisfactory.</b> Teachers and students share good relationships. Achievement is satisfactory overall. In Year 12, not all students are challenged enough by the teaching.
Information and communication technology	<b>Very good.</b> Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject. Students achieve very well and are actively engaged. Concepts are delivered in highly inspiring and effective ways, using good resources.
Humanities	<b>Geography: very good.</b> Very good teaching results in students learning and achieving very well. Students' very positive responses make a significant contribution to their own learning. <b>History: good.</b> Students learn well as a result of the good teaching. Lessons are well planned but sometimes lack pace and vitality. Some students, although hard-working, do not always show good independence in their learning. <b>Sociology: very good.</b> Students are very positive about the course because teaching is very well focused on standards and achievement. Imaginative teaching builds on students' views and experiences very well. Students achieve very well.



Curriculum area	Evaluation
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Art and design: very good.</b> Students are helped to develop their artistic abilities very well by the learning environment. Standards in ceramics and photography are not as high as those in other media.

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

*For those subjects that were not a focus for the inspection, a few lessons were observed. In all cases, the students were involved and learning successfully. The approaches to teaching made learning interesting and challenging. In most lessons, students achieved very well.*

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Students receive very good quality support and guidance. Good procedures ensure that students new to the school settle in quickly and easily. Boys entering the sixth form from elsewhere were pleased with the way they had been introduced to their new school and they settled quickly. Support for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Very good information helps students when they choose their courses. Very good quality advice helps them choose their post-18 routes and, if appropriate, prepare for university applications and entry. Reporting and review procedures are good and students and their parents have a clear picture of the progress they are making and how they can improve their work.

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

**The leadership and management are good.** The leadership team shares a clear vision for the sixth form. The curriculum, both academic courses and extra-curricular opportunities, is kept under review. A very good range of community and national opportunities and international initiatives are offered to broaden students' experience. Senior teachers provide good role models in their teaching. Performance of subjects is closely monitored and any weaknesses identified are tackled quickly and effectively. Governance of the sixth form is satisfactory.

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

Students' views of the school are very positive. They enjoy being students at the school and feel they are given good encouragement to develop good independent work habits and explore and research subject areas for themselves. They respect their teachers because they know their subjects well, are challenging but also very approachable and willing to help them to do their best and gain the most they can from their sixth form experience. Students feel that they are treated fairly and know that their views and contributions to the school are valued and respected. Students feel that they receive good guidance on future careers but in a few cases they did not feel that individual guidance on what to study in the sixth form had been helpful. Discussions confirmed that the help available to sixth form students, both those coming from Year 11 in the school and those joining from other local schools, is generally good. The inspection revealed that a significant number of sixth form students have very good, and often excellent, attitudes. They are articulate, mature and share a strong sense of community responsibility and take leading roles in a number of extra curricular and school activities in the main school. The inspection team agreed with the very positive views of the students.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are well above average in the main school and sixth form. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 11 and very well in the sixth form.

#### Main strengths

- The proportion of students gaining 5 or more A\* to C passes at GCSE is very high
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are well above average
- Standards in sixth form geography are very high
- Students' achievement in most sixth form subjects is good or very good; it is satisfactory in chemistry
- Students achieve very well in English literature, modern foreign languages and discrete ICT throughout the school

#### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	41.5 (40.7)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	44.3 (43.6)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	40.2 (39.5)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 112 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. Students enter the school with standards that are well above all schools nationally, but lower than many other grammar schools in Kent and nationally. Students achieve well in their time at the school. Results in the end of Year 9 national tests, in 2003, were very high compared to the national average, and this picture has been consistent for three years. In 2004, results were broadly similar. In comparison with similar schools in 2003, results in English were average, but in mathematics and science results were well below the average. However, these statistics do not fully take into account the different entry levels between this and other grammar schools. The school met the targets set for the proportion of students reaching National Curriculum Level 5 in each of these subjects in 2003 and 2004. The trend in improvement in results over the last five years has been below the national trend because the results have been maintained at a very high level, compared with the national average, and therefore have very restricted scope to improve. The progress made by students from Years 6 to 9, the value added measure, is very high when compared to all schools and average for similar schools.
2. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and in geography, history, ICT and religious education. Standards are above average in all other subjects, with the exception of art and design where they are average. Students are now taught all of the required skills in art and design to enable them to achieve higher standards. Students achieve very well in English, ICT and modern languages. Language college status is having an increasingly valuable effect on achievement because of the richness of the experience it provides for students.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	98 (95)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	50.5 (49.7)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 117 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. In 2003, the proportion of students gaining 5 or more grades A\* to C was very high, compared with all schools nationally. When compared to similar schools, the proportion of students gaining 5 or more A\* to C was above average. There was some underachievement at the highest level and fewer students achieve A grades compared with other grammar schools. As a result, the average points score for students, although comparing well nationally was average when compared with similar schools. As for Year 9 assessments such statistics must be interpreted with care as the entry level is lower than for many other grammar schools. The school met the targets it had set. Students' average points score for the best eight subjects at GCSE was very high in national comparisons but below average for similar schools. Results in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and the vast majority of other subjects were significantly above average. In 2004 the picture was very similar. The value added measure from Year 9 to Year 11 was above average when compared to schools nationally. The school's results have been rising broadly in line with national results.
4. The standards in Year 11 remain well above average overall in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and also in history, modern languages, religious education (non examination course), citizenship and physical education. Standards are very high in geography and GCSE religious studies where students build on the good foundations laid in Years 7 to 9 so that they have a detailed knowledge of the topics covered at GCSE. Students in Years 10 and 11 sustain good achievement overall and do very well in English, geography, ICT (examination course), modern languages and religious education. Attainment in English has improved since the last inspection and reflects the very good management of the department and very good teaching and learning that is encouraged. Students who do not follow an examination course in ICT in Years 10 and 11 achieve unsatisfactorily because there is no methodical teaching or assessment of ICT programmes of study across the curriculum.
5. Throughout the school, students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers overall because they are taught well by staff who are sensitive to their needs. Where teachers are not so experienced or prepared, or where additional support is not available, students with special educational needs nevertheless achieve soundly. Those students who are gifted and talented also achieve as well as other students. They are now being identified and a register is being compiled, but, although there is some good provision, the school is only at the early stages of planning for their development. The few students who speak English as an additional language are fluent in English. These students are encouraged to take GCSE examinations in their mother tongue, and gain very high passes.

#### **Sixth form**

6. Standards in most subjects are well above average and students are achieving very well. Most students enter the sixth form from the main school with very high standards, but a significant minority of students, particularly boys, come into the sixth form with standards that are average. Overall, the results attained by boys and girls were well above average in 2003 compared with sixth forms nationally. They were very high in English literature and geography but results in chemistry were lower reflecting the wider ability on admission to the sixth form and the limited experience of chemistry for some students. The sixth form has shown a steady improvement in its performance over the last three years and 2004 figures suggest that this is continuing.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	95.4 (96.7)	85 (92.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	40.0 (29.5)	27.6 (33.8)
Average point score per student	336.6 (292.8)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 97 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

7. In agreement with the school, the subjects that were the focus of the inspection in the sixth form represented a cross section of those being taught. There is a clear focus on GCE examinations. Standards are very high in geography, well above average in English, French, ICT and art and design, above average in mathematics, history and sociology, and average in chemistry. Students are well integrated into the sixth form and settle quickly to very good work routines. Students achieve well or very well in the vast majority of subjects in the sixth form because interesting lessons are very well taught and students want to do well in their examinations. In chemistry, students' achievement is satisfactory. They have the same will to do well but a number begin the course with only limited knowledge of chemistry. Carefully focused support for lower-attaining students is beginning to improve standards.

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

Students' behaviour is very good in the main school and excellent in the sixth form, and all students are very keen to learn. The overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students throughout the school is good. Attendance is very good but punctuality is unsatisfactory in both the main school and the sixth form.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students are enthusiastic in lessons and this contributes to their good achievement
- Behaviour is very good in almost all lessons. In the sixth form, it is excellent.
- Students get on very well with each other and work together very productively
- Too much teaching time is lost because students arrive late for lessons
- Students are very well involved in the life of the school and undertake responsibilities very willingly

**Commentary**

8. Students' attitudes and behaviour were identified as strengths of the school in the last inspection. These strengths have been maintained. Students enjoy and are proud of their school. They settle to work without fuss, are keen to learn and they take part with enthusiasm in lessons and in the many extra-curricular activities on offer. Their very positive attitudes contribute strongly to their good achievement because they work hard in lessons and in their homework. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Students get on very well with each other and with their teachers. They collaborate very effectively when allocated paired or group activities, taking turns and sharing responsibility.
9. Behaviour is very good around the school and in the vast majority of lessons. Given the scattered nature of the buildings across multiple sites, this makes an important contribution to the success of the school as it means that students can be trusted to move sensibly from one site to another. The only incidents of misbehaviour seen in the inspection were in a very small number of lessons in Years 10 and 11. In these lessons, misbehaviour was linked to weaknesses in teachers' management of the class. Although, in their questionnaire responses, quite a high number of students expressed concerns about bullying, in discussions with inspectors students said that bullying was rare. Students are confident that when incidents are reported they are dealt with well. Bullying behaviour is one of the topics dealt with appropriately in personal, social and health education lessons. Students with special educational needs are well motivated and behave well. They are confident and participate fully in the life of the school.

**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	725	5	0
White Irish	13	0	0
White – any other White background	15	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	1	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	6	0	0
Student/parent preferred not to say	43	0	0

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

10. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and the provision for students' social and moral development is particularly strong. Students take a keen interest in social and moral issues, choosing to raise funds for charities that reflect their concerns, for example over the victims of torture. Students in Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to be trained as mentors to help younger students in Years 7 and 8. Both the older and younger students benefit from this experience. The school's work in preparing for its specialist status as a language college has already helped to broaden the students' awareness of other cultures. Although the thrust of this work has focused principally on different European cultures, the school has additionally focused on other parts of the world. Last year, for example, an India Day gave girls the opportunity to experience aspects of Indian dress, food, music and culture.
11. Spiritual development was identified as a weakness in the last inspection. It has improved and is now satisfactory, with students benefiting from opportunities for reflection and empathy with others. However, requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met because there is no planned opportunity for students to experience a quiet and reflective time in tutor periods on days when they do not have an assembly.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	0.9
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

12. Attendance rates are very good. In common with other grammar schools, they are well above the attendance rates of most other secondary schools. Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection as a result of the very good systems operated by the school to promote good attendance, including contacting parents on the first day of any unexplained absence. A high proportion of students travel quite long distances to school and are dependent on public transport. Inevitably, this means some students arrive late in the morning through no fault of their own. An avoidable weakness, however, is lack of punctuality during the school day. Despite there being a provision in the timetable of five minutes between lessons to allow students time to move from one building to

another, there is sometimes a lack of urgency as students stroll along the road to their next lesson. During the inspection, lessons commonly started five or ten minutes late. Totalled over the course of a week, this represents an unsatisfactory loss of valuable teaching time.

### **Sixth form**

13. All of the positive features of opportunities for personal development in the main school apply in abundance to the sixth form. Students are highly motivated in their studies and very eager to learn. Their behaviour is excellent. Students take a leading part in a range of school activities, such as drama competitions. They provide very good role models for younger students. The leadership of the school identified concerns, in the past, over attendance rates and introduced similar systems, as in the main school, to monitor and follow up non-attendance. These have proven very effective, as attendance is now very good. The high rate of attendance is contributing to the very good achievement seen during the inspection. Punctuality to lessons was unsatisfactory and students showed a similar lack of urgency in reaching their classes as in the main school.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education provided is good overall. It is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Teaching and opportunities for learning are good overall, very good in the sixth form and enhanced by very good extension opportunities for learning beyond the classroom. Students are well supported in their learning. The good partnership with parents and the community and very good links with other schools and colleges make an important contribution to the standards students' achieve and their personal development.

### **Teaching and learning**

In the main school students are taught and learn well. The teaching observed in Years 10 and 11 was a little better than that seen in Years 7 to 9. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are very good. Assessment is satisfactory overall in the main school, where it is not yet used to full effect by all staff. It is good in the sixth form.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A high proportion of teaching in the sixth form is very good and excellent
- Very good subject knowledge is used by teachers to plan interesting lessons that engage students well
- Students are encouraged well to develop good independent learning skills and share ideas with confidence
- The variety of teaching approaches is sometimes restricted by the size of classrooms
- Lesson planning sometimes takes insufficient account of assessment information to ensure that the needs of all ability groups are met

### **Commentary**

14. Students learn well because of the good teaching they experience and the positive attitudes they bring to their lessons. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use well to give clear explanations of new concepts and lead lively and challenging discussions which extend students' understanding. Lessons are well planned and interesting, often with a variety of approaches to gain students' interest. During the inspection, for example, topical issues were raised in geography lessons, while role play was used in history, and ICT in art and design. Teaching was very good in English, ICT lessons and modern foreign languages, where students particularly enjoyed their work and tried hard to do their best.
15. Relationships in the school are very good. In lessons this means that students develop the confidence to join in and share their ideas because they know their contributions will be valued. They work well independently, in groups or as a whole class, and especially so in Years 10 and 11, where teaching is even more firmly directed towards encouraging students to take an active part in their own learning. A number of class discussions seen during the inspection were very stimulating. Homework is well used to supplement and extend lessons.

16. Teaching styles are restricted in some classrooms because limited space does not permit teachers or students flexibility in organising a range of activities such as re-grouping for small group discussions. In design and technology, cramped workshops significantly reduce the quality of learning. Support staff are greatly valued but their time is very limited especially in design and technology and to support students with special educational needs.
17. Students with English as an additional language are well taught and learn as well as other students. Gifted and talented students are well integrated into classes and there is some good provision by very experienced teachers. Sometimes, staff do not challenge higher-attaining students effectively because lesson planning does not take account of their different needs and provide them with more demanding work. In design and technology lessons, for instance, there are no specific ideas for challenging the highest attainers to write extended answers in their course workbooks.
18. Teachers use their knowledge of students with special educational needs well in lessons to enable these students to make similar progress to their classmates. Students who have more significant organisational or social difficulties benefit from extra support, but there is insufficient support time to ensure that students other than those in most urgent need receive additional help.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 103 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7 (7%)	34 (33%)	43 (42%)	17 (16%)	2 (2%)	0	0

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

19. The whole-school assessment policy is currently undergoing development, resulting in some inconsistencies in application across different departments, but overall is much improved since the 1999 inspection. The impact of assessment on lesson planning is variable. Work is not always explicitly planned to meet the needs of higher and lower-attaining groups within the class and so the quality of learning is reduced. Effective practice, as seen in modern foreign languages, uses thorough and constructive marking to identify what students can and cannot do and adjusts lesson plans so that all students can access new learning.
20. Marking is good overall but variable between departments. Where marking is good, it is clear and makes very explicit to students how well they have done and outlines clearly what they can do to improve their work further. Regular assessment at the end of each half or full term, in Years 7 to 9, is used well to monitor students' progress and inform them of their current National Curriculum level. Students, and their parents, know what targets have been set for improvement and how that can be achieved. Some mentoring, such as that used in science and modern foreign languages, has been introduced to raise the attainment of underachievers.

**Sixth form**

21. The strengths in teaching in the main school are reflected even more strongly in the sixth form. Teaching was almost always good, often very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge very well to encourage students to develop even greater independence in the way they approach their work. They give clear guidance to help students in their use of research and in managing their own time so that work is completed promptly. In class discussions, and other collaborative work, teachers are very effective in helping students to explore new ideas and explain their views. They use a range of teaching methods to encourage interest and to create a stimulating learning atmosphere in which students really want to contribute.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 39 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (5%)	21 (54%)	14 (36%)	2 (5%)	0	0	0

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

22. Work is usually well matched to the broad range of students. Whatever their attainment on entry, they have a very good level of challenge in most subjects and receive very good encouragement and support from teachers. Students meet very high expectations of behaviour and commitment to learning, and this contributes significantly to their achievement.
23. Assessment is supportive, thorough and constructive. Students identify the ongoing assessment of coursework as being particularly useful. Teachers provide students with specific advice for improvement and strategies on how to reach target levels. Students have good opportunities to evaluate their progress based on test results, a thorough knowledge of their targets and a good understanding of examination requirements. As a result, students are well motivated and mature in their approach to their work.

### **The curriculum**

Provision is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form, with very good opportunities for enrichment. There are sufficient resources in the school for the needs of the curriculum but accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's status as a language college contributes greatly to students' appreciation of the world around
- The large sixth form enables a wide range of academic courses to be offered
- Very good extra-curricular activities and enrichment of the curriculum extend students' learning and personal development and are well attended
- Insufficient time is given to ICT in Year 10 and 11
- Despite improvements made to some areas of the site, accommodation is still unsatisfactory
- Support staff, although greatly valued, are not allocated enough time

### **Commentary**

24. All students have access to a worthwhile curriculum that prepares them well for employment or further study. Since the last report, the school has reorganised the timetable and revised schemes of work so that sufficient time is given to subjects, and the curriculum now meets the statutory requirements for Years 7 to 9. There has been no improvement in meeting statutory requirements in ICT for Years 10 and 11 since the last report. The result is that, whereas students' competence in using ICT is very good in other years, in Years 10 and 11 their skills are not honed and refined efficiently by regular use and this affects learning in all other subjects.
25. Care is taken to ensure that as many students as possible are able to study their first choice of subjects at GCSE. Although there has been little demand for vocational courses in the past, the school has recognised that there is a need for such courses to start in Year 10 and extend into the sixth form.
26. The curriculum provides very good opportunities for enrichment throughout the school. Programmes are carefully planned to complement normal lessons and are offered to as many students as possible. The curriculum is appropriate for students with special educational needs and they take full advantage of the wide range of enrichment activities available. Language college status has improved opportunities for students to see themselves as citizens of a wider world. All students take two languages in Year 7, and three in Year 8. Up to three languages can be studied at GCSE. The presence of foreign language assistants broadens the horizons of students as they meet people from other countries and cultures. Visits abroad are open to all and include time to visit museums such as the Louvre and the Pompidou Centre.
27. Large numbers of students participate in the wide range of activities, including sports at community, local and national levels. These extension activities allow gifted and talented students to perform to a very high level, but are not exclusive to this group. External coaches are involved in activities such as dance, and additional language tuition is available in Russian and Chinese. All students have the opportunity to visit the theatre, both to support the English curriculum and for its intrinsic worth. House drama competitions involve large numbers of students. Clarendon House musicians and actors work with students from Chatham House, the boys' grammar school nearby, in joint productions of music and drama. Most students visit local art galleries and many in Year 10 and 11



undertake projects involving the Victoria and Albert Museum. The school has recently submitted an application for Artsmark status.

28. Provision for personal, social and health education has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Fortnightly lessons are complemented by an imaginative focus day for each year group. During the inspection, Year 8 spent a day off timetable and enjoyed a carousel of topics including yoga and healthy eating. In the only lesson seen, Year 7 students plotted their learning styles on a profile grid but did not have enough time to interpret or apply the results. Careers education and guidance is also part of this provision and is very well supported by the Connexions service. Kent Education Business Partnership runs a business project for teams of students in Year 10, and Year 11 students take part in a work experience and business enterprise week. This work experience opportunity is valued by students and contributes well to their personal development as well as giving good practical experience of the world of work.
29. Sufficient teaching staff are available to meet all the needs of the curriculum and promote effective learning. They are very well qualified and have a wide range of experience. Teaching assistants and technicians provide very effective support to facilitate teaching and learning. The quality of support provided for students with special educational needs is good but some students need more help than is available. Technical support for teaching staff in ICT, and design and technology is greatly valued but the time allocated is not enough.
30. The school has sufficient, appropriate resources overall to meet its curricular needs. Some departments have insufficient access to ICT, sometimes because the site makes networking difficult. There have been improvements in the accommodation for science, geography, the arts and the library. However, many classrooms are too small for the classes using them and this limits the creative use of space for group work. The accommodation for design and technology significantly reduces how well students achieve. Even though time has been built into the five-period day for travel between the various sites, too much teaching time is lost because students and teachers are late arriving to lessons. Accommodation is well managed and the school responds calmly and creatively to the difficulties resulting from the use of four buildings and some inconvenient and small teaching spaces.

### **Sixth form**

31. Learning opportunities are good in the sixth form. The school offers traditional A-level courses. Links with partner schools provide a further choice of vocational courses, but these are not popular with students or parents. The school's approach to curriculum planning ensures that almost all students can study their preferred options. Teachers are alert to subject options being considered by students in Year 11, and are flexible in responding to students who wish to add extra AS courses in Year 13. Creative use of video conferencing has enabled the introduction of Spanish and government and politics to small groups of students.
32. Students benefit from a wide range of visits, links and exchanges resulting from the specialist language college status. The sixth form have an important role in running house activities, charity events and other community-based projects with younger students. Teachers are well qualified. Resources are generally satisfactory, although limited access to the Internet affects research possibilities and support in sociology lessons. The unsatisfactory accommodation that affects the main school also impacts on learning in the sixth form. Although teaching groups are on the whole smaller, a number of small rooms are cramped and lead inevitably to a relatively staid and unexciting range of activities. Students show patience and tolerance but nevertheless some lessons are less challenging or interesting for students.

## Care, guidance and support

The school provides good care for students, values their views well and provides good support and guidance for them in Years 7 to 11. In the sixth form students' views are valued very well and very good guidance is provided.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- New students are well cared for and they settle in well at any stage
- Subject and pastoral staff provide good guidance and support for students
- Child protection matters are well managed
- The tutorial programme in the sixth form is well managed, students progress well and they feel very well supported
- Good extra support is provided for lower and average-attaining students to help improve their attainment; higher-attaining students are identified but do not always receive the extra challenge needed to fulfil their potential

### Commentary

33. Staff are committed to all students' wellbeing, health, care and safety. Good attention is paid to matters of health and safety, such as the arrangements made for younger students when they have to move between the different buildings around the school site. Access to the Internet is controlled with relevant procedures. Risk assessments and site inspections are carried out appropriately. The school nurse and school counsellor both provide important and much respected services for students. Overall, the management of care, welfare, health and safety is good.
34. All tutors and pastoral heads know the students well and are readily available if any student has a problem or concern. Students are aware of this and appreciate the support they are given. Year 7 students appreciated the transition arrangements with open evenings and visits that enabled them to settle in quickly. Students who join the school after Year 7 also speak positively of the help they are given to settle in.
35. Students with special educational needs know how to access help through the pastoral team or the special educational needs staff and they are well cared for. Good use is made of support agencies, information about students is communicated well to relevant staff, and special arrangements for examinations are well managed.
36. The attainment and achievement of all students is well monitored routinely by all teachers. Teachers evaluate assessment data effectively and clearly identify any students who are underachieving or having difficulties. Students are fully aware of their current attainment in all subjects and their likely predicted grades by the end of Years 9 and 11. Parents are well informed on the progress of their children. Assessment data is used effectively to identify underachievement, especially amongst lower-attaining students. Some departments, such as mathematics and English, use the outcomes of assessment well to adjust and supplement their curriculum and examination syllabuses. For example, the introduction of a statistics course for higher-attaining students in mathematics and the increased emphasis on writing skills in Years 7 to 9 in English resulted from good use of assessment analysis.
37. Teachers provide many opportunities for students to receive support and further guidance in the form of booster classes, support groups and one-to-one tutoring. A relatively new system has been introduced that enhances this support. Students identified as underachieving are now not only supported by the subject teacher but also referred to their tutor, who gives further support and guidance. Less effective, but sound overall, is the planning and implementation of further challenge and higher goals for gifted and talented and higher-attaining students to ensure they achieve as well as they can and gain the highest examination passes. Students receive good guidance on both option choices in Year 9 and pathways post 16. Many students feel this support from the school enabled them to make the correct choice of subjects at GCSE.
38. Students express confidence that the school takes their views into account. There is a well-established school council that includes representatives elected from every form, as well as some sixth form students co-opted because of their involvement in local youth and community groups. The council has had good involvement in developing some school policies, as well as helping positively to encourage the introduction of new subjects such as Latin to the curriculum. The council

members are proud of their successes in influencing changes, such as improvements to the toilets and changes in the school uniform. Students' views have also been surveyed well through questionnaires and their concerns reflected in school planning, for example in revising school policies and procedures for dealing with bullying.

### **Sixth form**

39. Induction arrangements into the sixth form for students from the main school and those from other schools are very good and care is taken to see that students settle quickly. Teachers monitor the progress and attainment of all students closely to ensure this is in line with their predicted grades. The relatively small groups in Years 12 and 13 enable teachers to discuss with and support students very effectively on an individual basis. In discussion, students speak of their appreciation of this support and the fact that teachers are very willing to offer support outside lessons.
40. Students are fully aware of their potential grades. They understand how they can improve their work, thanks to the detailed marking and analysis of their work by teachers in all subjects. Tutors closely monitor students' progress and achievement. The advice and guidance given is very good and enables students to reach their potential. For example, in chemistry, where students begin their A-level course with limited expertise, the support and monitoring of their progress enables them to improve their attainment through Years 12 and 13. Sixth form students' views are well canvassed and the school values and respects their involvement and commitment to the life of the school and wellbeing of younger students.
41. Sixth formers receive very good individual support for university applications and there is a very supportive ethos through the tutorial system, personal, social and health education guidance, and religious education. Dedicated time is given to careers and guidance tutorials with the Connexions service, and students attend a higher education conference at a nearby university.

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

The school has a good partnership with parents and the local community. There are very good links with other schools.

### **Main strengths**

- Parents are kept well informed about what is happening in the school and the progress their children are making in the main school and sixth form
- Good links with the community contribute to the students' personal development
- The school has built very strong and supportive links with other local schools

### **Commentary**

42. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and meeting were positive and reflect parents' confidence in the school. They feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or complaints. The school has used surveys to gauge their views and to consult them over, for example, transport arrangements. Although not all said they were happy with reports on students' progress, inspectors judged reports to be good because they give clear information about how well students are doing in each subject along with, in most cases, helpful targets that indicate what the student needs to do to improve their work. Generally, the information provided to parents through reports, e-mail contact and the regular newsletters, keeps parents well informed.
43. Students' discussion about, choice of, and support for charities contribute well to their personal development while also raising money for good causes. There are very productive links with the community and local businesses through the Creative Partnerships, a national pilot initiative for areas of high social deprivation. Following the achievement of language college status, links have been developed with the community to promote modern foreign languages among adults locally so that they can explore and learn language skills for pleasure or for specific purpose. An initiative arranged with the Ramsgate Town Twinning Association, for example, has resulted in a number of local councillors regularly attending classes to develop their foreign language skills.
44. Language college status has also played a part in the development of very effective partnerships with other local schools. Support had previously been given to some local primary schools to help teach French in Years 3 to 6 and help organise a day trip to France for local pupils in Year 5 of their primary schools. This has been extended to other schools in the area. In addition, girls in Years 11

have helped promote French in a local junior school by accompanying the children on a trip to France. Students gain greatly from these links and many opportunities for foreign visits and exchange arrangements with schools in Europe extend the learning experiences of students and promote their personal development very well. Links with primary schools are helping to ensure the smooth transfer of students to their new school.

### **Sixth form**

45. Partnership arrangements are equally strong for sixth form students and their parents. Links with a range of educational establishments, including colleges in France, help provide very valuable opportunities for students to meet other young students and for exchange visits.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff and the overall management of the school are good. Governance of the school is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher's good leadership and the commitment of key staff successfully promote the school's drive for improvement
- Leadership of the sixth form focuses especially well on how well students achieve
- The school has successfully achieved specialist language college status
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but do not ensure that the school fully meets statutory requirements
- Planning for improvements in some aspects of the provision for students with special educational needs is inadequate, though the special needs policy is good

### **Commentary**

46. The headteacher gives good direction to a school that remains very popular with parents and which maintains high standards. She has ensured that the school has made good progress in tackling the key issues from the previous inspection. There is a clear vision for improvement and senior staff are united in their commitment to boosting effectiveness and raising achievement and standards. Specialist language status has been achieved, with all departments having been involved appropriately in bidding. The process of gaining this status, and the additional resources it has brought, are playing an important part in the continuing development of the school. Senior staff contribute well to the school's major strengths of promoting opportunities for all and in knowing and meeting the needs of students as individuals.
47. Changes in leadership of subjects have meant that not all improvements that have begun are well established or monitored, and their potential impact has not yet been fully achieved. Nevertheless, there has been significant improvement since the last inspection and leaders are very professional, provide very good role models to both students and other staff, and have played a strong part in driving forward the school's improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The timetable is effective, provision of personal, social and health education is much improved, and citizenship has been introduced to the curriculum with some success. Systems for managing the attendance and morning punctuality of students are now very effective. Strategic planning is clearly linked to the vision for the school and forms the basis for improvement plans. The development plan is monitored regularly and evaluated through a regular review cycle.
48. The governors give satisfactory support to senior managers and have strong links with parents and the local community. Following the previous report, they have helped shape and direct the school's priorities for improvement by working in partnership with key staff. Governors have improved their understanding of performance data, are formed effectively into supportive committees, and are mindful of their responsibilities. They are aware of strengths and weaknesses in provision, but do not hold the school to account rigorously enough to ensure that all statutory requirements are fully met. Students in Years 10 and 11 are not receiving their full allocation of time in ICT and the school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship. Governors meet their legal obligations fully in other respects.

49. The provision for special educational needs is managed soundly. The special educational needs policy is good. Monitoring of students' progress is not sufficiently rigorous. Leadership has not provided sufficient time or expertise to promote this aspect of the school's provision adequately.
50. Performance management is central to school improvement. All new members of staff are effectively supported and mentors are assigned to guide the initial training of teachers. A sound focus on the monitoring of teaching and learning in subject departments by senior managers is promoting the continuing improvement of the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. However, effective practice identified in some departments is not yet widely shared.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,651,856	Balance from previous year	28,165
Total expenditure	2,666,077	Balance carried forward to the next	13,944
Expenditure per student	3,341		

51. Financial planning provides effectively for the needs of the curriculum and is well organised. The school works effectively to secure the best value for its spending by, for example, taking proper steps to ensure that building works and services are commissioned after careful evaluation of tenders. The views of parents and students are sought and taken into account in the school's decision-making process.

**Sixth form**

52. The sixth form team is well led and focuses strongly on enabling all students to achieve their full potential. Tutors work closely together to ensure that students are well integrated into the sixth form, and there is a high rate of retention. Students are encouraged to take a very active part in a wide range of activities in the main school and tutors provide a strong lead in helping students develop a mature and committed approach to their school community. The head of sixth form is well aware of the strengths and areas for development in the sixth form and the changes needed to improve education in the sixth form further. Management and review of teaching, learning, the organisation of the curriculum and structure of pastoral support in the sixth form are good. Particularly effective has been the management of procedures to monitor and improve attendance by sixth formers.
53. The most important criterion for admission to the sixth form is that students are well motivated and prepared to work hard. This means that there is a broad range of ability amongst sixth formers and some require additional support to ensure that they achieve as well as their peers. Where underachievement is identified additional support is well managed by both pastoral and subject staff working well together. Staff set clear targets for students to help them improve the standards of their work and this has been further helped by the school's use of the Kent and Medway self-evaluation process. The programmes for students' personal, social and health education have been improved since the last inspection, are now well managed and make a valuable contribution to students' personal development. Governors support the sixth form well, carefully analyse examination results and regularly review financial planning. The sixth form succeeds well in being very cost effective and financial management provides very effectively for the needs of the curriculum.

**OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

**Work-related learning**

Provision for work-related learning is satisfactory.

54. There are no vocational courses currently in Years 10 and 11. This is mainly due to the nature of the school and the presumption that most students will go on to higher education. However, the school is planning to introduce an applied GCSE subject in September 2005 to support the small number of students who do not gain five GCSEs A\* to C.
55. Partnerships with local employers have been developed, but not all the current Year 11 students are undertaking work experience. This is, in part, due to the difficulty in obtaining meaningful quality work placements in the area. In Year 11, students do work simulations, including telephone skills

and job applications, and prepare their curriculum vitae. Local employers come into the school for two days in the autumn term as part of the Year 11 careers fair and workshop day.

56. All Year 10 students take part in a Business Enterprise competition, in conjunction with other Kent schools. Students attend four workshops during the day and prepare a portfolio. In preparation, representatives from industry come to the school and discuss business and marketing plans with students. Those following the GCSE ICT course prepare a cash flow forecast in their lessons. In 2003, one group from the school was joint winner for the oral presentation and another group was outright winner for the best written presentation. Students receive good advice when planning their GCSE option choices, but insufficient support is available to students when they are planning their A-level subject choices and matching them to their chosen careers. New leadership and management are satisfactory, with plans in place to develop work experience opportunities.

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

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

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

##### English

Provision in English is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

##### Main strengths

- Standards for students in Years 7 to 9 have improved with the incorporation of the recommendations of the national strategy
- Teachers' subject knowledge and range of learning strategies contribute to students' very positive attitudes to learning
- Very good leadership is guiding the department through a period of change

##### Commentary

##### Examination results

57. Results, at the end of Year 9, in 2003 were very high compared with all schools, and average compared with similar schools. Students did better in English than they did in science, but not as many attained the higher levels as they did in mathematics. The most recent results show a small but steady improvement. Teacher assessments underestimated the number gaining the highest grades, and results in reading were below those for writing. The standards achieved in GCSE English and English Literature examinations were also very high and there has been a steady increase in the numbers who gain the higher grades. In 2003, students generally made more progress in their other subjects, but indications are that this has been reversed as a result of more stable staffing in the last year and the department's focus on improving written work by eliminating careless mistakes in writing.

##### Standards and achievement

58. The standards seen at the end of Years 9 and 11 were well above the national average. By Year 9, students have very good techniques for analysing literature because teachers prepare a wide range of increasingly complex tasks. High-attaining students' writing has a fluent style and mature tone that keeps the reader's interest. They choose words carefully to describe the growing tension in the witches' scene in *Macbeth*. Average-attaining students use research very well to find statistics that support different points of view in the foxhunting debate. The small numbers of lower-attaining students are improving paragraphing and writing with increased confidence.
59. By the end of Year 11, the majority of students' persuasive writing challenges issues relating to the school community and the wider world. Students use language effectively, with quotations very well integrated into the main part of an essay and conclusions that are thought provoking. Lower-attaining students use fewer quotations but give clear explanations of an author's intentions.
60. Students have very positive attitudes to work that is demanding and challenging, and most achieve very well as they move through the school. Students with special educational needs, gifted and talented students and those who speak a language other than English at home, progress at a rate that matches that of other students because teachers are alert to their needs. Very good relationships between teachers and students create a respectful learning environment. This enables serious issues related to the spiritual, moral, social or cultural content of literature to be treated

sensitively. Students listen attentively to each other and their teachers, and pair and group discussions play an important part in the pre-writing process.

### **Teaching and learning**

61. Students' learning in Years 7 to 9 benefits from a variety of teaching strategies. Work is very well planned with interesting activities that capture students' imagination. In an excellent lesson, a teacher's very animated reading of protest poetry provoked very thoughtful responses from all students. Teachers make very effective use of questions that help students to think critically before reaching conclusions. Although teachers facilitate discussions, they gradually hand over control of them to students. As a result, older students achieved a very detailed understanding of the complex theme of dementia in Gillian Clarke's poem *Miracle on St David's Day*. A very small proportion of time was used less effectively in some lessons when teachers spent too long on explanations and students' attention wandered.

### **Leadership and management**

62. In spite of recent disruptions to staffing there is a very good ethos in the department, morale is high and new staff members feel valued. The head of department has a clear vision based on a detailed analysis of data. A focus on raising standards, through increased challenge and greater consistency in assessment and marking is having a positive impact and students have become involved in peer and self-assessment. Homework is used well and very good use is made of opportunities for students to use ICT skills for research and presentation.
63. Very high standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching and learning has improved. Electronic and printed resources have increased, and the new library promotes students' wider reading choices well. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because the small size of many rooms limits the creative use of space for group work. The department has no meeting area and classes taught in the mobile classrooms have insufficient access to ICT.

### **Drama**

64. Drama was sampled in Years 7 and 9. In an excellent Year 7 lesson, students worked very well together in pairs and used gesture and gibberish to create characters that were very different from themselves. The best role plays incorporated pace and timing to generate comedy or pathos in well-constructed performances. Very effective use was made of lighting in a Year 9 lesson to create the right mood for individual floor work, as students created a room in their mind's eye. They were very receptive to their teacher's suggestions. Practical work is very well supported by homework, and writing and literacy skills are well incorporated into lessons. Accommodation and resources are very good. Links between the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 and the sixth form are being improved for 2005 with the introduction of a GCSE course. At present, students only have one lesson in the studio every two weeks and this puts pressure on the need to ensure clear progression in the new scheme of work. A strength of the department is the range of productions and extra-curricular activities that students are encouraged to enjoy.

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

65. Standards in speaking, reading and writing are well above average across the curriculum. A strong emphasis on the development of language and literacy skills has been very effectively developed throughout the school. In most subjects, key words are explained carefully and students use technical vocabulary accurately. There is very good use of mathematical language to explain patterns. There are very good opportunities for role play in English and religious education, where students also extract vital information from texts from different faiths. Research and note-taking skills are used to prepare class presentations in science and geography. Students write at length in many subjects, including reports in English, poems and letters in science, play scripts in religious education and textiles, and essays and letters in modern foreign languages. Students' written work is valued and very well displayed in classrooms, departments and other prominent areas around the school.



## Modern foreign languages

The provision for modern languages is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

### Main strengths

- Teachers' subject expertise is very good and lessons are lively and interesting
- Links with local and international communities are very good and very well managed
- Students have very good opportunities to make visits abroad and use their language skills
- Students show enjoyment in lessons and value their teachers' enthusiasm and language skills

### Commentary

#### Examination results

66. Students achieve very high levels of attainment because they are very well taught. In 2003, almost all students gained A\* to C grades in their GCSEs. Results for 2004 show that these high standards have been maintained. There is no comparative data for Spanish in 2003. All students who were examined in Spanish, in 2004, gained grades A\* to C.

#### Standards and achievement

67. In Years 7 and 8, students study French, German and Spanish. Some students have previous experience of French but none have experience of German or Spanish before joining the school. They identify masculine and feminine nouns and match adjectives to nouns correctly. They are keen to learn and know what they must do to improve their standards, and their achievements in lessons are very good in Years 7 to 9. Spanish is a recent introduction to the lower school curriculum, and is not yet taught in Year 9. A good number of Year 9 students move on to GCSE courses, with higher-attaining students studying three languages. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve very well. Previous staffing difficulties that caused a drop in the quality of teaching have been overcome and students have now regained their enthusiasm. Students enjoy vocabulary games and consolidate their new learning by writing short accounts of themselves or their holidays and visits to Europe. By Year 11, students produce very well considered essays and letters, and their conversation skills in French, German and Spanish are very good. They use past, present and future tenses with confidence in these languages. Year 10 students make good progress in their first term of Spanish, using computer programmes and working well with foreign assistants to improve their speaking skills.

#### Teaching and learning

68. Teachers' language expertise is very effective in encouraging students to listen and respond in the relevant language. Well-structured lessons retain students' interest and concentration. Computer technology is used well to reinforce and consolidate learning. Literacy is well promoted and the effective deployment of foreign language assistants enhances students' cultural development. Teachers' assessment of students' work enables them to plan teaching that meets the needs of all students. Relationships between staff and students are good.

#### Leadership and management

69. Leadership has enabled the department to maintain standards despite a series of long-term staff illnesses. Departmental and curriculum planning are very well managed and resources are well used. Careful planning has also ensured the development of excellent links with the local schools and colleges abroad. Enrichment clubs and residential visits provide very good cultural

opportunities, which contribute to students' enthusiasm, skills and broader understanding of their studies. Staffing levels are good and supplemented by three foreign language assistants.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is good.

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

  

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Test and examination results at the end of Years 9 and 11 are very high
- Students' very good response considerably increases their attainment and level of achievement
- Very good leadership enhances the overall provision
- The use of ongoing assessment, particularly marking, is inconsistent and lowers the quality of some teaching and learning

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

70. Although the overall level of attainment on entry to Year 7 is lower than usual for similar schools, as a consequence of good teaching and learning, students achieve well and progress by two national curriculum levels between Years 7 and 9. End of Year 9 results in 2003 were very high compared to the national average for all schools and was similar in 2004. However, as in previous years, 2003 results were well below the average for similar schools. GCSE examination results, in 2003, were very high compared to the national average for all schools. In 2004 the proportion of students attaining grades A\* to C slightly decreased.

#### **Standards and achievement**

71. Current standards are well above average. A period of staff turbulence has had an adverse affect on the achievement of some students but a combination of good teaching and effective management is providing "catch-up" opportunities. Well-planned teaching ensures that the majority of students make good progress and achieve well in algebraic, statistical and geometric knowledge and skill. Higher-attaining students are enabled to gain GCSE Statistics in Year 10. Average and lower-attaining students are less adept at using mental calculation skills and are too quick to seek the aid of a calculator.

#### **Teaching and learning**

72. The proportion of good teaching has increased since the last inspection. Teachers use their good subject expertise to demonstrate and explain new concepts effectively. They make good use of stimulating scenarios and practical resources. As a result, students learn well. Lessons proceed at a good pace and the level of difficulty and complexity of the activity is often challenging. Students communicate well, use precise vocabulary to make notes independently, and work collaboratively in groups. Progress in deeper mathematical understanding is not as fast, due to insufficient emphasis being placed on reasoning and other thinking skills.
73. Regular testing accurately informs students of the level of their work. Day-to-day marking only indicates whether work is right or wrong with little guidance on how to improve. The use of information, from marking and other assessment, is not used well to plan lessons so that work matches more closely the different needs of groups of students.

## Leadership and management

74. Leadership has established a very clear direction for the department with a determination to raise standards. The development plan lays the foundation for this. Leadership was particularly effective in refocusing the department after a period of staffing difficulty. Colleagues are well supported. Daily lunchtime “catch-up” programmes are a highly valued part of the school culture. Teaching and learning are monitored and evaluated in a variety of appropriate ways. However, the information from testing and other assessments have not clearly identified weaker aspects of teaching and so these areas have not been targeted in a drive to raise standards.
75. Since the last inspection, recommendations of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy have been incorporated in planning. The use of assessment has improved and well-above average standards have been maintained. The development plan is better constructed to raise attainment and an increased number of students achieve high levels and grades by the end of Years 9 and 11.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

76. On the whole, students use their good mathematical skills very well in other subjects. In science, geography, history and design and technology, students construct and interpret graphs, charts and data well. Teachers of most other subjects have responded very positively to training and have become sufficiently confident to use mathematics to add some extra innovation to their teaching. For example, in a Year 8 music lesson, graphs were used to measure the link between pop music and the blues. Although the pace of whole-school implementation has been steady overall, a few subject departments have been rather slow to respond.

## SCIENCE

The provision in science is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are keen to learn and enjoy interesting and challenging lessons
- The teachers and students share good relationships and work in a co-operative manner
- A few lessons fail to motivate a minority of students

## Commentary

### Examination results

77. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9, in 2003, were very high. They have been very high since the previous inspection. Results in 2004 were at a similar level. These results are, however, well below those of similar schools. In 2003, the proportion of students gaining GCSE grades A\* to C was very high. Results in 2004 were similar.

### Standards and achievement

78. Students enter the school with standards that are much higher than average but well below those of similar schools. Their achievement is good in Years 7 to 11 due to good teaching and the students' good attitudes. The achievement of higher-attaining students in the GCSE examinations is very good. Students with special educational needs are well supported by teachers and achieve well. A few lower-attaining Year 10 students do not achieve as well as other students because they are not fully engaged in some lessons.

## Teaching and learning

79. Teaching is good overall with the greatest strengths in Years 7 to 9. Some lessons are very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In the most successful lessons, the teachers planned lessons very well and ensured that the pace was good, with students fully engaged and challenged. The students responded in a very positive manner to teachers who set high expectations and had good classroom control. Many students have a very good attitude to science and show a real enthusiasm for the subject. Relationships between teachers and students in lessons are very good, which leads to students learning well. In lessons where attitudes were less positive, students were not fully engaged by the limited range of teaching styles used. This resulted in a small number of students, especially in Year 10, not achieving well. The availability of resources limits the use of computers by teachers for presentations, and the use of computers for whole-class activities is not widespread enough. The marking of students' work is variable. and the most effective marking is when teachers clearly indicate what students need to do to improve. Overall, the guidance and support given to students is good and helps them attain the high standards seen.

## Leadership and management

80. There is a clear understanding of the issues that need to be tackled to raise standards even higher. The department has a team of enthusiastic, well-qualified teachers who are well supported by an effective team of technicians. Students' attainment is analysed in detail and the findings are used effectively to identify any underachievement. However, the department's agreed procedures and strategies are not always implemented fully by all staff. As yet, not all teachers have responded to the need to match work to the needs of students, particularly of the lower and higher-attaining students. This important area of development remains to be effectively managed and implemented. Since the last inspection standards have been maintained and accommodation is now very good.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory overall but very good for discrete ICT.

	Year 9	Year 11 examination course	Year 11 non-examination
Standards	Well above average	Above average	Average
Achievement	Very good	Very good	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make good use of resources to focus students' learning and make tasks clear
- Students achieve very well in lessons because teachers plan meticulously and know their subject well
- Work is thoroughly marked and students are given clear guidelines about how they can improve their work
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements for most students
- Access to ICT is limited in some subjects

## Commentary

### Examination results

81. Results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were well above those reported nationally. Results, in 2004, showed an increase in the proportion of students reaching National Curriculum Level 7. GCSE results in 2003 were very high. In 2004, the proportion of students gaining the higher grades increased.

## **Standards and achievement**

82. Students in Years 7 to 9 use ICT to generate, develop, organise and present their work, critically investigating information from a variety of sources. They use flowcharts for sequencing and control, with higher-attaining students incorporating subroutines. Students evaluate web sites and use web-authoring software with confidence, investigating advanced features competently. They are able to define variables and rules. In Years 10 and 11, GCSE students make very good use of validation rules in their coursework models and all solutions are tested rigorously and methodically recorded. They have a good understanding of modern communication methods and follow good practice in their own handling of files. The standards reached by students who are not on an examination course in Years 10 and 11 are average. These students do not receive their full curriculum entitlement and their achievement is unsatisfactory.

## **Teaching and learning**

83. Teaching is very good in ICT lessons. In most lessons, use of excellent resources combined with a variety of tasks, leads to lively lessons which progress at a fast pace. Teachers work hard to keep up to date with developments in the subject area. They are enthusiastic about their subject and use a variety of imaginative teaching styles to stimulate the students' interest. They know their subject very well and have a good relationship with the students, using praise to encourage all of them to be involved. Students are encouraged to think about what they are doing and to develop their ideas. Students of all attainment levels are well supported and challenged, and as a result they achieve very well. In a minority of lessons, a few students are less involved and this limits their achievement. Work is well marked and students are given clear guidance on what they need to do to improve.

## **Leadership and management**

84. Leadership provides very good support for those who teach ICT, either as a specific subject or within their own subject area. Planning and assessment in the department are very good and students are supported well out of lessons. The head of department has quickly identified opportunities for delivery of ICT in other subjects. However, there has not yet been time to monitor fully the use of ICT in other departments or to introduce the improvements necessary to raise achievement of those students not following an ICT course. Since the last inspection, attainment at the end of Years 9 and Year 11 has risen, and there has been significant investment in hardware to support ICT.

## **ICT across the curriculum**

85. Students in most other subjects use ICT skills very competently, though less so in Years 10 and 11 where many do not receive their curricular entitlement. Nevertheless, due to previous good achievement, their competence is average. The ratio of computers to students is below the national average, with some suites of machines in need of replacement. The distribution of buildings on the school site hampers communication links. Limited access to ICT reduces the quality of learning in English, science, design and technology and music. However, even these subjects sometimes contribute well to learning in ICT. Good use of ICT supports learning in history and art and design, where image manipulation is well developed. The geography and science departments use ICT for Internet research and data handling. Laptop computers are used effectively to support learning in English and modern foreign languages. Students make good use of computer-aided design and manufacture in design and technology but do not use computers for control. Where departments have interactive whiteboards, they are used well.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Very high
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Good	
Management	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good knowledge and interest in the subject and students respond enthusiastically to the challenging teaching and achieve very well
- There are insufficient opportunities for students to practice ICT skills in their learning
- Students have the skills necessary for independent learning and opportunities to apply these through enquiry work and regular homework
- Though thorough, marking does not always tell students how to improve their work

### Commentary

#### Examination results

86. In 2003, the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were very high when compared with those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were very high. More than half the students gained grades A\* or A. Results in 2004 show a similar pattern.

#### Standards and achievement

87. Year 7 students have the skills and enthusiasm necessary to make very good progress. They achieve well during their first three years. By the end of Year 9 they can express their very good knowledge and understanding of the places and themes covered using the correct terms and have acquired a very good range of subject skills. In Years 10 and 11, students build on the very good progress of earlier years. Their written work shows a detailed knowledge and understanding of the topics covered and an ability to interpret maps and diagrams and to analyse data. They have a very clear appreciation of examination requirements.

#### Teaching and learning

88. Students learn effectively because they enjoy their work and want to do well. They do best in Years 10 and 11 because they build on the good subject knowledge they have accumulated and the pace and challenge of lessons increases. Teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject motivate students. They are encouraged to consider controversial issues with sensitivity and objectivity. Year 8 students had expressed clear views on the threat to the rain forests, views they supported with evidence.
89. Lessons were well planned and moved at a brisk pace, so that students produced a good quantity and quality of work, for example accurate maps, diagrams, written and oral work. Planning ensured students were able to build upon existing knowledge to extend understanding and practise their skills. Understanding was developed further through the inclusion of topical and local issues, for example the recent hurricanes in the Caribbean. Skills developed through practical work and enquiries are applied in fieldwork, when data is collected for analysis. Year 7 students spoke enthusiastically of their visit to Pegwell Bay. Students are expected to take responsibility for their learning and homework regularly requires them to use their skills through independent study. Relationships are very positive. Students' contributions are valued, and so they are confident and willing to ask as well as answer questions. Teachers invariably challenge them to explain answers and give reasons.

90. Lessons were less successful when work failed to challenge and engage students, or where the behaviour of a small minority disrupted the learning of others. Assessment information is being used increasingly to monitor progress. Marking is thorough but does not tell all students how to improve their work and target setting is unusual. Insufficient use is made of ICT, which limits opportunities for students to practise ICT skills in the subject.

### **Leadership and management**

91. Much has been achieved in a short time to improve the effectiveness of strategic planning. There is a departmental improvement plan and some progress has been made in the analysis of assessment data to effect improvement. Schemes of work are being updated to meet present requirements. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades in GCSE examinations has improved.

### **History**

Provision in history is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results at GCSE are well above the national average although they are not consistent
- Recent changes in teaching style are contributing to improving standards in Years 7 to 9
- The use of information from assessment, and from monitoring and evaluating the department's work, is not focused enough to ensure consistent improvement
- Relationships between staff and students are very good and history is a popular subject

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

92. The results of teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were very high compared to those reported nationally. In 2004, they improved further, with the majority of students being 2 National Curriculum Levels above average. GCSE results, in 2003, were also very high and were higher than in 2002 and 2004.

#### **Standards and achievement**

93. In Years 7 to 9 current standards are well above average and achievement is good for most students. They make good progress because they show enthusiasm for their lessons and are well taught. They develop the skills to use original source materials, selecting and exploring the most relevant and valuable information, for example to identify the main changes in democracy and democratic government between 1820 and 1990. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average. Students' progress continues well as they refine their research skills and explore different perspectives for historical events. In considering poor law reform, for example, students considered events from the perspective of a ratepayer as opposed to an infirm married pauper and thereby gained a deeper understanding.

#### **Teaching and learning**

94. Teachers know their subject well. Students learn well in all years because teachers work hard to interest them. Where facilities allow, teachers and students use ICT creatively, and active methods of study make the work enjoyable and productive. For example, GCSE students' multimedia coursework on 'The Home Front' shows very good command of both history and of technology. Role-play and dramatic work also feature in all years, and younger students are benefiting particularly from teachers' growing understanding of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. The use of primary

source material, pictures and archive records added valuable dimensions to class work. Sometimes, when students were expected to listen passively rather than challenged to think for themselves, lessons lacked pace. Teachers mark work positively and help students to know broadly what they have achieved, and what they need to do to improve.

### **Leadership and management**

95. The department is characterised by good teamwork and a desire to improve. New ideas are welcomed and some have been implemented very successfully. There are, however, some gaps in the department's vision and methods. Assessment data is used well to help individual students to improve, by informing them of strengths and weaknesses in their work and by setting target levels and grades. Its use as a management tool for analysing how well the department is doing and to plan for improvement is ineffective. Although school policies are supported, monitoring and evaluating recent changes to teaching and learning strategies have not been focused tightly enough. As a result, the quality of individual lessons varies and overall development plans, although broadly effective, have lacked rigour in these vital areas. Students, rightly, feel well supported by the department. Relationships are very good, some lessons are great fun and the visits programme is extensive.

### **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is very good.

	Year 9	Year 11 - GCSE Religious studies	Year 11 - Non-examination
Standards	Well above average	Very high	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good		
Management	Good		
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good		

### **Main strengths**

- The leadership inspires the team, and non-specialist teachers are very well supported
- Students respond to the very good teaching with interest and enthusiasm, and achieve very well
- In lessons, students feel supported, their views are valued and so they contribute confidently
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to the personal development of students as they learn from the main faiths and empathise with ideas and viewpoints different from their own

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

96. The results of teacher assessments in religious education, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, were very high compared with those reported nationally. Results in GCSE religious studies examinations have risen since the last inspection. In 2003, the proportion of students who achieved the higher grades A\*-C was very high when compared with the national average.

#### **Standards and achievement**

97. Younger students make very good progress in investigating world religions. They have a good knowledge and understanding of distinctive features of other faiths. They appreciate that people of different faiths can share beliefs, shown when Year 8 students studied Ramadan as an example of how people make sense of life's experiences through their religious beliefs. They can interpret ideas and symbols and understand the meaning of rituals and artefacts. Year 9 students achieved a very clear understanding of suffering and Buddhism.
98. Older students were able to give balanced consideration to a range of issues, including controversial and sensitive topics. Year 10 students, reviewing racial discrimination in South Africa and the southern states of America, could express and argue a position on this issue and listened



carefully to the views of others. This contributes much to their personal development. Students' written and oral work is of a very high standard.

99. Students in Year 11 following the GCSE course are working at a level well above that expected at this stage of the year. Students have a very good knowledge and understanding of the topics covered, for example of the beliefs of different denominations of the Christian faith. Their oral skills are very good and they are very willing to express and support their own views. They listen to, and consider maturely, points of view other than their own. Written work is of a very high standard, a particular strength being their use of sources, including holy texts and the Internet, in supporting arguments.

### **Teaching and learning**

100. Lessons are carefully planned to include a range of learning activities and challenging teaching methods. Work meets students' needs and, as a result, they learn well. All teachers have high expectations and an enthusiasm for the subject that stirs students' interest. Lessons require students' active participation as they learn the value of religions in understanding ideas or dilemmas similar to those they might face in their own lives. For example, Year 10 students could suggest ideas to counter racism in schools in religious education. In the GCSE course topics are re-visited to consolidate learning and move studies to a higher level. Students are able to make comparisons across religions and appreciate the impact of religious teachings on people's everyday lives.
101. Discussions are probing and challenging. In all the lessons seen, trust and supportive relationships gave students the confidence to learn from each other and to express their views. For example, Year 11 students, reviewing their own beliefs, learned through sensible and mature consideration because of the way the teacher used their skill in handling sensitive and personal issues. Teaching is interesting and so attitudes and behaviour are good or better in all lessons. Students are encouraged to develop their very good literacy skills to produce well-structured extended writing. Discursive pieces show they can see issues from different perspectives as a result of teaching that relates one religion to another. Through pair and group work, students learn to work together and develop their speaking and listening skills. Marking is thorough, but, except on the GCSE course, students often receive too little guidance about how to improve. Homework is used effectively to prepare for class discussions, to extend and consolidate learning and provide opportunities for independence.

### **Leadership and management**

102. Teachers work well together and share effective practice. Non-specialist teachers are supported well and all have empathy for the subject and make a full contribution to the successful teaching. Leadership is aware of the strengths in the subject and provides a very good role model in command of the subject and leading a team. Monitoring and assessment are not yet used with sufficient rigour throughout the department. The proportion of curriculum time devoted to the subject has now been increased in Years 7 to 9.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is satisfactory.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

  

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers are well qualified, work well together as a team and are committed to raising standards
- Some students underachieve in a few aspects of the subject
- Students have good attitudes and present well-prepared coursework
- Accommodation and resources are significant weaknesses

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

103. The course offers resistant materials, food technology and textiles in Years 7 to 9, with graphics and food technology options in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, the results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above those reported nationally, with all students gaining National Curriculum level 5 or above. Results for 2004 were not as high. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average. Almost all students gained grades A\* to C.

### **Standards and achievements**

104. Standards in the sample of work provided ranged from average to well above average. . Students come into the school with limited previous experience of the subject, and the standards at the end of Year 9 show steady progress. In Years 7 to 9, some particularly effective design work was seen in textiles. Coursework is well presented. Year 11 students write effectively in their coursework folders about their design decisions, and give sound reasons for the conclusions drawn from the trial product that they have made. In these folders, skilled use was made of ICT. In graphics in Year 11, high quality work was seen in coursework.

### **Teaching and learning**

105. Teachers show enthusiasm for their subject and are supportive of students, encouraging good work habits. In a Year 9 food technology lesson, students worked very competently on practical tasks and used a wide range of equipment with care and precision, to produce high-quality food products. Currently, there is limited planning of work to meet individual students' needs and there is often insufficient challenge for the higher-attaining students. The use of course workbooks is good, but these do not allow scope for more extended responses to written tasks. Students' attitudes are positive in all years although a significant number do not come well prepared for practical lessons, which impedes their progress. Very effective use is made of ICT for coursework in Year 11. The use of ICT in Years 7 to 9 is more limited, mainly as result of lack of resources and curriculum time. No use is made of computers for control. Computer-aided designing and making are used effectively in resistant materials and graphics.

### **Leadership and management**

106. Leadership and management have ensured the gaining of well above average results. This is a popular subject and much enjoyed by students. Although planning is good overall, not enough emphasis is given to more open-ended designing and making, and to the evaluation of existing products. The rate of progress within the modules of work in Years 7 to 9 is slow at times. The department handbook and scheme of work are satisfactory but contain only limited references to literacy, citizenship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.
107. Accommodation is unsatisfactory despite some improvement since the previous inspection. Resistant materials and graphics are taught in mobile classrooms that have limited facilities, with no space for resistant materials preparation. The workshop is cramped and cluttered. Funding is low and does not meet the needs of the department. The single, one-hour lessons constrain the range of work that can be done, especially in food technology. The amount of technician help for the subject is inadequate and impedes progress within the department. Results have greatly improved since the last inspection. The National Curriculum is now covered correctly, with good use of computer-aided design and making.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision for art and design is good.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

  

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Effective use is made of assessment and target setting to raise standards
- The extension of the curriculum beyond timetabled lessons gives students good opportunities to succeed
- The lack of challenge and independence in some lessons inhibits effective learning

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

108. Results of teacher assessment, in Year 9 in 2003, were broadly in line with those reported nationally. Results in 2004 show a significant improvement. In 2003, GCSE results were average and improved in 2004. Staffing appointments in January 2004 brought to an end a long period of instability during which standards fluctuated.

#### **Standards and achievement**

109. Students systematically develop a range of artistic skills from Year 7 when they learn about portraiture. By Year 9, they use a range of materials including charcoal and chalks, watercolour and acrylics. By Year 11, students have a broader range of skills to draw upon when preparing for their mock exams. They use a range of printing techniques and show good standards, for example in a project on pattern and adornment, when they develop work based upon Islamic architecture or pattern in the natural world.

#### **Teaching and learning**

110. In the most successful lessons, students were given clear objectives and made good progress, as they were encouraged to think and work independently. They worked hard, and co-operated with each other very successfully to achieve their goals. Some students, learning about the painting techniques used by Jack Vettriano, worked together well to make a comparison with another artist depicting the Seaside. Teachers and students evaluate their work carefully and set future targets for improvement. In some lessons the pace was too slow. Long explanations bored students and they did not achieve as well as they could. All students make good use of ICT. Visiting artists work with the students to produce public art and design, and a sculptor is working on an exhibit for Margate gallery with Year 10 students. Some inexperienced students initially had difficulty with using lino-cutting tools or with preparing clay, though all students learned quickly as their problems were identified and remedied.

#### **Leadership and management**

111. The department has re-established itself in a relatively short period of time and is now well led and managed. A bid for Artsmark status signals the desire to raise the profile of the department. Schemes of work and clear assessment criteria help ensure that all students develop appropriate artistic skills for their age. Marking and assessment are good. Teachers work hard to raise the standards of all by holding daily lunchtime sessions when students can come and continue working on their current work or project. The department makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students through its displays around the school and through the

culture within the department. The art and design rooms provide an attractive environment and visits to galleries enrich the curriculum.

## **Music**

Provision for music is good.

	Years 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

  

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' very enthusiastic attitudes to the subject contribute positively to their achievement
- Teachers use their expertise effectively to guide and advise students
- Planning for the higher-attaining and musically talented students, and for the use of ICT, is underdeveloped
- Assessments at the end of Year 9 are not thorough enough

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

112. Teachers' assessments, at the end of Year 9 in 2003, indicated that standards were significantly above those reported nationally. Results in 2004 were similar. These assessments did not give a complete picture, as they did not include a sufficiently rigorous and detailed evaluation of students' creative achievement. GCSE results, in 2003, were below the national average. Results in 2004 were slightly higher.

#### **Standards and achievement**

113. Although students' previous musical experience is varied, they join the school with standards that are average overall. By Year 9, students have well-established rhythmic qualities and this contributes positively to their creative skills. This was very evident in their rap compositions and performances. Here, students captured the style of the music accurately, fitting their words to a rhythmic backing whilst maintaining a steady beat. Students use their instrumental skills and their knowledge of the main elements of music effectively, to support their creative work. The majority perform melodies with confidence and more competent instrumentalists vary a melody with good understanding.
114. The majority of students in the GCSE group are instrumentalists and this contributes positively to their overall good performance skills. Students have good knowledge of the main historical events in music, identifying the different periods of music and describing with accuracy the most important features of each period. Students are beginning to understand structure in compositions. This element, however, is under-developed. A contributory reason for this is the lack of emphasis on this element during Years 7 to 9. This has now been remedied with a greater focus to develop students' creativity.

#### **Teaching and learning**

115. Teachers have good relationships with students, creating an atmosphere in which they are confident to perform in front of others, and are encouraged to seek help when required. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and use their skills effectively to demonstrate styles of music. The planning of lessons is thorough, on the whole, and generally builds on students' previous learning. Lesson plans do not include strategies for challenging talented students, who do not always achieve as well as they could. Lessons begin with good starter activities to extend students knowledge of the technical vocabulary of the subject, but opportunities are sometimes missed to reinforce their understanding with relevant questioning.

## Leadership and management

116. The leadership sets a clear vision for future developments in the subject. Management is satisfactory overall, despite weaknesses in the analysis of recent examination results and the monitoring of students' progress. Assessment procedures are generally satisfactory, with some good student self-evaluation. However, the levels for the creative element lack precision, resulting in assessments that have low expectations for improvisation and composing. The use of ICT music programs to support students' learning is under-developed in Years 7 to 9 but used effectively in Years 10 and 11. New computer equipment is waiting to be installed. Currently the subject's contribution to ICT teaching does not fully meet requirements.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is good.

	Year 9	Year 11 GCSE	Year 11 non-examination
Standards	Above average	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers set high expectations
- Students have good attitudes
- Extra-curricular activities give very good opportunities for students to extend their learning and experience
- Evaluations and assessment are not sufficiently detailed
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory

## Commentary

### Examination results

117. GCSE results, in 2003, were well above average. Results in 2004 were lower. They were affected by staffing issues and some students' non-attendance and lack of commitment.

### Standards and achievement

118. Students have average skills in games activities when they enter the school. They have a wide range of experience in activities. In Years 7 to 9 they have a sound understanding of the effects of exercise on the body. GCSE students in Year 11 are achieving better than students in Year 10 because of better attitudes. They achieve satisfactorily in theory lessons and there is good use of technical language, but the misbehaviour of a minority of students affects the progress of others in the lessons. Standards achieved by talented team players are high and some students perform at regional and national levels. Students' achievements are enriched by the use of external coaches, for example, in dance and fencing.

### Teaching and learning

119. Teachers' questioning is effective in prompting students' learning. Students acquire practical skills quickly because they listen well and enjoy this aspect of the course. Higher-attaining students are challenged well, and lower-attaining students learn well because teachers break down tasks into manageable objectives. For example, Year 7 students in the early stages of gymnastics learned how to widen their movement vocabulary by fulfilling the teacher's set tasks on simple sequences. In the best lessons, teachers encourage students to view one another's work so that students learn to co-operate well. Students learn well from each other, demonstrating good opportunities for personal development, but this is not consistent in all lessons. Lessons are well planned, with high expectations of behaviour and performance to which students respond and learn well. Talented

students have some good opportunities to lead groups or assist with demonstrations. Insufficient use is made of ICT and digital cameras to allow students to observe and analyse one another's performance as a means of improvement. Assessment in the GCSE course is used well to help students to check their progress and measure performance against targets, but marking does not always highlight areas for improvement or clearly relate to examination grades. Teachers usually review lessons to consolidate learning, but this is not done consistently.

### **Leadership and management**

120. Very good leadership has given very effective direction to improve standards since the previous report. Courses and activities are well chosen to meet students' needs. For example, a switch in examination boards is planned to meet the strengths and needs of students, and a GCSE dance course is a very popular addition. The use of ICT is encouraged in lessons to widen students' experience but limited funds have affected this development. Good guidance for teachers is provided in detailed schemes of work and a comprehensive handbook, but consistency is not evident in lessons. For example, opportunities for demonstrating good citizenship are not always taken.
121. The location of the games field, some considerable distance from the school, has a notable impact on teaching time. Time for activity is severely cut, especially in those lessons only timetabled for one period, and this limits what can be taught and achieved. Accommodation, criticised in the previous report, is used effectively but lack of tennis courts means that this activity is restricted to clubs. A theory room has been allocated, but this is not well sited for linking theory and demonstration. Despite a number of difficulties, overall improvement since the previous report has been good.

### **Dance**

122. Provision in the GCSE dance course was sampled. In Year 11, standards are well above average. Students focus and concentrate on fluidity, rhythm, the use of gesture and sustained movements. They understand the importance of timing and the need for good interpretation of music. Students respond well and teamwork is emphasised effectively with students working very well together. Talented students have very good opportunities to lead the group. All students understand the importance of expression, interpreting dance vocabulary very well and relating this very well to themes and accompaniment. Students' enthusiasm and very good attitudes assist improvement.
123. Teaching in Year 11 is very good. In one lesson, very good use of props was being developed as part of examination preparation. Very good analysis and evaluation assisted learning. Improvement and progress was particularly effective because of the teacher's very good focus on key dance terms. Specially organised extra-curricular provision helps students practise, and external coaches improve and enhance students' work. Teachers review previous learning, to check understanding, before moving on. Good demonstration, effective questioning and thorough evaluation at the end of lessons, contribute strongly to the progress students are making. The facilities for dance are satisfactory although there is no dance studio to assist students in checking movements. The course is led and managed very well.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is good.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	This is a new course since the last inspection

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are very well informed, and understand their rights and responsibilities much better than most students nationally
- Students are very positive and participate thoroughly as citizens in the life and running of their school
- There are no separate records of assessment, and reporting to parents is unsatisfactory

### Commentary

#### Standards and achievement

124. Students are very well informed and responsible citizens in the general sense of the term. Citizenship is taught as part of the personal social and health education programme in Years 7 to 11, and is not assessed separately. It is not monitored and recorded when taught in other departments. However, based upon the work sampled and observations during the inspection, students achieve well.

#### Teaching and learning

125. Teachers plan very well and pack lessons with a wide range of interesting activities, so that students enjoy the work and participate with enthusiasm and imagination. Discussions and group activities are used well to explore ideas, for example in the work undertaken on bullying, where discussion and role-plays helped students to present their feelings and ideas on how good citizens should react to bullying and oppressive behaviour.

#### Leadership and management

126. The subject is well organised and the curriculum is covered well, despite not having separate timetabled time. An audit has been made and all subjects have identified opportunities for covering citizenship in their own schemes of work. However, subject teachers often do not identify clearly to students in lessons when they are covering elements of the citizenship programme, and they do not assess it separately. As a result, most students, with the exception of those on the short course, do not know how well they are doing or how to improve. Monitoring and evaluation are currently informal, and parents are not properly informed of their daughters' progress because there are no assessments upon which to base accurate reports.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design and design	3	66.7	80.1	0.0	23.7	16.7	29.9
Biology	10	80.0	65.2	0.0	11.1	22.0	20.6
Business Studies	11	100.0	76.4	27.3	16.3	36.4	26.2
Chemistry	9	77.8	72.7	0.0	13.9	20.0	24.1
Classical Studies	1	100.0	87.4	0.0	34.3	30.0	35.2
Communication Studies	7	100.0	86.4	42.9	23.8	40.0	32.0
Drama	4	25.0	86.5	0.0	19.6	7.5	30.6
English/English language	6	100.0	82.9	83.3	17.5	46.7	28.7
English literature	8	100.0	85.9	12.5	19.1	31.3	30.2
French	6	83.3	78.2	0.0	18.9	20.0	27.6
General studies	40	82.5	73.9	12.5	17.8	29.3	25.7
Geography	1	100.0	74.3	0.0	19.8	40.0	26.5
German	3	100.0	81.5	33.3	19.3	33.3	28.9
History	10	100.0	80.7	10.0	19.5	35.0	28.6
Information Technology	4	75.0	67.0	0.0	10.9	17.5	21.4
Mathematics	14	14.3	61.9	0.0	17.1	4.3	22.1
Music	1	0.0	86.5	0.0	21.4	0.0	30.7
Other social studies	22	90.9	69.7	45.5	16.7	39.1	24.1
Physics	2	100.0	68.6	50.0	14.4	45.0	22.7
Religious education	2	100.0	80.2	50.0	22.6	35.0	29.8
Sociology	9	100.0	71.8	33.3	18.4	40.0	25.4
Vocational Studies	7	100.0	62.8	28.6	12.3	38.6	20.8

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design and design	13	100.0	98.6	53.8	50.2	92.3	87.5
Biology	19	100.0	96.4	26.3	39.2	75.8	78.6
Business Studies	21	100.0	98.7	61.9	36.8	98.1	80.1
Chemistry	15	100.0	97.6	13.3	49.0	58.7	84.9
Classical Studies	4	100.0	99.5	50.0	55.9	85.0	90.9
Communication Studies	23	100.0	99.4	39.1	37.8	87.8	82.1



Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Drama	7	100.0	99.5	42.9	40.1	80.0	83.6
English/English language	7	100.0	99.4	42.9	36.3	91.4	80.9
English literature	27	100.0	99.5	74.1	46.5	101.5	86.5
French	9	100.0	98.8	0.0	51.5	71.1	87.6
General studies	62	100.0	94.7	56.5	31.0	93.9	73.1
Geography	22	100.0	98.7	68.2	44.5	97.3	84.0
German	6	100.0	98.4	16.7	47.9	66.7	84.8
History	18	100.0	99.0	44.4	44.6	83.3	84.6
Information Technology		100.0	95.6	25.0	24.6	65.0	69.5
Mathematics	8	100.0	96.7	25.0	55.6	75.0	88.8
Music	2	100.0	98.8	0.0	38.9	70.0	81.1
Other social studies	39	100.0	97.4	41.0	42.7	84.1	81.8
Physics	12	100.0	96.7	33.3	44.6	73.3	81.7
Religious education	7	100.0	98.8	42.9	46.7	85.7	85.6
Sociology	11	100.0	98.2	36.4	44.3	83.6	83.6

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The school offers A-level courses in English literature, English language and literature, French, German and Spanish. The focus was on English literature and French, but English language and literature, German and Spanish were sampled.

In the Year 13 English language and literature lesson, teaching and learning were challenging and very good. Students had very good understanding of Shakespearean devices such as dramatic irony, and in their analysis of how spoken language transforms the character of Othello they were able to draw parallels with other texts such as Macbeth.

In modern languages, the teachers' skilled questioning probes students' knowledge and challenges them to greater awareness of international events, which enhances their development as European citizens. As a result of teachers' very good linguistic skills, students in the Year 13 German lesson used a wide range of vocabulary at conversational speeds, and read aloud from notes and printed texts with fluency and expression. Their mature discussions on poverty in the third world indicate a good depth of understanding of world affairs. Video conferencing is well used by the small number of students taking advanced Spanish. This very high quality tuition enabled Year 12 students to access Spanish fully and they responded with well considered questions and answers on the customs and culture of Valencia.

## English literature

Provision for English literature is very good.

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### Main strengths

- Examination results are well above the national average and improving
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject
- Students' very positive responses make a significant contribution to their learning
- Very good relationships enable students to ask questions and accept and give constructive criticism
- Very effective leadership has improved standards and developed provision

### Commentary

#### Examination results

127. In 2003, three quarters of the students gained the higher grades A or B. The most recent results were similar, although not as many gained the highest grade.

#### Standards and achievement

128. Current standards are well above average. Careful monitoring of students' work by staff ensures that boys and girls achieve as well as each other.

#### Teaching and learning

129. Teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of the examination requirements are very good. The structured approach to teaching the skills of literary criticism in the main school results in students making rapid progress with their essay writing in Year 12. Students are encouraged to explore the feelings of characters through dramatic presentations and this results in secure knowledge and understanding of the text studied. The work of higher-attaining students is characterised by the crisp presentation of complex arguments. Teachers are very skilled at giving discreet support to less confident students so that they become independent learners.
130. Teachers facilitate discussion without dominating students' views. High-quality questioning encourages students to explore and extend their first responses. For example, Year 13 students debated confidently how language and imagery were used in *Ode to a Nightingale*. Although contradictory views evolved, students reflected on each other's points of view with sensitivity. In a parallel class, students prepared to debate opposing views of the Shakespearian character, Iago. A very good range of teaching strategies was used to support students' initial efforts, but then responsibility for learning was placed on the two groups. They rose to the challenge and by the end of the lesson their discussions were evaluative and they appreciated the importance of textual accuracy to support an argument.
131. Students, especially those new to the school, are well inducted into the reading requirements of the course. Students have good access to the Internet in the refurbished library, and to a small but high quality collection of books that support their critical studies and wider reading. Students enjoy taking part in a wide range of seminars, debates and other enrichment activities, such as the trip to visit the battlefields of the First World War. Guidance includes appropriate information for those who intend to continue the subject at university.

### **Leadership and management**

132. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Staff work well as a team and are committed to maintaining high standards. They are encouraged to teach to their expertise and their commitment and enthusiasm are evident to students. Since the last inspection, there has been an increase in the range of courses offered and results have improved.

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

133. There is a well planned approach to teaching language and literacy through other subjects in the sixth form which has been well supported by all staff. A strong focus has been placed on improving students' essay writing and reading skills. Students are encouraged to acquire and use a high level of technical vocabulary. The probing analysis and evaluation of each other's work is developed very well in clear written accounts of coursework in ICT and mathematics, and in many other subjects that build on students' ability to reason, argue and redraft extended essays.

### **French**

Provision in French is very good.

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### **Main strengths**

- Teachers have very good subject expertise and communicate enthusiasm for their subject
- International work-related schemes are very good

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

134. Students enter the sixth form with overall average GCSE grades. They follow AS and short course GCSE syllabuses and the majority continue towards full advanced level courses in Year 13. In 2003, no student gained A or B grades, although all gained A to E grades. This was below the national average. Results in 2004 improved with five out of seven students gaining A or B grades.

#### **Standards and achievement**

135. During the lessons seen, students achieved very well. They used a wide range of vocabulary accurately in serious topical discussions, such as the Concorde air crash in Paris, and analysed French newspaper surveys. Their written work is of a very good standard, with well-researched essays that indicate a good understanding of France and French culture.

#### **Teaching and learning**

136. Well-planned lessons are challenging, with fast paced conversations, paired work and discussion groups. Cassettes were used well to reproduce actual news bulletins and interviews at the time of the air crash, and students' responses to these indicated good comprehension skills. Teachers' linguistic expertise is very good and students and teachers expect to communicate in the relevant language throughout the session. A French foreign-language assistant provides extra support for students' linguistic and cultural development.

### **Leadership and management**

137. Very good leadership has been effective in promoting languages within the school, and in the wider community, as well as maintaining high standards. There are excellent links with European schools and colleges, and links are being developed with a French residential college to establish work-experience opportunities for post-16 students. The French college has already accepted three Year

13 students for summer 2005, where they will work alongside their French peers in engineering, jewellery or watch making. Residential visits, such as the sixth form weekend in Paris, provide very good cultural opportunities. Staffing levels are good and supplemented by foreign language assistants. Accommodation and resources are good overall. Improvement since the previous inspection has been particularly good in preparing students to become European citizens.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The inspection focused on the A-level course in pure mathematics and mechanics. Provision for students taking further mathematics and statistics was sampled. The school also offers students GCSE mathematics, but the timing of the inspection did not allow this to be sampled.

In the two sampled lessons, teaching and learning were very good. The teacher's expertise in both further mathematics and statistics was used very effectively to motivate students, test understanding with probing questions, and give clear explanations to ensure that any misconceptions did not recur. Learning objectives were sharply focused and all students were able to achieve very well in lessons that had pace and interest for them.

Provision in mathematics is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Performance in AS level examinations has improved
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge so that all students learn complex mathematics at a good pace
- The breadth of courses and examinations on offer is good
- Insufficient use of ICT slows progress in understanding

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

138. Results in 2003 were below national averages and lower than previous results. The most recent examination results are an improvement on the 2003 results.

#### **Standards and achievement**

139. Students achieve well and make good progress in all areas of mathematics because good teaching emphasises the language of higher-level mathematics and effectively utilises the students' high level of algebraic competence.

#### **Teaching and learning**

140. Good management has ensured that teacher expertise is well matched to the demands of the curriculum, and teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to develop complex mathematics at a good pace, without missing out the small steps that enable students to link new knowledge and new skills with the old. The very good relationships and dynamics within the classroom generate good levels of collaboration and productivity. By working together, students of all abilities quickly learn to cope with the increased range of vocabulary and notation that is required to understand the way examination questions are expressed. Students have good decision-making skills and the confidence to check answers independently. The progress made in understanding new concepts is less than that made in knowledge and skills. A significant factor in this is the insufficient use of ICT, particularly the limited use of graphic calculators.

## Leadership and management

141. There has been an increase in the range of courses to meet the needs of students. Students' learning opportunities have been enhanced by the extra-curricular provision for further mathematics and the decision mathematics modules. The leadership provides an excellent role model for teaching, with expertise to teach the full breadth of the course. The expertise and experience of teachers is well matched to the demands of the curriculum. Assessment data is used well to set targets for individual students. The curriculum content for each course is well defined and has been adjusted, after thorough analysis, to meet the pace at which students learn. The reasons why more students do not continue into Year 13 have not been explored.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

142. The development of mathematics as part of the teaching and learning in other subjects has had a positive impact on achievement in chemistry, history, geography and sociology. Most significantly, inspectors observed the students' ability to apply accurately a wide range of statistical and algebraic methods and numerical expertise. Students' achievements are enhanced by their very good capability to interpret data, construct charts and diagrams, such as accurate cross sections of strata, and to solve complex chemical equations.

## SCIENCE

The focus in science was chemistry, but biology and physics were also sampled.

In a Year 13 biology lesson, all the students, regardless of their prior attainment, were achieving very well. The teacher had very good subject knowledge and provided very good individual support and guidance in the relatively small group. Very good teaching gave students a very detailed and clear explanation of genetics. In the physics lesson, students were fully engaged in the topic of the Doppler Effect. Their achievement was very good due to their excellent attitudes and very good teaching by an enthusiastic subject specialist. The standards seen were above average.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is satisfactory.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory
Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers have good subject knowledge which they use well in explaining ideas to high attaining students
- Targeted support for lower-attaining students is beginning to raise standards, but these students' achievements are not as good as those of others
- The relationships between students and teachers are good

## Commentary

### Examination results

143. Examination results in 2003 were well below the national average and similar in 2004. This is in part a reflection of the relatively wide range of students accepted for the course, covering GCSE grades from A to C.

## Standards and achievement

144. Standards seen during the inspection were broadly average. Students make steady progress over time and their achievements are satisfactory. Targeted support for those students with lower attainment is starting to bear fruit, but further work is needed. Students show a range of experimental skills in lessons. Most can use burettes effectively in titrations, for example, but understanding of the 'mole' by all but the most capable students is weak. Lower-attaining students sometimes achieve less than they could during practical sessions, because they are not given sufficient support. Higher-attaining students usually do well, attaining well above average or high standards.

## Teaching and learning

145. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they use well to explain concepts and increase high attaining students' understanding. Many students, particularly in the smaller Year 13 classes, are kept involved in lessons by a good range of teaching and learning styles. Teachers know students well and relationships between staff and students are good. The work is not always well matched to the needs of the lower attaining students, who nevertheless have the capacity to achieve more than they do. These students receive less support than they need, particularly in the larger groups in Year 12. Work which included proportionality, such as mole problems, was not always taught at a level that lower attaining students could comprehend. Teachers have good knowledge of examination syllabuses, which is helpful to the students who listen well and are motivated to attain high grades. The few students who are passive are not challenged sufficiently to become involved in lessons.
146. Work is marked carefully and students appreciate the constructive comments made on how to improve their work. Assessment information is beginning to be used effectively to set clear targets for students. This is increasingly valuable for lower-attaining students and especially those in the small classes where there is more time for the teacher to spend with individual students.

## Leadership and management

147. Teachers work in a co-operative manner and are effectively supported by a specialist technician. The A-level chemistry course is well planned and co-ordinated and covers the syllabus requirements well. The department has recognised the issue of underachievement of the lower-attaining students and has started to tackle it through closer monitoring of students' progress. A focus on improving the weaker aspects of teaching, however, is not yet a high enough priority. Good planned use is made of ICT and students' files show that the curriculum has a good balance of practical and theoretical work.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is very good.

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	This is a new course since the last inspection

## Main strengths

- Teachers adapt their teaching to suit the learning styles of students, enabling them to achieve very well
- Teachers know their subject well and have an infectious enthusiasm which motivates students to work hard
- Coursework is assessed well and students are given clear guidelines on how to improve

## **Commentary**

### **Examination results**

148. This course was introduced in September 2003 and so students are currently in their second year. The department previously offered A-level computing.

### **Standards and achievement**

149. The standard of Year 12 coursework is well above average. Students are able to devise solutions to design specifications using well-developed skills, exploring the most advanced features of spreadsheets and showing a very sound knowledge of visual basic (a standard programming language). Although test plans are followed, using a range of cross-referenced data, it does not always lead to corrective action. Coursework is well evaluated against specification, with limitations and further developments identified through end-user evaluation. The user guides that students write are of a good standard, overall. Students understand advanced features of networks and their infrastructures. They apply their knowledge to case studies on distribution and centralised systems, identifying parts of the described infrastructure which support these. They analyse the use of a planned database, identifying hardware implications and relate these to ICT policies. They are able to identify the advantages and disadvantages of human/computer interfaces and are encouraged to use deductive reasoning to develop their ideas.

### **Teaching and learning**

150. Teachers know their subject well and have an infectious enthusiasm in their teaching. Lessons are prepared meticulously, using very well prepared resources. Teachers work hard to keep up to date with new developments, and incorporate these into their discussions with the students, ensuring students achieve high standards. There is a very good relationship between teachers and students, and the students know they can seek help out of lessons if they need additional support in order to complete their work. The teachers have identified styles of learning among the students in the sixth form and developed their teaching methods to maximise the achievement of all. Students are highly motivated and achieve very well. Their written work is well marked. Model answers are given for each piece of written homework. Coursework is assessed thoroughly, with students given clear guidelines on how to improve.

### **Leadership and management**

151. The leadership provides a very good role model and supports other staff and students very well. Sixth form courses more suitable for girls have been investigated, and this has increased the popularity of the subject and raised the standard of students' work. Assessment is meticulous and there is very good sharing of good practice in the department. A-level ICT was not reported in the last inspection.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

152. Very good use is made of ICT in modern foreign languages, design and technology and government and politics. Video conferencing is used very effectively to deliver A-level Spanish and government and politics. Design and technology makes very good use of computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture. In history, students use their ICT skills to support text manipulation, to share information, and in art and design image manipulation is well developed. Students use Internet research and word processing for drafting and editing their essays in English. Graphical calculators are used well in mathematics and the ICT suite is used to support teaching and learning in A-level chemistry. Good resources in geography are used for data handling, Internet research and word processing. In the social sciences department, ICT resources are limited. In sociology the remoteness of the classrooms from the main building prevents reasonable access to the Internet. In business studies, although computers are available, the equipment is obsolete and of little use in supporting independent research.

## HUMANITIES

The focus subjects for the inspection were geography, history and sociology. The school also offers courses in classical civilisation, government and politics, religious studies, psychology, general studies and a short course on citizenship. Most of these were sampled.

In a Year 13 classical civilisation lesson, good teaching of Virgil's 'Aeneid' led to students achieving well and developing considerable knowledge of Virgil's vision of the underworld and how it differs from Homer's version. They used good quotations from the text to support different points of view.

Government and politics is taught by an on-line video conferencing link because it is an option for which demand is low. In a lesson, two Year 13 students achieved very well because they were exceptionally motivated and had prepared thoroughly by reading and by written answers to pre set questions. The tutor is very knowledgeable and up-to-date in his research, so the level of questioning was very challenging and sometimes led to exceptionally high levels of understanding by the students.

In an excellent Year 12 religious studies lesson, students studied the complexities of 'Samatha Meditation' and its importance to Buddhists. All made excellent progress as a result of the scholarly and enthusiastic teaching that informed and stimulated their interest. Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive and this contributes to the high standards attained.

Teaching and learning were good in a Year 13 psychology lesson. Students worked in pairs to evaluate three biases in a range of psychological theories. They were interested, worked hard and had a good understanding of key concepts.

### Geography

Provision in geography is very good.

	Year 13
Standards	Very high
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### Main strengths

- A-level results have been consistently very high and have improved since the previous report
- The considerable strengths in teaching result in students learning very effectively
- Very good relationships have developed showing mutual respect and a shared desire to succeed

### Commentary

#### Examination results

153. Results, in 2003, were very high when compared with the national average. The proportion of students gaining the higher A and B grades was also very high. Results for 2004 show a similar pattern. Results have improved since the previous inspection.

#### Standards and achievement

154. Students produce work of a very high standard. For example, the work of Year 13 students on cold environments is very detailed and reflects their very good understanding of glacial and periglacial environments. In oral work, students use technical terms confidently when providing evidence and examples in support of their inferences.



### Teaching and learning

155. Teachers provide very clear explanation and rich exposition. Students have many opportunities to apply and extend the skills they have built-up over earlier years through independent study. For example, essay writing receives a high priority in Year 12. Students in both years are conscientious and very few choose not to progress from AS to A2 level.
156. The preferred learning styles of the students are met through a range of activities. Students recognise that they are expected to take responsibility for learning. Geography is a popular subject at this level, and groups are of a suitable size to allow student interaction, discussion and the exchange of ideas. These opportunities are exploited to the full, with students researching topics prior to lessons in order that all play a full part. Relationships between students and teachers are very good, both wishing to obtain the highest grades possible. To this end, students are provided with detailed feedback on essays and practice questions.

### Leadership and management

The subject leadership sets high expectations and the staff work effectively as a team. A clear focus on improvement has ensured that standards have risen since the previous inspection and are now being maintained. The department is forward looking and recognises the subject's contribution to students' overall learning. Students have plenty of opportunities to use skills in English, mathematics and ICT, and these also contribute strongly to their achievement in geography.

### History

Provision in history is good.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Student enjoy their lessons and work hard in school and at home
- Teachers use their very good subject knowledge well to plan interesting lessons that students enjoy
- Data from assessment and from evaluation of teaching are not used effectively

### Commentary

#### Examination results

157. Results at A-level in 2003 were average, both at higher grades and overall passes. The 2004 results were better.

#### Standards and achievement

158. Standards seen during the inspection were above average and achievement good, with students making good progress.

### Teaching and learning

159. Students are very well motivated for the most part and apply themselves well to work in school and at home. Most work hard and do all the required research and preparation. They are, however, less independent than is usual for their age and some, particularly in Year 12, lack the usual confidence seen in class discussion and debate. Teachers are very knowledgeable and lessons are well planned and carefully structured. Some lack the vitality and pace often seen at this level, because students are not always sufficiently challenged in terms of understanding and the processes to be used. Some lessons are too teacher-directed, and so students' ability to organise and evaluate

themselves is underdeveloped. At its best, the teaching seen was lively and students took full responsibility for their own learning and that of others. They shared research and notes, and were happy to make and defend statements in pairs, groups and whole-class situations. Students are less strong than expected in extended oral work, but written work is good and is well marked by teachers, so that they know how to improve. Examination mark schemes are used well to encourage students to focus their writing on meeting these specific requirements.

### **Leadership and management**

160. Subject leadership ensures that teachers share a common sense of direction. The use of data to analyse subject performance is weak, as are the use of formal monitoring and evaluation. As a result, students are well supported as individuals, but teachers lack the benefit of a full picture of the department's long-term strengths and weaknesses. Given the fluctuations in the subject's performance these are significant omissions.

### **Sociology**

Provision in sociology is very good.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	This is a new course since the last inspection

### **Main strengths**

- Students achieve very well, taking into account prior examination performance
- Good subject knowledge enables teachers to plan varied, challenging lessons
- Students' attitudes are very good and this assists rapid accumulation of knowledge and understanding
- Students appreciate the very good care, guidance and support they receive

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

161. Results were average in 2002, when the first cohort of students completed the course, and in 2003. In 2004, results were better. Numbers on the course have risen and the course is a popular sixth form option for students.

#### **Standards and achievement**

162. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average and students achieve very well. Early in Year 12, specialist vocabulary is strongly emphasised in all lessons and students can identify technical terms and link these with definitions. They make well-informed comments on institutions. For example, students in Year 12 discussed the change in family groupings in modern society and explored the history of this change, referring well to previous learning. The conclusions, in Year 12 students' essays, do not relate closely enough to the title of the piece. Year 13 students' essays show an increasing breadth and depth of knowledge, linking arguments well to titles and following very good structures. Students understand how to analyse statistics, interpret graphs, and collect data and to research, in order to argue and confirm hypotheses. They answer questions very well and usually choose appropriate examples to support their answers. However, they do not always demonstrate their good understanding of theorists' studies and different perspectives sufficiently well in their answers to gain the extra marks and raise standards further.

## Teaching and learning

163. Very good lesson planning ensures that much is achieved in the time available. A very good personal understanding of the subject enables teachers to use a variety of teaching methods that challenge students. There is a good interchange of ideas, with students expressing their own clear views in confident dialogue, and learning very well. For example, Year 13 students' understanding of power and politics was widened when discussion drew out the importance of charismatic leadership in a modern, media-driven society. Students saw how the influence of television and partisan newspapers impacted on the success of New Labour and the decline of the Conservative party. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good and they appreciate the co-operative, joint learning environment. They enjoy the course and see it as a useful contribution to future careers. Gifted and talented students are not always challenged enough.
164. Staff and students are fully acquainted with examination requirements. Teachers are aware of students' strengths and weaknesses and students have been consulted on preferred learning styles. Good systems of monitoring students' progress enable teachers to guide and advise students very well. Target setting and good feedback from marking keeps students aware of grades and helps them to raise the standard of their work.

## Leadership and management

165. The popularity and success of the course, and consequently increasing numbers, puts strain on the good accommodation and particularly on the resources available. Sufficient books are available in the school and departmental libraries but several are outdated. Unsatisfactory access to ICT affects what can be achieved in presentations and research. A lunchtime AS citizenship course complements the A-level provision and provides very good extension opportunities for students.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Food technology and graphics are offered at A- level. High quality work was seen in a Year 13 graphics lesson. Students made good use of ICT to design coursework products. Good teaching encouraged independent learning and achievement was very good. Examination results were high.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The school offers courses in art and design, history of art, theatre studies and media studies. The focus of the inspection was on art and design.

Standards, in a Year 12 theatre lesson, were well above average. Very good teaching helped students evaluate and improve their performances of pantomime. Each group used a range of lively and fun techniques to communicate with, and involve, the audience.

Good teaching made students in a Year 13 media studies lesson, aware of the impact of musical numbers on the audience. Well-chosen extracts demonstrated the political correctness and feminine elements of Disney cartoons in the 1980s. Good insights from students, into the function of various cartoon devices, showed that standards were above average.

## Art and design

Provision in art and design is very good.

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

### **Main strengths**

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use to encourage greater independence for students to explore artistic materials and processes
- Students show a high level of commitment and standards are rising

### **Commentary**

#### **Examination results**

166. Results were above average in 2003 and similar in 2004. The department has had a period of staffing instability. Recent appointments have had a positive impact on standards, although there has been insufficient time for this to be reflected in examination results.

#### **Standards and achievement**

167. Scrutiny of work and observation of lessons show that all students are now making very good progress and their achievements, in relation to their prior attainment, are very good. Students are well motivated, regularly attend out-of-hours classes, work with enthusiasm and enjoy art and design. They show considerable independence of thought and use a variety of media confidently. Whilst students show confidence in their use of existing resources, they do not have enough experience of exploring ceramics or photography. The standard of portrait painting in oils is particularly high, as is the combination of computer images with artwork. Students show a high level of understanding when comparing the work of different artists.

#### **Teaching and learning**

168. Teachers skilfully probe for information and give confidence to students, who express themselves lucidly, using appropriate artistic terminology. The monitoring and assessment of students' work are very thorough. The agreement of individual targets, prior to each lesson, ensures that a very good pace of work is maintained. Teachers structure work very well and ensure that students remedy any lack of skills. The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

#### **Leadership and management**

169. The very good leadership has created a skilled team that communicates its ideals, and seeks to raise standards further by a bid for Artsmark status. Links with the community are encouraged and students display their work in local galleries and shopping malls. Life-drawing classes with visiting teachers are a regular feature, and visiting artists give students additional support. Students regularly visit galleries and museums. The accommodation is good. Resources are good and the Internet is very well used for research, but the internal computer suite is not yet fully utilised, as some software is not yet available.

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

The school offers A-level physical education. In a very good Year 12 dance lesson, all students achieved very well as a result of very good teaching and collaborative work with their fellow students.

### **BUSINESS**

A-level business studies was sampled during the inspection. Teaching and learning in a Year 12 lesson were very good. Knowledgeable teaching, the teacher's enthusiastic presentation and well-organised group work ensured very good learning and achievement. Students had been given very clear assessment criteria for their work and gave very well prepared presentations on product designs.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>3</b>
Students' achievement	2	3
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>2</b>
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well students learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	3	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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