

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE
SCHOOL**

Tunbridge Wells

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118907

Headteacher: Ms Rosemary Olivier

Lead inspector: Keith Richard Simmonds

Dates of inspection: 22nd - 25th February 2005

Inspection number: 268923

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils: 11 - 18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 991
School address: Reynolds Lane
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
Postcode: TN4 9XL
Telephone number: (01892) 527 444
Fax number: (01892) 546 621
Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr John Fogarty
governors:
Date of previous 1st February 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Gregory's School is a mixed Roman Catholic voluntary aided comprehensive school, which has specialist status as a Mathematics and Computing College. It is about the same size as other secondary schools with 991 students on roll. Its students are admitted from both the local area and further afield. The backgrounds of most students display some advantage and most parents are highly supportive of their children's education. Ninety per cent are white British; others are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Most speak English fluently but a minority do not. The percentage eligible for free school meals is below average (5.5 per cent). The percentage of students with special educational needs is above average at 19 per cent; 27 have statements, higher than at the last inspection. The students' attainment on entry, in Year 7, is overall average and the ability of the student cohort is biased to the average group and is similar to that at the last inspection. The school hosts a local authority resource for hearing impaired students, who are fully integrated into the life of the school. As well as being a specialist status school, the school has Investors in People status and the school's work in sport has been recognised by the award of the Sportsmark (Gold) in 2004. In 2003, the school received the Schools' Achievement Award. It takes part in Young Enterprise and is an active member of the area 14-19 Consortium. St Gregory's has a sixth form, which is similar in size to that of most secondary schools.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3238	Keith Simmonds	Lead inspector	
14347	Joan Lindsay	Lay inspector	
1068	Jan Allcorn	Team inspector	Mathematics
8530	John Adams	Team inspector	Design and technology
11258	Ivor Rushforth	Team inspector	Art and design
11751	David Sutcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (sixth form)
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	History Citizenship
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	English
15971	Michael Pye	Team inspector	Physical education Sports studies (sixth form)
20324	Vera Morris	Team inspector	Geography Business education (sixth form)
20767	Jeremy Royle	Team inspector	Music English as an additional language (EAL)
20832	Mohindar Galowalia	Team inspector	Science Biology (sixth form)
18076	Henry Dodd	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
2521	Sandra Killman	Team inspector	Special educational needs (SEN)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Gregory's is an effective and inclusive school in which most students' achievement is **good**. Students relate very well to each other, respect staff and enjoy learning. Most teaching is good and often better. Governors and senior staff have a clear vision for the school's future development. The school is competently led and managed and has the confidence of parents. It provides **satisfactory** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- students' above average achievement in GCSE and equivalent external examinations;
- the well above average standards achieved by students in history and art and design throughout the school;
- the significant weakness in standards and provision in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 11;
- students' very good attitude and engagement in their work and lessons, which support their good achievement;
- assessment data is not consistently used to inform students' improvement and learning;
- the rigour of monitoring and self-evaluation of the school's work by some leaders is not sufficiently developed;
- effective implementation of specialist status, particularly in information and communication technology (ICT); and
- the very good induction of new students and the high quality of care and support for the students' welfare.

Improvement since the last inspection is **satisfactory**. All the key issues have been addressed but the provision for modern foreign languages has declined and requires urgent action. There has been good improvement in the strategic role of governors and the friction evident in aspects of leadership has been resolved. The role of middle managers and the rigour of the school's self-evaluation processes require further work. Teaching has been improved in its consistency across the school. It is now good or better in all years. Improvement in the percentage of students gaining the higher grades in public examinations is satisfactory but further work remains in challenging the consistency of assessment practices. Implementation of the school's specialist status and sixth form development has significantly enhanced provision.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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 pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Students' achievement is good. The school's performance in examinations is above average in Year 11 and average in the sixth form when compared to all schools nationally. Although GCSE results in 2004 declined, they still represent good achievement for the capability of the students. Students enter the school with overall average capability and are

regularly leaving with above average standards. This shows good achievement from Year 7 to Year 11. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9. Standards in the national tests for 14-year-olds are above average. Work seen during the inspection was above average across Years 7 to 11 and also of an above average standard in the sixth form. Particularly high standards were seen in art and design throughout the school and history in the sixth form. Significant underachievement was evident in modern foreign languages in the main school, with standards generally below average.

Achievement for students with special educational needs (SEN) and English as an additional language (EAL) is good. For those who are gifted and talented, it is also good. Students from ethnic minority heritages mostly do at least as well as other students. The sustained good teaching is a key factor in the students' progress.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good and sensitively promoted. Students' attitudes in lessons, and to their work, are very good throughout the school. Students enjoy coming to school and engage with interest and enthusiasm in all that they do. Behaviour is a similar strength. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is **good**. Students benefit from good teaching. The sustained quality of teaching throughout the school is a significant factor in the students' good achievement in GCSE and in the sixth form. Particular strength is seen in the teachers' expectations of students. Students respond well to this and make good gains in their learning. Assessment is satisfactory overall, but assessment information and performance data are not always well used to inform future planning and the improvement of students' achievement.

The school provides a broad and relevant curriculum, which meets the needs of students, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. A good range of high quality activities enriches the taught curriculum. Pastoral care is good. Students are valued and they are well supported. The partnership with parents is very good and specialist status is allowing further development of the good links with the community. Links with other schools are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory**. Governance is **good**. Governors are well informed and appropriately challenge and support the achievement of high standards. Senior staff and most leaders are making an increasing contribution to the school's success. Some subject leaders are not consistently engaged in leading the curriculum and learning, and the rigour of the school's self-evaluation practices is not yet sufficiently developed.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are highly positive about the school. Few raised any issues of concern and particular praise was given to the school's induction of new students and inclusive ethos. Students themselves are also equally positive about the school; a small number, as with parents, raised bullying as an issue but noted that the school deals well with any incidents. Inspectors confirmed this. Students see the school as a very supportive community.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- urgently resolve the low standards and unsatisfactory provision in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 11;
- ensure that assessment data on individual students is used, diagnostically, to inform and drive the planning of learning and teaching throughout the school; and
- further raise pupils' achievement overall by giving priority to the monitoring and challenge of ineffective practice and the sharing of good practice, from within and outside of the school, in the role of all leaders.

THE SIXTH FORM AT ST GREGORY'S CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

The sixth form caters for 192 students. The courses currently provided are a mix of mostly AS and A -level with vocational provision. The school is a partner in the local area consortium.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is effective. Standards are above average overall. Some students make significant gains from a low entry performance in Year 11. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Teaching is good and the cost-effectiveness of courses and the value for money provided is satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- the above average standards achieved in English, French, biology, history, computing and art and design;
- students have very good attitudes to their work and strive hard to succeed;
- students are prepared well for higher education and careers guidance is good; and
- the rigour of monitoring and self-evaluation of the school's work by some leaders is not sufficiently developed.

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	Good. Standards in English are above average. Effective teaching ensures that students make good gains in their learning. In French, numbers are small but standards are currently above average. Students' fluent writing and speaking support their achievement. However, the roles of subject leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Standards are average and the highest attaining students do well. Teaching does not meet the needs of all students and some do not do as well as they should.
Science; Biology	Good. Standards in biology are above average and students make effective progress. Teaching and learning are good. Chemistry and physics were not inspected.
Information and communication technology	Good. Computing is a popular sixth-form subject. Standards are above

	average because the good teaching caters for the needs of all students.
Humanities; History	Very good. History is a popular subject; standards in Year 13 are very high and teaching is good. Geography was not inspected.
Visual and performing arts and media; Art and design	Very good. Standards in art and design are above average. Students are articulate in discussing complex concepts and ideas. Teaching is very good, and assessment is used well for improvement. Music and performing arts were not inspected.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel: Physical education	Good. Students make good progress and achieve average standards because teaching is good. Study skills and wider course reading are not sufficiently developed.
Business	Satisfactory. Students work hard and standards are broadly average. Teaching is satisfactory, but too often lessons are not well matched to all students' capability.

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

Students receive good pastoral support. Advice and guidance, on the full range of opportunities beyond the school and different accreditation routes beyond Year 11, is effective and independent. Attendance is satisfactory and well monitored. Punctuality, to school and lessons, is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership is satisfactory and day-to-day management is good. The strategic development of the sixth form has been given appropriate priority. The recent development of the specialist sixth form centre, together with the increased curriculum breadth, through school and local consortium provision, has enhanced the opportunities and learning outcomes for all students.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

They have positive views about the school. However, whilst they believe the sixth form prepares them well for their futures, they would like more independence in some of their learning opportunities. Inspectors agree with the views of the students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

The school's performance in relation to all schools, in examinations, is above the national average in Year 11. Students enter the school with overall average capability and are regularly leaving with standards which show sustained good achievement from Year 7 to Year 11. In the sixth form, performance in relation to all schools, in examinations, is in line with the national average. Many students make good gains from their position at entry in Year 12.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The above average standards in the Year 9 national tests and Year 11 external examinations.
- The particular strengths in art and design and history across Years 10 and 11.
- An ethos where the achievement of all students is valued.
- The above average or higher standards, achieved in sixth form English, French, biology, history, computing and art and design.
- The below average standards and underachievement in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 11.
- The good achievement of students with special educational needs (SEN) and English as an additional language (EAL).

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	n/a (36.8)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	n/a (37.9)	n/a (35.4)
science	n/a (35.9)	n/a (33.6)

There were 156 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Note: At the time of the inspection, the 2004 average points scores from national tests had not been published.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	57 (64)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (94)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38.1 (38.7)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 150 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	95.4 (93.8)	92.4 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	32.1 (38.1)	36.2 (35.6)

Average point score per pupil	234.0 (245.1)	265.2 (258.2)
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There were 82 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. The school's performance in the national tests for 14-year-olds is very good. From 2001 to 2003, overall results have been in the top ten per cent of the country. In Year 9 in 2003, compared with the prior attainment of the pupils in primary schools, results were average overall and well above for English. Results for 2004 in English, mathematics and science are well above the national and local education authority averages. Improvement in mathematics and science has been significant. Over time, the school's trend of performance for 14-year-olds has been rising faster than that nationally. Targets have been met or exceeded over a three-year trend. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys or girls and, although boys' performance is higher than that nationally, it is in line with their capability. The performance of higher attaining students has improved since the last inspection and is good overall. Students from ethnic minority heritages do at least as well as other students. However, the tracking of the performance of EAL students is too informal. Overall standards have been well sustained and improved further from those at the last inspection.
2. The school's intake is of a full range of ability but with a bias, as in the last inspection, to the average capability group. Attainment on entry is average overall, although there is wide variation in the capability of students, confirmed by the scores achieved by the students in cognitive tests taken during their first year in school.
3. Achievement is good from Years 7 to 9, due to good teaching and students' own interest and enjoyment in learning. In English, mathematics and science, the average National Curriculum levels of the students on entry are consolidated and improved upon; at the end of Year 9, they achieve above average or better results in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds. In the work seen and in lessons, inspectors judged that much of the work being done by Year 9 was of an above average standard.
4. In other subjects, attainment is also above average overall by the end of Year 9. In art and design, it is well above average. In art and design, challenging practical tasks extend the students to high levels and they are very effectively engaged by very good teaching. Students benefit, in history, from the teachers' effective development of skills and good insistence upon accurate use of sources of evidence. Students enjoy the lessons and progress well. In German, students' attainment and achievement is below average and in French, whilst attainment is average, achievement is unsatisfactory. For both subjects, this reflects the unsatisfactory teaching. With these exceptions, most students' attainment is at least in line with that expected for their age or capability in all subjects.
5. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 are above average. In 2004, 57 per cent of the students gained five or more A* to C grades compared with 52 per cent nationally. The average points score was above the national average and, in most subjects, students gained grades higher than those achieved nationally. Results in 2004, for students achieving five or more A* to C and A* to G grades, were below those in 2003. However, the difference is accounted for in the overall lower capability of the 2004 student group. In relation to schools whose students had similar prior attainment, the 2004 results at GCSE are in line for those achieving five or more A* to C grades and for the average points score. Over time, the school's trend of improvement, though very much a flat line, has been above that nationally. Since the last inspection, up to

2004, targets had been met. Particularly high results were gained in art and design, history and ICT. In most other subjects, the grades gained were above average with the exception of French and German. The German results were significantly below those nationally. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys or girls and, although boys' performance is higher than that nationally, it is in line with their capability. The performance of higher attaining students has improved since the last inspection and is good overall. Students from ethnic minority heritages do at least as well as other students. However, the tracking of the performance of EAL students is too informal. Since the students entered the school with average attainment, they achieved well to gain results that are above the 60th percentile in the country.

6. During the inspection, standards of attainment seen were above average overall and achievement was good. Key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are well developed and underpin achievement throughout the curriculum. The standards at the end of Year 9 are successfully built on and sustained to the end of Year 11. In history and art and design achievement is very good across Years 10 and 11; for example, in art and design, students skilfully recorded studies from observation and other reference materials to provide excellent visual and written research; history students' very good focus on coursework and development of key examination skills ensure that they do well. In all other subjects, with the exception of French and German, achievement is never less than satisfactory and mostly good. Students' attainment is below average and achievement is unsatisfactory in both French and German, reflecting the unsatisfactory teaching and subject leadership. Overall, the sustained above average standards are achieved as a result of the good and often very good teaching and also because of the school's ethos where high achievement for all is valued.
7. Students with special educational needs achieve well overall. Those with statements, physical, emotional and behavioural needs, and more severe literacy difficulties make good progress because of the good individual tuition and support that they receive from specialist teachers and teaching assistants within normal lessons and in small group sessions. Those with a hearing impairment are able to keep pace with others during lessons because their support teachers use signing and clear diction while repeating and extending the teacher's questions and other pupils' responses. Subject teachers are also suitably equipped with radio hearing aids during normal lessons, enabling students to successfully follow the flow of what is being taught and discussed. Achievement is equally strong in individual sessions. For example, in one small group session, students displayed a good grasp of the characters and story sequence when responding to questions on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', successfully building on their knowledge from previous lessons. Students with special educational needs and hearing impairments also make very good progress in ICT across all year groups, where the quality of specialist teaching is very good, and the subject readily adjusts individual education plan (IEP) targets to extend the students' capability.
8. The overall achievement of students with English as an additional language (EAL) is good. Most students achieve at least as well as other students in the school. Students with EAL are encouraged to take a GCSE early in their mother tongue. This has proved very successful in building confidence and individual students have achieved high grades in Greek, French, German, Dutch, Spanish and Italian. When students receive additional in-class support from the Minority Communities Achievement Service (MCAS), they are fully included in lessons and achieve well. When this support is not available, the students experience difficulties in some

lessons, the planning lacking effective strategies to fully support them. The one-to-one support sessions are effective.

9. For both students with SEN and EAL needs, their attainment and achievement is higher than at the last inspection, reflecting the school's successful improvement in these two areas. Gifted and talented students achieve well overall. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, they responded speedily, accurately and with confidence to higher-level mathematical problems on 'ratios'. Gifted and talented students are well identified and in most subjects their needs are effectively met through a good range of extension activities. Positive examples are seen through the school's good implementation of its specialist status in mathematics and ICT. Similarly, students with particular talents, as in sport and the arts, are well catered for.

Sixth form

10. Standards achieved in A/AS level and VCE examinations in 2004 were broadly average and show a consistent trend over the last three years. The average points score of students was below the national average in 2004. Standards in vocational courses were above the national average overall. The school's flexible and open entry policy to sixth form courses means that many students, as in mathematics, enter Year 12 courses with GCSE performance below that normally expected. Overall, these students usually do well, making some significant gains. Achievement is satisfactory for the students' prior attainment. In the courses inspected, the work seen indicated that students' overall attainment was above average and their achievement was good. No significant differences were seen in the performance of male or female students or those from ethnic minority heritages. The performance of higher attaining students is good and improved from that at the last inspection.
11. Many students take subjects for which their GCSE results, although very high, have not prepared them fully. Many students take up subjects at A-level, such as computing, sports studies, business and vocational courses, which they have not studied at GCSE. They usually make good progress and achieve well due to effective teaching, their own very good attitudes to learning and desire to succeed. In the subjects inspected, standards were above average, with the exception of physical education and business, which were average, and mathematics, which was below average. However, in physical education, the average standards still represent good achievement for the students' capability. Similarly, in mathematics, the below average standards represent satisfactory achievement for the students' capability. Particular strengths were seen in: art and design, where standards are outstanding and students achieve very well; history, where some very good teaching motivates students to very good levels of achievement; and the GNVQ courses, where the students' own hard work and positive attitudes to study support their achievements.
12. Students achieve good standards overall in key skills. Most have appropriate skills to enable them to cope with the demands of their courses. Students absorb information well and have a strong capacity to research independently and effectively organise their work. However, opportunities for students to do this are too few in some subjects and they would like more choice and independence in their learning opportunities. Literacy skills are good, though the students can be too passive in discussion in some lessons. Mathematical skills are also good and most students cope well with the basic numeracy demands of their courses. In ICT, students' overall development is satisfactory. They can effectively use computers and appropriate software to

advantage in their work. However, in some subjects, such as art and design, limited access to ICT facilities can still hamper the development of their skills.

13. The rates of students staying on into the sixth form are good and improving. Retention of students from Year 12 into Year 13 is good overall, although there are weaknesses in mathematics, which reflect the national trend. The proportion of students continuing into higher and further education is increasing.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to school are very good. Their behaviour is also very good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Attendance at school and in the sixth form is satisfactory and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very high levels of interest in their work and life in school.
- Bullying and harassment are uncommon but are dealt with very effectively when issues arise.
- Relationships are very good as students have very high levels of respect for others.
- Students' social and moral development is high and very well provided for by the school.
- The number of unauthorised absences is very low.

Commentary

14. The positive attitudes seen at the last inspection have improved even further. Students of all ages show a very keen interest in their lessons, apart from on the very small number of occasions when teaching is not strong. Students listen very well to each other and to the teacher or visitor. For example, in a Year 8 citizenship lesson, students listened to and watched with rapt attention when a member of the fire service gave a presentation about arson and anti-social behaviour. Such attitudes and willingness to learn have a very positive impact on standards overall as there is very little disruption to lessons. Students are also very enthusiastic about other aspects of school life such as the many extra-curricular clubs, the lunchtime homework club and sports activities.
15. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection and is now very good overall. The number of fixed term exclusions has fallen since the last inspection. It is testament to the effectiveness of the school's Positive Behaviour Management procedures and the support given to students, that there have been no permanent exclusions during the last reporting period. There was no evidence of intimidation or harassment during the inspection, although a small number of parents and students highlighted some concerns about bullying. However, it is clear that staff deal very effectively with any incidents that do occur. Behaviour is also very good when students move around the school, or when they are in the playground and the dining hall. During assemblies, behaviour is exemplary. The consistently good staff expectations of students' behaviour, in lessons, have a very positive impact on their learning.
16. Students show a high level of confidence and self-esteem and are willing to take on responsibilities, as in the school council. Year 12 and Year 13 students are very willing to participate in the wide range of roles available to them, such as acting as buddies to

Year 7 pupils and involvement in leading different aspects of their enrichment programme. As a result, they make a significant contribution to the life of the school. There are, however, more limited opportunities for younger students, particularly in Year 7 and Year 8, to take on roles of responsibility.

17. Relationships have been maintained at the very good levels seen at the previous inspection. Students reflect the very strong ethos in the school and learn from the very effective examples set by adults in the way they show respect for others. Pupils and students are particularly accepting of others, especially those who are from different ethnic groups or who have special needs. These aspects of the school's inclusion and the positive priority given to diversity are significant strengths in the school's work and student relationships. Students are polite, friendly and show a very high level of respect to adults. The very good relationships seen have an obvious and very positive impact on behaviour and learning in the school.
18. The provision for students' spiritual and cultural development is good and their social and moral development has been maintained at the very good levels seen at the last inspection. Although spirituality in lessons is not consistently planned for, it does occur. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, students were able to make and reflect on the link between shared meals and the Eucharist. Assemblies add to spirituality in the school through giving pupils the opportunity to reflect on wider issues such as the significance of Lent and also to think about how others have suffered, for example, as a result of the Holocaust or extreme poverty. Priests visit the school daily to conduct voluntary services for staff and pupils and retreats take place, giving those who attend time for self-reflection and the opportunity to become more spiritually aware.
19. Students have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. The clear moral code is based on self-responsibility and, especially in relation to behaviour, students have a high awareness and responsibility for their own actions. Although some students dislike the recently introduced system of punishment sheets, they accept that they instil a need to take responsibility for their own actions. There are also opportunities for older pupils to reflect on moral issues such as abortion, through the debating club, and through aspects of the tutor programme, by promoting awareness of issues such as racism and bullying.
20. Personal and social development is enhanced through fostering a strong sense of community, both within the school and in a wider sense. This is effectively achieved through aspects such as the buddy system, tutor group activities and school council, which regularly looks at issues affecting the whole school community, such as uniform. Older students also serve their school community as prefects and sports captains. Students are regularly given opportunities to discuss issues such as anti-social behaviour and how it affects others. They also learn about the world of work through a good work experience and placements programme and the successful work-related learning courses in the sixth form. The sense of service is a strength of the school community and students regularly participate, for example, in the Community Sports Leadership Awards and fundraising for several charities throughout the year. As with the fast day, on the last day of the inspection, to raise funds for the Third World, these opportunities give students a very good understanding of the needs of others in the wider world.
21. Students' cultural development is enhanced through different areas of the curriculum such as music, art and design, history and religious education. For example, students

participate in musical productions and festivals, visits are made to the National Gallery and other cultural venues and, as with a recent visiting Japanese artist workshop, take place in school. Students gain an appreciation of other cultures through learning about Black History, studying different world foods in food technology and appreciating other major religions as part of the religious education syllabus. Students also have the opportunity to visit other countries, such as the visit to the World War One battlefields, or participation in a German exchange visit. There are also opportunities to venture further afield to South Africa, China, India and Costa Rica. This variety of opportunities prepares students well for life in today's multicultural society and gives them a strong appreciation and understanding of other cultures and traditions.

Attendance

22. Attendance levels have fallen slightly since the last inspection and are now satisfactory: unauthorised absences remain very low. Parents and carers make good efforts to ensure their children attend regularly, which has a positive impact on standards. The school monitors and promotes attendance well, awarding certificates for 100 per cent attendance and working effectively with the education welfare officer in the very few cases where there are attendance issues. Students in the sixth form attend regularly. Punctuality to school is good, with any problems occurring related to transport difficulties. Students arrive promptly to lessons and settle quickly so that teaching time is used to maximum effect.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.3	School data	0.3
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

23. The number of fixed term exclusions has fallen since the last inspection and there have been no permanent exclusions in the last reporting period. The overall exclusion rate is low. The school works hard to prevent exclusions, which are used only as a last resort for serious behavioural problems. The low rates are a reflection of the positive attitudes of the students and the strength of the school's work in fostering good behaviour and engagement of all students in their work.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
877	20	0

White – Irish	6	0	0
White – any other White background	31	3	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	30	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	11	1	0

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

Sixth form

24. Students enjoy life in the sixth form and find it interesting and rewarding. Their attitudes to work are very good. Behaviour is also very good and, as senior students, they conduct themselves in a mature and responsible manner. Students work hard and they collaborate well with each other, showing respect for different values, attitudes and beliefs. They take their responsibilities seriously and, for example, willingly act as buddy mentors for students in Year 7, play a full role as prefects and support many of the school's activities, as with charity fundraising and the Sports Leaders programme. Students' attendance is satisfactory and their punctuality to school and lessons is good.
25. Most students respond enthusiastically to the good range of activities and opportunities the school has to offer. During lessons, they show commitment and take pride in their work in order to achieve the best possible results. As members of the school council, students liaise closely with members of the governing body, such as the raising of a number of issues for improvement to the school environment.
26. Students form very good relationships with their teachers and with one another. They are fully aware of the impact of their actions on others and they are very good role models for younger students. Students have trust and confidence in the school and in their teachers, and they clearly understand what is expected of them in the sixth form. As in the main school, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Students are interested and engaged in their learning. The curriculum is good throughout the school and meets the needs of most students. Enrichment of the curriculum is a strength, particularly in sport and the arts. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Students progress well and benefit from consistently good teaching in all years. A strength is seen in the students' productivity and engagement in learning, where their high motivation and positive attitude supports the teaching and their learning. Assessment is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good subject expertise and expectations of students.
- Sixty seven per cent of lessons observed were good or better – 65 per cent in the sixth form.
- Students come to school wanting to learn and to succeed.
- The teaching of students with special educational needs and EAL is effective.
- Assessments and data are not consistently used to inform planning or to show students how to improve.
- Opportunities for students to participate actively and independently in their learning are not always well used.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 133 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (0.8%)	33 (24.8%)	55 (41.4%)	37 (27.8%)	7 (5.2%)	0 (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.

27. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and, together with the students' interest and enjoyment in learning, lead to above average standards. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, seven were unsatisfactory and over a quarter were very good or better.
28. Teachers are mostly specialists in their field and have good subject expertise. Expectations of the capabilities of their students and the work they do are consistently good. In a Year 9 history lesson, for example, students independently used ICT for an online investigation meeting successive challenges set by their teacher and displaying a depth of skill in both history and ICT.
29. In English, teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Teachers challenge their students well. When developing an understanding of the characters in 'Midsummer Night's Dream', the teacher of a Year 8 class established high expectations by skilled questioning and discussion of the text. Students picked up the enthusiasm of their teacher and were able to make very perceptive explanations of the individual characters' role. The teacher's expertise was particularly well used in engaging students with special educational needs. A minority of lessons, in Years 9 and 10, where not all students have equal access to their

learning, are unsatisfactory. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, girls were not involved by the teacher in responding to questions. In mathematics, teaching and learning are good overall. Students in the lowest sets are well supported, for example, in a Year 8 lesson on ratios, students with special educational needs were effectively supported in their learning by the teacher's clear exposition and encouragement of self-assessment. Probing questions, pair work and practical activities involve students fully in the learning process. These features were clearly evident in an effective Year 11 lesson on transformation. Some lessons, although satisfactory, sometimes involve students spending too much time listening to the teacher and routinely completing exercises to practise their skills.

30. Teachers work hard to plan lessons to match the wide range of students' capability and, because of this, almost all students achieve well. In some subjects, such as mathematics, students are put into sets based on prior attainment to enable planning to be better focused on a narrower ability range but in many classes, the ability of the students is mixed. Teachers usually plan work which is well matched to the needs of all in the class, including extension work for the most able. However, in the minority of unsatisfactory lessons, this was not the case, for example in a Year 7 French lesson, French was only occasionally used, and tasks were not matched to the students' capability. Students had little real interest in this lesson and made few gains in their learning. Similarly, in a Year 10 science lesson, the lack of students' access to their learning led to boredom and inappropriate behaviour, which was not well managed by the teacher. These features only occur in a minority of lessons and most consistently in modern foreign languages.
31. In almost all lessons, teachers do not tolerate any behaviour which is not conducive to learning and usually display good strategies for student management. Consequently, the desire most students have to succeed, their very good behaviour and the ethos of hard work ensure that almost all lessons are productive and interesting.
32. Teaching methods are good; most lessons start briskly with a well-defined 'starter' activity. In the best lessons, discussion and group work is effectively used, for example, students in Year 9 ICT enthusiastically engaged in using a variety of software and techniques in developing their assessment project based on the school play. Some very good opportunities are provided for practical work in design and technology, art and design and physical education. In a Year 8 art and design lesson, students achieved well in their graphic design work on a CD cover because of the well applied subject expertise of the teacher. A Year 10 design and technology lesson produced good critical thinking from the students as they applied the elements of what constitutes value and quality in a product, which had been identified in the brisk starter to their own developing designs. Similarly, in Year 11 art and design, students very effectively applied critical thinking and self-assessment to identify areas for further improvement in their GCSE coursework. The teacher's clear understanding of the syllabus criteria and the achievement of each student enhanced their ability. On occasion, when teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, the tasks and activities of the lesson are not well matched to the capabilities of the students, as in a Year 7 French and a Year 10 English lesson.
33. The teaching and learning of literacy and ICT skills are good. Speaking and listening skills are good, but students can participate too passively in discussion in some lessons. There is good attention to the use of key technical vocabulary and support for writing skills in literacy. Numeracy skills are well taught in core mathematics lessons but are only satisfactorily developed in the teaching and learning of the other subjects.

In numeracy, students make good gains in their mathematical competence in core mathematics lessons; however, these skills are not routinely developed in the teaching of all subjects. ICT skills are effectively taught, though some learning is restricted by limitations in access to the ICT suites and computer facilities.

34. The teaching of students who have special educational needs is good overall. The expertise and support provided in lessons, together with the knowledge of individual students, is good. As a result, students make good progress and improve in confidence. Some teaching of individual students is very good, characterised by very good planning, an interesting variety of tasks which effectively sustain attention, and secure, trusting relationships. Where students have statements, they are equally well taught and sensitively supported so that they do not become dependent upon the learning support staff. Subject teachers mostly take good account of students' individual education plans (IEPs) in planning. Teaching of students with a hearing impairment, as part of the Local Authority Resource Unit, is particularly good. Lessons are well planned, both in terms of the resources needed and the personal needs of the students. Teachers are also very flexible in their use of time, ensuring that students receive the maximum support available. Teachers across the school have a good awareness of the students with special educational needs and those with a hearing impairment. Students are very appreciative of the feedback they receive, and this motivates them and improves their self-esteem.
35. The quality of teaching for students for whom English is an additional language (EAL) is good, enabling them to make good progress. Students whose language skills are at an early stage are screened by the Minority Communities Achievement Service (MCAS) and additional support is well organised. However, the needs from this initial assessment and the effective support plans are not consistently passed to subject teachers. Students are well catered for in mathematics, information and communication technology, history, geography and art and design. They commented favourably on the additional support that they receive but said that they could struggle where this was not as well planned as in some English, science and modern foreign languages lessons.
36. A minority of parents thought that their children are set too much homework or homework that does not extend them in independent study. Inspectors found that homework was not excessive and appropriately extended the curriculum and students' learning. Overall, the students' achievement was enhanced by the usually effective homework.
37. Assessment is satisfactory overall. The systems for the collection and management of assessment information on students' progress and achievements are satisfactory. Data is comprehensive but not always easily accessible to teachers. Strong examples are seen in art and design, history and ICT. In these subjects, there are particular strengths in the quality of the marking of students' work and the feedback they receive on how to improve. Weaknesses in the quality of marking and feedback to students are seen in English and modern foreign languages, in Years 7 to 11. The use of target setting, to raise standards, is satisfactory in most subjects, though targets are not always well matched to the students' achievement or capability, as in science throughout Years 7 to 11 and design and technology in Years 7 to 9. Students usually know their targets and what they must do to improve. Weaknesses are evident in English and physical education, where students do not always know about the requirements of their work in relation to their targets to effectively improve. For students with special educational needs, assessment is also satisfactory, for example,

the information from team discussions on individual students' progress is used well, helping those with behavioural difficulties improve their attitudes and communication skills. However, more could be done to monitor the impact of the special educational needs support on students' attainment. Currently, the focus on the small steps for improvement, within individual education plans (IEP's), is not sufficient to always ensure effective progress. Similarly, the assessment strategies for students with EAL needs are satisfactory; in some subjects, as in history, they are particularly effective. The progress of students who are at an early stage of language development is regularly monitored. However, the overall performance of students with EAL is not routinely analysed in comparison with other student groups.

Sixth form

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 37 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	11 (29.8%)	13 (35.1%)	13 (35.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (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.

38. In the sixth form, teaching is good. Well qualified staff extend the students' learning to a high level. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and almost a third of the lessons were very good. Overall, there was no significant difference between the quality of teaching and learning in Year 12 or Year 13. In the best lessons, as in Year 13 French and Year 12 physical education, students are encouraged, through very effective teaching, to extend their learning and depth of subject skills and understanding. In these lessons, students work independently, learning for themselves, and teachers effectively employ a mentoring approach. In some lessons, the teaching can be too structured and controlled, for example, in English, mathematics and business. Students recognised this themselves and commented that they would like more independence in some of their learning opportunities. Students clearly find their courses and lessons enjoyable, as, for example, in history, art and design, ICT and the GNVQ courses. Relationships are very good and impact upon the way in which many students share the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. Whilst ICT is well used in a number of areas, as in history and business, there are occasions where the students' tasks miss opportunities for them to apply ICT effectively to their learning, as in mathematics.
39. Assessment in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. Examples of very good practice were seen in history, ICT and art and design. However, weaknesses were evident in mathematics, biology and business. In all these subjects, assessment information and data is not sufficiently analysed to identify patterns and trends which may inform future planning and improvement of overall performance and the achievement of individual students.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good overall. In Years 7 to 11, it is broad and balanced and, particularly in Years 10 and 11, relevant to the needs of most students. In the sixth form, it is good. The developing mix of Level 3 (AS and A2 courses) and Level 2 (vocational provision, as in GNVQ) is well matched to the needs of students. Overall opportunities for enrichment through a wide range of activities are good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results confirm that the curriculum is effective in meeting the needs of most students up to the end of Year 11.
- The curriculum for students with special educational needs and EAL has improved and is effective.
- The range and take-up of extra-curricular activities are very good.
- Limitations in the accommodation for modern foreign languages, resources in design and technology and ICT access for some subjects can constrain the students' progress.

Commentary

40. This aspect of the school's provision is good overall. Until the end of Year 11, students receive their full statutory requirement. Since the last inspection, there have been good improvements in the vocational and work-related learning provision. ICT has been significantly improved. The curriculum for students with special educational needs (SEN) and EAL is good and has been effectively improved. Citizenship has been established and overall provision is satisfactory.
41. The curriculum for Years 7, 8 and 9 is organised along traditional subject lines, except for personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship and careers education, which is taught by an inter-disciplinary tutor team. The current provision provides a broad and balanced curriculum during Years 7 to 9. Student grouping is effective, with classes in Years 7 to 9 mostly organised in mixed ability groups, with setting in mathematics from Year 7. Implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is effective and current development has particular reference to assessment for learning.
42. In Years 10 and 11, students follow mainly academic GCSE options, though some vocational courses, which effectively broaden the curriculum and increase its relevance to all students, have been introduced recently. They continue with the core subjects and choose from a relevant range of options. Provision is effectively planned to ensure continuity with previous years and the sixth form. The 14-19 curriculum increasingly offers an appropriate mix of academic and vocational provision; however, few students yet choose mixed learning pathways, particularly in the sixth form. Examination results confirm that the curriculum, until the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form, is effective in meeting the needs and aspirations of students. The school is currently working hard to increase flexibility further in the 14-19 curriculum and to ensure the higher cost-effectiveness of courses. Already, some courses are offered in collaboration with the local consortium and effective links are being established with the local Further Education College to expand the vocational provision.
43. The school provides well for students with special educational needs (SEN). A good mix of in-class support, small group and one-to-one teaching ensures that students' requirements are met, as outlined in their statements. In Years 10 and 11, students have good opportunities to gain entry-level qualifications in several subjects in addition to GCSE. Some of these students attend West Kent College to study link courses, which they enjoy as they meet their needs well. Similarly, the identification and additional curriculum for EAL students has been satisfactorily developed. Support is well planned and integrated with the students' normal subject curriculum. The school has also worked effectively with families and the ethnic communities to ensure that cultural traditions are not an impediment to choice and achievement of the students.

44. Provision for students' personal, social and health education is effective. The programme of study successfully and sensitively covers sex and relationships education and gives appropriate attention to the misuse of drugs and alcohol. The programme is also successful in providing aspects of the citizenship curriculum. However, the current timetable organisation, with one period each week in Years 7 to 11, is not sufficient to ensure an appropriate depth of study for all students in PSHE, citizenship and careers education.
45. The school is highly inclusive and ensures that the principles of equality and fairness are integral to the design of the curriculum. In most parts of the school, there is appropriate access for students with physical disabilities, but not all, for example, some first floor rooms have no access for wheelchairs. There are also good opportunities for all students to learn signing through lunchtime and after-school clubs, greatly assisting the integration and involvement in the whole-school community of those students who attend the hearing impaired resource unit.
46. The school is effective in the preparation of students for the next stage of education, training or employment. In Year 9, for example, the students have specific careers lessons to help them to exercise responsibly, the choices they have to make for Year 10. The provision is well co-ordinated with Connexion's personal advisers. In Year 11, students have good opportunities for work experience, and the development of vocational courses and work placements has been positive in giving a more work-related experience for some. Overall, the work-related curriculum is satisfactory. Advice on opportunities beyond Year 11 is full and independent, though the new careers library is small and not yet fully reorganised. Guidance and advice on entry to higher education at the end of Year 13 is good. Many students commented that they were well supported and prepared for their futures.
47. Extra-curricular activities and support for learning outside the school day are extensive and varied in range. Mainly at lunchtime, because of transport difficulties, and after school, a large number of high quality opportunities are available. Particular strengths are evident in sporting activities. The ICT suites offer excellent resources for independent learning during and after the end of the school day. Opportunities for students' intellectual, personal and cultural development are good. Enrichment visits to museums, art galleries, theatres and places of historical interest are a regular feature. Similarly, school visits abroad are a significant feature in the school calendar, with regular visits and exchanges with continental Europe and other parts of the world. Elements of spiritual development, as in the regular retreat opportunities for students, service through the school's charity fundraising and community service activities, are regular and a very effective feature of the provision.
48. The governing body and leadership team have been effective in developing and adapting the Year 7 to Year 9 curriculum, as with the successful implementation of initiatives within the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Development in the Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form has been mostly effective. However, the significant weakness in modern foreign languages, in Years 7 to 11, though recognised, has not been resolved. The approach has been sensitive to individuals and the previous circumstances but too cautious. Governors are rightly undertaking a curriculum review to develop further the coherence and quality of 14-19 provision and to capitalise on the school's new mathematics and computing specialist status. Development and use of collaborative courses with the local consortium is having an increasing impact upon the range and quality of provision. Specialist status has been effectively used to support

developments within mathematics and ICT. Whilst development is at the initial stage, governors and senior leaders recognise the need to use specialist status as a change agent upon the whole curriculum.

49. The staff are dedicated, hard working and highly committed, as individuals, to the ideals of the school. Teachers are appropriately qualified and have the relevant experience to match the needs of the curriculum well. Recruitment and retention are areas of priority for the school. Overall, the school's strategies are successful and retention of staff is satisfactory. In some subjects, recruitment is difficult, reflecting the national position. There are a small number of overseas staff, who are satisfactorily deployed. The school effectively supports the professional development of all teachers. Learning support assistants and other support staff are similarly well qualified and appropriately deployed to meet the school's needs. Workforce reform and the development of support staff is being effectively addressed.
50. Accommodation is satisfactory and mostly allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. Since the last inspection, the school has benefited from many improvements, such as the recent opening of excellent new sixth form accommodation and the development of good quality specific ICT suites. Most rooms and subject areas provide effective and stimulating learning environments. Some aspects of music accommodation, the general decoration and limited practice space are also unsatisfactory. Displays are usually of a good standard and their use, to celebrate students' achievements, is effective. At lunchtime, the dining hall space is very cramped. In addition, the quality of some toilet accommodation is a source of concern for students and some parents. Inspectors support this view and the planned programme of refurbishment will improve the situation. Students show good respect for the accommodation, there is little evidence of damage or graffiti and they are very tolerant of any limitations.
51. Resources are generally adequate to the needs of the curriculum. In the specialist ICT suites, they are excellent. In most other subjects, the available range of books, materials and equipment is at least sufficient to meet the curriculum needs and maintain high standards. New technologies, such as whiteboards, are increasingly available and becoming well used and deployed, as in the GNVQ courses. However, some subjects, mathematics and modern foreign languages, make insufficient use of these techniques. The library has an adequate stock of books and satisfactory facilities for ICT. Although there has been significant improvement in resources and facilities for ICT, access is still too limited in some subjects.

Sixth form

52. The school offers students a curriculum with a good degree of choice. Twenty-four A-level courses are taught with the associated Year 12 AS courses. Vocational courses are taught in business, health and social care, hospitality and catering, and leisure and tourism. Effective links are made with other schools within the local consortium, in some minority courses such as French, and the local Further Education College and as part of a Catholic schools consortium, through the successful use of video-conferencing to support students studying religious education and film studies. This results in an increasingly broad and relevant sixth form curriculum, which offers a range of appropriate learning pathways to students. Whilst for many students the curriculum meets their needs and they are successful in external examinations, few yet choose a mixed academic and vocational route. For a minority, a full AS and A2 programme is not the most effective in meeting their needs.

53. The range and take up of activities beyond the curriculum, in sport and in the arts, are very good. School productions are frequent and popular. Similarly, the sports leaders' programme offers opportunities for work with other schools and the community. Opportunities in other areas of activity are of a similar high quality. Other activities include aspects of peer counselling through the 'buddy system', charity fundraising, as with the fast day during the inspection, and involvement in events celebrating religious and cultural diversity. The sixth form makes a valuable contribution to the effective school council. There is a varied and successful social calendar. Careers guidance and that for entry into higher education is good.
54. The sixth form accommodation throughout the school is good overall. That provided in the new sixth form centre is excellent. Resourcing is satisfactory: there are occasions where access to ICT facilities can hinder the students' independence.

Care, guidance and support

Students' care, welfare and health and safety are good. Throughout the school, students receive good support, advice and guidance. There are good procedures to involve students and to seek their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures for child protection are very good.
- Too few staff are trained in first aid.
- Staff are very caring and provide very high levels of personal support.
- Assessment and data are not effectively used in some subjects for the setting of targets for the students' improvement.
- Students have trust and confidence in the staff.
- There are very good induction procedures for students joining the school, particularly in Year 7.

Commentary

55. The school's procedures for child protection are well established and effective. The recently reviewed child protection policy is appropriately based on the local area guidelines. The designated co-ordinator is well trained and ensures that all staff receive frequent reminders of the steps to take should they have any concerns about a student's welfare.
56. Health and safety procedures are satisfactory. There is a good system to ensure that regular monitoring checks are carried out rigorously. Relevant governors, the site manager and the health and safety co-ordinator are appropriately involved. However, some minor matters in music and design and technology were reported to the school during the inspection. In addition, there are only three staff fully trained in first aid in the school.
57. The provision and effectiveness of support, advice and guidance for students' personal development is good. This reflects the effective tutor group system, which is particularly successful from Year 9 onwards when group sizes are halved to support increased mentoring. This also impacts positively on students' achievement throughout Years 9 to 11. All staff in the school, including the headteacher and senior

management team, have responsibilities as personal tutors; this is very effective, and enables students to be well known by a range of adults. Consequently, any concerns can be quickly raised and discussed to the benefit of the student, which has a positive impact on their learning. In addition, the Inclusion Unit gives very good support to students who require additional help for a variety of reasons. Younger students who need a quieter place at lunchtime are well supported through the Haven Club. A consequence of the good support system is that almost all students have a great deal of trust in adults in the school, and a very positive relationship with at least one or more teachers. This has a significant positive impact, particularly for boys, on their attitudes to school and therefore their learning.

58. Students' academic monitoring is carried out through regular reviews by the personal tutor of the targets set by subject teachers. Whilst the system is effective, there is a lack of consistency in the effective use of data in the target-setting process across different subjects, which reduces the quality and usefulness of the tutor discussions with students. The guidance that students receive in relation to further study and careers is satisfactory across the school. Opportunities for students to access outside expertise from Connexions and relevant websites are good. Work-related learning opportunities are satisfactorily used to support this provision. For example, all students in Year 11 have a work experience opportunity and the Futures Week organised for students in Years 12 and 13 provides a wide range of careers-based activities.
59. Students with special educational needs are well catered for and feel secure and happy. Their physical, emotional and personal needs are given a high priority but more needs to be done to monitor the pace of their academic progress. Annual reviews are carried out appropriately. There is a very good dialogue between parents, the special needs staff and external agencies. Students with EAL needs receive good support. Needs are well assessed on entry to the school and mother tongue translators are used on initial interviews.
60. Students are involved well in the life of the school. Their views can be made known through the tutor group representatives or through the school council, which has two members from each year group elected by their peers. School council members are involved in, for example, the interview process for senior staff. Issues that affect the whole school, such as changes to the uniform, are discussed and questionnaires are also used to canvass pupil opinion, which gives them a good sense of being part of the school community.
61. The arrangements for students settling in to school are very good and it is the aspect of the school that parents are most happy with. The buddy system, of pairing new Year 7 students with those in Year 12, is very effective and enhances the sense of family and community in the school. Strong links with the main feeder primary schools, and events for pupils when they are still in Year 6, such as a sports afternoon and picnic, help to familiarise pupils with the school before they start. As a result, the transition to the next stage of their education occurs as smoothly as possible and has a positive impact on their learning. Procedures are similarly strong and praised by parents and students when students join the school in the sixth form or during the year. In this area of its work, the school has sustained well the strength of provision evident at the last inspection.

Sixth form

62. The majority of students consider that they are well supported in the sixth form, but some express the desire for a more adult environment. The form tutors and the head of sixth know students very well and they provide good pastoral care and encouragement for them. However, in some subjects, insufficient emphasis is placed on developing students' independent study skills and some, particularly in the Level 3, AS and A2 courses, rely too heavily on teachers for information. Students are well supported with up-to-date guidance on managing the demands of A-level and vocational courses, including personal and academic targets, which are reviewed regularly. Students agree that teachers are accessible to them and they receive appropriate advice and guidance for individual courses in school and link courses with the local Further Education College and consortium of schools. The quality of advice and support provided for students about careers, appropriate courses and entry requirements to higher education is good.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There is a good partnership with parents, who hold the school in high regard. Links with parents are very good. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have very positive views of the school.
- There are very good systems to consult parents and to deal with any concerns.
- Some report comments are insufficiently focused to the students' achievement and future improvement.
- The arrangements for the transfer of students into Year 7 are very good.

Commentary

63. The school has maintained the very good links with parents seen at the last inspection. Parents are particularly pleased with the way their children settle into school, the standard of teaching and the expectations staff have of their children. The evidence from the inspection confirms these views. The school involves parents very well and there are several channels to disseminate information and to allow parents to make their views known. The well established and very successful Area Parent Group meetings held in the four main parishes give parents regular opportunities to meet with the headteacher and governors, have subject presentations and any questions answered. In addition, events are held in school to which parents are invited such as Masses, visits and use of the new ICT facilities and school productions. The school effectively uses questionnaires to canvass parents' opinions on matters such as school uniform and how well students have settled into school. If parents have any concerns or complaints, they are confident that they will be listened to and acted upon as staff are seen as being very accessible.
64. Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning through ensuring they attend regularly and supporting them with homework tasks. The active Parent Teacher Association also contributes substantial sums of money to pay for additional resources for the school, such as funding the school minibus. Parents also make donations to the Governors' Fund, which has recently been well used to support the enhancement of sixth form accommodation, through the building of a new and outstanding Sixth Form Centre.

65. The information that parents receive is satisfactory. There are regular newsletters, an informative website and the student journal is a good means of day-to-day communication. However, there are minor omissions from the school's prospectus and the Governors' Annual Report to Parents. For example, the prospectus does not include the parents' right to withdraw their child from religious education and collective worship and it does not give the name of the chair of governors. The Governors' Annual Report needs to give more information about how accessible the school is to those with disabilities and the steps taken to prevent those pupils being treated less favourably than others. Parents receive regular progress reports, with four sent each year giving targets for each subject. In addition, a full written report is received annually. Whilst satisfactory, some comments contained in the reports are not sufficiently specific or focused on what the student has achieved or needs to do to improve.
66. The school has good, mutually beneficial community links. These are strongest with the four main parishes. Priests are regular visitors into school, celebrating Masses and assemblies for staff and students. The school has also recently very effectively used its new specialist status to extend its community links. For example, in setting up a cyber café in an Anglican church hall where local residents can learn to use computers. This is a successful venture much appreciated by those who attend. There is good use made of the school premises by clubs such as football and karate, and local businesses give their time and expertise in relation to providing work placements and giving information about careers to older students. Funding for visits to the Royal Academy and the National Gallery has been received from a local organisation and the curriculum is also well enhanced through visitors such as members of the police and fire service.
67. Well established links are in place with the four main feeder primary schools so that there are very good mechanisms for the transfer of Year 6 pupils. This enables them to settle quickly when they arrive which has a positive impact on their learning. The primary schools also benefit from the technical expertise of the ICT staff at the school and the mathematics masterclasses for gifted and talented primary school pupils, a feature of the school's specialist status, that are held in the school. Links with local secondary schools, such as through facilitating a joint parenting programme and setting up joint ICT training, are also effective and mutually beneficial. Older pupils and students also benefit from attending some courses, such as mechanics, at a local Further Education College and there is some collaboration with other schools in relation to sixth form provision, which effectively broadens the curriculum.

Sixth form

68. Good information is provided for students and their parents about the sixth form before they join. The same weakness in the quality of some reports exists as in the main school. Where comments are not specific and focused on achievement and learning, they can hinder the understanding, for students and parents, of their progress. There are good opportunities for students to do work shadowing, undertake work placements, for example, on a fortnightly basis in the GNVQ courses and to visit higher educational establishments.
69. Links with the community, such as the St Gregory's Futures Week for Years 12 and 13 students, and Young Enterprise projects, together with significant parish community work and work with feeder primary schools, provide additional opportunities to

stimulate students' enquiring minds, broaden their horizons and challenge them to achieve even higher standards. Joint course provision within the local 14-19 consortium, which allows the students to take a range of courses beyond the school, is cost-effective in provision and of mutual benefit to all.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher provides effective leadership and is becoming well supported by a new senior staff team. Governance of the school is good. Management is satisfactory but lacks a coherence of leadership from the middle managers.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, which is focused on further raising standards and broadening students' experiences.
- The rigour of monitoring and self-evaluation of the school's work by all leaders is not sufficiently developed.
- Effective scrutiny by the governors ensures that strengths and weaknesses are well known and that action to secure improvement is taken.
- The role of the subject leaders, as leaders of the curriculum and learning, is not sufficiently developed.
- The outcomes of provision for students with special educational needs are not sufficiently evaluated and the monitoring of EAL students is too informal.

Commentary

70. The headteacher and new senior staff team have a clear vision for the school's future. Both before and since the last inspection, the headteacher has successfully and effectively led the school through a difficult period. Standards have been well sustained at a time when many embedded and traditional practices have had to be challenged and friction between various elements of leadership resolved. In a number of areas, progress has been significant, for example, there is now a corporate identity and common purpose to the school's work, which was not fully evident at the time of the last inspection. Governance has continued to be a strength and has grown in its challenge to all areas of leadership. Strengths and weaknesses are well known and aspirations for the school's further improvement are based on achieving the highest quality of outcomes for all students. Students' views are now well listened to and there is recognition that they need to be further involved in their own learning. Development of the 14-19 curriculum and particularly the sixth form has been given appropriate priority and effectively enhanced. The value of the school's specialist status is understood and already actions have had a positive impact, both in key subjects, such as ICT, computing and mathematics, and the community, as with the development of adult learning opportunities. The headteacher's aspirations for the school are fully shared by the governing body and her new senior staff. The leadership team of senior managers are relatively new to their roles; over half joined the team from September 2004. However, they are making an increasing contribution to the school's direction and improvement. They carry out their responsibilities competently whilst maintaining appropriate continuity with the past traditions and ethos of the school.
71. Planning for the future is set out in an effective whole-school development plan. In setting appropriate priorities and targets, this plan shows sound linkage with financial

planning. Procedures to monitor and evaluate this plan are good but action is not always followed through rigorously by all leaders. As a result, the priorities of this whole-school plan are not consistently reflected in some subject improvement plans. Particular strengths are seen in art and design, geography and ICT but there are clear weaknesses in modern foreign languages, business and English. The leadership team's monitoring and evaluation of teaching is regular and effective; however, the subject leaders' role in this aspect is less consistent and some have yet to develop a focus to the leading of the curriculum and learning in their role. The specialist school development plan has provided a good model for the initial stage of development and the overall impact of specialist status on the whole curriculum has been positive.

72. Many middle managers, as individuals, are effective. However, as a leadership group, they have yet to develop, particularly in the subject leader role, a rigorous approach to challenge and school self-evaluation. Similarly, there is not yet a consistent focus to the application of assessment and performance data to drive learning and teaching practice. The leadership of most subjects is satisfactory or better and has improved in a number since the last inspection. However, there is too much variation between the best practice, as in art and design and the poorest, as in modern foreign languages. Good teamwork, a consistent view of teaching and learning, rigorous monitoring and evaluation, together with the effective use of statistical data are characteristic of the most effective subject leadership. Performance management and the continuing professional development of staff are satisfactory overall and, in the best led subjects, very well related to the raising of standards. Pastoral managers are effective and ensure that pastoral care is good. The work-related provision is well managed and the school has effective links with the local Connexions service and employers. The growing involvement with, and influence of the local consortium is impacting positively on this area of management and the development of cost-effective minority subject and vocational sixth form courses.
73. The leadership and management of special educational needs is satisfactory. Policies and procedures are securely in place and all staff work well as a team. There are good opportunities for staff development, and support staff are used well. The staff keep systematic records of individual students' achievement through the effective collation of subject reviews. However, this data is not sufficiently used to monitor the academic progress students make, or to evaluate effectively the impact the strategies documented on the IEPs are having on attainment. The new teacher in charge of the hearing impaired resource has a very good grasp of the issues and plans well to ensure that the needs of students with specific hearing-impaired disabilities are being met, both academically and physically.
74. The co-ordination for students with EAL is led by the special educational needs co-ordinator; it is satisfactory. Many of the identified students have some English and provision is appropriately matched to all students' needs. On arrival, students' needs are effectively identified and sound strategies to support their language development are put in place. However, these are not consistently followed up with all subject leaders and individual teachers. Liaison with support staff and external agencies is effective and contributes well to the provision. The analysis and tracking of students' achievement and progress in relation to other groups is limited and the monitoring of EAL students is too informal.
75. Governance is good. Governors continue to be very supportive of the school and to monitor its actions effectively. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and regularly join staff on their training days and spend time in school to

keep abreast of progress. Governors have a good input into the strategic development of the school and into formulating the whole-school development plan. They carry out their statutory duties well in respect of the headteacher's performance management. Monitoring of the school's finances is effectively carried out and governors ensure value for money, as in their close involvement in the recent excellent sixth form accommodation, building programme and the implementation of the specialist status programme. There are very good relationships between governors and the leadership team that enable frank and open discussions to take place. Governors comply with all statutory requirements, except for minor omissions in their Annual Report to Parents and the school prospectus.

76. The school's status as a specialist school gives it additional funding for staff and curriculum development. Specialist school funding has been effectively used in achieving the targets and outcomes detailed in the specific specialist status development plan. Already, the impact of this well-managed initiative is being seen in the development of standards in ICT, its effect upon the mathematics curriculum and the school's wider involvement with the community, local industry and commerce.
77. The school has effective procedures to ensure the appropriate recruitment, retention and induction of staff. There is now a satisfactory balance between new and more experienced staff and staff deployment has been well managed. The initial teacher training opportunities offered are sound and trainees make a valuable contribution to the school. The school has put satisfactory measures in place to implement the government's Workload Agreement.

Sixth form

78. The strategic development of the sixth form has been given appropriate priority. Leadership is satisfactory and day-to-day management is good. The new head of sixth form is effective and committed to doing the best for all students. Data is increasingly used to analyse performance and there is a sound understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. Limitations of the middle managers' role, as in self-evaluation and the leading of the curriculum and learning, evident in the main school, are also evident, but to a lesser extent, in the sixth form. Leadership of vocational courses and work-related learning in the sixth form is effective.

Financial information

79. The school's finances are satisfactorily managed. The leadership team and governors receive clear, up-to-date financial monitoring information from the bursar. The recommendations, made in the last received auditors' report from the Local Education Authority, have been appropriately acted on. Due regard is paid to the principles of best value. The school is currently in receipt of transitional grant from the Local Education Authority and the carried forward deficit is in line with the agreed budget plan to return to balance. Spending decisions made by the governors are well related to priorities for improvement. The school has responded positively to national initiatives to relieve teachers of administrative burden.
80. The school makes good use of specific grants and additional funding, as in the development of the new sixth form accommodation and ICT facilities. It uses its funding for special educational needs appropriately but does not sufficiently evaluate the outcomes of its spending in terms of student achievement to ensure value for money. Funding, from the school's involvement in the National Strategies for Literacy,

Numeracy and Key Stage 3, has been prudently used in relation to its already above average standards for 14-year-olds.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,876,869
Total expenditure	3,782,720
Expenditure per pupil	3,836

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-14,042
Balance carried forward to the next year	80,107

81. The main aids to students' achievement are: the students' own high level of self-motivation and high quality behaviour; the high expectations of individual teachers; the overall consistently good teaching and learning throughout the school; and the effective governors' scrutiny. The main barriers to raising achievement further are the serious weaknesses in modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 11; the lack of consistency in the use of student level data to inform and drive the planning of learning and teaching in some subjects; and the lack of rigour in the monitoring and challenge of ineffective practice by some leaders. Taking into account the funding received by the school, the social and economic backgrounds of students and the overall good quality of education provided, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision for work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work placement opportunities are effective and appreciated by students.
- Opportunities are missed to build links between students' work experience and the work they do at school.

Commentary

82. All students in Year 11 have a work experience placement. Preparation for work experience is effective and students are appropriately guided by thorough briefings prior to taking up their placements. The placements offered cover a good range of experience across public service, industry, service industry and commercial opportunities. These reflect the school's growing and effective links with the local community. Students indicated that they enjoy these placements and feel that the experience is relevant to their development. Students are well monitored and the procedures to ensure their health and safety are appropriate. However, the gains made from these placements are not always well built upon in the work of individual subjects. Positive examples are seen in vocational courses, art and design and physical education but are more varied in other subjects, where opportunities to relate the practicalities of the world of work and link theory to practice can be missed.

83. Some students benefit from regular off-site provision. In particular, a small number of students who are disapplied from the National Curriculum provision in Years 10 and

11 make successful progress through effective link courses with the West Kent College for Further Education.

Sixth form

84. Further work-related learning opportunities are given in the sixth form. In particular, the cycle of two-week work placement, alternating with two weeks in school in the GNVQ vocational courses, is particularly successful. The effective gains and understanding of the work environment made in these placements is evident in the students' coursework tasks. Students are very positive about this approach and feel that it will be of direct assistance in helping them pursue their careers. The overall good standards being achieved in the GNVQ courses reflect the quality of this provision. The work-related courses of the sixth form are well planned and overall, the teaching on these courses is of a good quality.

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 are above average and in Years 7 to 9 achievement is good.
- Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9.
- Students' attitudes are good and this has a significant impact on their achievement.
- Assessment and the quality of marking do not sufficiently help students improve.
- There are some significant weaknesses in subject leadership in the main school.

Commentary

85. Standards at the end of Year 9 in National Curriculum tests have been consistently well above the national average for a number of years. They have also been well above the average for schools whose students have similar prior attainment at the start of Year 7. The results for 2004 were again well above the national average. The number of students gaining the higher levels in these tests was also above the national average. Over time, there has been a steadily rising trend, broadly in line with that of the national trend. In the GCSE examination in English language in 2004, the percentage of students achieving grades A*-C was above the national average, with the percentage of A* and A grades also above average. Standards in English literature were broadly similar. There was a decline in the percentage of grades A*-C from that in 2003, although the overall three-year trend has been one of improvement. The attainment of girls and boys is closer than is seen nationally, with that of boys being higher than the national position. Students from ethnic minority heritages do at least as well as other students.
86. On entry to the school, students' attainment is broadly average. They make good progress and, by the end of Year 9, their attainment is above average. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language also achieve well. Achievement seen during the inspection was good. Students' positive attitudes to learning have a significant impact on their achievement. Students, including those with lower attainment, make good progress through the use of discussion. Most students develop a clear written style, although lower attaining students have more difficulty in this aspect. Most are able to match their writing to a range of audiences and purposes and show a developing awareness of plot and character in their reading. Students have a varied vocabulary and use this well in both oral and written work.
87. Students start their courses at the beginning of Year 10 with above average attainment and their achievement by the end of Year 11, including that of students with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language, is satisfactory. Students have very positive attitudes and those currently in Year 11 are achieving satisfactorily. Students make effective progress in their response to

literature and in making textual references in order to justify their opinions. They increasingly use a clear style for a range of writing and display a satisfactory level of accuracy. Their personal and creative writing develops well. Some students have difficulty, especially at the start of the course, in writing in a way that is relevant and fully answers the question, although they make satisfactory progress in this.

88. Teaching and learning is good overall. In Years 7 to 9, it is predominantly good. The teaching seen in Years 10 and 11 was in a range from good to unsatisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching is similar to that at the last inspection but no very good teaching was seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which is effectively used to boost students' confidence. In the best lessons, they make good use of questioning to encourage students to adopt a thoughtful approach to their work. There are good opportunities for students to experience a range of writing tasks and there is a good level of demand and challenge in their tasks. Teachers offer students an interesting range of texts, including those intended to appeal particularly to boys, and they make good use of discussion. This stimulates students' engagement with and interest in the literature they study. Where lessons are unsatisfactory, questioning was directed almost entirely towards the boys, significantly limiting the girls' involvement and achievement. Planning did not include a range of ways of meeting the needs of all students' capability. As a result, lower attaining students are unable to access their tasks and underachieve. The quality of presentation in students' work is too varied, reflecting unsatisfactory marking and monitoring of routines. Marking is frequently cursory and offers very little advice on what students need to do to improve. Students are often uncertain of their targets and have very little understanding of what they mean in terms of their work or what they have to do to improve. These aspects of assessment are unsatisfactory and represent a decline since the last inspection.
89. There is significant variation between the good leadership and management in the sixth form and some clear weaknesses of leadership and management in the main school provision, where management is satisfactory and leadership is unsatisfactory. Currently, the subject leader also leads modern foreign languages; this has not supported the leadership of English. There has been effective improvement in the subject handbook and schemes of work since the last inspection. The developing schemes for Years 7 to 9 offer sound guidance to all staff. ICT facilities have been similarly improved and are well used. The organisation and administration of GCSE coursework is exemplary and supports the students' good achievement. Monitoring of the subject's work and its self-evaluation are unsatisfactory, particularly in the main school. There is insufficient awareness or use of the range of available assessment and performance data to track students' progress effectively. Systems to monitor teaching and learning are not sufficiently rigorous and do not provide sufficient opportunities for teachers to share good practice. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

90. Standards of literacy in other subjects of the curriculum are generally good. Students are articulate and make good use of discussion to enhance their achievement. For example, in a Year 10 lesson in graphics, students made good use of discussion to explore their understanding of the features of maps. Students make good use of specialised subject vocabulary in both speaking and writing and responded well to the teacher's expectation that they should use a wide and appropriate vocabulary. Year 8 students used technical vocabulary well to discuss in appropriate detail the topic of bias in an ICT lesson. Students' writing is at least satisfactory and usually good. They

write well to record and extend their knowledge and understanding. In art and design, students write about their individual research, to evaluate their own progress and the work of their peers. In history, students' good writing and reading promotes good achievement since it allows them full access to the curriculum.

Drama

91. Standards seen in drama are satisfactory and sometimes good. In the drama lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good. The teacher adopted a flexible and supportive approach to students to enable them to reflect on, and come to an improved understanding of their texts and performances. Students of all capabilities are confident, enthusiastic and work hard. Questioning and discussion is used well to enable students to reflect on their own performances and to make progress through comparing them with the work of others. This has a very positive impact on achievement. Students listen carefully to both their teacher and their peers in order to be able to refine and improve their own performance. They have a developing understanding of their texts and the way in which they should be performed. Sixth form students approach the increased demands of work at A-level thoughtfully and seriously and make good progress in using an appropriate range of dramatic techniques.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French is **unsatisfactory**.

Provision in German is **poor**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are too low in all years; in GCSE, they have declined and are amongst the lowest in the school.
- Students do not enjoy modern foreign languages.
- The teaching and learning styles used are not consistent with expectations in 2005.
- All classes and most teachers make insufficient use of French and German in lessons.
- Unsatisfactory leadership and management over time.

Commentary

92. Standards at GCSE in French and German have declined since the last inspection. In 2004, boys' performance in French dropped to 29 per cent A*-C and 92 per cent A*-G, well below the national averages. Girls' performance is slightly above the national average at 55.6 per cent A*-C and 100 per cent A*-G. A small number of students gained the higher A* and A grades. French results were the lowest in the school, apart from German. In German, only 28 per cent of students attained an A*-C grade at GCSE in 2004, with girls performing far less well than boys. This was well below the national average and the lowest in the school. Only 88 per cent of the boys were awarded at least a G grade, well below the national average, though all girls attained at least this level. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 for 2004, in French, showed students' attainment to be broadly in line with the national expectation for their age. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 for 2004, in German, also indicate that students' attainment is broadly in line with the expectation for their age. This was not supported by the work seen and weaknesses in the subject's assessment procedures mean that the data is limited and unreliable.

93. In the work seen for French, standards are in line with national expectations for the students' age by the end of Year 9 but below average by the end of Year 11. Writing is extremely limited in range and dependent on the teacher's direction. Some good examples of work were seen, as in Year 8, with students' effective use of ICT and French in the preparation and emailing of a letter to a partner school in Belgium. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11, attainment was below average. Although there were again some examples of good attempts at independent writing and good use of tenses, most students' work displayed too many basic errors for this stage of their development. Overall students' reading and speaking skills are better. In German, the standards in the work seen and lessons are below average in all years. Listening and reading skills are more effectively developed and often of an average standard. For example, in one Year 7 class, students were able to understand a letter in their textbook. However, their productive speaking and writing skills are below average. The use of any extended writing is very limited beyond Year 7. Pronunciation is more satisfactory, and some pupils in a Year 7 class were able to use German for real purposes. Students with special educational needs usually perform as well as other children in their modern foreign languages work. In both subjects, attainment of boys and girls, in the work seen, was similar. However, higher attaining students are not challenged or extended in their work. Whilst in a small number of lessons, in both languages, students' achievement was satisfactory, there is, over time, significant underachievement. Overall achievement is unsatisfactory.
94. Students' progress is slow, in both French and German, and their learning is unsatisfactory because of the unsatisfactory teaching. Many students stated their dislike of both subjects and clearly expressed the view that their work was not engaging or interesting. Too little is learned and the overall unsatisfactory teaching fails, despite detailed preparation in individual lessons, to promote good learning. For example, students were very rarely encouraged to use the French and German language, even in French, when their teachers provided strong examples in terms of both fluency and accuracy. In some lessons, the teacher controlled the learning process very tightly, using an academic, memorising approach, which was inappropriate to the wide range of capability of the students. In a Year 7 lesson, this strategy did not support the learning needs of most students and particularly those with special educational needs. Techniques for developing an environment in which students expect to hear and speak both French and German were limited in their use. For example, there was no use of important phrases such as 'in my opinion'. Students' have limited opportunities to become independent in their learning, for example, through the use of information technology and, particularly in German, their work is not well matched to their capability. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Teachers use their own individual methods and do not follow whole-school policy. There is no sign of any systematic subject approach to the use of data and assessment to inform learning and help students improve.
95. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Over time, this has been an area of difficulty for the school but the present temporary arrangements, with the subject leader for English also leading modern foreign languages, need urgent review. The lack of specific subject leadership provides insufficient challenge to the embedded weaknesses, as in the quality of teaching and assessment. The subject improvement plan is extremely limited. There is no effective liaison with primary schools or development of the Primary Languages Strategy and National Key Stage 3 Strategy. The use of double lessons in Years 10 and 11 can constrain students' achievement. There is almost no effective monitoring and self-evaluation of the subject's practice

and performance management is weak. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory and there is an urgent need to resolve the significant subject weaknesses.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well by the age of 16.
- Students are hard working and take very good advantage of the good teaching they receive.
- Teaching and learning styles do not always encourage students' independence and engagement.
- Staff are highly committed and give freely of their time to help students.
- The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the subject's work is not rigorous enough to raise standards further.

Commentary

96. Standards are above average, with students achieving very well in public examinations. Overall, the students do much better than those in schools where they have a similar attainment and background on entry at 11 years.
97. For the last three years students' performance in the national tests for 14-year-olds has been well above that nationally. Results show much better progress than for students in similar types of school. In 2004, an above average number of students obtained the higher level 6 or above of the National Curriculum in these tests. At these higher levels, students often do better than in English or science.
98. Overall performance at GCSE over the last two years has been considerably better than that nationally and represents good or better achievement for most students, as their prior attainment at 11 years of age, when they enter the school, is only in line with that nationally. Students do better in mathematics than they do in English and science. In 2004, students did not do as well at the higher A*-C grades as they did in 2003, when performance was significantly better than that nationally. Nevertheless, their performance was in line with that nationally. To some extent, this lower performance reflects a lower attainment on entry, but there was some underachievement. The subject has analysed effectively the results and put strategies into place to address issues such as the non-completion of coursework.
99. Boys and girls achieve equally well and any significant differences in results mostly reflect differences in ability on entry to the school. The boys' results are particularly good when compared with those of boys nationally and, at GCSE, have been better than those of the girls at the higher A*-C grades over the last two years. The students from different ethnic groups or with English as an additional language do as well as other students.
100. The standards seen during the inspection reflect the good examination results obtained by students. At the end of Year 9 and Year 11, students are working at levels above those expected nationally. The lowest attaining pupils, in particular, make very

good progress. All students have very positive attitudes to their work and enjoy learning. This, together with the commitment of their teachers, makes a significant contribution to the good standards achieved.

101. Teaching is good overall. The consistency of good practice ensures all students make effective progress and achieve well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and explain new ideas clearly. They prepare students well for examinations. Homework is regularly set and completed. Effective use of setting enables the highest attainers to undertake challenging tasks. Students in the lowest sets are well supported by the additional help of learning support assistants. All lessons seen during the inspection were satisfactory or better, with just under a half being good. The best lessons have a good pace. The introductions are clear and successfully recap on previous learning. Probing questions, pair work and practical activities involve students fully in the learning process. This approach was particularly successful with a lower attaining group in Year 8, working on factors and multiples, where the group work was also matched well to the different capabilities of the students. These students were enthusiastic about their mathematics. Other lessons, although satisfactory, sometimes involve students spending too much time listening to the teacher and routinely completing exercises to practise their skills. In these lessons, students' enjoyment and engagement is less obvious and when questioned they are not always secure in their learning. ICT is not sufficiently used in lessons to support or extend students' independent learning opportunities.
102. Students' progress is monitored through half-termly testing and, particularly in Year 11, they know their examination targets. However, the effective use of assessment to inform future learning is not yet a consistent aspect of the subject's work. For example, teachers do not always leave enough time at the end of lessons to check students' gains in learning and so inform the planning of the next lesson. Some good practice, as in the analysis of examination questions and comments in students' books, is beginning to help them to know what to do to improve.
103. Management and leadership of the subject are satisfactory overall. The subject leader has created a hard working and committed team, who give willingly of their time and support each other well. His recent appointment to the senior leadership team requires the more effective delegation of some aspects of the subject's work, if they are to be securely maintained: in particular, the analysis of data on student performance and the tracking of students' progress is not well used to drive learning and teaching. The good practice, which exists, as in the quality of teaching, needs to be more regularly and effectively shared by the subject team.
104. Since the last inspection, improvement has been satisfactory. Standards have been well maintained with an improvement in the number of students gaining the highest grades in national examinations and tests. Accommodation has significantly improved, with the subject moving into new purpose-built accommodation where effective display makes it an attractive learning environment. The school has gained specialist mathematics and computing status, which is beginning to have a good impact on the work of the subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum

105. Students' competence in mathematics and numeracy skills is good and supports well their work in other subjects. This reflects their success in core mathematics lessons and their own mature approach. In some subjects, mathematical skills are well

identified in planning, for example, in developing their own plans for making a hat in design and technology, students accurately applied their measuring and calculation skills to ensure a good finished product. Some effective whole-school training for subjects in how they can contribute to the development of students' mathematical skills has been completed. However, the effective application of this development is too varied.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are above average.
- Students achieve and learn well because of the good teaching they receive.
- Students' performance and assessment data is not used analytically to inform further learning.
- Planning does not sufficiently match the needs of all students, especially in the mixed ability groups.
- Students' attitudes, interest and behaviour are good.
- Monitoring and self-evaluation systems, whilst established, lack rigour.

Commentary

106. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above the national average. These results have improved significantly since 2000. Boys have consistently outperformed girls in these tests but the subject has not yet looked at the data analytically to determine the reasons for this. In the 2004 GCSE results, the number of students achieving A*-C grades in the double science award were broadly in line with the national average, although the proportion of students taking this GCSE, in the school, was significantly higher than that nationally. In addition, about 11 per cent of the year group took a GCSE in the three separate sciences. Three quarters of these students obtained A*-C grades. Over time, the overall GCSE results have been maintained at broadly in line with the national average. The results show that there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls by the end of Year 11 and students from ethnic minority heritages do at least as well as other students.
107. Students' attainment in Year 9 is above average. This represents good achievement from the students' overall average attainment at entry in Year 7. In calculating density in relation to salt water and fresh water, many students confidently work out pressure from given values for force and area. However, some lower attaining students find it difficult to perform this calculation, especially when the values contain decimals. In all years, whilst literacy is not a barrier to learning for most students, some do not think carefully when writing their conclusions, for example, "freshly squeezed orange juice had more vitamin C because it had less drops of juice before the colour of the 'reactant' changed". In Year 11, students' attainment is above average and their achievement is good. For example, in chemistry, most can effectively apply their knowledge and understanding of chemical formulae to work out the mass of a chemical produced in a reaction. Students from minority ethnic heritages engage well in their lessons and make good progress. For example, they had developed a good grasp of displacement reactions. Similarly, students with special educational needs also make good progress. For example, in a lesson when they were investigating the effect of salt on the freezing of water, the work engaged them and they were well supported by effectively briefed learning support assistants.

108. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good expertise in the subjects they teach. The methods employed are effective. In one lesson, the use of a computer animation was very effective. The students tested their reaction time to stop a train and a motor vehicle travelling at different speeds from crashing. The teacher then invited the students to elicit and consolidate learning of factors that affected the reaction time, for example, the use of drugs. A video clip also provided very good learning of the effect of an accident on the blood vessels and nerve cells in the brain and some of the factors that lead to accidents, for example, distractions. In a Year 7 lesson, effective use of a data projector enthused and engaged students to learn about the structure and function of plant and animal cells and their parts. In most lessons, teachers manage students effectively and sensitively. As a result, there are good relationships between students and between the students and the adults. The students' good attitudes and interest also help them to learn effectively. In some lessons where the learning is less effective, weaknesses in student management and the more limited matching of tasks to all students' needs can slow progress. This is more often evident in the teaching of the mixed ability groups. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory overall but the efficient analysis of this data and the patterns from test and examination results to inform future planning and improvement is unsatisfactory.
109. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has improved curriculum planning, though use of some elements, such as effective starter activities in lessons, is not yet consistent. Monitoring and the self-evaluation of the subject, whilst established, lack sufficient rigour, as with the analysis of performance data, to ensure secure improvement. The subject curriculum is good; teachers get good guidance from effective schemes of work. Booster classes are well used to support students' achievement, particularly in Year 9, and the provision for extra-curricular activities, such as visits and clubs, is good. All teachers are specialists in science and, together with effective technician support, they make a positive contribution to the subject's overall success. Improvement from the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and students make good progress as they move through the school.
- The very good leadership and management of the subject has created an enthusiastic team who share a strong commitment to further improve standards.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent and enhance the learning experience of the students.
- The very good relationship between teachers and students improves their confidence in the subject.
- The achievement of some higher attaining students in Years 7 to 9 is below that indicated by their prior attainment.

Commentary

110. GCSE results in 2004 were above the national average and above the standard achieved in similar schools. Over a four-year trend, results are above average. In

2004, most students achieved at least half a grade better than their target predictions, representing a significant gain in added value and reflecting the overall quality of teaching and strong leadership in the subject. From the work observed in lessons and from the scrutiny of GCSE assignments, students' current attainment in Years 10 and 11 is above average. Achievement is good. By the end of Year 9, standards in the teacher assessments in 2004 were above the national average. In both 2003 and 2004, more than three-quarters of the students reached the National Curriculum level expected for their age. However, the number reaching the higher Level 6 was below average. This may reflect the limited time given to ICT in the past, when it was only taught in Years 7 and 9. The school now teaches ICT in all years and an improvement in attainment for the higher attaining students is becoming evident. In the work seen, attainment in Years 7 to 9 was also found to be above average overall. By the end of Year 9, students are working on projects that prepare them well for their GCSE courses in Year 10 and they are confident users of the school network and a wide range of ICT resources. Their skill in the use of databases and spreadsheets is particularly strong. Achievement is good. In all years, there is no significant difference in the performance of boys or girls. Those students from ethnic minority heritages achieve at least as well as other students and those with special educational needs achieve well for their capability.

111. Teaching is predominantly good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and some very good lessons were seen in Years 9, 10 and 11. The work of the non-specialist staff is closely monitored and they receive very good support from the subject leader. All teachers enjoy a very good relationship with their students, who work with interest and engagement in their lessons. Expectations are high and teachers provide good individual support to ensure that all students make effective progress. In the best lessons, a wide range of tasks, methods and questioning techniques was successfully used to engage students and check understanding. Planning of what is to be taught is thorough and ensures students develop a range of skills to a high standard. Students are encouraged to evaluate and assess their own work and, in Years 10 and 11, teachers are particularly conscientious in explaining to them how they can improve their coursework to satisfy the GCSE assessment criteria. Assessment is good overall. In all years, the planning and delivery of lessons ensure that students with special needs are fully included. A greater challenge and match of some tasks to the students' needs, particularly the higher attainers in Year 9, would further improve the number of students reaching the higher National Curriculum levels.
112. The accommodation and resources are excellent and create a very positive learning environment. The open access facility, of allowing students to complete their ICT work using the computers during the lunch hour, is well used and much appreciated by the students. The knowledge, expertise and helpfulness of the network manager and ICT technicians ensure the smooth running of the subject and enhance the use of ICT in teaching and learning across the school. An effective start has been made to the implementation of the school's specialist status plan and the overall impact upon ICT provision and the students' achievement is positive. However, although standards are being well sustained, it is surprising that the time allocation for the GCSE course is below that normally expected.
113. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader sets an exemplary role model in her enthusiasm, teaching ability and organisational skills. She is ably supported by the Key Stage 3 co-ordinator. All ICT staff work together as a very effective team. Regular meetings and effective systems for them to discuss issues and share good practice play an important part in the overall high standards and the

quality of provision achieved. Significant revisions to schemes of work have been successful in improving the quality of learning and raising standards. There is a clear and demanding vision for the subject's future, strengths and weaknesses are well known and, as with the better use of performance data, being acted upon. The subject leader is always striving to improve the quality of the ICT provision further. For example, the effective weekly staff training sessions and the successful whole-school 'e-learning' meetings. The recent publication of ICT teaching materials on the national TeachNetUK website has further enhanced the recognition of a successful subject.

114. Since the last inspection, standards have improved, as have the resources and accommodation for ICT, which are now excellent. The new schemes of work have improved the quality of teaching and learning. Improvement has been good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

115. Provision is good. The school has a suitable strategy to encourage and develop the use of ICT and has equipped all teachers with their own laptop computers. Students make good use of computers for their work in many subjects and their general competency is good. Equipment has been introduced into most curriculum areas but is still underused in subjects such as music, art and design and design and technology. The school has made a major investment in improving the facilities within ICT to a very high standard; however, there is not a clear audit of the needs of all subjects. The school's ratio of computers to students is impressive and easily satisfies national expectations. Much progress has been made since the last inspection in developing the school's website, network and online learning resources. Good facilities exist for teachers and students to access their files from any computer in the school and from home.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good and has a very positive impact on the rising standards of students' work.
- Examination results have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The very good subject leadership and management, together with the dedication of the teaching team, have a positive impact upon students' achievement.
- There are too few opportunities for fieldwork, and some textbooks and maps are out of date and need replacement.

Commentary

116. There has been a significant improvement in examination results at all levels since the last inspection. This has been particularly marked in the GCSE and A-level results for the last three years. The proportion of students attaining the top A*-C grades in the GCSE examinations now exceeds the national average, as does the proportions of students gaining the A*-G grades.

117. Standards of work seen throughout the school are good, and often very good. Students achieve consistently high standards in Year 11 and standards exceed the national expectations in Year 9. Achievement by all students is good. Gifted and talented students and higher attaining students' achievement is very good. Students with special educational needs also achieve well for their capability. From their earliest years in the school, students effectively and progressively develop their understanding of the subject, frequently producing very good standards of written and map work. By Year 11, students have acquired very secure subject knowledge and very good geographic skills of analysis, which they apply with great competence to investigate a range of challenging questions. The breadth of their knowledge enables them to examine and accurately interpret geographic evidence from a number of different perspectives, carefully evaluating the outcomes before drawing conclusions. The normal standards expected by Year 11 of the GCSE course are already apparent in the quality of ideas, analysis and presentation achieved by Year 10. For example, students were able to explain effectively the impact of change for rural and urban communities in areas of local economic development from those without such support.
118. The overall quality of teaching is good, and often very good. As a result, students' learning is consistently good or better. Teaching is based on very strong specialist knowledge, great enthusiasm for the subject, very effective deployment of good teaching strategies and a real commitment to the students. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on ecosystems, the very effective use of resources and probing questioning quickly engaged the students, who responded very well, particularly when allowed to develop their ideas independently in paired discussion. Lessons are carefully developed with real pace and momentum to provide a range of learning opportunities, which are varied, challenging and exciting, rich in content and resources. Activities are carefully planned and progressive so that students are constantly moving forward, effectively building their skills and understanding. Students are encouraged to investigate and discover for themselves with a range of practical tasks, which engage their interest. As a result, students develop a high degree of independent thinking skills while working co-operatively together. They learn to exercise their own judgement in interposing evidence. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on the increasing world wide demand for water, students very effectively drew on their analysis from evidence sources in structuring their group presentations to the whole class. Students listen carefully, develop very good powers of observation and articulate their ideas with confidence. Teachers are especially successful in matching tasks and questions to student capability, always stretching and stimulating. Lessons are friendly, with good teacher and student relationships, and teachers are very supportive. Homework, which is set regularly, is carefully marked, although there is some variation in the quality of feedback to students; some is detailed and helpful, but other marking is too general. Targets for achievement are regularly set and understood by the students; however, they need to be challenging and take students beyond what they know they can easily achieve.
119. The curriculum is good. The subject is working hard to improve the integration of citizenship into the curriculum. High standards are set for literacy and numeracy. However, fieldwork, away from the immediate local environment, is not sufficiently developed as a key resource. Some textbooks, maps and audio-visual resources are out of date and can constrain aspects of the students' learning.
120. Leadership and management are very good. The present subject leader has taken the subject from being one of the least successful in the school to being one of the most successful. He is supported by a very hard working, well qualified and highly

committed team of staff. There is a clear commitment to achieving high standards and an ethos of continuous improvement. Monitoring and the subject's evaluation of its work are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national average in Year 9 and well above in Year 11.
- Teaching is very good in GCSE classes because lessons are very well planned.
- Overall management is good but there are inconsistencies in teaching and assessment in Years 7 to 9.
- Computers and other resources are used well by students but the subject has limited access to ICT and there are not enough textbooks.

Commentary

121. Standards on entry are average and by Year 9 they are above average. Students' achievement is good because of their own positive attitudes and the satisfactory or better quality of teaching that they receive. The results at GCSE at A*-C have been well above the national average. In 2004, results were equally good and boys performed particularly well. Students achieve very well at GCSE because of the very good teaching in Years 10 and 11, the high focus on coursework and the skills and knowledge required for the examination.
122. Students' attainment in the work seen was above average in Years 7 to 9 and well above average in Years 10 and 11. Achievement was overall good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Students achieve well because they work hard in class and complete the homework that links well with work in lessons. Both teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. Students with special educational needs are supported effectively, although not all work is sufficiently well matched to their learning needs. Extension work and extra resources challenge the most able students, especially those in GCSE classes. Those from ethnic minority heritages achieve at least as well as other students. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys or girls. Year 11 benefit from detailed work sheets on the Cold War but also from the careful use of maps to ensure that they understand the key decisions made in 1945.
123. In Year 9, students make frequent and effective use of ICT and all gain a good basic knowledge of Germany in the 1930s. In a particularly successful lesson, on life in Hitler's Germany, students made excellent gains in learning because of the teacher's very careful planning and use of resources. However, a lack of access to ICT resources and textbooks does limit learning opportunities in some lessons. Planning is well focused on the development of skills and understanding as well as knowledge. However, the range of topic and skills coverage in Year 7 can limit learning and achievement in a minority of lessons.
124. Teachers use questioning effectively and GCSE assessment is very good, but assessment and marking in Years 7 to 9 is less consistent. In all years, students talk with interest about the topics that they are studying and the majority have a good

understanding of change over time and how we find out about the past. They respond well to opportunities for discussion and role-play but do not have enough opportunity to work in groups. Work on the First World War is well planned and students benefit from field trips to the battlefield sites.

125. Management is good, particularly in the development of resources and in ensuring that this team of six teachers, who are all teaching in other subject areas, works effectively. The subject leader provides sound leadership. Issues such as the impact of timetable limitations on the subject, the use of non-specialist teachers and shortages of resources are known and being addressed. The improvement in performance at GCSE since the last inspection has been a considerable success and improvement overall has been satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve standards which are well above national expectations in food, graphics and resistant materials at GCSE.
- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good.
- Students make good progress from Years 7 to 11.
- Monitoring and student assessments are not sufficiently used to identify what is working well in the subject and where improvements are needed.
- The development and use of computer-aided design and manufacture are well below national expectations.

Commentary

126. In 2004, results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results show that standards are above average, as they were at the time of the last inspection. The boys' performance at GCSE is well above the national average for boys. Standards at GCSE are well above average in food, resistant materials and graphics. They are below the national average for textiles and well below for electronics. Most students did at least as well as they should and many did better, other than in electronics where some underachieved. Students generally do better in design and technology than in their other subjects and for girls it is often one of their best subjects. Those from ethnic minority heritages do at least as well as other students.
127. Students enter the school with attainment, which is in line with the expectation for their age. By Year 9, their attainment in lessons is generally above average and their achievement is good. They make good progress from Years 7 to 9, although progress in resistant materials in Year 9 is slowed by tasks which do not extend or challenge the students sufficiently. Students have good knowledge and understanding of mechanisms and ingredients, which they apply well to the designing and making of products for particular purposes. They are also confident when experimenting, developing and testing their ideas, such as when they develop patterns to make hats in Year 9. Good care and attention to detail is also shown when they manufacture their ideas. Year 11 students' attainment is above average overall and in food and resistant

materials it is often well above average. Students design confidently and often show good levels of creativity in their ideas. Design work is often comprehensive and students display good literacy skills in the annotation of drawings to explain their thinking. However, some lower attaining students have limited graphical design skills, which limits their progress. Students plan their making very well and standards of manufacture in food and resistant materials are particularly high. In electronics, students' manufacturing skills meet expectations, but some find electronic principles difficult to understand, which constrains their overall achievement.

128. The quality of teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good. It was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen. Teachers are experienced, able and have high expectations, which are central to the consistently good progress that the students make. Teaching is often best in Years 10 and 11 where teachers ensure lessons build progressively on previous learning. This results in good levels of challenge and student achievement, such as in a very good lesson in which Year 10 students explored the concepts of value and quality assurance when producing products. Year 11 students receive effective and detailed feedback to enable them to improve. However, in other age groups, teachers mark work with care but often provide less guidance to students on how to reach higher levels and miss opportunities to accelerate their progress. Teachers have very good relationships with their students, who enjoy their lessons and have very good attitudes to their learning.
129. Teachers make good use of the satisfactory and recently improved accommodation. However, in some instances, unsatisfactory timetabling results in lessons in inappropriate rooms and teachers sharing a class. Resources are unsatisfactory overall. In particular, staff training and resources for computer-aided design and manufacture are a weakness, which is limiting students' achievement in this aspect of the subject.
130. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Experienced and committed teachers manage courses well on a day-to-day basis and the subject leader promotes good teamwork within the subject. The subject has worked hard to maintain the good standards achieved at the last inspection. However, it has been slow to implement developments, which can further raise standards. Improvement plans do not sharply target issues that will make a difference. Student assessments and performance data are not sufficiently used to identify where improvements are necessary and where there is already good practice that can be shared and developed. Monitoring procedures and self-evaluation are not applied rigorously to raising standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and students learn and achieve very well.
- Consistently very good teaching supports high standards.
- Subject leadership and management are very good and focused on continuous improvement and the raising of standards.

- Students' high interest and very good attitudes to their work support the high standards they achieve.
- Provision of specialist ICT resources is inadequate and limits the opportunities for students, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

131. GCSE examination results for grades A* to C in 2004 were very high compared with all schools and boys did exceptionally well, achieving results very close to those of girls. Examination results have improved significantly in recent years and students achieve higher grades in art and design than most of their other subjects.
132. Attainment on entry in Year 7 is broadly average. The results in the 2004 teacher assessments, at the end of year 9, are well above the national average for all schools. This indicates that in Years 7 to 9 all students achieve very well, including those with additional educational needs, the gifted and talented and those from ethnic minority heritages. They have well developed practical skills in drawing, painting and 3D work and are becoming knowledgeable about a variety of art movements and different cultural traditions. They acquire good research skills and write confidently about the subject, using appropriate technical terms. However, there are not enough opportunities in lessons for them to develop their practical art skills using ICT due to the acute shortage of computers and specialist imaging resources in the subject.
133. Throughout Years 10 and 11, all students make rapid gains in both their practical art skills and, by the end of Year 11, achieve very well, resulting in standards that are very high. They often show high technical competence in drawing, use of colour in a variety of design and expressive units of work. There are examples of excellent visual and written research into art historical study alongside skilfully recorded studies from observation and other reference materials. This information is used very well to inform their planning of final pieces in painting, graphics and sculpture. It is striking that lower attaining students do well in their research projects, an area in which so often they struggle, reflecting the high quality of the teaching they receive. Few students following GCSE courses use sketchbooks, which can limit their creative thinking. ICT is used well for a variety of purposes including research, research folder presentation and in generating artwork.
134. Teaching and learning is consistently very good and never less than good. Lessons are well planned, structured and taught using the teachers' evident strong subject expertise. Expectations of students are high and clearly communicated, using good quality visual resource materials, demonstrations and student work exemplars so that students are very clear about what they should achieve. Teachers promote positive relationships with their students and this creates a strong ethos for learning. As a result, students are very well motivated, purposeful and value the subject. As they mature, they are encouraged to be more independent learners and make effective use of their time beyond school to complete their projects. Teachers' use of assessment is very effective, especially in Years 10 and 11, where it is well matched to the GCSE requirements. This, together with regular monitoring and feedback, is being influential in raising standards. In Years 7 to 9, National Curriculum levels are used well to record students' progress, but not explicitly enough in planning to help the achievement of the highest levels. Individual interactions between students and teachers are effective in moving them forward in lessons because of the quality of the feedback and guidance given. Students have very good attitudes to art and design

and behave very well. They produce copious quantities of quality work, showing care and motivation.

135. Leadership and management are very good. There is a strong vision for the development of the subject allied to effective action, which has resulted in rapidly improving standards over recent years. Development planning is clear and realistic, the analysis of assessment information very effective so that there is a good view of the subject's strengths and weaknesses and of how to improve. The curriculum is broad and meets the needs of all students. Art and design successfully aids the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in lessons and through the imaginative extra-curricular opportunities provided in partnership with cultural organisations and artists. Art rooms are stimulating learning environments helped by the quality of display, although the kiln area and dry clay storage are in poor condition, reflecting the lack of technician support.
136. Despite the best efforts of the subject leader, a number of issues in respect of ICT and inadequacy of accommodation remain since the last inspection of which the school is aware. The senior leadership team and governors are seeking to prioritise appropriate funding. However, in the raising of standards, quality of teaching and learning, good progress has been made since the last inspection. Improvement is therefore good overall.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' positive attitudes and the additional time allocated for the subject contribute well to the students' good achievement.
- Students' good understanding of how to structure a composition adds to their overall creative development.
- The use of ICT to support students' composing skills is underdeveloped.
- The lack of appropriate quiet practice areas slows some of the students' learning.

Commentary

137. In 2004, the teachers' assessment of students at the end of Year 9 indicated that standards were well above the national average. These assessments were not supported by the work seen, which indicated that standards are, overall, in line with those expected for the students' age. New assessment procedures, now in use, are giving a more accurate indication of standards. In the 2004 GCSE examination, results were below the national average. Although these results are not as those of 2003, the 2004 group was much larger and of a much wider capability. All students who followed the course achieved a grade.
138. Students' attainment when they join the school in Year 7 is below that expected for their age. Their prior musical experience has been varied and, in particular, the creative element is limited, with few having had opportunities to compose and perform their own music. However with the benefit of the enhanced time allocated to the subject in Year 8 and students' very positive attitudes to their learning, achievement is good. By the time they reach Year 9, the attainment of most is at the national expectation. Students have good rhythmic skills, contributing to their creative work.

They are beginning to understand that compositions need a clear structure. This was very evident in a Year 9 song-writing topic. Here, students successfully composed songs, showing a good understanding of an introduction, a verse and a chorus. They know about the use of primary chords and use them accurately to support their compositions.

139. This good achievement continues in Years 10 and 11 and students in the GCSE groups are at the level expected at this point in the academic year. Students' practical skills are good and many successfully use their individual expertise to improvise and develop melodies. This was noticeable in a Year 11 group who successfully improvised a melody over a repeated pattern and effectively enhanced their performance by incorporating the use of dynamics. Although students have completed appropriate compositions for their GCSE coursework, this element is not so well developed as their performance, with some showing a lack of style and creative development. Students from ethnic minority heritages achieve at least as well as other students. Those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress for their capability. There is no significant difference in the attainment and achievement of boys or girls.
140. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. A particular strength of the teaching is the starter sessions at the beginning of lessons. These activities quickly engage students' interest, leading well into the main focus of the lesson and therefore promoting good learning. The planning of individual lessons is good with a variety of activities to include listening, appraising and practical activities. Teachers have good practical skills and use these effectively to demonstrate to students. They manage pupils well, allowing lessons to proceed without interruption. Teaching is less effective when the organisation of lessons is not clear. Although teachers explain tasks carefully, there are occasions when questioning is not sufficiently used to ascertain students' understanding before moving to the next task. Similarly, pace of learning is slowed when resources are not appropriately organised, for example, time spent distributing and connecting keyboards. As a result, the students had insufficient time to practise and consolidate their skills. Assessment of students' work and the feedback they receive on how to improve is satisfactory.
141. The curriculum provision is satisfactory. Students' achievement is enhanced by the time allocation in Year 8 but overall learning and achievement is constrained by the limited provision of specialist ICT resources and the number of quiet practice areas, which are often fully occupied by the visiting instrumental teachers. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good with a range of ensemble opportunities to challenge and extend students, particularly the musically talented. These activities, however, are not always well supported by the students.
142. Leadership and the management are satisfactory. Although the subject leader is in an acting role, she has maintained the momentum of development and successfully led new initiatives such as the vocal harmony group. Planning in the lessons seen was good, but long-term planning is underdeveloped, lacking in detail and progression. Similarly, the subject improvement plan does not show a clear vision for the future. Some of the issues from the previous inspection have been well addressed, as with the improved quality of teaching and the raising of standards. However there has been minimal improvement in the accommodation and the development of specialist ICT resources. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and often very good achievement results from good quality teaching and the provision of a good programme of enhancement.
- Students have an insecure knowledge of their levels of work and how to improve.
- Very good leadership has resulted in an effective and committed team.
- GCSE examination programme of work requires further development.
- There are some very good and developing links with other schools and the wider community.

Commentary

143. Standards in Year 9 are above national expectations. Overall, students' attainment on entry in Year 7 meets the national expectation. However, a significant number of students, on entry, only have experience of games skills and much weaker knowledge in areas such as evaluation and health and fitness. Consequently, by the end of Year 9, the majority of students, including those with special educational needs and from ethnic minority backgrounds have achieved well, with significant numbers achieving very well. Students acquire good skills in such activities as netball and swimming, but are still less confident when asked to evaluate their own and others' performances. In Years 10 and 11, a basic entry certificate provides a very good focus for non-examination students and they also achieve well. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys or girls. Those students with special educational needs achieve appropriately for their capability.
144. 2004 GCSE results were above the national average. In work seen, standards are confirmed as being above average. This constitutes good achievement for students of all capabilities. In recent years, GCSE results have often been well above average, reflecting high achievement levels. Students' strengths are seen in the development of practical skills where they benefit from the very secure subject knowledge of their teachers. They apply their theoretical knowledge well when developing their own detailed fitness programmes. A lack of consistent detail in some written work, together with basic examination techniques adversely affects boys' theory work.
145. The subject has worked very hard to develop an extensive and well-attended range of out-of lesson enrichment. This undoubtedly helps students to further their skill levels and the Sportsmark Gold Award recognises this. There is a very impressive level of school and individual representation at local, county and national levels, for example, in rugby and hockey.
146. Teaching and learning are good overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. This was despite the fact that because of snow, during the inspection period, many planned lessons had to be significantly adapted. Students achieve well because teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and are able to challenge students' knowledge and understanding effectively. Secure student management contributes to positive relationships in lessons where students want to do well. Some very good lesson planning ensures students are on task for prolonged periods and that demand is effectively stepped-up as the lesson progresses. Learning is well reinforced in regular periods of consolidation. On occasions, opportunities are missed to involve students in raising questions themselves and to reflect and discuss their work in

plenary sessions. Different tasks for students of differing capabilities are not always planned for. Relevant homework is set and regularly marked, although teachers' comments could be more diagnostic. In GCSE theory, the use of worksheets fails to provide an open-ended questioning approach, which would extend and enhance the achievement of all, particularly the higher attaining students. Assessment is satisfactory. Students are involved in self-assessment; however, their knowledge of what the National Curriculum levels mean in their work is not sufficient to allow them to always effectively analyse and improve their performance. Whilst a wide range of assessment data is effectively recorded, it is not always easily accessible to allow all teachers to interpret it and thereby inform their future planning.

147. The subject benefits from very good leadership that has seen good improvement since the last inspection. The leadership has a clear vision for the subject, based around maintaining high standards and achievement. Very good teamwork has been established. This is reflected by the teachers' commitment to running clubs and fixtures, and the very good work in developing links with the community and other schools. Management is good, proactive and ensures the smooth running of the subject. Helpful policies and procedures are in place, although further guidance to staff is required about the subject's approach to aspects such as literacy, numeracy and citizenship. Good programmes of work have been developed, and identify, for example, where best to deliver opportunities for the talented student, information technology and citizenship. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have good opportunities to participate in citizenship-related activities, especially fund-raising for charities.
- Students make good use of ICT and other resources in citizenship lessons.
- Links with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) and PSHE are good, but the tutor period provides limited time for citizenship.
- Curriculum planning is now being well developed but not all subjects yet fully identify citizenship elements or contribute to its assessment.
- Leadership and management are good and contribute well to the developing provision.

Commentary

148. Discussion with students indicates that they have satisfactory levels of knowledge about being a good citizen and their work shows that their skills of enquiry and communication are sound. They achieve as they should because citizenship is taught with PSHE and careers in weekly lessons and overall planning for these sessions is effective. Many other lessons contain elements that support learning and assessment in citizenship; however, these opportunities are not always fully identified to further enhance the students' achievement.
149. Planning shows where the essential elements of citizenship education are taking place in the tutor period, but only three of the five year groups have worked on citizenship so

far this year. The heads of year have worked hard to ensure that students are making satisfactory gains in knowledge. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although the quality of teaching and learning in lessons is varied, as some teachers are less secure in their teaching of citizenship and the available time is limited. Year 10 pupils are able to talk about the issues that divide Northern Ireland and others have a basic understanding of the European Union.

150. The school makes effective use of outside speakers, for example, the fire service, and students' work shows that they make good use of ICT resources. Written work shows secure levels of understanding and is presented well. Learning is satisfactory. Some tasks are well assessed and students evaluate and record their own progress. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall but they do not yet clearly identify levels of attainment for all students. Parents are appropriately informed about student progress.
151. Students have gained some understanding of the democratic process through the voting procedures for the school council, which is now playing a more prominent role in the school. For example, it is working with the governors in decision-making about changes to the school uniform and has been involved in supporting some staff appointments. There are many opportunities for students to participate in citizenship-related activities. They contribute to a range of charities and local and wider community links are well developed. The library has a range of newspapers for students' use and teaching resources have recently been enhanced.
152. Leadership and management are effective and citizenship has a higher profile in the school's development priorities. The need for wider curriculum opportunities and staff training has been recognised and the management of teachers, resources and visiting speakers is good.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

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	6	100.0	78.3	16.7	21.6	33.3	28.5
Biology	3	100.0	63.5	0.0	10.4	30.0	19.8
Chemistry	2	0.0	70.3	0.0	13.2	0.0	23.0
Communication studies	5	80.0	87.2	0.0	24.9	24.0	32.8
Drama	6	0.0	86.6	0.0	19.8	0.0	30.9
Economics	5	80.0	71.6	0.0	18.6	30.0	25.8
English/English language	1	100.0	85.3	0.0	16.1	30.0	29.0
English literature	7	100.0	86.2	28.6	17.4	37.1	29.7

French	3	33.3	79.8	33.3	19.4	20.0	28.2
Design and technology	8	87.5	72.6	0.0	13.9	23.8	24.3
General studies	1	100.0	73.6	0.0	16.9	40.0	25.5
Geography	3	66.7	75.5	33.3	20.4	33.3	27.0
German	1	100.0	81.6	100.0	18.8	50.0	28.8
History	7	85.7	82.2	14.3	20.8	30.0	29.2
Information technology	7	100.0	66.6	14.3	8.8	32.9	20.6
Mathematics	4	100.0	59.9	0.0	14.1	25.0	20.5
Music	4	50.0	79.8	0.0	16.9	12.5	27.5
Other social studies	9	77.8	67.8	11.1	15.1	24.4	23.2
Physics	7	71.4	66.4	0.0	14.8	20.0	22.4
Religious studies	9	77.8	82.2	33.3	26.1	28.9	31.2
Sociology	1	0.0	72.1	0.0	19.6	0.0	25.9
Spanish	1	100.0	77.1	100.0	17.0	60.0	26.5
Sports/PE studies	6	100.0	72.2	0.0	11.8	23.3	22.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	8	100.0	98.3	75.0	50.2	102.5	87.1
Biology	6	100.0	96.6	0.0	40.0	56.7	79.3
Chemistry	1	100.0	97.7	0.0	50.0	40.0	85.7
Communication studies	8	100.0	99.2	25.0	40.4	77.5	83.5
Drama	7	100.0	99.6	14.3	42.8	68.6	85.1
Economics	10	100.0	98.8	20.0	54.3	62.0	89.8
English literature	20	100.0	99.4	50.0	44.9	90.0	85.5
French	3	100.0	99.0	33.3	53.1	60.0	88.9
Design and technology	15	100.0	97.8	20.0	35.0	66.7	77.9
Geography	23	100.0	98.8	47.8	46.4	89.6	85.2
History	18	100.0	99.0	77.8	45.6	101.1	85.1
Information technology	14	100.0	96.3	28.6	25.7	77.1	71.1
Mathematics	10	100.0	96.8	20.0	56.6	80.0	89.5
Music	1	100.0	98.2	0.0	37.1	80.0	79.5
Other languages	1	100.0	97.3	100.0	66.7	100.0	95.6

Other social studies	20	100.0	97.4	15.0	42.5	71.0	81.6
Religious education	12	100.0	99.1	83.3	49.5	98.3	87.4
Sports/PE studies	12	100.0	97.8	16.7	30.9	66.7	75.4
Business VCE	22	95.3	91.6	27.9	24.1	67.9	67.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English was inspected in full.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good and standards are above average.
- Teaching is demanding and of a good quality.
- Students have good opportunities for independent research.
- There is a flexible policy on entry to the course.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Students' achievement is hindered by their lack of full participation in some lessons.

Commentary

153. In 2004 A-level examinations, standards were above average. The percentage of students who attained grades A or B was higher than that nationally and all students obtained a grade E or better. There was a very similar picture in 2003. Standards in the AS examinations in 2004 were well above average. A full range of evidence seen during the inspection indicates that standards in Years 12 and 13 are above average. This represents very good progress since the previous inspection, when standards were reported to be below the national average.
154. Students start the course with a wide range of attainment in their GCSE examinations. A significant proportion have prior attainment which does not form a secure basis for further study in the subject. These students achieve well to gain a pass at AS or A-level. Higher attaining students also achieve well in reaching the two higher grades. Students currently in Year 12 and 13 have positive attitudes to learning, which have a significant impact upon their good achievement.
155. Students develop a good range of clear and useful notes, which form an effective research base for essay planning and revision. They plan their written work effectively, producing a clearly structured argument. They make good use of their understanding of the ideas of well-known literary critics and of the contextual background of their texts to enhance the depth of their response. When students prepare and deliver a presentation to their peers on aspects of their work, they make good progress in both independent research skills and in personal confidence. Higher attaining students develop a mature and sophisticated written style, well suited to literary criticism. The achievement of nearly all students is hampered, in some lessons, by their marked reluctance to participate freely in discussion or to question the ideas of others.

156. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a clear love of the subject, which gives students confidence in them. The marking of students' work and the advice this gives on improvement is of a very good quality and has a significant impact on students' good achievement. Teachers make good use of the examination assessment criteria to advise students on what they need to do to improve their grade. Challenging written tasks set a high level of expectation and students work hard in order to meet this. The practice of requiring students to make presentations to the group is effective, but teachers make insufficient use of follow up questioning and discussion to raise achievement even further. Instead of engaging in discussion, students are frequently allowed to become passive note takers and, when this happens, the lesson loses pace and stimulus. Teachers provide a good range of additional reading and extracts to add breadth to their students' response.
157. Leadership and management are good. There is an admirably flexible policy on entry to the course which means that after individual discussions, a wide range of students are given the opportunity to study the subject at a higher level. There are effective schemes of work in place, which offer appropriate guidance to teachers. The subject follows the practice of adjusting the target grades set for students if these lack challenge and students then work towards the higher target. Informal but effective strategies for the identification of students who are in danger of underachieving ensure that good additional support is given, as required, and that high standards are maintained. The course offers a well-chosen range of texts which enhances students' response to the study of literature at this level. Enrichment activities are of a good quality but rather limited in number.
158. Students speak positively of their choice of English literature as a sixth form subject. It attracts high numbers and students' success at AS level ensures that a high percentage continue the subject to A-level. They are appreciative of the level of additional support they are given should they need it and they know that this is readily available. Students themselves are aware of the fact that they do not participate spontaneously in questioning and discussion, but are at a loss to explain why this is the case.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

159. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are good. Students are very articulate and explain their thinking well. They generally use a wide subject vocabulary to ensure that what they both say and write is clear and precise. Students effectively engaged in an animated and productive discussion about artificial intelligence in an ICT lesson. However, in two subjects where the quality of discussion is particularly important in enhancing progress, English and history, they are reluctant to speak freely and spontaneously. The quality of writing is generally good. In mathematics, writing is precise and clear and in ICT, above average writing skills mean that students are able to write lengthy analyses successfully. In history, students make good use of a wide range of writing techniques, ranging from bullet points to well structured essays.

Modern foreign languages

French was inspected in full. There are good arrangements for the one student in Year 13 to join other A-level students at a neighbouring school, for some lessons.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' fluent writing and speaking effectively support their achievement.
- Very good teaching and learning overall.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory but roles are not well defined.

Commentary

160. The A and AS level French courses attract only small numbers of students, for example, only one in the present Year 13. However, standards have been gradually rising with most students gaining at least an E grade pass, and three in the last two years attaining either an A or B. The gains students make from their attainment at GCSE, over the two year course, indicate good added value. Present standards are high, with students in Year 12 able to speak fluently and accurately, for example, on the subject of lottery wins, and the Year 13 student engaging in a lively discussion with the teacher on political issues. The occasional mistake provided a good opportunity for the teaching of a grammar point, for example, the use of the subjunctive to express probability in French. The teacher was also ready to develop the students' vocabulary and idiom, as, for example, the phrase used for 'an open secret'. Writing is fluent in both years; in Year 12, there are some inaccuracies of grammar and spelling, whilst in Year 13 the standard of accuracy is high. This represents very good achievement in students' development since GCSE.
161. Learning is very good in all lessons, with students of different backgrounds and experience of French being well included. Student effort and diligence is one reason for the good learning, but it is also as a result of very good teaching by the two members of staff. This ranges from the academic and reflective to the interactive discussion-based lesson, with both styles promoting and developing high standards of language learning. Reading material was interesting and appropriate, but not sufficiently contemporary. There is no evidence of the use of ICT in either Year 12 or 13. Written work is well marked, with mistakes clearly indicated, but students are not given sufficient indication of the progress that they are making and expected grades in the future.
162. Leadership and management are satisfactory. However, there is a lack of clarity over management roles and the vision for language learning in the sixth form. As in the main school, the temporary arrangements made since January 2005 require urgent review. Arrangements for peer-based performance management are unsatisfactory. However, since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in the development of students' speaking skills.

MATHEMATICS

The school offers AS and A2 level courses in mathematics, which together make up the A-level course. Further Mathematics is also offered. These courses were inspected in full. This year, the subject is running a GCSE course for those sixth form students who wish to improve their grades. This course was not inspected.

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a good and full range of subject expertise across the different topics in the AS and A2 courses.
- The highest attaining students achieve good results.
- Teaching and learning strategies do not meet the needs of all students; as a result, some do not do as well as they should.
- Monitoring and self-evaluation, particularly the analysis of assessment and performance data, is not rigorous enough to always identify where improvements in the subject's work need to be made.

Commentary

163. Standards seen during the inspection on A-level courses in Years 12 and 13 are just below those expected overall. However, given the range of students' attainment on entry to the sixth form, achievement is satisfactory. The best progress is being made by the most able students, who particularly enjoy the opportunity to take the demanding A-level further mathematics course. One described it as "fun".
164. In 2004, performance at A-level was equivalent to that nationally. This is a decline from 2003 when it was above. Male students do better than female students, but because of the low number of female students, differences in results are not significant. Since the introduction of changes in examination procedures from September 2000, success rates have fallen and, in recent years, students have done less well in mathematics than many of their other subjects. This is disappointing, particularly given the numbers who start the course in Year 12 with the highest GCSE grades. Too many drop out or do not achieve well enough in their AS examinations at the end of Year 12 to continue into Year 13. Whilst this is a national pattern and is being addressed by changes in the syllabus for this summer, the drop out rate is still too high. Appropriate strategies, as part of the specialist status school plan, have been put in place to address this and effect improvement.
165. Nevertheless, observation of lessons and the scrutiny of students' work during the inspection show current students are mostly making satisfactory progress. The most able students make the best progress. Teaching is satisfactory overall and the lessons observed during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to very good. Staff who teach the A-level courses have good subject knowledge and an effective range of expertise across the different aspects of the course. Work is regularly marked and teachers give freely of their time to help students outside of lessons. Where teaching is best, students make good progress in understanding and consolidating new work because they are well involved in the learning process. Questioning clearly probes the students' understanding and the students are encouraged to share their methods of approach with each other. Most students conscientiously undertake the tasks set and this significantly helps the satisfactory and sometimes better progress these students make. Some students who find the work difficult decide to give up the subject quite early on in Year 12. Others give it less time than their other subjects.
166. Although satisfactory, too much teaching is based on teacher explanation, the taking of notes, and then the students undertaking exercises. Questioning varies from the good involvement of all students to some which does not probe students' understanding deeply enough. This limited range of learning styles does not

sufficiently support those students who find the course more difficult. The range of teaching strategies used is improving, but teachers miss opportunities to involve students more fully through pair work and investigative activities. As a result, current practice does not always help students develop their own methods of approach and gain a range of strategies to solve the problems they might meet in their examinations.

167. Regular testing monitors progress but at the end of lessons teachers do not always fully check the students' understanding of what they have been taught. Access to computers and interactive whiteboards is still somewhat limited for sixth form work and ICT can be under-used. Library provision to support students' learning outside of lessons is inadequate.
168. The day-to-day leadership and management are satisfactory. However, monitoring and self-evaluation strategies do not sufficiently identify actions for improvement, for example, the needs of students who initially find the course difficult and the low take up of the course by female students. The success of the school in obtaining specialist mathematics and computing status has given the subject the opportunity to run further mathematics courses for the highest attaining students. These courses are successful and valued by the students, although numbers in Year 13 are not currently cost effective. In the last inspection, sixth form mathematics was not reported upon separately and since this time changes in the examination process have had a negative effect on standards in mathematics nationally. Comparisons are difficult to make but improvement is satisfactory overall.

Mathematics across the curriculum

169. The mathematical skills of sixth form students are good and appropriate for work in the range of subjects they take. There is no organised provision within the school for students not taking AS mathematics to develop it further as a key skill. A cross-curricular audit of mathematical provision has yet to be completed and a whole-school approach to identifying students' needs and supporting further the development of their mathematical skills is a recognised priority.

SCIENCE

The AS and A2 courses in biology were inspected in full. Courses are also offered in chemistry and physics but were not inspected.

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- The students achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The use of performance data is not sufficiently critical in identifying areas for improvement.

Commentary

170. Only a small number of students took the 2004 AS Level examination, making statistical comparisons unreliable. In 2003, results were below the national average and the male students outperformed the female students, whose results were well below the national average. Results in the 2004 A-level examination were well below the national average. Over time, the trend of results has been below those nationally. However, the numbers taking the subject at both AS and A-level are small and the statistical base is not robust. When the prior attainment of individual students at both GCSE and AS is examined in relation to their final results, most have done as well as they should on the courses.
171. The standards seen in Year 12 are average and those in Year 13 are above average. Both represent good achievement from the students' prior attainment at entry to the sixth form. The students have above average knowledge and understanding of the function of organs such as the kidney, in homeostasis and liver in digestion and metabolism. Similarly, processes, such as respiration and interspecific and intraspecific competition, are well understood. English and mathematics skills are used well to support the students' scientific learning and study.
172. Teaching and learning are good. For example, one Year 12 lesson started with a very effective starter activity that provided strong intellectual stimulus. The students were able to explain why the average shoe size has changed during the last 100 years and why identical twins separated 20 years earlier have a different body mass index. In another lesson, the task of what determines the characteristics of the same species of plant growing at different altitudes challenged the students' thinking. The following and effectively managed discussion elicited and consolidated learning of factors such as temperature, wind speed, precipitation and soil chemistry. The successful use of research results, in a Year 13 lesson, was preparing students well for the unifying concept paper of the examination. Discussion on factors that effect gene expression in primary cells and the teacher's own specialist knowledge of tissue culture deepened the students' knowledge and understanding. The very effective use by the teachers of subject expertise, questioning in discussions, sensitivity and demanding tasks contributed well to the good learning of most students. Classifying information that distinguished the structure and function of an artery, vein and capillary through collaborative group work was very effective in promoting and consolidating learning in a Year 12 lesson. However, the starter activity, in the same lesson, where an opportunity to use ICT was missed, was not sharp enough and did not sufficiently engage the students.
173. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject leader is an enthusiastic practitioner and serves as a good role model for others in the subject team. Assessment is effective but performance data is not monitored with sufficient critique in evaluating achievement and making teaching and curriculum more responsive to the needs of the students. With the small numbers following the courses, this is essential if the gains for individual students are to be maintained and the teachers are to know what is working and what is not. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The AS and A2 courses in computing were inspected in full. There are not general or vocational ICT courses. The school has specialist status in mathematics and computing.

Computing

Provision in computing is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and the students' very positive attitudes ensure that they achieve well.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent and enhance the students' learning.
- Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
- There is not sufficient choice in the range of courses offered.

Commentary

174. Between 2001 and 2003, results in the GCE A-level and AS level examinations were consistently above average. In 2004, results at A-level dropped slightly but were still above average, with a large majority of students meeting or exceeding the grades predicted for them based on their prior attainment at GCSE. The drop in attainment at A-level was largely due to students' relatively weak performance in the 'processing and programming techniques' aspect of the examination. The subject has effectively analysed this performance and taken appropriate action to address the issue for the current students.
175. The quality of work seen confirms that the standards are above the course expectations. The subject has a commendably open recruitment policy, often allowing students who have limited prior ICT experience or relatively weak GCSE grades to start the AS course. Retention rates during the course are good, with very few students withdrawing, and most students' final grades indicate that the added value over the course is good. Overall results at AS and A-level over the last four years have been consistently above average. This represents good achievement. There is no significant difference in the performance of male or female students.
176. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to challenge and support individuals. Both the AS and the A-level courses are well structured, with a supportive framework of good resources, both written and on-line. Teacher support is very good with effective and detailed monitoring and assessment of students' work. The system of giving detailed feedback on students' assignments, using the pro-formas provided by the examination board, ensures that students understand exactly what they need to do to improve. All students strongly appreciate this support and enjoy the very comfortable learning conditions. They are generally well motivated and most take responsibility for their own learning. As a result, the majority of students, including those with learning difficulties, make good progress. They enjoy the computing lessons but some said they would have appreciated the option of following a more general ICT course, as opposed to computing, or pursuing a vocational ICT course such as the AVCE.
177. The subject leader provides very good leadership and management. Detailed schemes of work are in place and a very good system has been implemented to monitor and evaluate the progress of the students. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is closely monitored with each teacher being regularly observed by the subject leader. A full comparative analysis of the performance of the subject takes place annually, with action plans being drawn up to improve standards. The subject leader effectively organises the curriculum and deploys staff appropriately. Her commitment to the development of the subject and the raising of standards is exemplary. As a consequence, she leads a dedicated staff team who are supportive of each other.

178. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Specialist status has been obtained and is being very well implemented. The number of students opting for computing has increased and the resources and accommodation are improved and are now excellent.

Information technology across the curriculum

179. The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. Students show good skill and confidence in using computers and much good use is made of internet research, word processing and desktop publishing in the presentation of coursework in a variety of subjects.

HUMANITIES

The AS and A2 courses in history were inspected in full. Geography was not inspected.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high in Year 13 and learning opportunities and resources are very good.
- Assessment outcomes are used very well and students are given very good guidance on how to improve their work.
- Students make very good use of ICT resources, although computers were not used in the lessons observed.
- There are many opportunities for independent learning outside of lessons but students are sometimes too passive in class.

Commentary

180. At A2 in 2003 and 2004, performance was high in comparison with the national average and most students met or improved on their predicted grades. AS results in 2004 were also well above average. Retention is good, although some students do not continue with the A2 course. Visiting students from Germany and Switzerland sometimes choose to take the AS examination and provision for them is very good. The subject is popular and standards are above average on entry to the course. There is no significant difference between the achievement of male and female students, although the latter contribute particularly well in discussion.

181. Standards in Year 13 are very high. Students achieve very well because they benefit from good teaching and guidance about the examination requirements. An unusually high proportion of students intend to study history at university. Teaching is good. A high level of student contribution is encouraged in most lessons, through the use of skilled questioning, but teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to take a lead role. Learning is very effective because students have very good research skills, use the subject's own web site very well and are confident in managing their own learning.

182. Year 13 students can discuss complex issues, for example, the political and religious

factors affecting the Elizabethan religious settlement, and they are able to evaluate the different interpretations of historians. This ability was used particularly effectively in a lesson on Hitler when the highest attaining students showed a high level of analytical skill. In Year 12, most students already have secure understanding of the events and personalities in France during the revolutionary period but average students are less clear on some basic aspects of government in Germany in the 1920s.

183. Leadership and management are very good. The subject has a good balance of responsibility for different aspects of the course. Assessment procedures have been developed very well. Use of the library and ICT is good, although computer resources are not available in the sixth form teaching room. Results have improved, more students recruited and new courses developed; the subject has improved well since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design was inspected in full. Music and performing arts were not inspected.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students' achievement is very good.
- Students research well and have the capacity to discuss and present complex concepts and ideas.
- Teachers possess very good subject knowledge and provide good advice and support.
- Leadership and management are very good; monitoring and self-evaluation are particularly effective.
- The lack of a specific sixth form workspace can constrain the range and size of some students' work.

Commentary

184. In the sixth form, students achieve very well and the results at A-level in 2004 were significantly improved upon 2003, particularly at the highest grades. In 2003, A-level results were broadly in line with the national average for all schools. Current students in Year 13 are achieving above average standards in their coursework folders and final pieces of work. They research well and present their work in very imaginative and expressive ways. They respond to a variety of themes, with often striking ideas and lines of enquiry, particularly when linked to cultural and moral values and issues. They show confidence and fluency when discussing their work and research into art and design but the breadth of knowledge about contemporary art is restricted. The quality of practical skills is often high, as shown in observational drawing within a work on portraiture and in the construction of sculptural chairs using found materials from the seashore. A number of students have good ICT skills, which they use to imaginative effect in manipulating images and extending their creative ideas. In Year 12, AS students show good achievement by the rapid improvement in knowledge and application of the visual elements of art through experimentation with still life composition and in making large, linear structures in cane and wire. Photography students achieve well in quickly acquiring competent camera skills and in effectively

using ICT to manipulate, refine and experiment with the visual qualities of their pictures. Journals are imaginative and often well presented and researched but occasionally the presentation overshadows the quality of the content.

185. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use their subject expertise very well to structure lessons, which are well matched to the needs of the students. Students are encouraged to work with independence and responsibility and they respond to this approach very well and are highly motivated. This is shown in the quality of unit journals and coursework. Relationships, promoted between students and teachers, are always positive and lessons are relaxed but purposeful. Assessment processes are well matched to the demands of the AS and A2 examinations and students benefit from regular monitoring and feedback on both a group and individual basis. A number of European foreign exchange students have been successfully integrated into the AS course and are achieving well due to sensitive teaching and encouragement.
186. Leadership and management are very good. Standards have improved as a result of the effective subject management and staff teamwork. Teaching is shared across the experienced teachers so that students benefit from their complementary levels of expertise and artistic backgrounds. Monitoring and self-evaluation processes are effective in ensuring achievement is very good and that students often achieve beyond their target grades. The subject benefits from a detailed analysis of examination performance in the sixth form. The individual differences in the achievements of different groups of students are known and inform priorities in the effective subject development plan. The lack of a dedicated sixth form art studio inhibits independent learning opportunities outside lessons and the development of large scale, ambitious work. The subject's programme of study visits to galleries and museums, together with the projects developed with outside agencies, for example, with a partner school offering teaching in photography and the Life Drawing Day held by the Royal Academy of Art Outreach programme, ensures the good promotion of students' social and cultural development.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The courses in AS and A2 physical education, which make up the A-level provision, were inspected in full. In addition, the sixth form recreational provision in physical education was sampled.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and often very good teaching supports students' good achievement.

- Progression, particularly in study skills, is not sufficiently emphasised in the schemes of work.
- Students do not sufficiently enhance their learning through reading beyond their lessons.
- The levels of practical skill and analysis of skills are strong elements.
- Students' ability to use self-assessment in the setting of their own short-term targets is under-developed.
- Very good leadership ensures a clear vision for future development.

Commentary

187. AS results in 2004 were in line with the national average. A-level results were below the national average. This, however, constitutes good achievement, given the wide range of prior attainment students have at the start of the Year 12 course. Almost all students gain a pass in the examinations. In past years, more higher grades have been achieved; for example, in 2003, the higher grades at A-level were above the national average. The performance of males and females is not significantly different.
188. In the work seen, standards were average and achievement was good. Year 12 students demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of organisations that encourage mass participation in sport. Less secure is their ability to apply the theory to actual examples consistently. A good level of practical ability is in evidence. Students in Year 12 play badminton and then analyse their performance for weaknesses before drawing up appropriate improvement action plans. The current Year 13 group is reaching some very high levels of practical skills in badminton prior to carrying out a skills analysis of their own and others' performance. Students use subject-specific vocabulary accurately. In written work, students show satisfactory understanding of the psychology behind sporting performance. Under assessment conditions particularly, less competent students tend to describe rather than evaluate, and often do not support their arguments with factual detail and exemplar evidence. This reflects an approach which does not sufficiently emphasise the importance of additional reading, research and the employment of study skills to the depth of study required in AS and A2 courses. The learning progression in these aspects is not sufficiently clear in the course schemes of work.
189. Teaching and learning is good, with some examples of very good teaching. Planning is well focused and provides an appropriate level of challenge, enhancing students' achievement. Students benefit from their teachers very secure knowledge of the subject. However, on occasions, students are too passive and over-rely on their teachers for guidance. Assessment is regular and effective. Students receive some very good feedback and know where they are and how to improve. Some worksheet materials do not sufficiently challenge the students' thinking. Relationships within lessons are positive. Students are appreciative of their teachers and of the wide opportunities for enhancement. They respond accordingly.
190. Leadership is very good and has overseen the successful development of a Community Sports Leaders' Award course. Students following this programme have helped in primary schools as well as being effective when working with students in the main school, for example, when supporting non-swimmers. All in the sixth form have opportunities to participate in recreational physical education. This provision is successful and fully engages students, for example, the success of the under-19 football squad winning the Kent Cup was known and being celebrated by the whole school. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to this programme, which ensures that

each session is well used. Management is good with assessment and recording firmly established. However, the students' ability to use self-assessment in setting and reviewing short-term targets for themselves is underdeveloped. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

BUSINESS

A range of business studies courses is offered in the sixth form, which effectively meets the interests and aptitudes of all students. The A-level course was inspected in depth and the economics course was sampled.

Business and economics

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are committed to their studies and work hard.
- Resources are of a high quality and well matched to students' learning needs.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory but is not always well matched to the students' capability.
- The subject team does not have a clear sense of common purpose.

Commentary

191. The school offers Advanced Vocational business studies (AVCE) and Advanced Level GCE economics as well as advanced subsidiary studies in both subjects. Historically, these courses have proved popular choices with students. Examination results in business studies and economics have followed a somewhat uneven pattern of success since the last inspection. The A-level results in business studies for 2003 and 2004 indicate that the proportion of students attaining the top A-B grades is slightly above the national average and, in 2004, the proportion of students gaining A-E pass grades is broadly in line with the national average. Results in A-level economics are more uneven; the above average results in 2003, when half of the students attained the top A-B grades, were not replicated in 2004 when grades were below the national average. The AS grades attained in 2004 were below the national average.
192. The standards of work seen in lessons in both business studies and economics are average. Students put significant effort into their written project work in business studies and often their independent assignments are of a higher standard than the work seen in lessons. Application of theoretical business models to real life problems is usually good, as is their analysis of primary research in developing new marketing strategies. Similarly, students' written work in economics, their diagrams, notes and examination test questions are well presented and reflect good development of analytical skills. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but too many students do not make sufficient gains from their generally good GCSE attainment at entry to the course in Year 12. These limited gains in progress reflect some of the weaknesses in the pace of teaching and the match of teaching strategies and student tasks to their capability.
193. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise is sound. Relationships with students are positive, though too often passive, with opportunities for students to work independently and develop their ideas through

group and paired discussion only occasionally used. For example, in a Year 13 business lesson, on market research, effective planning and initial use of appropriate video resources engaged the students but their learning was not as well progressed when subsequent questioning lacked demand. Too often, the pace and challenge of the lessons and the students' tasks are too comfortable and do not extend their achievement. In a Year 12 economics lesson, effective teacher intervention helped to challenge and re-focus the students' work but the lack of a clear plenary failed to establish what individuals had gained or share understanding between students. The range of strategies used is too narrow and not well matched, particularly in the business course, to all students' capability. Too often, too much time is spent on coursework alone. In economics, there is a better match of teaching and learning to the students' needs but the most able are not consistently extended. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Most students know where they are but have less information on how to improve. As yet, the use of assessment information and the analysis of examination data to improve the planning of future learning is limited.

194. Leadership and management and improvement since the last inspection are satisfactory overall. There are new and high quality resources in ICT and textbooks are up to date and relevant to the course needs. Good links are maintained with local business from which students benefit. The subject leader has developed a sound programme for professional development, which is improving practice. However, the subject lacks a sense of common purpose and direction. Team management is not always effective. This is recognised and the school is taking action, which will lead to improvement.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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