

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MAIDSTONE GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118835

Headteacher: Mr N Turrell

Lead inspector: Mr J Bald

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

Inspection number: 268850

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: Voluntary controlled  
Age range of students: 11 to 19  
Gender of students: 11 to 16, male. 17 to 19, mixed.  
Number on roll: 1293

School address: Barton Road  
Maidstone  
Kent  
Postcode: ME15 7BT

Telephone number: 01622 752101  
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Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: The Reverend Canon C Morgan-Jones

Date of previous inspection: April 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is above average in size. It has recently become a language college, and holds the Sportsmark award. The sixth form is large, and a quarter of its students join from other schools; most of these students are female. The vast majority of students are white, with a small number from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, of which the largest group is of Indian heritage. Very few students have English as an additional language, and none is in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average, but high for a school of this type; most have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), and some have behavioural difficulties. Students joining the main school have reached well above average standards for their age. They have reached very high standards in science and mathematics, but weaker standards in writing and in some other subjects. Students joining the sixth form have reached above average standards for their courses. The social and economic circumstances of the school are very favourable, and the school population is very stable.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17932	John Bald	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
32697	David Smith	Lay inspector	
22958	Terry Bailess	Team inspector	English
24891	Jackie Johnson	Team inspector	Mathematics (main school)
1249	Joe Edge	Team inspector	Science (main school), biology (sixth form), special educational needs
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology, business education.
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
4829	Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (main school); French, German (sixth form)
4223	Garth Collard	Team inspector	History
30114	Ann Kenward	Team inspector	Citizenship, geography
11672	Peter Harle	Team inspector	Art and design
4605	Michael Lormor	Team inspector	Music
20192	Terry McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education
10761	Pat Willan	Team inspector	Sociology, religious education (sixth form)
33809	Steven Foxhall	Team inspector	Religious education (main school)
31765	Ian Hume	Team inspector	International Baccalaureate
3643	Derek Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics (sixth form)
15075	Bryan Goodman-Stephens	Team inspector	Spanish (sixth form)

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a very effective school that combines high standards with a broad and balanced education.** Standards are well above average, and sometimes very high, in the main school and sixth form. All groups of students achieve well. Teaching and learning are very good, and there is very good provision for students' personal development. Leadership is very good, and the headteacher's leadership is excellent. Management is good, with outstanding features. Funding is below average, and the school provides excellent value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students and teachers work very well together to achieve high standards.
- The headteacher fosters commitment to excellence and personal development throughout the school.
- Governors and senior managers provide vision and clear direction, backed by very good planning.
- There are high levels of achievement in the International Baccalaureate (IB).
- Students have very good opportunities for creative work and personal expression.
- Some middle managers do not make full use of school policies for planning, assessment and marking.
- Students make good progress in English, but provision for literacy co-ordination needs improvement.

The school has shown very good improvement in the five years since its last inspection. The overall quality of teaching has improved from good to very good, and the proportion of excellent teaching has more than doubled. While there is still some inconsistency between subjects, there are now significantly more high grades at GCSE and A-level, and the IB has opened new opportunities for higher-attaining students in the sixth form. The school has made very effective improvements on most points for action since the last inspection, particularly in its subjects where teaching was weak, but it still needs to do more on marking and assessment. Major improvements in governance and management, including excellent financial management, have given the school control over its direction, and it is developing its site and resources, particularly its computers, very well.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A*	A*	A*	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A	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.*

**Achievement is good.** The grade A\* indicates that results were in the top five per cent of all schools nationally. GCSE results remained in this category in 2004, and showed a rising trend in A and A\* grades, particularly in mathematics and history. Standards in national tests in Year 9 are also high, and in 2004 were particularly strong in mathematics and

science. The standard of work seen in Year 9 and Year 11 was well above average. However, achievement in religious education is too low in Year 11, and only just satisfactory in citizenship in Year 9, because of limited teaching time for these subjects. Achievement is good in Year 9 and Year 11. It is very good in several subjects, including science and information and communication technology (ICT), and excellent in history in Year 11. Some students' achievement is held back by relatively weak writing skills. Sixth form achievement is good, with very good achievement in several subjects and excellent achievement in ICT.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good.** Students have very good attitudes. They are happy to be in school, work hard, and behave very well. They are happy to accept responsibility, and take this very seriously. Attendance is very high.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is very good. The quality of teaching is very good.** It is very good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, and good in Years 7 to 9. Throughout the school, teachers plan lessons carefully, and create a very effective working partnership with students that leads to very good learning. In the sixth form and Years 10 and 11, teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Teachers assess students' progress well in Years 10 and 11, but assessment in other year groups needs greater consistency.

The curriculum meets students' needs well, and makes good use of ICT. Provision for languages has recently been strengthened by the language college. Work in literacy, however, needs to be better co-ordinated. Enrichment activities are very good, with some outstanding features. Accommodation is adequate, but is being steadily improved, and resources for learning are good. The school has had staffing difficulties recently, but is now well staffed with qualified teachers. Provision for the care and guidance of students is very good, and the school takes notice of their views. There are good partnerships with parents, other schools and the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are very good.** The headteacher's excellent leadership is based on a commitment to the highest possible standards and equal opportunities for all students. It is supported by very good leadership from his senior colleagues. Management is good. Most is very good, with excellent development planning and financial management, but a small number of middle managers do not fully use school policies on planning and assessing work. The work of the governors is very good, and their organisation and management of their work is excellent. Statutory requirements are not met for religious education in Years 10 and 11, reporting to parents on citizenship, and the daily act of collective worship.

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

Parents have a positive view of the school, and students' views are very positive. Some parents were concerned about the consistency of teaching in some subjects. Inspectors found that the school had improved the consistency of teaching, but that there were still some weaknesses in marking and assessment.



## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the consistency and co-ordination of provision for literacy, particularly in Years 7 to 9
- Make further improvements in the use of school policies on planning and assessing work in each subject.

And, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship, and sufficient time for religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Include achievement in citizenship in students' annual reports to parents.

The most important things the sixth form should do to improve are:

- Improve the use of development planning and other policies in subjects where these are weak.
- Sharpen its focus on enabling its highest-attaining students to achieve A rather than B grades.
- Strengthen its guidance to parents and students on the effects of too much part-time employment.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT MAIDSTONE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The sixth form provides very good education.** Standards are well above average and achievement is good, with outstanding features in some subjects and in the IB, which offers courses in a wide range of subjects. Teaching is very good, with excellent features. Provision for personal development is very good; all students are equally involved, and their achievements celebrated. There are very good opportunities for students with modest GCSE grades. The sixth form is very well led and directed. Senior and most middle management is very good, but some middle managers do not use school policies fully. Some students' long hours of part-time work are a barrier to achievement. The school monitors these, but its guidance on likely effects on A-level grades has had little impact. Standards and the quality of teaching, with provision for equal opportunities and the wide range of additional activities, represent excellent value for money.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teachers are experts in their subjects, and foster very good working relationships.
- Just over half of all A-level passes are at grades A and B, though mostly at grade B.
- Achievement is very good in mathematics and sciences, and in history and geography. It is excellent in ICT.
- The IB leads to high achievement, with excellent extended essays.
- Students' progress is closely tracked, and all receive very effective personal guidance.
- The sixth form provides equal opportunities for all, including those joining from other schools.
- Students work hard in lessons, but some could do more in their own time.

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

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Very good</b> teaching, learning and achievement in English. <b>Good</b> teaching, learning and achievement in French, German and Spanish, though the accuracy of some written work needs to be improved.
Mathematics	<b>Very good</b> teaching, learning and achievement and a very high take up rate. Excellent features in teaching and management, including a very successful introductory course for Year 11 students.
Science	<b>Very good</b> teaching, learning and achievement in physics and biology. There are excellent features in teaching, particularly in teachers' knowledge of their subjects, and in students' independent learning.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	<b>Excellent</b> in computing, where excellent teaching is leading to very high standards. <b>Very good</b> in other specialist ICT courses. The use of ICT to support learning in some other courses needs further development.
Humanities	<b>Very good</b> teaching, learning and achievement in history and geography, with excellent subject knowledge among teachers and an excellent course in ancient history. <b>Good</b> teaching and learning and achievement in sociology. <b>Satisfactory</b> teaching, learning and achievement in philosophy and ethics; good teaching and achievement at A-level, but low standards at AS.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Good</b> teaching, learning and achievement in design and technology. Above average standards and imaginative work, though pace could be improved.

Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Very good</b> teaching, learning and achievement in music, which was fully inspected, and in work sampled in art and design, media and film studies.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Very good</b> teaching, learning and achievement in physical education. There is an excellent working atmosphere in this department and standards are rising. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects.
Business	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are high, teaching has a very good blend of theory and practical application, and students work very hard.

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

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Advice, guidance and support for students are very good. They are based on clear assessment and monitoring of students' work and personal development. This provision leads to very good relationships, with very effective additional support for students who need it. Provision for the quarter of students, mostly female, who join from other schools, is excellent; they are immediately and fully integrated into the community. The introductory course for mathematics is excellent. The school gives clear guidance on the consequences for achievement of excessive part-time employment, but students do not always take this issue seriously enough.

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

Leadership of the sixth form is very good, with excellent features, and it is managed well. There is strong vision for the development of the sixth form, particularly in the range of activities beyond lessons, in equal opportunities, and in the IB, which is extending opportunity for higher-attaining students. Management is good, with excellent financial management that enables the school to develop its provision within its budget. Most middle management is very good, but a minority of managers do not make full use of school policies for planning and assessment to develop their subjects. Teaching and learning are monitored closely, and action is taken to improve them where necessary. The management of assessment is good, particularly in setting targets for lower-attaining students, though it could do more to promote achievement at grade A.

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

Students have very positive views of the sixth form and the opportunities it offers.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students join the school with well above average standards for their age, and their overall achievement is good, with some very good features, throughout the main school. Students entering the sixth form, including those joining from other schools, have reached above average standards for their courses, and achieve well. There are no major differences in the achievement of different groups of students, though the achievement of students with English as an additional language is particularly consistent.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- 2004 GCSE results were in the top five per cent of all schools nationally.
- There is a high proportion of A and A\* grades, particularly in history and mathematics, but this is not consistent across all subjects.
- Achievement is good in mathematics, and very good, with excellent features, in sciences.
- Students achieve very well in creative and practical work.
- There is good achievement in speaking and listening and in reading, but some weaknesses in writing.
- Gifted and talented students achieve well, and sometimes very well, in a wide range of subjects.
- Students with English as an additional language achieve very well throughout the school.

#### Commentary

1. Overall, standards among students joining Year 7 are well above average. Their results in Year 6 national tests are very high, though test scores in English have fallen slightly over the past three years, and only a third of students joining Year 7 in the year of the inspection had achieved more than the nationally expected standard in writing. Standards in subjects not included in national tests are lower, but still well above average overall. The school has a higher proportion of students with special educational needs than most grammar schools, and its students include a broader range of abilities than many selective schools.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	40.2 (39.3)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	46.7 (46.9)	35.4 (34.7)
science	42.4 (43.6)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 174 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

**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	99 (99)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96.0)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	52.2 (50.5)	34.7 (34.7)

*There were 188 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. Current standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average, and represent good achievement in each year group from students' starting points. National test results in Year 9 are consistently in the top five per cent of all schools nationally. They show good achievement in mathematics and English, and very good achievement in science. Achievement in other subjects is consistently good to very good except for citizenship, where teaching time is very limited. Nevertheless, standards in citizenship are above average, and achievement is satisfactory. Achievement in art and design was unsatisfactory in Year 9 at the time of the last inspection; standards are now well above average, and achievement is very good.
3. GCSE results are consistently in the top five per cent of all schools nationally, and are broadly average overall for selective schools, many of which are more rigorously selective than this school. They include an exceptionally high proportion of A and A\* grades in history, and well above average proportions of A and A\* passes in several subjects, including mathematics and sciences. Achievement is now good or better in all GCSE subjects, and its consistency has shown very good improvement since the last inspection. Pockets of unsatisfactory achievement at GCSE at the last inspection have been effectively tackled, and there has been a significant increase in the proportion of passes at A and A\*. The proportion A\* grades is, however, still not consistent in all subjects, despite the high overall quality of teaching. Inspection evidence indicated that achievement was highest in subjects, which made the best use of assessment to ensure that strengths in teaching were clearly focused on what students most needed to learn.
4. Students with English as an additional language are particularly committed to their work, and their overall achievement is very good. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good overall, and very good among those with the most pronounced learning and behavioural difficulties as a result of highly effective personal support. The school's thoughtful provision for these students, and the achievement that results, is one of the clearest examples of its commitment to extending educational opportunities for all students. The long-term achievement of gifted and talented is also very good. Academically gifted students derive particular benefit from teachers' high levels of understanding in their subjects, and talented students do particularly well in additional learning opportunities and opportunities for creative and practical work.
5. Since the last inspection, management has focused on improvements in teaching as its main vehicle for raising standards, and this has led to much greater consistency in

achievement across the school. The overall proportion of A and A\* grades has improved significantly; the proportion of A\* grades was below average at the last inspection, and is now well above average, with almost half of all GCSE passes now at A and A\*. The school's central systems for assessing and tracking work are good, and inspection evidence suggests that they make a very good contribution to achievement when they are used consistently; middle management has more to do to achieve this. The school has identified the need to boost achievement in writing by improving co-ordination. It has recently begun to take steps to do this, and raised the priority given to the issue following feedback during the inspection. A range of weaknesses identified in the last inspection report indicated that significant improvement was needed in achievement. Overall, the school has made very good improvements on this position, and is very well placed to make the further adjustments needed to improve achievement further.

## Sixth form

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are consistently well above average, and represent good overall achievement.
- There is a high proportion of A and B grade passes, but there could be more As in some subjects.
- Achievement in the IB is very good, and excellent in students' extended essays.
- Students with modest A-level grades complete their courses, and very often beat their target grades.
- Senior and most middle management takes very effective steps to maximise achievement, but some middle managers do not do enough to promote achievement at grade A.
- Standards and achievement at AS are often much lower than at A-level.
- The hours spent by many students in part-time paid work limit their chances of high grades at A-level.
- A very well designed introductory course for Year 11 students boosts achievement in mathematics.

## Commentary

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98.2 (97.3)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	43.8 (45.3)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	304.9 (297.3)	258.2 (254.5)

*There were 141 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

6. A quarter of sixth form students, most of them female, join from other schools. The sixth form's entry requirements ensure that they are qualified for their courses, but are comparable to those of many other sixth forms. Overall, students begin with above average standards, and their achievement at A-level is good. Results are consistently well above average, and the proportion of passes at grades A and B is rising steadily.

Just under half of all passes were at this level in 2004. However, there were many more B than A grade passes. The school feels that A grades in some subjects, particularly modern history, have been affected by inconsistent marking, and it has external evidence to support this view. Nevertheless, its analysis of 2004 results shows some subjects, including computing, music, physical education and business studies, with well above average proportions of A grades, and others with very few.

7. There are no significant weaknesses in the achievement of any groups of students, but students with modest GCSE results consistently beat their target grades, and the highest-attaining students, including those who are academically gifted, achieve very well. Across the school, a very high proportion of students complete their courses successfully. Standards at A-level, and in work seen during the inspection, are above average to well above average in almost all subjects. They are particularly strong in mathematics, where students benefit from a very well thought out introductory course at the end of Year 11, in computing, in geography and in sciences. Standards in modern languages have been affected by weaknesses in staffing over the past year. They are above average overall in French and Spanish, and average in German. Provision in these subjects is now good, however, and standards are recovering. The most recent IB examinations indicated very good achievement, but the school has not entered students for the past two years. The standard of work seen in the IB during the inspection was well above average, and included excellent extended essays. This showed very good achievement.
8. In some subjects, including computing, physical education and mathematics, standards are well above average at AS, as well as at A-level. In most, AS results are much lower than those at A-level. The full reasons for this are not clear, but inspection evidence shows that good AS results are often, though not always, associated with very good later performance at A-level. It also suggests that AS results are often weakest in subjects that students do not intend to take in Year 13. There is an important barrier to achievement in the amount of part-time employment undertaken by large numbers of students, despite guidance from the school that hours should be limited. In some cases, students do the equivalent of two full days of paid work each week, and this seriously limits the quality of their learning beyond lesson time. This issue is more serious than at the time of the last inspection, and is beyond the school's direct control. It monitors the situation closely, and issues clear guidance to students on hours of work, but discussions with students during the inspection indicated that this is having little effect, and that hours of part-time employment are tending to increase.
9. Since the last inspection, the school has improved its arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning, for setting targets and tracking progress. It has extended its guidance to new students, and has improved opportunities for higher-attaining students to reach very high standards through the IB. Overall, the steps it has taken to raise standards in the sixth form since the last inspection have been good, and the introductory course in mathematics is an excellent feature that is having a significant impact on participation and achievement.

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

Attitudes, behaviour and relationships are consistently very good in lessons and in additional activities, and often excellent. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good. Attendance is very high and students are very punctual.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is an exciting place in which to learn, and students are very keen to attend.
- Very good relationships throughout the school create a calm and supportive climate for learning.
- Students are fully involved in school life, and take responsibilities very seriously.
- The school's wide range of enrichment activities helps students develop responsibility and teamwork.
- Students develop sensitivity and understanding in their work on literature from other cultures.
- There is very effective additional support for students who need it.

### Commentary

10. Students like the school's friendly atmosphere and speak highly of their teachers. Teachers' high levels of subject knowledge appeal to students, and generate a strong desire to learn and succeed. Teachers and students are united by a sense of common purpose and their aspirations are high. Students particularly appreciate the way that teachers are willing to give up their time to help with any personal or academic problems. This investment pays tremendous dividends. Students trust their teachers, and the open and supportive relationships that flow from this make a major contribution to students' high level of commitment to their studies and the standards they achieve.
11. Students show great self-discipline and they are very responsible. They live and work in an environment where respect and tolerance for others are important, and this quickly becomes a natural way of life. During the inspection, students of all ages were unfailingly polite and considerate. Analysis of the students' questionnaire, however, showed that one half knew of incidents of bullying and one third was dissatisfied with the standard of students' behaviour. The inspection team explored these issues with many students during the inspection. The students interviewed said that the school deals any such issues very effectively. Inspectors agree with this positive picture. Behaviour during the inspection was very good, with rare exceptions, and often excellent.

#### *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	1124	21	3
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	15	0	0



Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	14	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	15	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Chinese	6	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	16	0	0

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

12. The level of fixed-period exclusions is low for a school of this size, and reflects the generally very good behaviour seen during the inspection. Permanent exclusion is close to the most recent national average figure, but remains a final step, in these cases as a result of repeated breaches of school policy on drugs.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.1	School data	0.3
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

13. Attendance is very high, with little unauthorised absence. The school promotes attendance very well and strongly discourages unnecessary absence.

#### **Personal development**

14. Personal development is central to the work of the school, and a major priority for the headteacher, whose organisation of the senior management team ensures that he is kept in close personal touch with all issues in this area. Provision for social and moral development is particularly strong. All adults in the school provide students with a very effective model of hard work, respect for others and co-operation, and this is reinforced through a wide range of activities, including competitive sport, a wide range of charitable work, and the combined cadet force (CCF). Tutorial periods and assemblies are used very well to reinforce positive attitudes and the school's central values, and controversial issues are discussed openly and with confidence. Students develop a clear understanding of right and wrong, and of the long-term benefits of making the right choices. They learn to respect the right of others to hold different views from their own, even when they consider these views to be erroneous.

15. Provision for cultural development is good, with very good features. Religious education includes study of all major world religions, and gives the students an awareness of other peoples' beliefs as well as the chance to develop an understanding of why their values may be different. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including World Challenge, brings students into contact with a wide range of cultures, and they have good understanding of the range of cultures in modern British society and the importance of treating them with respect. There are very good features in the study of literature from other cultures in English, in the range of styles and techniques used in art and design, and in opportunities for performance in music. The school's adoption and encouragement of a thoughtful approach to life and work, and the extensive opportunities it provides for students to reflect on their role in the world and responsibility to others, ensure good provision for spiritual development.

### **Sixth form**

16. The school pays close and very effective attention to the personal development of sixth form students. Provision is very good, with some excellent features. All sixth form students, including those joining from other schools, are encouraged and expected to help lead the school community, and the school sustains a wide range of additional activities for them, despite its limited funding. Students benefit from the excellent example of intellectual commitment they see from their teachers. Inspectors saw many examples of students using the school's facilities for independent study and practical work, though some students' participation in additional activities and study is limited by their excessive hours of part-time employment. Students take their responsibilities within the school very seriously, and represent it to a high standard, for example when greeting and guiding visitors and speaking at open evenings. Sixth form attendance is very high, and punctuality very good.

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

The quality of education is very good. It is based on a well-considered balance between high standards and personal achievement, and the development in all students of self-confidence and a sense of responsibility to others, both individually and in the community. The curriculum is good, with several strong and innovative features and only a small number of faults, almost all of which are being tackled. It includes extensive and very effective provision for enrichment beyond lessons. Provision for health and safety, and the care and guidance of students are very well organised and systematic, with very good additional support for the students who most need it. The school has a good and developing relationship with parents, other schools and the community.

### **Teaching and learning**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teaching is very good, with excellent features, in Years 10 and 11, where there is a strong focus on examination success. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good, with very good features in some subjects. Students make a very good contribution to learning through their interest in their subjects and willingness to work hard. Systems for assessing standards and tracking progress are good overall, but have some weaknesses in Years 7 to 9. Teaching and learning in the sixth

form are very good, with excellent features. Arrangements for assessing students' work in the sixth form are good.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subjects very well, and several are national authorities in their field.
- Teachers plan lessons carefully, manage classes well, and explain complex issues very clearly.
- Work is, on the whole, very well matched to the needs of the highest-attaining students.
- Wherever possible, teachers make very effective use of ICT in teaching and learning.
- Teachers and students work closely together to create a very positive working atmosphere.
- Specialist teaching for students with special educational needs is very good.
- Most teachers mark and assess work well, but there are some weaknesses, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers' use of assessment to plan work and set targets is good overall, but could be more consistent.
- Teaching in information and communication technology (ICT) is excellent in the sixth form.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in IB courses are very good, with excellent features.

## Commentary

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 190 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
17 (9)	68 (36)	81 (43)	24 (13)	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.*

17. Throughout the school, teachers are well organised and purposeful. They plan lessons carefully, and make effective use of national guidance, adapted to meet the needs of students. They know their subjects in breadth and detail, and understand patterns of learning among high-attaining boys. Their lucid explanation of complex issues, questioning of students and management of discussion are important strengths. Homework is set regularly, and classes are very well managed. This approach sets up a very effective learning partnership between students and teachers, and has led to significant improvement in examination results since the last inspection.
18. Where teaching is excellent, teachers combine their outstanding subject knowledge with very clear learning goals that fully challenge students, but at the same time support their thinking, so that they learn difficult ideas through a series of apparently easy steps. The following example is typical.

### Example of outstanding practice

Excellent knowledge of Latin and English grammar and phrasing allowed a group of Year 11
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**students to understand new grammatical features quickly, and to apply them in studying poetry.**

This very high-attaining group was taking a full GCSE course in the time allocated for a half-course. This was made possible by the teacher's very clear knowledge and understanding of the structures of Latin, which he explained to the students with great clarity, following them up with printed notes and short exercises that were distributed to students and built up into a personal textbook. Each step in the process built carefully on the students' earlier learning, making it easy for them to adjust their thinking to take on the new structures. At the same time, the teacher skilfully extended their vocabulary, carefully managing the level of support he provided to take account of the students' limited time for the subject, while retaining a strong element of challenge. Written tasks were expertly designed to balance new learning with reinforcement, and carefully marked. Very effective time management left good time for students to work on poetry in the final third of the lesson, during which they applied their developing knowledge of grammar to work out complex, compressed language with a high degree of success. The teacher used his expert knowledge of ancient history to put the verse in context, and to ensure that the lesson contributed to students' understanding of Roman culture as well as Latin.

19. Very good teaching is based on equally high levels of subject knowledge, but tends to have slight weaknesses in organisation and planning, which leaves some room for improvement in the quality of learning. In less successful lessons, this shortcoming is more pronounced. In just over a tenth of lessons, planning ensures satisfactory learning, but lacks the detail necessary to promote good learning amongst all students, particularly those whose learning needs are significantly different from those of the bulk of the class. This is a fault in mathematics in Years 7 to 9, where teaching is satisfactory overall.
20. Teachers make good overall provision for literacy and numeracy, and the consistency of good and better teaching throughout the school leads to very good learning among the highest-attaining students. Students with special educational needs benefit from very good specialist teaching, and their learning in subjects across the school is good. However, all of these aspects of teaching and learning could be improved through better co-ordination by heads of department. Students with English as an additional language are consistently among the higher-attaining boys, and teaching meets their needs very well. A minority of parents told inspectors that they were concerned about consistency in teaching and discipline in some subjects. The school agreed that this had been a problem in the previous year due to staffing difficulties, but inspection evidence showed a high level of consistency in teaching across the school.
21. The overall quality of assessment in the main school is good. It is consistently good in Years 10 and 11, where teachers use examination criteria very effectively to guide students towards high standards. In Years 7 to 9, assessment is satisfactory. The school asks departments to use National Curriculum levels as a basis for assessing progress and planning work. Teaching and learning are at their best in subjects where this is consistently carried out, but some departments do not do so. When this happens, students do not know clearly how to improve their work, and planning to ensure that work is pitched at the right level for all students is not consistently effective. Several parents felt that their children's work was not effectively marked in all subjects. Inspectors found some examples of very good marking, particularly in Years 10 and 11, but also some marking that did not pay enough attention to errors. This was particularly frequent in modern foreign languages, and in some mathematics classes. This evidence confirmed parents' concerns.

22. When the school was last inspected, teaching was good in just over half of the lessons, and very good or better in a quarter. Improving its consistency and quality was a point for action, and the headteacher and senior managers have responded energetically and effectively. Teaching is now much better planned, and more closely focused on the learning needs of students and the requirements of examinations. Subjects where teaching was unsatisfactory, or barely satisfactory, have received particular attention from the headteacher and senior managers, and have shown a strong pattern of improvement, particularly in art and design and modern languages. Teachers now make very good use of a wide range of resources for learning, including greatly extended ICT facilities, and provide many more opportunities for students to work creatively. Specialist teaching for students with special educational needs has improved significantly. Carefully planned recruitment systems for teachers and heads of department ensure that new staff are well suited to their specific responsibilities. The small, but highly significant, proportion of excellent teaching has been encouraged and extended – the proportion of excellent teaching has more than doubled – and an advanced skills teacher has been recruited to lead the language college. These improvements in teaching have been central to the overall improvement of the school.

### **Sixth form**

23. Teaching in the sixth form follows a similar overall pattern to that in the main school. It benefits particularly from teachers' extensive and detailed knowledge of their subjects, and this, combined with very good understanding of examination requirements and of patterns of learning among students, leads to much very good and excellent teaching. Teaching of this quality occurs in individual lessons in several subjects, and the overall quality of teaching is excellent in ICT, where it enables students to reach high standards at AS and A-level, even when they have little previous experience of the subject. In a minority of lessons, as in the main school, teachers rely too heavily on their subject knowledge, and do not plan work in sufficient detail to match the full range of learning needs in their class. As all students are qualified for the courses they take, learning in these lessons remains satisfactory and often good, but it could nevertheless be improved, particularly if the use of time and the range of learning activities were planned more carefully. Marking and assessment in the sixth form are of good overall quality, but vary too much between subjects. They need improvement in modern languages, where they do not require high enough standards of accuracy in writing, but are very good in several subjects, including history, mathematics, design and technology and ICT. Teaching, learning and assessment are very good in IB courses, and excellent preparing students to write extended essays. Close monitoring of sixth form teaching and learning by the headteacher and senior staff has improved its consistency and focus on standards since the last inspection. The school is now in a good position to extend this monitoring to include improving assessment in the minority of subjects where it has weaknesses.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum meets students' needs well in the main school, where it is well suited to students' needs and interests. The sixth form curriculum is very good. Innovative features in the curriculum are helping to raise standards in the main school and sixth form. Enrichment of the curriculum

beyond lessons is very good, with outstanding features. The overall quality of staffing, resources for learning and accommodation is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The range of courses offered is good in the main school, and very good in the sixth form.
- The school does not yet have a fully effective and co-ordinated approach to literacy.
- ICT is making a good, and often a very good, contribution to the curriculum across the school.
- The IB and the language college are successful innovations.
- The curriculum in the sixth form is excellent for mathematics and for ICT.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good, and very good for those with the most pronounced behavioural and learning difficulties.
- There are very good opportunities for students to take part in sport and artistic performances.
- The school prepares students very well for the later stages of education and the world of work.
- There is too little teaching time for religious education in Years 10 and 11.
- Citizenship provision is good in Years 10 and 11, but only just satisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

24. The curriculum has shown good improvement since the last inspection. Courses meet students' needs well, and significant improvements in planning and organisation since the last inspection ensure that each subject contributes to the aims of the school. The language college has extended opportunities for students to learn more than one language, and for higher-attaining students to take three science subjects to GCSE. The school has concentrated its ICT resources in subjects where they can make most impact; this is contributing very effectively to teaching, and facilities are being extended following a clearly thought out strategic plan. Equal opportunities are effectively provided for all students. Additional support from teaching assistants and teachers, combined with very effective specialist teaching, ensures good provision for students with special educational needs; the school's very thoughtful adaptation of its provision to meet the needs of those with pronounced difficulties enables them to achieve very well. High expectations among teachers ensure very good challenge to gifted and talented students over their time in the school, though this could be improved further by better co-ordination.
25. The curriculum makes very effective provision for students' personal development and their knowledge of other cultures. The school's emphasis on service to others makes a very good contribution to the participation strand of the citizenship curriculum, but there is very little teaching time for the subject, and provision in Years 7 to 9 is only just enough to meet legal requirements. Citizenship is, however, well provided for in Years 10 and 11. Provision for religious education is good in Years 7 to 9, and in the GCSE short course in Years 10 and 11. There is too little time for other students to cover the material set out in the locally agreed syllabus, however, and provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 therefore does not meet legal requirements. Provision for numeracy is good, but could be improved further through more effective co-ordination. The school has identified increasing weaknesses in students' writing when they join Year 7. The recent appointment of a senior manager to co-ordinate the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 puts the school in a good position to address these issues. The curriculum prepares students well for the next stage of education, and a preparatory course for students wishing to study A-level mathematics makes an important contribution to their achievement in the sixth form.
26. The school provides a very good range of enrichment activities beyond lessons, and almost all students take part in it. Students value the very good sport, music and other arts opportunities that are provided. They make good use of the school's well-stocked library, before, during and after the school day. Facilities in art, music, technology, and ICT are also popular with students who use them to good effect.

### Example of outstanding practice

**The combined cadet force (CCF) offers an excellent range of practical activities and experience, with the opportunity to take a BTEC qualification in service.**

The CCF is a voluntary activity that involves a high proportion of students from Year 9 onwards, including a significant number of female sixth form students. Male and female members of staff act as officers and instructors. There is an exceptionally wide and carefully planned range of practical training activities, including a vocational course in service that leads to a BTEC qualification equivalent to four GCSEs. Students and staff carry out weekly training and additional activities to the highest possible standards; students' attitudes, teamwork and self-discipline are excellent. Officers and NCOs ensure that students understand the reasons for each activity, and foster a strong sense of leadership, co-operation and service. Cadets in all branches have equal opportunities to take part in the full range of training, and female students joining in the sixth form are encouraged to become NCOs. The very high levels of achievement in the CCF make a major contribution to students' confidence and to their sense of responsibility and service.

27. The school has had significant difficulties with staffing over the past two years, particularly in English and mathematics, but by the time of the inspection it was fully staffed with qualified teachers, whose knowledge and understanding of their subjects is a major strength, particularly in their work in Years 10 and 11. There are sufficient support staff, and they are well qualified for their roles in supporting teaching and learning. Administrative staff are highly efficient.
28. Resources for learning are good. Arrangements for financial planning ensure that each department has the resources it needs, and the school has given priority to developing ICT resources, particularly for departments that need them most in teaching. This is particularly effective in modern languages, where the language college has contributed to funding, and the programme of modernisation is being extended to other departments as quickly as possible. Accommodation is satisfactory. It is well maintained and respected by students. There are many attractive displays, particularly of art and sculpture. Buildings offer limited access to people with physical disabilities, but the governors have prepared a suitable action plan. A major building project was in progress during the inspection.

### Sixth form

29. The sixth form curriculum meets students' needs very well. There is a very good range of A-level courses, and the range of courses in mathematics is excellent. The introduction of the International Baccalaureate is an exciting and innovative step that has significantly enhanced the school's provision for its most able students. The range and quality of courses is a significant feature in attracting students to the school, and the school's flexible entry requirements offer very good opportunities to students who do not have high GCSE grades. A comprehensive system of guidance ensures that students entering the sixth form ensure have a programme of work that meets their needs, and are fully involved in the life and work of the school. Parents and students greatly appreciate this aspect of the school's work.
30. Careers education and preparation for university entrance are very effective. There are good links with the major universities and the language college has brought good links with industry. Preparation for the world of work is good and students undertake work placements in the sixth form. A structured programme ensures that students' personal development needs are met and identified teacher mentors are always available. There is only limited time for religious education, but provision is satisfactory. Opportunities for enrichment are very good. There are good opportunities for students to contribute to the community through the school council and to act as mentors to younger students. Resources for learning are good and students make effective use of the library, technology and computers available to them. Accommodation is

satisfactory overall but the size of some rooms available, for example in history, is too small and inhibits group discussion work. Staffing of sixth form courses is very good, and teachers' excellent subject knowledge a major strength of the curriculum.

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

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety, and the support, advice and guidance they receive are very good. Involvement of students in school life through seeking and acting on their views is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teamwork among staff ensures that students are very well looked after during the day.
- Guidance is based on very close monitoring of academic progress and personal development.
- Excellent relationships build confidence among students and a sense of trust in adults.
- Students with the most significant learning and behavioural difficulties receive very effective support.
- The school council is effective, but its work is not widely recognised by students.
- The allocation of time for tutorial work is good in the sixth form, but fragmented in the main school.
- Guidance for students joining the sixth form is excellent.
- The school is unable to prevent some sixth form students from taking on too much part-time work.

### **Commentary**

31. Health and safety procedures are carried out to a very high standard and are very well managed by qualified staff. The school engages external auditors to carry out objective evaluations of its systems, and recommendations for improvement made following these evaluations have been implemented. No significant hazards were noted in teaching areas of the school, but one minor issue was reported to the headteacher for action.
32. Arrangements for the guidance and support of students are very well organised and managed, with very effective additional support for those who need it. All adults work hard and effectively to build students' confidence and belief that they can succeed. Tutorial work is consistent, and assemblies are used well to focus students' attention on key values, such as freedom from bullying and the need to follow ideas through to a conclusion. The school accepts the need to organise time for this work into larger blocks in the main school, and is introducing electronic registration to allow it to make this change. Careers guidance and advice on university entrance are well organised and adapted to students' needs.
33. Guidance on academic work and personal development is effectively based on comprehensive evidence from the school's systematic assessment and monitoring systems, as well as on teachers' detailed personal knowledge of each student. As a result, students clearly understand where they are doing well and how they need to improve their work. A lunchtime homework club and after school revision clubs, provide very good advice for individuals who require additional help. This aspect of



provision has shown very good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the high levels of additional support for students with serious learning and behavioural difficulties, some of whom are among the most successful in their year groups. Parents and students value these strengths highly.

34. The school listens to the views of students through individual discussions with staff and through surveys. There are a number of elected posts in each year for charities representatives, form and sports captains as well as form and school councils. Although the school council is not broadly recognised as effective by the students they can still cite several instances of improvements, which have been driven by the school council. Students of all years know what they want, know that they can make a difference to how the school runs and have the confidence to initiate change in the school to make things happen.

### **Sixth form**

35. The school has developed an excellent system for the guidance of new sixth form students. Induction sessions are very well organised, and personal interviews ensure that all students, including those joining from other schools, are immediately integrated into the school's life and work and have equal opportunities to assume posts of responsibility. Parents of students new to the sixth form praised this work very highly. There is particularly effective guidance for female students joining from other schools, and for those wishing to study mathematics. The quality and organisation of guidance in the sixth form has similar strengths to that of the main school, and tutorial periods make good use of time. The head of the sixth form and his colleagues are in close touch with each student's academic and personal progress, and provide support where it is needed. They seek their views and monitor attitudes through individual contact and regular surveys. These have revealed a high level of part-time work among many students, in some cases involving 16 or more hours each week. The school gives clear guidance on the potential harm excessive work can do to A-level performance, but discussions with students during the inspection suggested that hours of work had increased since its most recent survey.

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

The school has good and developing links with parents, other schools and colleges and the community.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents work hard with the school to promote their children's education.
- Parents are well informed about day-to-day school life and their children's progress.
- Some parents feel that the school could do more to consult them.
- Concerts and other events are very well attended.
- Strong links with the community enrich the curriculum and promote students' personal development well.
- The language college is extending opportunities for members of the community to learn languages.
- The school plays a very active part in supporting educational provision in the area.

- Sixth form students have very positive views about the school.

## **Commentary**

36. Parents expressed positive views about the school at the pre-inspection meeting and in responses to a questionnaire. Most felt their children were doing well, that the school took very good care of them, and that it was well led and managed. Some parents were concerned about the quality of information on progress, particularly as they no longer saw all of their child's teachers at parents' evenings. Inspectors did not have an opportunity to observe a parents' meeting and so could not evaluate this point, but discussion with the school indicated that there was a need to improve some tutors' approach to these meetings. Some parents were concerned about the quality of teaching in a minority of lessons, particularly where there had been temporary teachers. The school recognised that there had been some inconsistency, but inspection evidence indicated that the problem had been resolved by the time of the inspection. Parents of sixth form students had very positive views about the quality of education provided. Students shared these views.
37. Parents receive good written information about the school and their children's progress. Annual reports provide detailed feedback about standards and achievement, and parents receive at least two very informative term assessments. Each student has a planner, which is generally used well to convey information and comments between teachers and parents. If requested, the school also uses email to send information home. Parents can also find out more about the school through the school website and departmental websites provide more detailed, information on home and coursework. The school has good plans to develop its website further.
38. This school is very active in the Kent Business Partnership and enjoys very constructive links with a number of other businesses and organisations. These provide students with mentoring support, access to local government and work experience opportunities. For example, students have written articles for a national newspaper and designed a bus passenger information system for a national bus company. As members of the Kent Youth and Maidstone Parliaments, students gain experience of democracy in action.
39. The language college has boosted the school's relationship with primary schools, whose language provision it supports and encourages. Subject specialists from other areas, such as mathematics and computing, also support primary and secondary schools. The school has also initiated a number of language classes for parents and children from primary schools and the community, and is actively exploring options to extend the range of languages offered. The school actively supports initial teacher training in a range of subjects in collaboration with two universities. The headteacher takes a leading role among local headteachers in promoting education in the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent, and that of other managers very good. The overall quality of

management is good, with excellent features in important aspects of its work. Governance is very good, and also has several excellent features. Governors do not fully meet their statutory requirement to provide full coverage of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education to all students in Years 10 and 11, to provide a daily act of collective worship, and to include citizenship in students' annual reports to parents.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher's excellent leadership provides clear direction for all aspects of the school's work.
- Governors are exceptionally well organised, work closely with senior managers, and visit regularly.
- Excellent financial management gives the school scope to develop its site and resources.
- Senior and most middle managers are well organised and efficient, despite high teaching commitments.
- Provision for care, guidance and support, and for equal opportunities, is very well managed.
- Some middle managers do not use school policies on planning and assessment consistently enough.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are closely and effectively monitored.
- The introduction of the language college and of the IB have been very effectively managed.

### **Commentary**

40. The last inspection found that the headteacher provided effective leadership, but that management required extensive improvements. The headteacher, senior managers and governors have taken effective action on all of the points raised in the report, and the overall quality of management is now good, with some excellent features. As the opportunity has arisen, the senior management team has been reformed to ensure that all key aspects of the school's work have effective central management. There are clear lines of responsibility, and the design of the team keeps the headteacher in personal touch with issues relating to students welfare and personal development as well as with standards. Development planning has improved, so that issues in the school development plan are carried through into departmental plans. All plans are carefully costed and reviewed each year by the deputy headteacher and bursar. Effective additional management support is given to departments that need it. Teaching, learning and standards are closely monitored, and effective action taken to improve teaching where necessary.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4174113
Total expenditure	4005680
Expenditure per student	3283

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	135123
Balance carried forward to the next	168433

41. There has been excellent development of the role of the bursar since the last inspection, and financial management is now outstanding. This has given the school scope to plan strategically, despite a cost per student that is significantly below average, and to extend its buildings and resources, including ICT. The new language college is very well managed, and is beginning to make a significant impact on standards and the quality of education in modern languages, particularly in its use of ICT. Senior managers provide very good leadership, encouraging talents among the staff and providing effective additional support and guidance where it is needed. The overall quality of management at senior and middle levels is good. Senior and most middle managers are very effective, but a minority of middle managers do not make full use of school policies for planning and the use of assessment, and arrangements to co-ordinate literacy and numeracy have only recently begun to be put in place. Provision for students' guidance, care and support is very well managed, leading to a strong sense of teamwork and consistency among tutors, and a feeling of security among students.
42. The governors have made extensive and very effective changes to their organisation since the last inspection, and have taken a leading role in improving management. Governors are highly experienced in educational administration, and have developed an excellent system of committees that work in groups, closely linked to senior management, and keep the Chairman and other key governors in close touch with all aspect of the school's work and development. Exceptionally clear and detailed minutes keep all governors and managers in touch with progress, and a highly effective system of target setting for senior managers ensures that priorities in development planning are followed up in good time. While acts of collective worship do not take place daily, governors ensure that assemblies are of good quality. The introduction of citizenship in Years 10 and 11 this year has taken time away from religious education, so that most students do not have enough time to complete the locally agreed syllabus. While provision in Years 7 to 9 is good, teaching time in Years 10 and 11 needs to be increased. The breach of statutory requirements on reporting on citizenship is to be rectified this year. These partial breaches of statutory requirements do not have a long-term effect on students' achievements. Governors' visits to the school are exceptionally well organised in co-operation with the deputy headteacher; reporting back from visits to the governing body is excellent.
43. The headteacher's leadership is based on very clear understanding of the school's potential, the constraints within which it operates, and the strengths and weaknesses of students and staff. His presence in classes and at additional events is a constant source of stimulus and encouragement to colleagues and students, and he ensures that the school is committed to equal opportunities for all students, including those with the most pronounced special educational needs. He recognises and respects the high levels of expertise among the staff, and since the last inspection has worked very effectively to complement this by improving the consistency of teachers' planning, widening the range of teaching techniques, and improving the monitoring of standards and achievement throughout the school. The headteacher has initiated and carried through a wide range of new developments, including the language college and the introduction of the IB, and has sustained the confidence of staff when they have faced difficulties through erratic external marking of examination papers. He takes a leading role in the leadership of schools in the area and acts as spokesman for local headteachers. This excellent leadership has been a major factor in raising standards

since the last inspection, and places the school in an excellent position to improve further.

## **Sixth form**

44. Leadership and management in the sixth form are very good overall, and excellent in respect of the IB. The head of the sixth form gives clear direction to its work and works closely with other members of the senior management team and headteacher to ensure that the school's key values of breadth of outlook and service are included in its work. Equal opportunities in the sixth form have been given careful thought, so that students from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully involved, and students joining the sixth form have very good opportunities to take responsibility.
45. Teaching, learning and standards are closely monitored, and good achievement among lower-attaining students is valued as highly as that of the most capable. Financial planning is rigorous and effective. As in the main school, most middle managers make good use of school policies, but a minority make only sketchy use of development planning and assessment procedures, particularly the use of assessment to match work to individual students' needs. The introduction and management of the IB qualification, which ensures consistency of challenge for those taking the course, has been very successful, and achievement here is consistently high. The sixth form, however, faces a barrier to achievement in the extensive part-time paid work undertaken by many students, some of whom work up to 18 hours each week. The school monitors part-time work and gives clear guidance on the effects on A-level achievement of working too many hours, but these steps have had little impact, and inspection evidence suggests that the problem has grown significantly since the last inspection.

## **WORK-RELATED LEARNING (WRL)**

The effectiveness of work-related learning is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Work-related learning in Years 10 and 11 meets legal requirements, but its range is limited.
- Examination results are well above average and sometimes high.
- A very high proportion of students enter the sixth form, which has good arrangements for work experience and vocational courses.
- Some sixth form students need to strike a better balance between employment and study.
- Provision is well led and activities well managed, but co-ordination needs improvement.
- There is an outstanding contribution from students' participation in the CCF.

### **Commentary**

46. Provision for work related learning is satisfactory, and has good features. Students learn about the links between jobs, income and lifestyle in Year 8 and progress to a

satisfactory range of vocational courses and work experience in later years. All students take the GCSE course in ICT and a third the GCSE in design and technology in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, the examination results in these subjects were high. This provision meets students' needs, though its range is more limited than in most schools. All students progress to the sixth form, where half take one or more of the courses in computing, business studies, design and technology and economics, or the International Baccalaureate. In 2003, examination results in these subjects ranged from well above average to very high.

47. Work experience is compact, but well organised, in the main school, and good in the sixth form. In Year 10, students spend a day at work with a parent, and successfully review their work during the second day with staff and local employers. In Year 12, all students undertake a week of work experience and nearly all are judged to have completed this work well or better. Students receive reports on their performance at work from employers. The work is suitably reviewed later at school. Sixth form students also learn much about the world of work through their part-time employment, though some work hours that are too long for them, and need to strike a better balance between part-time employment and study.
48. Teaching and learning are very good, with outstanding features. Students learn how to apply what they learn in lessons to real work situations in the vocational courses. Teachers are keen to ensure that students are well prepared for their work experience. Students learn about careers, how to approach and communicate with employers, codes of practice at work and writing curriculum vitae in the personal development programme. Work experience in Year 12 is well planned in co-operation with the Kent and Medway Education and Business Partnership. The CCF provides an outstanding range of vocational opportunities, including many management and leadership skills relevant to civilian as well as military careers, in the main school and sixth form.
49. Work-related learning is well led by an assistant head teacher. Individual activities are managed well by specialist staff, but arrangements for co-ordination and monitoring of students' progress are weak, and there is no school policy for this aspect of its work.

## **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 **good**.

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

- Standards in tests and examinations are very high, and students become confident and articulate.
- Students have positive attitudes and achieve well during their time in school.
- GCSE coursework is of a high standard, with excellent writing about literature from other cultures.
- Management systems are not well established.
- Marking, assessment and homework need to be improved in Years 7 to 9.
- ICT is used well, but there too little access to computers.

##### **Commentary**

50. Year 9 test results improved in 2003 and were very high overall, although few students reached the highest available level. National comparative figures were not available in 2004. The school has, however, had frequent challenges to the marking of these tests upheld, and in 2004 this involved the upgrading of 115 scripts. GCSE results in 2003, both for English and English literature, are also very high. The proportion gaining A\*-A grades has increased significantly since the last inspection, and standards are higher than in comparable schools. 2004 results are at the same level in English, though slightly lower in literature. All students take this examination. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well above average in Year 9 and Year 11, and students with special educational needs achieve well. Overall, these results represent good achievement in both Year 9 and Year 11.
51. By Year 9, almost all students read confidently and with understanding. An interest in wider reading is encouraged. A new structured reading programme has begun in Year 7, with more effective use of the very good school library in lesson time. Students adapt their writing for different purposes and make a good effort to develop ideas, for example using imagery and sensory detail well in descriptions. There could be more challenge and variety in the written work expected in some classes, however, and homework could be used more regularly to develop extended writing. A systematic approach to teaching basic skills is adopted, but mistakes in grammar, punctuation and the spelling of common words still occur too often, and are not dealt with systematically enough.
52. Teachers have high expectations for GCSE coursework, and students are well motivated by examination requirements. Extended personal and creative writing is well

structured and expressive. Higher and middle attaining students also write perceptively about literature. Essays are developed in depth, with very good use of textual detail to support arguments. Work of the highest standard was seen in writing about literature from other cultures. Speaking and listening skills are well above average throughout the school. Students make confident and articulate contributions to whole class and group discussions. Good examples of word-processed and desktop published work were seen in each year group, but access to ICT equipment is limited during lesson time. There are some inconsistencies of approach between classes as a consequence.

53. Teaching is good, and sometimes very good. Teachers know their subject well, and most lessons are effectively planned and clearly structured. Where teaching is very good, teachers establish a dynamic working atmosphere, with high expectations and relationships that have sometimes developed very well after a difficult start. These lessons are particularly well organised and challenging, encouraging students to think hard about difficult concepts and helping them express themselves clearly. In a minority of lessons that are less successful, learning goals are not made clear to students, and weak time management leads to a rushed ending to the lesson. More generally, in most lessons, there is not enough difference in the work expected from high and low attaining students. Nevertheless, learning is good. Students acquire skills and knowledge well, closely supported by their teachers. Assessment of students' work is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in Years 10 and 11. More specific use of assessment criteria in teaching and target setting in Years 7 to 9 would help to focus students' efforts more clearly, and improve their knowledge of their own learning. There are many opportunities to consider moral, social and citizenship issues in the range of challenging literature studied.
54. Subject leadership is good. The new head of department provides a very good role model in his own work. He has a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses in provision and has agreed an effective development plan. Management is satisfactory, but systems to monitor teaching and learning within the department are not yet well established. Despite recent rapid progress, detailed schemes of work are also not finalised. This must be a key priority to support newly appointed staff and to ensure that students continue to make progress. It has proved difficult to fill teaching vacancies this year, and there is currently no second in charge of the department. This makes delegation of duties difficult. Whilst accommodation is satisfactory, English lessons are taught in a range of different subject rooms, and this restricts opportunities to create a specialised learning environment. Provision in English at the last inspection was satisfactory, with some good features, but also significant weaknesses, particularly in assessment. Overall, the school has made good improvements since that time, despite its staffing difficulties, and is well placed to improve further.

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

55. Provision is good overall, but capable of further improvement. Literacy skills are well above average, but standards in writing among students joining the school have been falling, and only a third of students in Year 7 reached higher than the nationally expected standard in their primary schools. The co-ordination of literacy across the school has not been systematic enough since the last inspection, and it has not yet



succeeded in ensuring consistency of marking. The school has identified literacy as an area of increasing concern, and has recently appointed a senior manager as co-ordinator.

56. Across the school, teachers make good use of speaking and listening, both in discussion and in their use of questions to ensure that students understand their work and express themselves clearly. Students would, however, benefit from more opportunities to speak in more formal contexts. Writing is taught well in history, ICT and media studies, and there are good opportunities for creative writing in English. Key words are taught well in many subjects, including science, DT and mathematics, but could be more effectively displayed in classrooms. ICT lessons promote accuracy through the use of spelling and grammar checks, but teachers across the school do not consistently ensure that students pay attention to accuracy when they write. There is very effective additional teaching of literacy for students with special educational needs.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know the languages they teach very well, and use them consistently in class.
- Students develop good understanding of languages, and have a thoughtful approach to learning.
- Students need to pay more attention to detail in writing, and marking needs to be more rigorous.
- Teachers make very good use of the school's new ICT facilities.
- The language college is extending opportunities for learning in the school and for the community.
- Very effective leadership and management have established a strong pattern of improvement.

## Commentary

57. GCSE results are well above average in Spanish, French and German, and have a clear trend of improvement, particularly at A and A\* grades. Standards in Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average, and students with educational needs make similar progress to others in the class. Most students display a very high standard of understanding and pronunciation in each foreign language, and acquire a wide range of vocabulary of the topics that they study. They understand a good range of tenses and grammatical constructions. These enable them to write successfully, though they make too many errors through not paying enough attention to detail. Overall, their achievement is good, though greater attention to detail would improve standards further.
58. The quality of teaching is consistently good, and one Year 7 lesson was excellent.

### Example of outstanding practice

#### **Teaching in a fast track French class for students with previous knowledge of French extended their understanding of spoken language and grammatical structures, including the future tense.**

The starter activity was an oral warm-up session as revision. Students' understanding of pictures of leisure activities, projected onto the screen, was then tested by asking: *C'est quel numero?* Afterwards, students chose the correct activity from the pair named by the teacher. Choral work consolidated preferences, for example, *c'est formidable, je n'aime pas ça*. Students revised days, giving preferences. They consolidated the construction *jouer au* + different sports in chorus, and extended answers, using two activities. The teacher then combined activity and day by asking: *Qu'est-ce que tu vas faire lundi?* With worksheets, students participated in a paired role-play of six exchanges with the appropriate constructions and noted the answers. Finally, a listening comprehension tested students' understanding of the lesson's objectives: assessment was well used by the teacher to evaluate the success of the lesson. French was the language of the classroom for teacher and student alike. Each activity passed seamlessly into the next, and students worked productively. Teaching was stimulating and engaged the students' interest, with much concentration on speaking and listening skills as well as on the new grammatical feature.

59. All teachers teach two languages, several are native speakers, and their overall subject knowledge is very good. They use the foreign language to very good effect in the classroom. Lessons are well planned to include different activities and skills. They begin with revision, and students go on to learn something new in every lesson. ICT is used effectively to engage students' interest: worksheets complement many lessons and help teachers to respond to students' individual needs. Lessons end with an evaluation of what students have retained. Occasionally, opportunities to engage more students orally are missed or the evaluation is rushed. Homework is set regularly to

extend the work of the classroom. The one significant weakness in teaching is that marking is not sufficiently rigorous, and does not always show students how to improve. Students' enthusiastic and thoughtful approach to their work in lessons makes an important contribution to learning, though most need to take more care with their writing.

60. The leadership and management of the language college and of the department are very good. The school has invested heavily in the very latest ICT resources, which teachers have embraced wholeheartedly. Opportunities for language learning are very good: over half the students in Years 10 and 11 study two languages, and family learning classes for the community are well supported and successful. The department enjoys good links with feeder primary schools and businesses, and very good links with the local university. Foreign language assistants are well integrated into the departmental planning, and the wide range of visits and exchanges contribute very well to students' cultural development. When the school was last inspected, provision in modern languages was satisfactory, but had some significant weaknesses in teaching. Overall progress since that time has been good, and recent progress very good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are very high, and long-term achievement is good.
- Students are very effectively prepared to study mathematics in the sixth form.
- Some marking does not give students enough guidance on improving their work.
- Very effective leadership and management have improved teaching and learning since the last inspection.
- The national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is in place, but needs to be used more consistently.
- Some higher-attaining students need to improve their literacy skills.

### **Commentary**

61. Results in Year 9 national tests and at GCSE results have been consistently high since the last inspection, and a substantial number of students achieve A and A\* grades. Similarly high standards were seen during the inspection. These standards represent good achievement from the high starting point of most students joining Year 7, and students with special educational needs also achieve well in response to good support from teachers and teaching assistants. About one third of the students in Year 11, including those that are identified as gifted and talented, achieve high GCSE results in the January of Year 11 and continue with a freestanding mathematics course that prepares them well for subsequent studies in the sixth form. This is an important contribution to the very good achievement seen in the sixth form. Achievement overall is good, and has improved significantly since the last inspection.
62. Students have very well developed numeracy and algebraic skills by Year 9. Average students are starting to factorise quadratic expressions and high attaining students

rearrange formulae although are not yet totally secure with examples that incorporate fractions. In Year 11, the majority of students use the sine rule competently and very higher-attaining students understand translations of graphs of quadratic equations although are not yet secure with expressions that contain cubic values. Achievement has improved since the last inspection.

63. Teaching has also improved. It is now very good in Years 10 and 11, and satisfactory, with good features in Years 7 to 9; its overall quality is good. Very good lessons are based on high levels of mathematical understanding, high expectations and sensitive but firm class management. Where teaching is satisfactory, work is pitched at a level that enables the class as a whole to make satisfactory progress, but is not finely tuned to the range of learning needs among students. Time management and pace could also be improved in some of these lessons. Homework is used well to confirm and extend skills. Where teaching is very good, work is marked regularly, with comments that help students to understand how well they are doing and how to improve. A minority of marking is less thorough and helpful. Several parents told inspectors that they had concerns about the quality of mathematics teaching. Inspection evidence and discussions with the school suggested that these reflected recent staffing difficulties; no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection.
64. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department, supported very well by the second in department, monitors provision diligently and sets clear priorities for improvement. Monitoring of teaching is followed by prompt action to enhance teachers' skills. The national strategy for Years 7 to 9 is established, but there is now some inconsistency in its use between classes, and this limits the effectiveness of some starting and closing activities. The use of ICT is restricted at present, but new facilities are soon to be available. Literacy skills are supported satisfactorily, but weak literacy sometimes holds back higher-attaining students; the department has identified this as an area for development, but opportunities to apply and develop students' speaking skills are sometimes missed. Weaknesses in teaching and achievement seen during the last inspection have been addressed, and overall improvement has been very good. The school has very good potential to improve further.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

65. Students' high mathematical skills support learning in other subjects well. A training day has helped to raise awareness of the use of numeracy across the curriculum and there is already good and very good practice in many departments. In science and art, for example students' high standards in mathematics are used and fostered very well. However, this work is not co-ordinated effectively; the school's recent appointment of a senior manager to co-ordinate work in Years 7 to 9 is an appropriate step.

### **Science**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is very good, especially at A and A\* grades at GCSE.

- Teaching is very good; it is particularly well focused in Years 10 and 11.
- Students are interested in science, and willing to think scientifically.
- Teachers set demanding work in each lesson, and students rise to the challenge.
- Very good leadership and management have created remarkable improvement in recent years.

## **Commentary**

66. Standards are very high, and have improved every year for the past three years. At GCSE in 2004, almost half of the students attained A and A\* grades. Standards during the inspection were very high in Year 9 and Year 11. Overall achievement is very good among all groups of students, but is better in Years 10 and 11. This is because teaching in these year groups is consistently very good, while in Years 7 to 9 it varies in individual lessons from satisfactory to excellent.
67. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers provide varied, interesting and challenging work in almost all lessons, and students work very productively. Some do so very willingly and with high levels of independence, but teachers do not allow less ambitious students to coast, so that they also work hard and achieve well. In a minority of lessons in Years 7 to 9, teachers do not plan work that is far enough above the standard expected nationally; this is the main issue to be addressed in improving achievement further. Teachers mark and assess work very well, and set regular and effective homework.

### Example of outstanding practice

**Year 9 students responded with intense interest to a beautifully structured lesson, full of detail and hard ideas, about the new topic: a study of injuries to joints.**

The students were fascinated by the new topic. Each of them answered questions in remarkable detail, using complex language. Students listened thoughtfully and when they asked their supplementary questions it was clear they linked the new learning to other complex science already covered. They were equally capable as they worked from textbooks. The teacher gripped their attention at each stage. Her questions were closely focused on the needs of named students, and each student had personal attention. The gifted scientists were offered even more angles to think about. Other students were led to reconsider and boost their first thoughts. A multimedia presentation illustrated and explained matters imaginatively as a further means of hooking these young minds into top level science.

68. Leadership and management are very good. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been extended, to include a wider range of courses for students in Year 11, and guidance to staff on lesson planning has been greatly improved. Better textbooks and improved use of ICT ensure that lessons are now more productive. Staff use the full and accurate data about students' progress very well, though this could be used still more effectively by managers to track trends in achievement. Overall, the school provides many opportunities for all students to give of their best in science, and provision has shown very good improvement since the last inspection.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in Year 9 and at GCSE.
- Students develop high levels of confidence in response to consistently good and very good teaching.
- Good learning resources and accommodation ICT lessons provide very good conditions for learning.
- The school has a very clear and effective plan for developing the use of ICT across all subjects.
- The rate of progress could be improved further by better marking, assessment and target setting.

#### Commentary

69. GCSE examination results for both the short and full courses, and teachers' assessments in Year 9, are well above average. Similar standards were seen during the inspection. Achievement is significantly enhanced by the very effective use of ICT in departments that have been given priority in the school's ICT planning; the school's strategy here is very clear and effective, and facilities are being improved in each department as quickly as funds permit. Achievement is very good among all groups of students.

70. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 to 11. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and provide motivating tasks, which leads to very good learning. Well structured lessons, ensures learning is underpinned with relevant knowledge. Teachers adapt the work to ensure students are challenged. Teachers support students effectively in lessons, though the range of strategies they use to meet the individual needs and monitoring students' progress is less well developed. However, there are inconsistencies in marking in Years 7 to 9 and this does not fully support students to improve further. A small minority of students need closer monitoring in lessons and would benefit from timed targets in to ensure they remain focused. There are very good opportunities for students to develop their numeracy and literacy skills. Teachers use data projectors well to demonstrate processes and this and this supports learning very well. In Years 10 and 11, teachers structure the work very well to enable students to follow the guidelines of the examination mark scheme, which enables them to gain marks for each section of the work. Teachers encourage co-operation in lessons and this leads to very good relationships and attitudes.
71. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a clear vision for the subject, supported by a team of teachers with a shared commitment of improvement. Considerable investment to develop accommodation and resources has contributed very well to raising standards. Standards are now well above average and achievement is very good. This represents very good progress since the previous inspection. The next stage of development is to strengthen the marking, assessment and target setting procedures to enable the department to make better use more of the data available. There is very good technician support, which contributes very well to the daily management of the resources in the school. The ratio of students per computer in the school is now better than the national average.

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

72. The use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is good, and is improving rapidly. It is very good in modern foreign languages, in science and in the special needs department. Other subjects make good use of ICT when it is available, and it often contributes to excellence in teaching.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching, learning and achievement are excellent in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching throughout the school is well informed, carefully planned, and challenging.
- Positive relationships create a good working atmosphere.
- Target setting, marking and assessment are very good in Years 10 and 11, but inconsistent in Years 7 to 9.
- Strong leadership and management are raising standards.

- There are too few opportunities for younger students to visit places of historic interest.

## **Commentary**

73. Provision in history is very good overall, and excellent in Years 10 and 11, where just over half of all students choose the subject. Standards in Year 9 are well above average and achievement is very good. GCSE results were well above average in 2003 and 2004. The top two grades at GCSE were achieved by 87% of history students in 2004. This exceptional result is the outcome of highly effective teaching, detailed understanding of examination requirements, very effective assessment and target setting, and students' very hard work. All groups of students achieve equally well. Overall, achievement is very good, and excellent at GCSE.
74. The overall quality of teaching is very good, and the best is excellent. Teachers' planning is extremely thorough and all have high levels of understanding of the subject. They use a wide variety of teaching styles to set challenging targets that meet the learning needs of all students.



### Example of outstanding practice

#### **A revision lesson on appeasement was brought alive for a Year 9 class by excellent planning which allowed students to take much of the responsibility for their own learning.**

The lesson was planned extremely clearly and coherently, in order to reinforce work done and prepare the students for an end of unit examination. From the start, the teacher's friendly and sympathetic manner persuaded every member of the class that they had a valuable contribution to make. The teacher used a brief introductory session to clarify the difficult specialist vocabulary needed to understand this period of history. A rapid question and answer session followed and the sheer pace delighted the students. Everyone was determined to participate since learning had become fun. Routine chronological events in the build up to the Second World War were discussed with ever greater enthusiasm because contributions were elicited by the skilful use of a variety of teaching strategies: the pretence at lack of knowledge, pride derived when a student was praised for a good response, a high degree of encouragement and a constant flow of challenging questions. The obvious bond of trust between teacher and students removed any barriers to learning. Students' knowledge and understanding of foreign policy was outstanding. A carefully conducted final discussion session cemented the excellent achievement of the whole class.

75. Students are encouraged to undertake their own research, and to become more involved in their own learning. Collaborative work is most successful in Years 10 and 11 but needs to be further developed in Years 7 to 9. Sensitive questioning allows all students to play a full part in lessons, and most work is matched to individual needs. Students are fully aware of their learning targets and what they need to do to improve their work. However, in Years 7 to 9 there is a need for more consistency in the marking of student assignments. Teachers work very hard to give students the confidence and expertise to write extended pieces of work. There is a strong emphasis placed on improving literacy, especially the mastery of specialist vocabulary.
76. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear view of the priorities for history and has created a strong team spirit. The department's close monitoring and evaluation of teaching and progress has made a significant contribution to raising standards. The department has built up a comprehensive range of resources, but students still have restricted access to the Internet. There are too few opportunities to take part in organised historical visits. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection and the subject is a real strength of the school. Improvement at GCSE has been exceptional.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject and communicate well.
- There is a very high pass rate at GCSE, with a high proportion of A\* and A grades.
- Marking and assessment are used very well in Years 10 and 11, but need improvement in Years 7 to 9.
- Students' independent work and use of ICT are good, but they need more opportunities to practise them.
- The department makes a major contribution to international exchanges.

## Commentary

77. Standards are well above average in Year 9 and Year 11. By Year 9, students have exceeded the school's targets, and the gifted and talented show a mature understanding of the language, the issues and the impact of the topics they study. Almost all students taking geography at GCSE over the past five years have passed with grade C or above, and there a high proportion achieve A\* and A grades. These standards represent good achievement from Year 7, where standards are above average.
78. Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, teachers manage classes well and explain work very clearly to students, who listen attentively. Students apply their numeracy skills well in map work, and use technical vocabulary well in discussion and in their writing. In Years 10 and 11, students handle a wide variety of tasks with confidence. Their books show good progress, and are marked using examination mark schemes and detailed comment, so that students both know their likely grade and what they need to do to improve. In an excellent Year 11 lesson, students summarised their learning on climate change by working in groups to make a multimedia presentation to the whole class. They showed good ICT skills and public speaking confidence in addition to a sound knowledge of the topic.
79. Leadership is good, and management is satisfactory. There are opportunities for boys to study geography outdoors, but there is little evidence of individual research in support of coursework, and students have relatively restricted access to ICT. Accommodation is very good and resources are good. The school's policies for assessing work and setting targets are not used effectively in Years 7 to 9, and this limits the impact of teachers' outstanding knowledge of the subject on students' learning. This was highlighted in the last inspection as a weakness and has still to be effectively tackled. The strengths of the department have been maintained, and improvement overall has been satisfactory.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of citizenship into Years 10 and 11 has left too little teaching time for most students to cover in full the locally agreed syllabus.
- Teaching and learning are good to very good, and GCSE standards are well above average.
- Leadership within the subject is very good and it is very well managed
- The working relationship between teachers and students is highly positive and respectful.

## Commentary

80. Standards were well above average in the short course GCSE in 2004, with almost all students entered for the examination achieving a grade C or above. The large majority of Year 10 and Year 11 students, however, do not receive their statutory entitlement to religious education. In the current Year 11, of those studying on the short course GCSE programme, standards are above average and good results seem likely again next summer. These students are achieving well, as are those in Year 10, who have recently started their GCSE short course. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9, and among the minority of students who complete the GCSE course. As so many in Years 10 and 11 do not do this, however, overall achievement by Year 11 is not as high as it should be.

81. Students work well together and cooperate during lessons; they also share a mutual respect for their differing beliefs and views and work harmoniously together in the classroom setting. Students explain the position of their own faith community well. There is a highly positive and respectful working relationship between teachers and students in lessons, which aids progress and achievement significantly.
82. Teaching and learning are consistently good or better, and the best is excellent. The department is centrally staffed by a highly qualified head of religious education, who provides very good curriculum leadership. Lessons are very well planned and resources are well used within the classroom, resulting in a stimulating and valuable learning experience for the students. In many of the written activities, students are encouraged to express their own viewpoint. Key learning tasks are often skilfully matched to the needs of different students, and ICT is used well to support students with special educational needs.

#### Example of outstanding practice

#### **Exploration of the principle of 'Zakah' (purification, by giving to the needy) as the Third Pillar of Islam, led to excellent understanding and achievement among a group of Year 11 students.**

As the lesson begins it swiftly becomes clear that the students expect a rich educational diet, based on a mixture of lightening pace and powerful use of humour. The lesson is focused on developing students' understanding of the idea of giving to others, to purify a person's own spirit. The teacher begins with an inspirational introduction to the topic, making the message relevant to students ... "would you sell a healthy organ to the west to feed your starving family, or would you accept Zakah from an Islamic brother?" Quickly established discussion groups soon led to vibrant and challenging questions by students to each other. The teacher then rotated the groups, quickly assessing the quality of discussion points and posing counter-points to provoke even more interest among students. Every student was by now engrossed in the activity. After allowing the discussion to run its course, the teacher skilfully switched back to a whole-class session, with a student volunteering to record contributions on the white-board. Students were now almost bursting with answers, and the teacher openly encouraged them to challenge their own and each other's views, which they did in a climate of mutual respect, with debate of high quality. The combination of an electric atmosphere and non-stop pace meant that students did not want to leave when the bell went, and neither did the inspector!

83. The head of department has a very clear vision for the subject to develop further and is keen to ensure provision is relevant to the lives of students of all backgrounds and faiths. He has made clear to senior managers and the governors that the time now allocated to the subject in Years 10 and 11 is not enough to meet statutory requirements. The subject makes a consistently good contribution to spiritual and moral development. There has been significant progress since the last inspection in the depth of study in the subject and the quality of teaching and learning. However, the current lack of teaching time in Years 10 and 11 means that the school's provision has not made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, despite the good work of the department.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students are very keen to learn and achieve very well; examination results are high.
- The quality of teaching and of students' response is very good and often excellent in Years 10 and 11.
- There is outstanding work in electronics and mechanisms in Years 10 and 11.
- The quality and use of assessment needs improvement in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

84. Students joining the school have reached slightly above average standards for their age. By Year 9, standards are significantly above average, and this pattern continues to GCSE, where standards are very high, and the pass rate at grades A\* to C has been 100 per cent for the past two years. Students with special educational needs make the same and sometimes better progress as other students. Individual assignments enable gifted and talented students to make appropriate progress. Overall, achievement is very good, with some outstanding work in electronics and mechanisms in Years 10 and 11.
85. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, and often excellent in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subjects and are able to demonstrate work very effectively. They motivate students very well by asking them questions in lessons. Relationships are excellent. As a result, students are keen to learn and make very good progress. In a small number of graphics lessons in Years 7 to 9, students could be challenged more effectively. Students are able to make dimensioned sketches of their designs excellently and make working models of their designs and mechanisms. They are also able to provide control programmes on computers for their digital products and embed them in microchips for use in their prototype models excellently. Students are given very good advice on how to improve their work and examination techniques. Students should be made more aware of their progress in Years 7 to 9 by the greater use of National Curriculum levels or their equivalent.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

**Challenging a very high-attaining Year 11 group to design and make a prototype for a commercially viable electronic product led to imaginative, practical thinking and final products of a high standard.**

Students were asked to create a digital product, which incorporated electronic control and had commercial potential. Two of the products were a device to teach a young child numbers – when a numbered key was pressed the number was electronically displayed - and a random number generator to help select National Lottery numbers. This exercise motivated students extremely well and provided opportunities to learn a wide range of skills. It also exercised students' imagination and flair as each developed sequence control programmes on the computer network. Once these were validated, students downloaded them into a microchip with the help of the departmental technician for incorporation in their circuit. Other students made prototypes of their control circuit. In previous lessons, students had designed cases for their product, which used a range of different materials including plastic. By the end of the lesson, all were well on their way to producing attractive, working products that were of merchantable quality.

86. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is an experienced teacher and very well supported by his colleagues. All teachers are keen to improve their work and standards. Changes since the last inspection are very good. Examination results, the quality of teaching and students' progress have all showed significant improvement.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Examination results are consistently well above average
- Very good leadership and management have made a big impact on standards since the last inspection.
- Very good teaching and learning have a direct impact on achievement.
- Students work hard and imaginatively; they accept responsibility for their learning and 'catch the art disease'.
- Students assess their own work, but do not make enough use of National Curriculum criteria and levels.

#### **Commentary**

87. Students join the school with above average standards, and reach well above average standards by Year 9 and at GCSE, where many pass with A\* and A grades. Students choose art and design in very large numbers at GCSE. Achievement is very good. Within a common core of skills and image-making, the department has a clear focus is on individual development and growth. Students learn to expect a great deal of themselves. This reflects the department's high expectations, and leads to very good progress. Standards are consistently high across a wide range of media and artistic techniques, including sculpture and image modification using ICT.
88. Teaching and learning are very good. Expertise and enthusiasm help students 'catch the art disease.' A vibrant and exciting environment for learning is created, but the rooms are overcrowded; the department moves to new accommodation in the autumn; this temporary difficulty has not been allowed to inhibit the creation of high quality work. Challenge and high aspirations are the norm. The impact of learning is seen not only in examination results, but also in the high quality of work on display around the school.
89. Very good leadership and management have enabled the department to make a strong recovery from weaknesses identified at the last inspection. The Head of Department thinks creatively, and knows how to put imaginative ideas into practice. Teachers share his enthusiasm, and work very well together as a team. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and includes art from across the world and of many periods and styles. The assessment scheme is adequate, but does not yet involve National Curriculum criteria and levels in all topics, so that students are not as well informed as they could be when assessing their own work. Spiritual development is well supported.

Students accept responsibility for their own work and development. Above all students arrive expecting to enjoy the lessons and to succeed. They do not leave disappointed.

## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are enthusiastic, highly skilled musicians, who give freely of their time.
- Students enjoy music, make good use of the facilities available to them, and reach high standards at GCSE.
- Gifted and talented students reach very high standards in performance and composition.
- A large number of students continue their learning outside lessons, and take part in performances.
- Planning in a minority of lessons in Years 7 to 9 could do more to make learning goals clear, and to match them to the full range of students' needs.

### Commentary

90. Students join the school with above average standards overall, though some have had much more experience of music than others. By Year 9, standards are well above average, and achievement is good. Students have good musical knowledge and listening skills. Many are capable performers. GCSE results were well above average in 2003, and all students achieved A\*-B grades in 2004. The most able students in Year 11 are reaching standards that are well above the requirements of GCSE course, especially in composing and performing. Most students make very effective use of ICT but in Years 7 to 9, not all students have the same opportunity to use computers to enhance their work. Students have very good attitudes. They work well in group work and the most able readily help other students. Occasionally, the disruptive behaviour of a very small number of students slows the pace of lessons and limits the progress that they and others make. Standards of literacy are good but some written materials are too demanding for some students with special educational needs. Overall, achievement is very good, with outstanding achievement on the part of gifted and talented students.
91. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good for the smaller numbers of students taking music in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, lessons are conducted at pace with high expectations that enable most students to make good progress in listening and composing. Teachers provide good individual support, but learning goals are not always shared with students or sufficiently matched to their different learning needs. National Curriculum levels are used to assess units of work but the use of assessment that would enable students to know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve is not fully established in lessons. In Years 10 and 11, teachers know their students well and have very good subject knowledge. They use their skills and knowledge of the repertoire to exemplify teaching points, ensuring that students make very good progress in developing musical knowledge and composing in different styles and genres.
92. Leadership and management are good, and have very good features. The head of department has a clear vision for the future development of the department, in which a sense of purpose, teamwork and a commitment to achieving high standards is evident. The resources and spacious accommodation are used to good effect, providing access to students who wish to complete work or practise together, before, during and after school. The department has identified appropriate priorities for improvement but the scheme of work needs greater detail to identify how the needs of different students will be met. The curriculum is broad and balanced. Units covering music from different genres and countries contribute to students' cultural development. The curriculum is further enhanced by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including additional lessons outside the main teaching day. Over 120 students are receiving

instrumental and vocal lessons from a large team of visiting teachers. A well-attended concert during the inspection included instrumental and choral work of high quality, with impressive performances from talented soloists.

93. The department has made good improvements since the last inspection in the quality of its teaching, in provision for the most able musicians, and in attracting students to study music at GCSE.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership and management lead to continuous improvement in the department's work.
- There is high participation in competitive inter-school sports.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning, and this ensures good achievement.
- Teaching is consistently good and this leads to good learning and rising standards.
- Limited ICT resources are slowing the effective development of the assessment system.

### **Commentary**

94. Students have not yet been entered for GCSE; the first group will take the examination in 2006. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average in Year 9 and Year 11, and represents good achievement from students' broadly average starting point in Year 7. Students take part with enthusiasm, and achieve well across all areas of the National Curriculum, including health and safety. Higher-attaining students play sports and games with pace and accuracy, and all students can play, officiate and coach competently and effectively in a range of games. Students have a firm grasp of the principles of health related fitness and conduct circuit training safely and with correct intensity.
95. Teaching and learning are good, and sometimes very good. The best teaching sets tasks to challenge students of all abilities, and leads to very good learning and achievement among all groups of students. Teachers balance specific skill building activities with good questions which test learning and secure understanding, and which allow students time to recover from strenuous work. The department provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities for both gifted and talented students and for those who have a personal interest and wish to take part. Participation is high and enthusiastic, and students' best work is highly skilled. Students are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively, often not under direct supervision. They have very good opportunities to take responsibility, and to undertake coaching roles with other students. These opportunities are taken very seriously.
96. Leadership and management are very good. A newly appointed and well-balanced team fully meets the demands of a varied and balanced curriculum. There is a clear vision of improvement, backed by effective management structures. Detailed assessments of students' work are securely tied to recognised national standards. They permit progress to be measured objectively, and are beginning to influence curriculum developments. This work is, however, impeded by a shortage of ICT resources. New schemes of work are detailed, and all staff have

contributed to their development. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Lesson planning is more detailed, schemes of work now include assessment procedures, and standards in Years 10 and 11 have risen.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's tradition of service promotes a high level of participation in citizenship activities.
- Achievement in Year 9 is satisfactory; students know about systems of government in different countries, though their knowledge of the British system lacks detail.
- There is a good curriculum for citizenship in Years 10 and 11.
- Policies have recently been introduced and a co-ordinator appointed.
- Assessment is in place, but the subject is not included in annual reports to parents.

### Comments

97. Achievement is satisfactory and standards a little above average in Years 9 and 11. Students enter the school with some knowledge of citizenship and make satisfactory progress following a scheme of work that covers the National Curriculum requirements for Years 7 to 9, either through special lessons or through identified work in other subjects. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is good.
98. The quality of teaching during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to very good, and was good overall. Citizenship elements in subjects are clearly identified in practice, and placed in the context of moral decisions, for example, through study principles of justice in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Many of the voluntary activities organised by the charities group, the school council and the youth forum contribute to the skills of enquiry and participation strands of the National Curriculum.
99. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new co-ordinator has worked very hard to prepare citizenship schemes of work for Year 7 to 11. Teams of staff have been identified for years 9 to 11 while form tutors are developing the course in Years 7 and 8. Apart from the usual range of activities various innovations have been introduced to broaden the appeal of the course. The mayor and council of Maidstone take part in a focus day in which they explain the role in local government. Other local links such as the Youth Forum, Young Enterprise and Maidstone business provide regular contact with the real world, while a bi-annual World Challenge trip adds a global strand. However assessment and reporting to parents have yet to be introduced, and to this extent provision does not meet statutory requirements. The recognition of need to 'give back' to the school and to society, in terms of mentoring, acting as prefects, and membership of the Combined Cadet Force, all of which have been identified as features of the senior school, remain a commendable strength. Students leave as well rounded citizens. Overall there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.



## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, sixteen 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	5	80.0	80.0	20.0	20.0	26.0	29.9
Biology	10	100	65.2	20.0	11.1	32.0	20.6
Business studies	7	85.7	76.4	14.3	16.3	34.3	26.2
Chemistry	11	90.9	72.7	18.2	13.9	29.1	24.1
Communication studies	3	66.7	86.4	0	100	23.3	32.0
Design and technology	1	100	74.9	100	15.1	50	25.3
Economics	3	100	73.6	0	27.0	33.3	26.4
English/ English language	1	100	82.9	0	28.7	73.6	28.7
English literature	4	100	85.9	25.0	19.1	40.0	30.2
French	4	100	78.2	25.0	18.9	37.5	30.0
Geography	6	100	74.3	0	19.8	31.1	26.5
German	9	100	81.5	0	19.3	31.1	28.9
History	11	100	80.7	9.1	38.0	26.4	28.6
Information technology	11	90.9	67.0	27.3	10.9	35.5	21.4
Mathematics	18	94.4	61.9	44.4	17.1	37.8	22.1
Music	2	100	86.5	0	21.4	25.0	30.7
Other sciences	1	100	71.4	0	15.8	20.0	24.3
Other social studies	14	92.9	69.7	21.4	16.7	28.6	24.1
Physics	24	100	68.6	20.8	44.0	35.8	22.7
Religious studies	1	100	80.2	0	22.6	40.0	29.8
Sociology	5	100	71.8	60.0	18.4	46.0	25.4
Spanish	9	88.9	78.5	0	17.7	26.7	27.3
Sports/PE studies	3	100	73.2	0	11.4	30.0	23.1

**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	13	100	98.6	7.7	50.2	64.6	87.7
Biology	26	100	94.0	50.0	39.2	84.6	78.6
Business studies	26	100	98.7	73.1	36.8	102.3	80.1
Chemistry	14	100	97.6	57.	49.0	92.9	84.9
Classical studies	13	100	99.5	76.9	55.9	95.4	90.9
Communication studies	21	100	99.4	71.4	37.8	97.1	82.1
Design and technology	10	90.0	97.8	20.0	35.0	72.0	77.9
Drama	1	100	99.5	100	40.1	120	83.6
Economics	10	100	98.9	60.0	52.0	92.0	88.3
English Literature	34	100	99.5	70.6	46.5	97.6	86.5
French	5	100	98.8	40.0	51.5	92.0	87.6
Geography	20	100	98.7	70.0	44.5	93.0	84.0
German	2	100	98.3	0	47.9	70.0	84.8
History	38	100	99.0	50.0	44.6	87.4	84.6
Mathematics	62	98.4	96.7	61.3	55.6	96.5	88.8
Music	5	100	98.8	60	38.9	96.0	81.1
Other social studies	31	100	97.4	35.5	42.7	81.3	81.8
Physics	27	96.3	96.7	37.0	44.6	82.2	81.7
Sociology	11	100	98.2	36.4	44.3	83.6	83.6
Spanish	22	100	98.3	40.9	50.2	83.6	83.9
Sports/PE studies	10	100	98.0	60.0	30.9	90.0	75.2

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

### **English**

Provision for English is **very good**.

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

- Teachers know their subject very well and encourage a scholarly approach to work.
- Students are very interested in literature, and know the texts they study in very good detail.
- Achievement is very good among students taking the IB.
- Examination results are well above average, but not consistently so at grade A.
- Opportunities for curriculum enrichment are limited.

#### **Commentary**

100. A-level results are consistently well above average, and half to two-thirds of students each year pass with grades A to B. A grades are, however, much less frequent than B grades. All students have completed their courses successfully in recent years. AS results in 2004 were of similar quality to A-level results, and showed significant improvement from lower standards in 2003. English attracts large numbers of students at A level and for the International Baccalaureate (IB).

101. In Year 13, students hold thoughtful and sustained discussions about literature. They show considerable insight in their reading of set texts and higher attaining students bring to bear broad general knowledge from their own independent study. Coursework essays are thorough and well structured, with detailed reference to texts. They demonstrate a very good knowledge of the historical and cultural background of works studied. Students on the IB course produce highly assured extended essays, which reflect wide reading of a range of demanding literature. The work of lower attaining students shows less capacity to evaluate style and technique and is sometimes marred by poor expression. All students make good use of word processing skills, however, to present their coursework to a high standard. Achievement is very good. Students on all courses develop breadth of understanding and very good skills of critical analysis. Those on the IB course maintain high standards achieved on entry to the sixth form.

102. Teaching is very good. Teachers' expectations are high, with a scholarly approach encouraged in the development of written work. Students' essays are assessed promptly, with detailed written comments that evaluate achievement constructively against examination criteria. Above all, teachers know their subject very well, and are able to communicate their own enthusiasm for literature in lessons. The most effective lessons featured a lively interchange of ideas, and involved students actively in the work. A successful balance between teacher and student contribution was not always fully achieved, however. More generally, opportunities to enrich the curriculum through external study days and theatre trips have been limited recently. Nevertheless, learning is very good. Students are well motivated and show high levels of interest in literature.

103. Leadership is very good. The new head of department is strongly committed to maintaining the highest standards and promoting excellence. Management is good. Effective schemes of work are in place, but monitoring and evaluation of teaching within the department is not yet sufficiently systematic. Improvement since the last inspection is good. A-level standards are higher, and new courses have been introduced successfully.

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

104. Students' literacy skills are well above average. Students achieve very good standards in written coursework for most subjects, including economics, geography, and sociology and business studies. Essays are well supported by effective research and use of detailed evidence. The systematic approach adopted in several subjects to developing reasoned analysis and understanding of technical terminology helps students to present arguments and explore ideas. Standards are good in DT and music, and satisfactory in modern foreign languages, but there could be higher expectations for the development of ideas and accuracy of written work in these subjects. Teachers make good opportunities for debate and discussion in English literature, art, physics and history, amongst many subjects.

### **French**

Provision in French is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good, and students achieve well.
- Teachers' very good background knowledge contributes well to students' cultural development.
- Few Year 12 students redraft work to improve its accuracy.

### **Commentary**

105. Students follow the traditional courses, leading to AS and A2 levels, or they study the International Baccalaureate at either standard or higher level. Two students attained grades at A-E in the A2 examinations in 2004, and this represents satisfactory achievement from their GCSE results.

106. Standards of attainment, as seen during the inspection, are above average overall, and students achieve well. Students' understanding of the foreign language is very good, because teachers use it consistently and very effectively in class. Students retrieve information from cassette successfully. Oral skills and pronunciation are good. Students in Year 12 were able to develop ideas and opinions, when they talked about their experiences at primary school, to demonstrate their knowledge of the imperfect tense. In the Year 12 class of IB students, they expressed their opinion about music, with some support from the teacher. Year 13 students in the IB class gave reasonably successful short summaries about the Dreyfus affair. In the A2 class, the only student present on that day worked admirably with the teacher. Talking confidently and at length, he displayed a very good command of the relevant vocabulary to talk about pollution and 4X4 cars, guided by the teacher's very effective questioning. Teachers' very good background knowledge helps students to cover a wide range of topics in

writing, from famous historical figures and economics to music and painting. Year 13 students generally write with considerable accuracy, and they redraft work. Some of the Year 12 writing, with some basic mistakes in tense constructions, would benefit from redrafting.

107. During the course, students acquire a very wide range of vocabulary to deal with the varied topics and authentic texts that they read and hear. Grammatical constructions and the formation and accurate use of different tenses are dealt with comprehensively, both orally and in writing. Teachers correct students' work conscientiously,
108. Teaching is good overall: two of the teachers are native speakers. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. Students' attitudes and motivation are very good, and students learn well. All lessons are conducted in French, and teachers explain grammar and difficult concepts very clearly. Students learn something new in every lesson. Teachers' questioning is very effective, and they ensure that all students in the class are included. They succeed in making their lessons interesting and stimulating. There is good provision in the teaching to distinguish between the varying needs of the A-level and the IB courses. Homework extends the work of the classroom. ICT enhances the topics in class, and students use the Internet for research. Teachers contribute very well to students' cultural development. Relationships in class are very good. Leadership and management of the department are good.

## **German**

Provision in German is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A-level results in 2004 showed good achievement.
- Good teaching is enabling students to recover from the effects of staffing difficulties during the last year.
- Teachers have very good knowledge of German, and use the learning well in lessons.
- Provision is well led and managed; there is clear direction, and standards are improving.
- A small minority of students do not work hard enough in some lessons.

### **Commentary**

109. Overall, achievement is good. Students follow A-level or the IB standard course. All students completed their courses successfully in 2004, with a good proportion of A and B grades. This represents good achievement in relation to their GCSE results. The standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly average for students' courses, and had been affected by staffing difficulties in the last year. However, students are now making good progress, and the department is well on its way to enabling them to achieve well by the end of the year. Standards in Year 12 are above average, except for one class in which some students showed too little commitment to their work in the afternoon. Higher-attaining students in Year 12 are now achieving well, but some students need to pay more attention to accuracy in writing.

110. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and use German well in lessons. Vocabulary and constructions are clearly explained, and teachers ensure that all students participate in oral work. Lessons are well planned to ensure that students complete different activities and skills, and teachers make good adjustments to tackle earlier weaknesses in learning. Students learn new vocabulary or constructions in many lessons, and teachers evaluate what the students have retained at the end of the lesson. Homework is set regularly and students' written work is marked well. There is satisfactory use of ICT.
111. Good leadership and management are enabling the subject to recover from its staffing difficulties, and have set in train a pattern of improvement.

## **Spanish**

Provision in Spanish is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers know the subject very well, and use Spanish very well in lessons.
- Students achieve many grade Bs at A-level, but few grade As.
- Standards are above average in speaking and listening, but average only in writing.
- The Spanish assistant makes a very good contribution to teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

112. A-level results were average in 2003, but improved in 2004, when grade B passes increased significantly, although the proportion of A grades remained low. AS results are broadly average. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average overall, because of students' good speaking and listening skills. Their written work was of average overall quality, because of a lack of attention to detail. The 2004 A-level results and the standard of work seen during the inspection represent good achievement, and could be improved to very good achievement by a substantial improvement in written work.
113. By Year 13, skills in listening, speaking and reading are well developed. Written work is well presented, consolidates class oral work well, but is only of average standard. Some Year 12 students, however, have considerable gaps in their knowledge of basic grammar and vocabulary, and a few are very reticent about speaking. Year 13 students speak very confidently and are accurate within the context of the A-level topics. Their pronunciation is very good and they have a good knowledge of grammatical structures. Their reading skills are well developed and they have a good vocabulary base.
114. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know Spanish very well, and have very good general linguistic skills. Students are generally very well motivated, hardworking and keen to express their personal opinions about A-level and AS topics. The use of up to date authentic texts and materials from the Internet motivate students. The Spanish assistant is very effective, providing students with the opportunity to consolidate their learning very effectively in small groups.

115. Leadership and management are good. There is a good scheme of work and the vision for the subject is clear. The tracking of students' progress is very thorough. The number of students is growing, and Spanish is now a very popular option in Year 12. The work of the Spanish assistant is very well planned well integrated into the schemes of work. The subject was not reported on at the last inspection, but its current rate of improvement is good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average for the very large number of students taking mathematics.
- The excellent curriculum is providing a wide range of learning opportunities.
- Very good teaching and learning have led to very good achievement by all groups of students.
- An outstanding introductory course at the end of Year 11 bridges the gap between GCSE and A-level.
- Very good leadership and management have tackled weaknesses at the last inspection and established a very strong trend of improvement.

### **Commentary**

116. Standards are consistently well above average at A-level and AS, and a very high proportion of students complete their courses. Similar standards were seen during the inspection, with very high standards in the highest-attaining groups in Years 12 and 13. This represents very good achievement, particularly as a high proportion of students choose and complete courses in mathematics, including some whose GCSE results are not in the highest grades. A very effective course at the end of the summer for students wishing to take mathematics in the sixth form helps them adjust to the demands of advanced mathematics and boosts achievement. All groups of students achieve equally well.

117. Teaching and learning are very good. The main strength of the teaching is the very good subject expertise of the teachers that gives students clear, precise and accurate information. In some lessons, the challenge in the teaching encourages extended oral contributions from student, and excellent learning results. Planning is very good and sometimes excellent. It is supported very well by extensive records of students' progress, which ensure students know how well they are doing. A minority of lessons have too much emphasis on note taking, limiting the overall rate of learning. ICT are not used enough in the teaching as access to suitable equipment is restricted, but good use is made of graphical calculators.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

**A Year 12 lesson on the rules of differentiation in calculus explained different ideas very clearly to students, so that they understood them quickly and could apply them in solving problems.**

The teacher began with a very clear understanding of what students already understood about calculus, and where they needed to adjust their thinking to accommodate new material in the rules of differentiation. Excellent use of questions helped students to make their thinking explicit, and extended their understanding without telling them what to think. Examples were carefully chosen to add further difficulty as the learning proceeded, without ever giving students more new difficulty than they could cope with. Students responded with genuine intellectual endeavour, discussing their work confidently and clarifying their own and each other's thinking. They enjoyed their success, and had a much clearer

understanding of how the basic definition of differentiation could be applied in a wide range of contexts. This outcome represented excellent achievement.

118. Leadership and management are very good. Very good assessment procedures have been developed since the last inspection. Performance management procedures have helped to establish a good team of teachers. The design of the curriculum reflects very clear vision for the department, and enables it to reach a high proportion of students who wish to take mathematics; this is an important contribution to the range of learning opportunities in the sixth form as a whole. The department had some weaknesses at the time of the last inspection, and its overall improvement has been very good.

## SCIENCE

Biology and physics were inspected.

### Biology

Provision is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved greatly since the last inspection, and are now well above average.
- Expert teachers demand highest standards and students respond with very good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management have improved standards and diversified the curriculum.
- Much is done to promote independent study and achievement beyond lessons.
- More could be done to help the students working at or near the lower grade boundaries of their courses.

#### Commentary

119. Standards are well above average at A-level, and were very strong in IB work seen. Standards at AL have risen steadily in recent years, and the IB course is being re-introduced successfully. A very high number of students complete their courses. Overall achievement is now very good among all groups of students, including those with basic qualifications for the course and those capable of the highest standards.

120. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers provide plenty of work for students, and present it expertly, covering top-level concepts in exemplary detail. Teachers prepare students for university by promoting study beyond what is needed for A-level. Marking, however, meets the needs of the most capable students very well but is less successful in showing others how to tackle more basic elements that they find difficult. Students value all facets of the teaching highly. They make very good and independent use of the very good resources in the library and the biology area. They are undaunted when lessons lack opportunities for them to discuss and debate, but enliven learning when given the chance to be actively involved.

121. The leadership and management are both very good in that major changes have been made, all successfully. Standards are improving steadily. Numbers taking biology have



risen significantly. Students can now opt for either AL or IB. The key strength is the detail and thoroughness with which many factors have been improved to ensure these big changes succeed so well. Staff have explicit plans to add further features of very good quality. These include fieldwork, and ways of using the data to manage students' overall progress more thoroughly. Provision now is much better than the just adequate provision reported in the previous inspection.

## Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of work seen during the inspection, and 2004 AS results, were well above average.
- Very good subject expertise and lesson planning have led to very good teaching and learning.
- Very good leadership and management have led to very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Students work hard and effectively in and out of lessons.

### Commentary

122. A-level results were above average in 2003, and improved in 2004, though the proportion of A grades remains below average. The standard of work seen during the inspection showed a further improvement among all groups of students and was well above average, with a high proportion of A grades at AS in 2004.

123. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know the subject very well, and plan interesting and challenging lessons. Very good practical demonstrations enable lesson time to be used very well, alternating students' activities between listening, watching, discussing and writing. This promotes very effective learning. Students have very good attitudes to their work; following up class work in private study. The marking of students' work is also very good, so they know what to improve. In a minority of lessons, discussions are not extensive enough to put the subject matter of the lesson into a wider context.

### Example of outstanding practice

**An excellent A-level physics lesson on interference of waves made outstanding use of listening, watching, discussing and writing to produce accelerated learning and understanding.**

At the start of the lesson, this very higher-attaining group understood that waves could interfere with each other constructively or destructively. This lesson enabled them to extend their understanding of this complex topic by investigating several aspects of it through short experiments and demonstrations, followed by questions, discussion and note taking. The teacher used his excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject to plan activities that challenged students without taking them too far in any single step, to give explanations that were clearly focused on the most important points, and to ensure that they thought clearly and independently. Students responded with a high level of intellectual commitment. Those with minority ethnic backgrounds were fully involved and learning to the same excellent standard as the others. Excellent graphs were used to summarise learning at the end of the lesson. The quality of teaching over the whole of these students' course had led to very high standards in their AS examinations, and was preparing them very effectively for A-level.

124. Leadership and management are very good, and have led to very good improvement since the last inspection in teaching and in the focus on enabling students to reach high standards. Leadership has produced a very good team of teachers who all contribute to the scheme of work and are committed to improvement. The monitoring of the department's work is very

good, and assessment is used very effectively to identify and tackle any under-achievement at an early stage. Support for individual students is very effective.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision in specialist ICT courses is excellent, but there are some gaps in the use of ICT in the curriculum.
- A-level results in ICT are well above average, with a high proportion of A grades.
- Teaching and achievement seen during the inspection were excellent.
- Students are very interested in the subject, and work very hard in and out of lessons.
- There is an excellent climate of shared interest and exploration in the department.

### **Commentary**

125. AS and A level results were well above average in 2003, and were maintained in 2004, which saw a sharp rise in the proportion of A grades at AS, as well as a very high proportion of A grades at A-level. The standard of work seen during the inspection in Year 13 was very high and indicated that standards were rising. Standards in the IB are well above average. Achievement ranges from very good to excellent in all courses and among all groups of students, with particularly consistent achievement among gifted and talented students. It is excellent overall.

126. Coursework grades are very high because of teachers' careful planning. Students gain very good knowledge of the specialist software before they attempt the necessary coursework and are able to apply this knowledge to a variety of increasingly complex and challenging tasks. Work shows a very good level of analysis, and students establish a client for their work, which provides a more realistic context for the development of information systems. Good understanding of complex concepts enables students to solve a range of problems when improving information systems.

127. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. Teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject, and provide expert support to students as they attempt increasingly challenging and demanding tasks. Learning benefits from very structured and specific guidance, which is very closely matched to the needs of individuals. Teachers prepare an excellent range of resources, including websites that support students in and outside lessons. Teachers set very specific goals in lessons, and communicate these very clearly to students. Teachers cover the knowledge to very good depth and students use this very well to set themselves complex and interesting problems to solve. This has a direct impact on the high standards achieved. Resources are almost always adequate and used well. Excellent individual support helps to consolidate students' own plans for their coursework. Most students have well above average skills in numeracy and literacy and complete work accurately and to very good depth. Teachers establish excellent relationships with students, which create a learning ethos in which there is mutual respect.

### Example of outstanding practice

#### **Year 13 lesson on designing data capture forms led to challenging and motivating discussion on normalisation resulting in complex problem solving and excellent learning.**

An excellent lesson where students were learning to apply the concepts of normalisation linked to the design of data capture forms. Outstanding teaching and learning was consistent throughout the lesson. First, the teacher explained the relevance of normalisation and the ability to rationalise and organise the way in which data can be gathered. The aim being, to avoid duplication of information when forms are designed. The teacher drew well on students' prior knowledge and their capacity to learn. The teacher led stimulating and challenging discussions that revealed students' ability to solve more sophisticated and complex problems. Their high level of understanding enabled them to apply this knowledge to a range of interesting coursework, where they were able to suggest a whole range of improvements. Students demonstrated their ability to hypothesise and test theories that they applied to their own work. The teacher facilitated the discussion very effectively and ensured students knowledge was underpinned with relevant and in depth knowledge. A very good balance of praise and encouragement sustained students' drive and self-motivation. Very good relationships and attitudes were at the heart of maintaining the high levels of work.

128. Leadership and management are outstanding. Teaching in all courses is very effectively co-ordinated, and resources are of a very high standard. There are very good opportunities for students to choose an appropriate ICT course in the sixth form. The subject was not reported in detail at the last inspection; its current rate of improvement is excellent.

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

129. Across the sixth form, teachers and students make effective use of ICT when it is available, and students use computers well in coursework. There are, however, significant gaps in the use of ICT in subjects where it can make a direct contribution to learning.

### **HUMANITIES**

Geography, history, philosophy and ethics and sociology were inspected fully, and religious education, politics and psychology were sampled. The teaching and learning seen in **religious education** were satisfactory and were based on the locally agreed syllabus. Teaching and learning in **psychology** were satisfactory, with good features in teachers' knowledge of the subject, but room for more challenge to the highest-attaining students. The quality of work sampled in **politics** were very good. Teaching and learning were very good, with high levels of subject knowledge and commitment among teachers and students. Students showed high levels of understanding of the British system of government, including the role of the civil service.

### **Geography**

Provision for geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of their subject and teaching is very clear.
- Students achieve a high proportion of passes at grade A as well as grade B.
- Resources for learning in the department and library are of high quality.

- AS examination results are consistently much lower than A-level results for the same students.
- The department does not make full use of school policies for assessment.

### Commentary

130. Standards are well above average and achievement at A-level and in the IB course are very good. Each course exceeds the school target for passes at grades A and B; nearly 70% of last year's students passed these grades, with a high proportion at grade A. This is very good achievement. By comparison, AS results are very low, even among students who subsequently achieve high grades at A-level. The reasons for this anomaly are not clear, but inspection evidence suggests students are less committed to AS than to A-level.

131. All the teaching seen in the inspection was good or better; overall it was very good. Experienced, very highly qualified and erudite teachers have the ability to build students' knowledge with easily understood explanations of complex concepts and ideas. Teachers have built up very good resources for learning, including a well stocked A level library. Some topics make good use of the Internet for independent research, including case studies, and this could usefully be extended.

### Example of outstanding practice

**Very clear explanations, combined with excellent organisation of resources, led to high levels of achievement in understanding pollution, first in a model and then in a real context.**

This Year 12 class was studying river pollution as part of the module "Energy and Life". Their recent lessons had focused on energy and food flows in ecosystems, and they had already studied the hydrosere as an exemplar. They recalled the basic food chain of a hydrosere, or aquatic ecosystem, shown on the board as a flow diagram by the teacher. They had to read an account of the ways in which agricultural, industrial and human effluent was discharged into the River Tyne, and annotate their flow diagram with the various effects of the pollutants on the levels of the food chain in the river. By focused questioning the teacher revealed the extent of the damage and the class understood the cycle of death and decay with great clarity.

132. There is very good leadership of the geography department in the sixth form. The head of department is unsparing in his commitment to his subject and his students. He personally leads a sixth form field course from a youth hostel base in the Peak District so that the low costs enable everyone to benefit from learning geography outdoors. This leadership is a key factor in the standards achieved, but there is room for further improvement in management, which is good, but could make more use of school policies for assessment in order to maximise achievement for all students throughout their course. Nevertheless, the high standards achieved in Year 13 represent good improvement since the last inspection.

### History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and students achieve very well.
- Achievement in ancient history is excellent, particularly at grade A.
- The International Baccalaureate and ancient history courses are very successful.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Marking, assessment and target setting for students are very effective.
- Students develop their independent learning and research skills very well.
- Students achieve a very high proportion of A grades in ancient history.

## Commentary

133. Standards and achievement are very good in A-level modern history and IB courses, and excellent in ancient history. A-level results are consistently above average. They are very high, particularly at grade A, in ancient history. In modern history, results at the highest grade have been less consistent, but have been affected, in the view of the school, by inconsistent marking. It has mounted many appeals over recent years, and some of its concerns have been shared by universities to which its students have applied. Overall, achievement in history is very good among all groups of students, and excellent in ancient history.
134. Students in Year 12 use a wide variety of historical skills to produce structured arguments in well written essays. They show a clear understanding of how political, social and economic factors affect historical events. They benefit from the department's close attention to study techniques, which enables them to meet the challenges presented by the different work patterns required in the sixth form. In Year 13, students build on these strong foundations and develop their independent learning and research skills. Their study of documents such as those relating to Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia has honed their skills in analysing evidence. They can analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence effectively. Students following the IB course have made clear gains in analytical ability, presentational skills and advances in creating and evidencing hypotheses.
135. Teaching and learning are very good, with excellent features. Strong expertise and enthusiasm for history is used to motivate and inform students. Very strong support is given to improving essential skills, such as extended writing, analysis of sources and personal study skills. Highly constructive marking provides detailed critical feedback on the quality of students' written work, and specific guidance on how to improve. Student attitudes are very positive. They contribute to their own learning, for example by making substantial contributions to discussions and by asking thoughtful questions. Teachers encourage them to undertake their own enquiries and this prepares them for further study after they leave school.

### Example of outstanding practice

**Careful planning gave students a wide range of analytic techniques, which they applied to a case study from ancient Rome. This led to excellent critical thinking in a Year 12 class.**

The lesson aimed to enable students to understand the ideas and actions of the Emperor Claudius, which were to be investigated using techniques of psychological and political analysis as well as traditional historical methods. To do this, the teacher introduced a series of scales to categorise actions, for example authoritarian-decisive, prudent-selfish. This technique enabled students to use ideas from other areas of study and to add new dimensions to historical explanation. Students worked with keen interest, applying their very detailed knowledge of the period, and using the new analytic techniques to develop their ideas of justice, order, equity and the nature of violence. Key issues in Roman civilisation, such as whether they were more influenced by the character of a leader or by policy, were discussed with insight, and related to Rome's approach to its colonies. The teacher encouraged speculation, but insisted it was backed by evidence. By the end of the lesson, students had made excellent progress in constructing an argument on the basis of all available evidence, and had developed thinking skills that would help in their later study and in the world of work and politics.

136. Very good leadership and management promote high standards. Students' progress is closely assessed and monitored, and they are fully aware of how to achieve their

learning targets. The introduction of IB courses is widening academic opportunities and helping to raise standards. History is a very popular subject and some groups are very large for sixth form classrooms. The new teaching block should radically improve subject facilities. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection.

## **Philosophy and Ethics**

Provision in philosophy and ethics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers know the subject very well, and design interesting lessons.
- Relationships are generally very good, particularly among higher-attaining students.
- A-level results are high, but AS results are low, and few students continue with the subject to Year 13.
- Students work well in lessons, but only a minority work as they should in their own time.
- Analysis of the subject's performance is limited, and there is no clear plan for its development.

## Commentary

137. A-level results were broadly average in 2003 and well above average for the small number of students who took the examination in 2004. This represented satisfactory achievement from these students' GCSE results. However, AS results are low, and the proportion of students continuing with the subject to A-level is smaller than in most subjects in the school. The standard of work seen during the inspection was well above average in Year 13, and these students were achieving well. Overall, achievement is satisfactory.
138. In Year 13, students show clear understanding of set texts. They can analyse contemporary dilemmas by close reference to their texts. Students in Year 12 are making a sound start to their course and draw effectively on previous learning. There are no significant differences seen in the achievement of male and female students, those with special educational needs, or those with English as an additional language.
139. Teaching is good, and leads to good learning within lessons. Learning is satisfactory rather than good, despite the strengths in teaching. It suffers from lack of opportunities for study outside lessons, and in some cases from a lack of commitment to working outside lessons from students. Teachers know the subject very well, and this is of great benefit to the higher-attaining students who continue with the subject into Year 13. Classes are managed well, and teachers make good use of discussion, though planning does not always succeed in including all students in this in the larger groups in Year 12. There are, however, no ICT resources in classrooms, and the use of ICT is yet to be included in the department's planning and teaching.
140. Management is satisfactory. Students' progress is assessed through the school's monitoring requirements, and students appreciate the additional support available from teachers if they seek it. However, although the subject has increased in popularity in Year 12, the low AS results and the small number of students continuing with the subject to Year 13 require further investigation. The subject was not reported on at the last inspection.

## Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know the subject very well, and teaching is consistently good.
- Well motivated students contribute to good relationships in the classroom.
- There is good achievement at A-level.
- ICT is under-used, and the range of learning beyond lessons is limited.

## Commentary

141. A-level results were broadly average in 2003, and improved in 2004. AS results, however, were significantly lower. Overall, A-level results and the above average

quality of Year 13 work seen during the inspection represent good achievement. There are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of students.

142. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know the subject very well, and plan interesting lessons that consistently develop students' knowledge, skills and understanding. Most students are enthusiastic, and the quality of learning is consistently good. There is an emphasis on engaging students through ensuring regular small group activities, though occasionally opportunities for students to reflect on learning are missed, and the teacher intervenes too quickly. There are few opportunities to develop and extend students' experience outside of the classroom, and ICT is under-used to promote learning.

143. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The department achieves good results through the quality of its teaching, but significant issues, such as the contrast between AS and A-level results, are not analysed in depth, and the resulting absence of clear priorities limits the scope of development planning. Library resources are good. The subject was not reported in detail in the last inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Teachers' command of the subject is excellent.
- Students know how to improve their work very well.
- Students receive good help and advice in practical activities.
- The pace of work is occasionally too leisurely.

#### **Commentary**

144. A-level results were broadly average in 2003, and showed good improvement in 2004. All students are male. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average, and represented good achievement from students' starting points.

145. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is excellent, and lessons on manufacturing techniques and methods have a very good technical content. All topics are well introduced and students receive good help and advice in practical activities. Relationships are very good. Students learn to design and make a satisfactory range of products – storage for a computer tower, stool with storage compartments and illuminated bedside furniture – well. Some of the designs are imaginative. Students are shown how to improve their work and helped with examination techniques well. Occasionally, however, students do not work with an appropriate sense of urgency.

146. Leadership and management are very good. The head of the curriculum area is an experienced teacher and well supported by his colleagues. All teachers are keen to



improve their work and standards. The curriculum is restricted to resistant materials and some students have expressed a desire to take electronics – one of the schools' stronger areas. Changes since the last inspection have been good. Standards are improving and the quality of teaching has been maintained. New improved accommodation and computing facilities have been installed. The department is very well placed to improve its work further.

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

Music was inspected fully, and provision in art and design and media and film studies was sampled. The quality of all of the work sampled was very good. Media and Film Studies courses are increasingly popular, and students achieve very well at AS and A level. Work sampled in art and design was very good, and students were working at a much higher standard than that indicated by the most recent A-level results, which were broadly average. There was much excellent work from gifted and talented students, particularly in architectural drawing, and students taking the subject as part of the IB were achieving very well.

### **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**.

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

- Standards in performing and composing are very high at A-level and in the IB.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and highly skilled musicians.
- Students have very positive attitudes to learning and their achievement is very good.
- There is a very strong atmosphere of co-operation, teamwork and respect in the department.

#### **Commentary**

147. Students follow A-levels in music and music technology. The introduction of music as part of the IB has added an innovative and challenging dimension to the department's provision for able students. The creative and flexible organisation of the timetable is well managed and ensures that students' needs are well met.

148. A-level results have been improving in recent years, and in 2003 were well above average. In 2004, all students passed with A and B grades. Small groups of students take A-level music technology. Their standards on joining the sixth form are broadly average, and their achievement is satisfactory, with a high pass rate at AS, but no A or B grades in 2004. Standards in the IB course are high, particularly in composing. Overall, achievement is very good. Students make very effective use of ICT. They work well individually and collaboratively, making a very positive contribution to the school's musical life.

149. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have an extensive musical repertoire that they draw upon to exemplify teaching points and to challenge students' thinking. They know their students well. Work is matched to their needs and the department makes very effective use of a music technician to support the learning of those studying music technology. All students make very good progress in fulfilling their musical potential.

150. Leadership and management are good, and assessments are used effectively to adapt the curriculum to students' needs. Teachers are enthusiastic and work effectively as a

team. Their considerable experience and expertise are used well to provide musical experiences of high quality for the students in their care. The department has extended its work very effectively since the last inspection.

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

### **Physical education**

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

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

- Standards are very high and the numbers of student on courses are rising rapidly.
- Teachers are expert in the subject, match work to students' needs and sustain a high level of challenge.
- Students work very hard, and take part in lessons and discussion with enthusiasm
- Very good leadership and management are developing the department very effectively.

#### **Commentary**

151. A-level and AS results are consistently well above average, and rising, despite rapidly increasing numbers of students taking courses. The vast majority of students complete their courses successfully. Students begin sixth form study with broadly average standards, and finish with well above average standards. Overall achievement is very good.
152. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, and one excellent lesson was seen. All teachers are expert. Lesson management is never less than very good, and gives all students many opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners. The use of shared learning objectives, allied to very searching questions to probe understanding and knowledge, ensures consistency and progression. Teachers relentlessly challenge students to work hard and produce high quality outcomes. They have consistently high expectations that students will succeed. Students meet these expectations and achieve very well. Teachers have generated an ethos of success based on challenge, support and hard work.
153. Students' attitudes are good overall, and they respond well to the exciting environment created by purposeful and stimulating teaching. They pay close attention to teacher guidance, and work with energy and enthusiasm to explore, challenge and develop their own ideas. Year 13 students are able to understand how muscle contraction is inhibited when calcium ion deficiency interferes with cross bridging formations. They are able and willing to offer cogent responses to searching questions. Year 12 students are able successfully to distinguish between skill and ability, listening carefully to different views and perspectives, and being prepared to modify their views in the light of guidance, argument and experience.
154. Leadership and management are very good. The department has a clear vision of the standards it wishes to achieve, and knows how it intends to reach these standards. Relationships within the staff group are excellent, and they make a well-balanced

team. They communicate and moderate work in progress very well, and they have total commitment to the students and the subject. There is a clear imperative to improve on previous best. The detailed marking of work, and assessment and reporting arrangements provide accurate information on student performance. Careful staff deployment ensures expert coverage across all areas of the curriculum.

155. The subject was not reported on in detail at the last inspection. However, its current pattern of improvement is very good. The number of students has increased fivefold in the last two years, and examination results are improving at a rapid rate. The department is in an excellent position to improve further.

## **BUSINESS**

Business studies was inspected fully and economics was sampled. Examination results in economics have fluctuated in recent years, but teaching, learning and achievement in lessons sampled during the inspection, were very good at A-level and in IB classes. Teachers planned interesting and challenging lessons that encouraged students to investigate ideas in well-chosen practical contexts.

### **Business Studies**

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

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

- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to relate work convincingly to the real world.
- Students are keen to learn and achieve very well.
- Teachers make very effective use of discussion in lessons.
- More use of ICT in lessons is needed.

#### **Commentary**

156. A third of students take the subject in Years 12 and 13, and numbers are steadily increasing. Examination results are consistently well above average, and were very high in 2003. The standard of work seen in lessons was well above average. Students begin with above average GCSE results, and their overall achievement is very good.

157. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have an excellent command of the subject and relate what is learnt in lessons to real business situations effectively. As a result, students are keen to learn and their attitudes very positive. Students' discussion of the relative merits of the Pound and Euro, and of how well known makes of personal computers are branded was well informed and incisive. All lessons are well planned and the pace of learning is always very good. Students are taught to work independently and how to optimise marks in examinations very effectively. Students' work is marked well and commented on appropriately. Because of a lack of access to computers, ICT is insufficiently used in lessons, but students use computers in homework and coursework outside normal school hours satisfactorily.

158. Very good leadership and management are enabling the subject to sustain a high standard of provision despite the strain imposed by increasing numbers, which are

leading to very large teaching groups. The department is very well organised, and teachers work very well as a team. Accommodation is adequate, but teaching rooms are crowded in Year 12. The subject has made good improvements in its work since the last inspection.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

159. Sixth form tutorial work was sampled. All of the lessons seen were of good quality, and made an important contribution to the consistency of provision for study skills and personal development, including citizenship.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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