

INSPECTION REPORT

SWADELANDS SCHOOL

Lenham, Maidstone

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118793

Headteacher: Mrs C McKenney

Lead inspector: Mr T Feast

Dates of inspection: 7th - 10th March 2005

Inspection number: 273786

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 - 17
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 929
School address: Ham Lane
Lenham
Maidstone
Kent
Postcode: ME17 2QJ
Telephone number: (01622) 858 267
Fax number: (01622) 850 668
Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr S Sotherden
governors:
Date of previous 30th November - 4th December 1998
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Swadelands School is an average size mixed community modern school for students aged 11-17. While the school's designation is an age range of 11-17, in reality the school educates students up to the age of 18. The school serves an area where admission to schools is determined by academic ability and includes grammar schools. The school is a popular choice with parents and has continued to grow since the last inspection. The attainment of students on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below the national average. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below that found nationally. The school serves parts of Kent with significant concentrations of social deprivation and students come from a wide variety of home backgrounds. Overall their backgrounds are similar to those found nationally. The number of students whose home language is not English is lower than national figures but there is a small group of students from Traveller backgrounds who are eligible for support. The proportion of students identified by the school as having special educational needs is well above the national average. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational need is above the national average. The range of needs includes special learning difficulties including dyslexia and dyspraxia, moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. No students were identified as having refugee and/or asylum seeker status. The number of students who are in public care is very small. The number of students transferring to and from the school other than at the normal time of admission in September in Year 7 is relatively high. The school is a Specialist Sports College. It works in partnership with other local primary and secondary schools as part of a Leadership Improvement Grant (LIG) Consortium and as a Training School. The school's preparation for the inspection was adversely affected by the inclement weather in the two weeks prior to the inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3650	Mr T Feast	Lead inspector	
9779	Mrs S Smith	Lay inspector	
30699	Mr A Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics
22958	Mr T Bailess	Team inspector	English
1249	Mr J Edge	Team inspector	Science
14841	Mr M Duffey	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
1782	Mr A Lyons	Team inspector	Design and technology
18755	Mr R Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education
8632	Mr D Beer	Team inspector	Geography
11751	Mr D Sutcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
11672	Mr P Harle	Team inspector	Art and design Music
15971	Mr M Pye	Team inspector	History
15924	Mrs A Barrett	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
8216	Mr G Binks	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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REPORT CONTENTS

Page

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

4 - 7

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

8 - 13

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

13 - 19

Teaching and learning

The curriculum

Care, guidance and support

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

19 - 21

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

21 - 22

Work-related learning

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES **- 45**

23

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

46

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Swadelands School is a good and improving school, with many very good features. It provides good value for money. Students of all backgrounds and abilities achieve well at the school and teaching and learning are good. The curriculum offered to the students is good. Leadership and management are good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations of the headteacher are excellent.
- The links with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good.
- The school's emphasis on valuing all students is very good.
- Teachers' assessments of the standards at which students are working are not always accurate and the students do not always know what they have to do to improve.
- There is not yet consistent use of information and communication technology (ICT) across all subjects to help raise attainment.
- Homework is not consistently set and marked.
- The school's involvement of students through seeking and acting on their views is very good.

The school was last inspected in November 1998. Since then the improvement has been good. Standards in examinations and national tests have risen, as have students' standards in literacy and numeracy. The school's planning process has improved significantly and the roles of managers have been developed well. Resources have improved well overall and very well in areas such as accommodation and ICT resources. The spiritual dimension of the school has improved well, although the full requirements of a daily act of collective worship are not yet met.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E	E	D	C
Year 13	A/AS-level and VCE examinations	E*	n/a	E*	n/a

Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average; E - very low. Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils with average points scores.*

Students' achievement is good overall. By the end of Year 11, standards are below those found nationally, but students' achievement is good in relation to their standards when starting the courses in Year 10. Standards in GCSE examinations have improved at a faster rate than found nationally in the period 2000-2004. In 2004 the rate of progress of students in Year 11 since they started their examination courses was above the national rate. The percentage of students who gained five or more passes at grades A*-C fell from 36 per cent in 2003 to 27 per cent in 2004 but the percentage of students who gained five or more passes at A*-G and one or more passes at A*-G rose. The school's targets for GCSE examinations were just missed in 2004. Current standards vary across departments. They are above national expectations in music and in line with national expectations in art and design and physical education. They are below national expectations in English, mathematics, science, ICT, French, citizenship, history, design and technology and religious education. They are well below national expectations in geography. The

improvement seen during the inspection compared with the GCSE examination results in 2004 is linked to an improved stability in staffing in many areas.

By the end of Year 9 standards are below the national average, but have improved at a faster rate than the national trend between 2000 -2004. Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good, given their low standards of literacy on entry to the school in Year 7. The percentage of students in 2004 who attained Level 5 or higher in the national tests at the age of 14 rose in English, science and mathematics. The school's targets for these tests were met in all three subjects. Current standards are in line with national expectations in design and technology, art and design and physical education and below national expectations in English, mathematics, French, geography, history, citizenship and music. They are well below national expectations in science, ICT and religious education.

Standards in the sixth form are well below national expectations, but there has been an improvement in the results achieved in the A-level examinations in the past two years.

Students with special educational needs make good progress overall. Girls attain higher standards than boys overall. Students in public care make good progress overall, as do students coming from a Traveller background.

The quality of students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good overall. Attitudes are good. Behaviour is good. The attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of students are not satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory. Students' punctuality is unsatisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good overall. Teaching and learning across Years 10 to 13 are good. Much teaching is good and often better than this, reflecting the school's focus on raising the quality of teaching. This results in students learning well and is reflected in improved examination and test results. There are inconsistencies in setting and marking homework regularly and not all students are clear as to what they need to do next to improve the quality of their work. The curriculum is good overall, and reflects well that this is a Specialist School and Sports College. Some subjects do not yet use ICT sufficiently to support teaching and learning. Guidance and support for students are good. The school's links with parents are satisfactory. The school's links with the community and with other schools are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Governance is very good. There is a very good emphasis on valuing all students, which is evident in the school's positive ethos. The school does not meet fully statutory requirements for providing a daily act of collective worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents are satisfied with many aspects of the school's provision. Some concerns were raised in respect of students' behaviour, the information parents receive about their child's progress, homework and the school seeking their views. Students are generally positive about the school, especially in respect of the school's expectations of them. Students raised concerns about behaviour and bullying, about students being fairly treated and about having their work assessed helpfully. The inspection team agrees with parents

and students that the behaviour of some students is not satisfactory. Homework is not yet consistently set and marked and reports do not consistently provide parents or students with specific subject guidance on how to improve.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- assess accurately students' attainment, especially in Years 7 to 9, and improve the guidance given to students on how to improve their grades;
- use ICT consistently across all subjects to help raise attainment;
- set and mark homework consistently;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship for all.

THE SIXTH FORM AT SWADELANDS SCHOOL

There are 85 students in the sixth form, making it smaller than other sixth forms nationally. Most students are recruited to the growing sixth form from the school's Year 11 pupils. The majority of students study a range of academic and vocational courses. Most take the academic courses to AS level and a small number progress to A-level. There is a very small number of students with special educational needs in the sixth form.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a good education for its sixth form students and provides good value for money. Standards on entry to the sixth form are well below those typically found. Standards by the end of Year 13 are still well below the national average. This is because whilst most students in the sixth form attain pass grades in their examinations, few achieve the highest A or B grades. The school offers to students the prospect of staying on and gaining higher qualifications. Most of those who stay on to Year 13 succeed in this and go on to higher or further education. Teaching and learning are good. The achievement of students overall, including of those with special educational needs, is in line with that expected of them. Leadership is good. Management is good, other than in respect of students' attendance. There has been a good improvement in the sixth form since the last inspection and this improvement reflects the priority given to the development of the sixth form by the school.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There are very good educational links with other schools and colleges and with the community.
- Students have access to very good support, advice and guidance.
- There is good leadership and management of the sixth form.
- Students' attendance and punctuality are unsatisfactory.
- The requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not fully met.

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	Provision in English is satisfactory . Results in the A-level examinations have been well below the national average. Standards seen in the inspection are below national expectations. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are good.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is satisfactory . A-level and AS level are new and developing courses in the sixth form. Students and teachers work hard in order to achieve the students' predicted outcomes. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Leadership and management are satisfactory.
Science	Provision in biology is satisfactory . Results in A-level examinations have been below the national average. Current teaching and learning are good. Leadership is satisfactory and management is good.
Information and communication technology	Provision in ICT is good . Students' achievement is good, although results are below the national average. Teaching and learning are good. Leadership and management are very good.

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

Although students expressed concerns in the questionnaires about the quality of advice and support they receive, they were more positive in discussions with the inspection team. The inspection team thinks that the advice and support they are given is very good, including that provided for students who are considering going into higher and further education. The attendance arrangements and the monitoring of students' attendance are not adequate to ensure good attendance and punctuality from the students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. There is good strategic leadership of the sixth form and subject leaders provide good curriculum leadership overall. There is good monitoring of students' performance and the quality of provision. Recruitment to the sixth form is improving. There has been a good improvement in the range of courses on offer to the students, including the provision of vocational courses. Whilst students do have access to religious education, as required by the Locally Agreed Syllabus, the requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not fully met. The sixth form runs well and tutors and teaching staff know their students very well.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive about many aspects of the sixth form. They enjoy being students at Swadelands School. Students think teaching is challenging and demanding. They consider teachers are helpful and accessible. They find that work is helpfully assessed and that they are helped to study. They were less complimentary about the advice they receive on what to study, but the inspection team judges that they get very good advice. Many students indicated on the questionnaires that they did not think the school offers courses which suit their ability or career plans but the inspectors judged that the curriculum on offer to the students is good and continuing to develop. There is a good range of both academic and vocational courses, as well as more general programmes to support students' academic and personal development.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

By the end of Year 9 and Year 11, students' standards in national tests and examinations are **below** those found nationally. However students' achievement is **good** overall in relation to their attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 and when they start their examination courses. Girls' attainment is higher than the boys' overall in GCSE examinations and in the national tests at the age of 14. Students' standards in A-level examinations are **very low**, but their achievement is satisfactory and they gain the grades expected of them.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good overall.
- Results in the GCSE examinations have improved at a faster pace than that nationally since 2000.
- Results in the GCSE examinations for dance in 2004 were above the national average and the students' achievements were very good.
- The school's focus on improving students' standards of literacy is having a positive impact on overall results in national tests and examinations.
- The progress of students with special educational needs, students from Traveller backgrounds and students in public care is good and similar to that of their fellow students.
- Results in the A-level examinations improved significantly in 2004.

Commentary

1. Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below that found nationally overall, especially in relation to their literacy skills. Girls' attainment on entry is generally higher than that of the boys. The students' standards improve well and their results in the national tests at the age of 14 are below average. More of them are closer to the national expectation and the school's average points scores have risen each year since 2002. The main reason why the results are below the national average is that only a relatively small proportion of the students achieve levels above those expected nationally (ie Level 6 or higher). This is not unexpected in a modern school where locally, selection on entry to secondary education is by ability. The percentage of students in 2004 who attained Level 5 or higher in the national tests at the age of 14 increased in English, science and mathematics. The school's targets for 2004 were met in all three subjects. The improvement in the school's overall performance in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in the period 2000-2004 has been faster than the national trend. Girls have attained much higher results than the boys in English and mathematics in the period, but results in science of girls and boys have been much closer. Overall, these results represent good achievement by the students, when compared to their attainment on entry to the school. The school's strategies for improving literacy have had a positive impact on raising standards, as has its commitment to and implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. The achievement of students with special educational needs, students from a Traveller background and students in public care was good and in line with that of their fellow students.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.1 (29.9)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	34.1 (32.8)	n/a (35.4)
science	32.2 (31.1)	n/a (33.6)

There were 208 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. GCSE examination results have improved significantly on those reported at the last inspection, when 17 per cent of students achieved five or more passes at A*-C grades. Between 2000 and 2003, the percentage of students who gained five or more passes at grades A*-C rose from 29 per cent to 36 per cent. In 2004 the percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades fell to 27 per cent; this was well below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. However the percentage achieving five or more passes at grades A*-G rose from 87 to 92 per cent. This was three per cent above the national figure and well above the average for similar schools. The percentage achieving one or more passes at grades A*-G rose from 94 to 97 per cent. This figure was in line with the national figure, and well above that of similar schools. The school did not meet all its targets for the 2004 GCSE results. Part of the reason for results being well below the national average for five or more A*-C grades is that many students achieve well for their ability by gaining results at D grades. This puts their results well below national figures when comparing A*-C grades and average points scores. However the school's results show that nearly all students achieve some external accreditation at the end of Year 11 and in 2004 this rate of achievement between Year 10 and Year 11 was above that found nationally. The performance of girls is generally higher than that of the boys at GCSE. This was particularly true in the results in GCSE dance, where the percentage of students achieving passes at grades A*-C was above the national average and their achievement was very good. The achievement of students with special educational needs, students from a Traveller background and students in public care was good and in line with that of their fellow students.

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	27 (36)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (87)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	29.3 (28.8)	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.

3. Current standards in Year 11 show an improvement on the GCSE examination results reported in 2004 and are more in line with those in the period 2000-2003. Standards are below national expectations overall but this represents good achievement, given the students' starting points in Year 10. This is partly a reflection of the improved stability of staffing. By Year 11, attainment is above national expectations in music and in line with national expectations in art and design and physical education. Attainment is below the national expectations in English, mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology, French, history, citizenship and religious education. It is well below national expectations in geography. Girls' attainment is generally higher than that of the boys. In part this is because girls make better use of their knowledge and

understanding from previous lessons in the subjects and from using skills developed across the different subjects.

4. Current standards in Year 9 are below the national average but reflect the improvement on last year's results in the national tests. This represents good achievement, given the students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7. Part of the reason for this improvement is the focus on improving students' standards of literacy and also the improved stability in staffing. Current standards are in line with national expectations in design and technology, art and design and physical education and below national expectations in English, mathematics, French, geography, history, citizenship and music. Standards are well below national expectations in science, ICT and religious education. Girls' attainment is generally higher than that of the boys, for reasons similar to those found in Years 10 and 11.
5. Students with special educational needs achieve well across the whole school curriculum. Their progress, overall, is similar to that of all students. In some lessons observed, for example in English in Year 11 and French in Year 10, there was very well planned team teaching by the teacher and the support assistant and this resulted in students with special educational needs achieving very highly.
6. There is specific support given to students from Traveller backgrounds. This support is effective and enables these students to achieve well, in line with the achievement of their fellow students.

Sixth form

7. The A-level examination results in 2004 were very low compared with the national average. These were similar to the results in 2002 which were also very low. There are no national figures available for 2003 to make comparisons with national performance. The percentage of students achieving A-E grades in 2004 rose significantly from 33.3 per cent to 84.9 per cent and the percentage of A-B grades rose from zero to 19 per cent. Results in Information Technology VQ and Leisure and Recreation VCE in 2004 were well above the results nationally in these subjects. The number of students taking A-level examinations rose overall. Male students outperformed female students. Current standards are below those expected nationally, mainly because the percentage of passes at A-B grades remains well below that found nationally. Current standards are below national expectations in English, mathematics, biology and ICT. However, this is good achievement by the students overall when account is taken of their standards when starting the courses in Year 12.

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	84.9 (33.3)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	19.0 (0.0)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	130.7 (n/a)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 27 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

ATTITUDES TO LEARNING AND BEHAVIOUR ARE **GOOD** OVERALL. A RECENT, AND SIGNIFICANT, IMPROVEMENT IN ATTENDANCE HAS RESULTED IN LEVELS BEING **SATISFACTORY** FOR THE CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR TO DATE. PUNCTUALITY IS **UNSATISFACTORY**. DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONAL QUALITIES, INCLUDING THE STUDENTS' SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, IS **GOOD**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance has improved significantly this year but punctuality is unsatisfactory.
- Most students like school and their positive attitudes support learning well.
- Strategies to support disaffected students have a positive impact on their attitudes overall.
- Good provision for personal development results in a good growth in students' maturity.
- Attendance and time keeping routines in the sixth form are not effective.

Commentary

- Attendance for the last school year was well below the national average. Pastoral teams have successfully focused on improving this. Levels for the current year to date have risen to 91.8 per cent and, as at the time of the last inspection, are satisfactory. Incidents of unauthorised absence are very low. The number of students using public transport for their journey to school accounts for a proportion of lateness at the beginning of the school day. There is, however, a lack of urgency from some students about getting to their registration groups as quickly as possible. Some students arrive after their peers when transferring between classrooms. Some students feel resentful when their teachers are late to lessons. The monitoring of absentees is thorough and prompt contact is made with parents and carers when the reasons for absence are not known.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.5	School data	0.1
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.

- The majority of students like coming to school and there are high levels of involvement in the very good range of activities organised for them outside of lessons. Many of those interviewed show high levels of esteem for staff and pride in the school environment and facilities. Most students are interested in their work, particularly when it involves practical activities. Behaviour in lessons is usually good, although the students' attention spans are often short and low-level disruption is evident when lessons are not planned well to engage their interest. This sometimes slows learning for all. There are a few immature students in each year group whose behaviour is disruptive. In most instances these students are managed effectively and removed from lessons where necessary to allow others to work. Around the school at break and lunchtimes behaviour is usually good, although some students leave the site without permission. The consistent application of the rules led to an increase in the number of exclusions last year. This consistency, and well-planned support for students on return from exclusion, is having a positive impact and the number of exclusions is now falling. In Years 10 and 11 the alternative curriculum provided improves the attitudes of some disaffected students. There is some bullying in the school; inspection evidence confirms the views of parents that this is mostly in Years 7 and 8. Students feel it is usually dealt with well by staff and particularly value the mentoring scheme that provides them with peer support. They say that some bullying takes place on the journeys to and from school. On some of these

occasions students are not confident about reporting bullying because of the possibility of reprisals by the bullies.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
864	116	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	7	0
4	0	0
1	1	0
2	0	0
1	1	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
8	1	0
0	0	0

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

- Students grow in confidence through opportunities for them to take responsibility, for example, on the School Council. The students' self-esteem is raised by the school's acknowledgement of their achievements, opportunities provided for them to represent their school and the value placed on their views and opinions. Themes chosen for the 'thought for the day' promote the students' social, moral and cultural development well. Opportunities to develop them spiritually are often overlooked by staff and the school fails to fulfil the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all. Students explore moral issues, for example, euthanasia and sex before marriage. Older students show maturity and a good understanding of fairness and justice when dealing with the problems of those younger than themselves. The school ensures that students have an effective understanding of cultures within their own environment, as well as extending their horizons by means, for example, of the contact the school has with students in Thailand. Suitable consideration is given to the cultural dimensions in subjects - for example, native American and African dance, the history of travellers, religious beliefs in medieval times and aspects of major world faiths. Students usually work well together when needed and show good levels of respect for the views and opinions of others.

Sixth form

- Students in the sixth form are expected to attend school full time and to be present for morning and afternoon registrations. In practice many are not present for registration, particularly when they have no lessons to attend. This has a negative impact on the quality of tutor support that is planned for this period. The importance of the school knowing whether

the students are on the premises is not fully appreciated by all of them and some students do not use the signing in and out procedures. Attendance in sixth form lessons during the inspection was low. Students in the sixth form say they usually enjoy school and both they and their parents say they value the quality of the pastoral support offered. Behaviour is usually good, although there are occasions when a lack of maturity is apparent. Many students willingly take on roles of responsibility, for example, on the School Council, mentoring and providing other support for younger students. As a result they show good growth in maturity and in their ability to take responsibility.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good** overall. The quality of teaching and learning is **good** overall. The quality of assessment is **satisfactory** overall. The curriculum provided for the students is **good** and extra-curricular opportunities are **very good**. The support and guidance given to students are **good**. The school has **satisfactory** links with parents. The school has **very good** links with the community and with other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **good**, as is the quality of students' learning. Assessment is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The improvement in the proportion of good and very good teaching since the last inspection is good, resulting in much good learning by the students.
- The management of students' behaviour is good in many classes.
- Teachers' assessments of students' work in Years 7 to 9 are not always accurate and insufficient guidance is given to students on how to improve.
- The teaching and the learning of students with special educational needs are good.
- There is a lack of consistency across departments in the use of ICT as a means of raising the quality of teaching and learning.
- Homework is not consistently set and marked.

Commentary

12. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is good in Years 10 and 11. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons and it was good or better in over 63 per cent of lessons. There has been a big improvement since the last inspection in the proportion of lessons in which the teaching is good or better.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 129 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	23 (17.8%)	59 (45.7%)	38 (29.5%)	9 (7.0%)	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.

13. Much of the teaching observed in Years 10 and 11 was good or very good. In three quarters of the lessons the teaching was good or better and in only one lesson was the teaching unsatisfactory. The quality of the teaching has a good impact on students' learning and contributes well to the progress they make in Years 10 and 11. Teachers preparing students for examination classes have a good grasp of the

requirements of the examinations and plan good strategies which support the students making good progress in their lessons. The teachers' assessments are helpful and accurate and give the students ideas on how to make changes to their work to achieve higher grades. Teachers demonstrate good behaviour management strategies when the behaviour of some students in class requires it. In the best lessons teachers do find ways in which to promote students' capabilities in working collaboratively and to develop independent learning, for example in dance, but in lessons where the teaching is only satisfactory, opportunities for such developments are more limited.

14. Much good teaching was also observed in Years 7 to 9 but also most of the unsatisfactory teaching, much of it in Year 9. Where teaching was unsatisfactory it was usually linked to the teacher's low expectations of what students could achieve or to the failure of the teacher's behaviour management strategies. In these lessons the unsatisfactory behaviour of some students had an adverse impact on the achievement of other students. However most teachers have good strategies for managing students when they are beginning to become distracted or disturbing others. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy has been used to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning, as has the focus on strategies to improve students' literacy skills. The teacher assessments in a number of subjects at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were unrealistically high. In most lessons students were aware of the level they were working at, but the levels were not always expressed accurately in relation to national expectations and many students did not understand what they needed to do to improve and raise the standard of their work. Homework is not consistently set for all classes and both parents and students commented that homework that is set is not always marked.
15. There has been a big improvement in the availability of ICT resources since the last inspection. In a number of lessons good, and sometimes very good, use was made of these resources by both teachers and students. For example, in some lessons students used PowerPoint presentations well as a means of demonstrating their knowledge and understanding. Some students use their home ICT facilities well to draft coursework or other projects. Where ICT is used it has a positive impact on the quality of students' learning. However, the use of ICT to raise the quality of teaching and learning is not yet consistent across all classes and some teachers are not confident in using these facilities. This disadvantages the students in their classes.
16. Teaching and learning for students with special educational needs are good in all subjects, except science, where they are no better than satisfactory overall. The particular strengths are that teachers and support assistants work well together and know their students particularly well. The size of teaching groups in classes for lower-attaining students tends to be smaller than in many schools. This affords greater opportunity for individual support, which the students respond to positively. Good support is given to students from Traveller backgrounds and their learning as a result is in line with that of their fellow students. The good quality of teaching, including the good relationships in most classes, helps students in public care to make good progress, in line with that of their fellow students.

Sixth form

17. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good, resulting in students learning well in many lessons. The students, once in lessons, work productively and respond positively to the teaching methods. Students think the teaching is challenging and demanding. They consider teachers are helpful and accessible. They find that work is

helpfully assessed and that they are helped to study. Teachers' expectations have risen and this has resulted in improved results in the A-level examinations, especially in the percentage of students achieving passes at A and B grades. In the best lessons good use of ICT was observed and an appropriate balance was found between the necessary teaching input and giving students opportunities to develop as independent learners. There are good relationships between teachers and students in the sixth form and the students trust staff to give them the necessary guidance on how to improve.

The curriculum

The school provides a **good** curriculum which meets the needs of the students well. The range of enrichment activities is **very good**. Staffing, accommodation and resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's Specialist Sports College Status has had a positive impact on the curriculum.
- Very good links with the community enhance the curriculum offered to students.
- The provision for students with special educational needs is good.
- The provision of enrichment activities is very good.
- Staffing difficulties in geography and history have slowed those departments' progress.

Commentary

18. The school has worked well to ensure that the curriculum meets statutory requirements and the particular needs of the students at Swadelands School. The result is the school provides a good curriculum, which meets the needs of the students well. The radical move to a two-week timetable and changes to the number of lessons per day have maximized the teaching time available and offered the school the opportunity to broaden the curriculum. A major impetus for curriculum development has come from the school's Specialist Sports College Status. Improved links with other schools and colleges and with the community have resulted in an improved curriculum. The statutory requirements for teaching citizenship and for work-related learning in the curriculum are well met and the provision for personal, social and health education is satisfactory. This provision results in the students receiving a well-rounded programme for their personal development. The school has used the National Key Stage 3 Strategy well to tackle the improvement of students' skills in literacy and to a lesser extent in numeracy.
19. Alongside the traditional range of GCSE courses, the school offers vocational courses to meet the full ability range of students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. A well-developed alternative work-based curriculum now ensures that the curriculum meets the needs of almost all students aged 14 to 19. A significant group of students in Years 10 and 11 take an 'alternative curriculum' in place of their traditional science

subjects. Thirty students study for a single science in Year 10 and then in Year 11 work towards Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications. These students respond very well to this area of their work and there are marked improvements in their confidence and competence. Very good curriculum links with the community enhance the learning of many students, for example, in the range of work placements on offer to them and the college courses on offer.

20. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities and students respond well to these opportunities. Over 120 different opportunities are offered and over one third of the students are actively involved. The school's commitment and success in piloting the Extended/Community School Initiative has been recognized by the Local Education Authority as highlighting the broad range of activities and supported services it is possible for a school to operate. The school has been recognised by The British Council for its success in implementing an international dimension to its curriculum and enrichment opportunities.
21. Curricular provision for students with special educational needs is good. Students with special educational needs have full and equal access to the curriculum and are fully involved in the life of the school. The very positive ethos of valuing all students and the specific support for students with special educational needs have a positive effect on the social development and learning experience of these students. Students with special educational needs have the opportunity to ask for and to receive specific subject support as part of extra-curricular provision. Support staff give their time freely to help students with special educational needs throughout the day.
22. Departments are kept fully informed of the specific requirements of students with special educational needs. The special educational needs department maintains regular links with subject departments. However, the provision of support staff in lessons is inconsistent. Most subjects have satisfactory provision but some subjects, for example, geography, receive no specialist support. Overall, teachers across the school have a good awareness of the students' particular needs and they work well with an effective team of experienced support assistants to help students make good progress.
23. Accommodation is satisfactory overall with some notable strengths and weaknesses in some areas. There have been considerable improvements since the last inspection in the quality of accommodation. Most notable is the very positive impact of the seven new teaching rooms and the new training and excellence area. The Specialist Sports College Status has supported the improvement of some areas of the accommodation in physical education and sport. For example, the new theory base, which includes a large amount of ICT equipment, has supported an increased range of teaching and learning opportunities. There are spacious grounds that provide good opportunities for team games on a range of courts and pitches. However, there are several inadequacies in the indoor facilities. For example, the lack of a specialist dance studio results in the main hall being used, but the hall does not have a sprung floor nor mirrored wall space. The school is making every effort to improve the appearance and the provision of accommodation to meet the needs of all students. There are still areas in need of improvement. In science, some of the laboratories have not been upgraded and these facilities are sub-standard. For design and technology, the specialist rooms do not make the most effective use of the space available. Space for music practice is unsatisfactory. In many of these areas the school is at an advanced stage of planning, funding and implementing a building programme to overcome these deficiencies, for example, in the construction of the dance studio/fitness suite.

24. Resources are also satisfactory in many departments. In some subjects resources are better. For example, in English the students have very good access to ICT equipment. In geography, rooms contain a good range of books and maps, as well as good ICT equipment. The Open Learning Centre has been developed considerably from the library provision that was judged unsatisfactory at the last inspection and a further development of these facilities is scheduled during the remainder of this academic year.
25. Levels of staffing are satisfactory overall and support satisfactorily the teaching of the curriculum. Some difficulty is experienced in the recruitment of teachers, especially for the core subjects of mathematics, English and science. However, the headteacher and governing body have been successful in improving the stability and quality of staffing which has benefited many departments. In geography this has not been the case. This has resulted in a large number of teachers taking geography lessons in Years 7 to 9, not all geography specialists. The school has also been unable to appoint a head of history and this has slowed the progress of developing schemes of work to develop students' historical skills and to assess their attainment accurately.

Sixth form

26. Students who wish to continue in education after the age of 16 are offered a good range of A-level, AS and vocational courses. Numbers staying on in the sixth form have risen and the number of students taking the different subjects has increased, although numbers are still small on some courses. Where students with special educational needs still require support, good provision is made. Overall the sixth form curriculum is good.
27. Sixth formers take part in the very good provision of extra-curricular activities, including sporting activities and drama productions. Students are offered support by departments after school when they find they need additional guidance on specific topics. There is very good careers guidance for sixth formers and good provision for personal, social and health education. Sixth formers do have access to religious education and the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus are met. Students are not offered a daily act of worship to support their spiritual and moral development. Sixth formers have physical education/recreation on offer on their timetables.
28. The accommodation for the sixth form is unsatisfactory but plans are well advanced to upgrade their discrete facilities. The common room is an inappropriate size for the current size of the sixth form. The catering facilities are unsatisfactory although the students do have access to the school's good cafeteria. Accommodation and resources for sixth formers in departments are satisfactory overall.

Care, guidance and support

Care, guidance and support are **good**. The school involves students **very effectively** in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students receive very good personal guidance through a strong pastoral system.
- Arrangements for helping students settle into the school are very good.
- Students know that their views are listened to and valued.

- In Years 7 to 9 particularly, the assessment of students' work is not always accurate and students do not always know what they have to do to improve.

Commentary

29. Parents are very pleased with the standards of care and guidance at the school. Relationships are very good and supportive. Students receive very good personal guidance through their PSHE lessons and through a strong pastoral system. They have confidence in and trust their teachers. Additional guidance and support are provided by the Student Support Services as required. Very effective careers guidance ensures that students are able to make informed choices about study in Years 10 and 11 and beyond. Information provided by primary schools helps the students settle in Year 7 with the minimum of disruption.
30. Students receive good academic guidance overall, although there are inconsistencies across subjects. Where marking is best students have a good knowledge of their own learning and know what they have to do to improve. However, in Years 7 to 9 particularly, the assessment of students' work is not always accurate and students do not always know what they have to do to improve. The quality of homework also varies in quality and regularity but overall supports learning in the classroom effectively. The additional support offered to students through additional revision classes and summer schools is good.
31. The school is conscientious in checking the premises to ensure a safe environment. This is not, however, currently undertaken against an assessment of risk. Although a health and safety audit recently conducted by the local authority has identified some areas for action these are mostly procedural and the school is in the process of tackling them. Appliances and equipment used by the school are regularly checked to confirm their safety. Risk assessments for all trips made by students are fully in place. All required child protection procedures are in place. There are broadly suitable arrangements to deal with first aid emergencies and prescribed medicines and plans for the provision of a medical room and additional staff are to be implemented imminently. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure the safe use of the Internet by staff and students and all use of the Internet can be monitored.
32. The school and year councils are very effective. Students' views about a range of issues concerned with the life and work of the school are sought and acted upon - for example, the introduction of the salad bar in the dining room and water dispensers around the school. In addition the school regularly uses questionnaires to ascertain students' views about the quality of some classroom activities and about behaviour and bullying in school.

Sixth form

33. Care, guidance and support in the sixth form are very good. Students taking subjects in the sixth form receive one-to-one academic guidance, for the most part from their teachers, which is both supportive and informed. The reporting of the students' progress and what they need to do to improve is very good. They are given very good careers guidance about options when they leave school and there is a good PSHE programme. Sometimes the lack of attendance and punctuality by the sixth formers reduces the effectiveness of the tutorial programme. The students are fully engaged in all aspects of school life including the school council and extra-curricular activities such as the school drama production. Students taking textiles in art and design were

involved in making chasubles for the local church which were dedicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury. These activities support well the growing maturity of the students.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the partnership between the school and parents is **satisfactory** overall. The quality of links with the community and other schools and colleges is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents think highly of the school and are confident of being informed, involved and supported when their children experience difficulties.
- Students' annual progress reports do not inform parents as well as they should.
- The school's integral role in the community enriches its life, work and development.
- Links with other schools and colleges support very effectively the induction of new students, the extension of curricular opportunities and the professional development of aspiring and established teachers.

Commentary

34. As at the time of the last inspection, parents are very comfortable about approaching the school with concerns and are confident that, where their children are experiencing problems, the school will seek to involve and support them in finding a way forward. They particularly value the pastoral system that enables them to get to know staff who play a key role in their children's lives. They willingly support the school when opportunities arise - for example, in providing the snowplough that enabled the school to open during the week of inspection. They receive good information about procedures, expectations, dates for their diaries, day-to-day news and planned school developments through the regular newsletters, the governors' annual report and the prospectus. There are no formal arrangements for them to be consulted about strategic decisions or changes to school procedures. Annual progress reports, and the mid-year interim summaries, provide a great deal of data. This is not in a format that makes easily accessible to parents an effective evaluation of what their children know and can do. Nor do reports provide specific targets that enable parents to understand what must be done to improve. This limits the opportunities for them to support the work of the school at home. Parents receive good information about their children's personal development, however. Suitable arrangements for parents to discuss the reports are made but only about 70 per cent of parents attend. Parents are not sufficiently aware of the levels of attendance expected for their children. Reports do not always tell them when it is unsatisfactory and specify the impact this has had on their learning. The setting of work to be done at home does not always follow the timetable provided, limiting opportunities for parents to establish routines. Parents value the information they are given about the school prior to enrolment and the ongoing support provided in helping their children to make choices in deciding about options in Years 9 and 11. Parents support the work of the school very well through the programme of fund-raising events organised through the parent and teacher association.
35. The school has worked very hard to achieve the high levels of support that it receives from the community in which it is situated. This includes significant financial contributions towards developing the provision the school makes for its students. Benefits from these links also include the wide range of expertise that is available to the school to act as a sounding board, for example, on management issues, staff

professional development and strategic planning. Staff know the community well and make very good use of the facilities available in the locality to extend classroom learning in a meaningful way. The wider community, including international links, is used very well to extend the students' horizons and to provide opportunities for the students' and staff's personal development. The school's premises and facilities are valued and used well as a resource for the whole community.

36. The school works very well with local primary school partners. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have ample opportunities to get to know both staff and the school very well before they start in Year 7. Links are particularly strong in sport, enabling primary schools to draw on expertise and facilities that would otherwise not be available to them. Older students help with some sporting activities provided for primary school pupils and this supports the students' personal development well. There are effective arrangements to ensure that all the necessary academic and pastoral information is transferred and used well to minimise disruptions to the children's learning when they change schools. The school is in a training partnership with other schools and this extends opportunities very well for the professional development of all staff. There is very good liaison with local teacher training colleges and an increasing number of trainee teachers are being accepted. The provision of educational opportunities for some students in Years 10 and 11 is greatly enhanced through the well managed links established with local colleges for vocational courses.

Sixth form

37. Parents of students in the sixth form value the information provided by the school that enables them to support their children in making decisions about the next stage of their education. Both they and their children value being able to continue education with the strong pastoral support and positive relationships present at the school. Students are particularly pleased with the courses on offer for the sixth form, which they feel meet their individual needs more closely than traditional sixth form provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management are **good** overall. The headteacher gives **very good** leadership and is well supported by senior managers in raising the profile of the school in its local community and in improving its facilities and environment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership by the headteacher has shaped the vision for the school and been very successful in raising aspirations.
- The governance of the school is very good in ensuring the school progresses very well against its targets and in securing additional funds for the school.
- There is a lack of consistency by departments in using performance data to set targets and review progress in achieving them.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good in developing appropriate provision for the growing number of students.
- Financial management is very good.

Commentary

38. The school's roll is rising; especially numbers in the sixth form and the rise in the school's fortunes reflects the community's confidence in the leadership of the school.

The clarity of vision and sense of purpose of the headteacher are excellent and have raised the aspirations for the school amongst staff, students and parents. The designation of the school as a Specialist Sports College has been achieved through a carefully thought out strategy based on the needs of the students and those of the local community.

39. The headteacher's leadership is very good. The senior leadership team fully shares the headteacher's vision for the school and provides good support, displaying a range of complementary skills. Strategic planning is very good and provides not only a clear programme for development but has also been most successful in gaining additional funds for the school. Planning for the development of the Specialist Sports College is excellent. The senior leadership team has line management responsibilities for subject and pastoral team leaders. The review programme is detailed and has helped in raising standards of teaching and learning although there is still not sufficient consistency in the frequency and the rigour of the monitoring.
40. The leadership and management of the pastoral teams are good and are effective in maintaining high standards of behaviour and uniform and in helping to raise achievement through the target setting and monitoring undertaken by tutors. Leadership and management of subject departments are good overall although in science, humanities and ICT the post-holder's views about their leadership roles are not sufficiently clear. The management of cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory although recently implemented changes are designed to tackle this weakness. The monitoring of performance data and the use of data analysis by departments in setting targets and tracking progress towards them are inconsistent. The collection and collation of performance data are good but the findings of analysis are not used sufficiently to inform teachers' planning in all subjects.
41. The contribution of the governing body to the work of the school is very good. Governors are well informed, have a firm grip on the school's finances and are closely involved at all stages of strategic planning. The governors have been successful in recruiting and retaining staff under difficult circumstances and they fully support the very good commitment that the school gives to initial teacher training, both as a means of improving teaching and learning and also to enhance recruitment opportunities. Governors are aware that the school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship, but have taken steps to ensure greater compliance. They are presented with performance data although the use of such data by the governing body is not consistent in its monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work. Parental views are valued and concerns that may be raised are addressed, although systematic procedures for gathering parental views and reporting how these have been acted upon are embryonic.
42. The school improvement plan is a comprehensive working document devised by the whole staff and the governing body. Although the complete plan is a weighty document, it is composed in such a way that individuals and teams have clear ownership of specific parts of it and appropriate monitoring mechanisms are in place. The strategic planning for the development of the Specialist Sports College is excellent, both in the clarity of its objectives and in its vision for the contribution that the school can make to the local and to the wider community in Kent.
43. The leadership and management of special educational needs are good and the allocated funds for special educational needs are well spent.

44. The continuing professional development of staff is good; much training is done in-house which effectively shares the school's expertise. Performance management procedures feed into the analysis of training needs although these procedures are not yet followed consistently. There has been an emphasis on developing the staff's understanding of children's different learning styles as a means of honing the teaching skills required to maximise student achievement. The school is an important provider for the training of teachers in Kent. It is designated as a Training School by the Department for Education and Skills and provides many placements for student teachers. A number of trainees have joined the staff of the school upon qualification, thereby easing recruitment difficulties.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,146,904	Balance from previous year	155,891
Total expenditure	3,124,553	Balance carried forward to the next year	178,242
Expenditure per pupil	3,751		

45. Financial management is very good. The school has recovered from a deficit budget through the prudent management of funds and by developing additional income streams through successful bids, such as that for specialist school status. The development of the sixth form is a school priority but this development has been self-financing in the main. The commitment of the school to providing appropriate opportunities for all its students is backed by the necessary finance to allow placements in colleges and work situations that the school itself cannot provide. The governing body is very good at ensuring that the principles of best value are met. The management of the large sums of money that have been committed to new buildings and the refurbishment of existing provision is very good and has made a big contribution to the raising of morale and aspirations. The carry-forward is prudent and is targeted towards the continuing improvement in resources and accommodation outlined in the school improvement plan. The school gives good value for money.

Sixth form

46. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Governance is very good and has ensured that the growth of the sixth form is supported financially and monitored carefully. Leadership is characterised by a very good vision for future development that takes careful account of the needs of those who choose to stay on at school through a curriculum with a strong emphasis on vocational courses. As a consequence, numbers in the sixth form are growing rapidly.
47. Management of the sixth form is good. Although numbers for most subjects are small, the school provides as many combinations of courses as possible. Furthermore, teachers ensure that those students whose needs can be more effectively met elsewhere are guided and supported towards those options. Good systems for seeking students' views are in place and there is regular evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. Many students take time to acquire the independent learning skills that are required in the sixth form and teachers use target setting and regular reviews to help them make the necessary adjustments. There is not yet sufficient use of best practice to identify and share effective strategies for preparing sixth form

students for the demands of advanced courses, so that standards can continue to rise and best use can be made of the developing sixth form resources.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision in work-related learning (WRL) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience makes a good contribution to the students' personal development both in Year 10 and in the sixth form.
- Many subjects provide good opportunities for students to consider the world of work.
- WRL activities are co-ordinated effectively across the curriculum.
- Leadership and management of WRL are good.

Commentary

48. The school has begun to effectively provide for the wider aspects of the statutory framework for work-related learning (WRL). It offers good opportunities for students to experience vocational activities at first hand, by offering suitable examination courses in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. In addition, three students are now at a local college full time, following vocational courses because, for them, this offered the best educational opportunities. Some students who showed disaffection with the traditional curriculum have been placed on programmes that mix attendance at school with work placements that develop vocational skills and offer suitable long-term work opportunities. These students value the new opportunities.
49. Work experience is organised successfully and is valued by the students. Students in the sixth form are offered the opportunity to attend work experience opportunities in France, and this is reciprocated in this country for French students. There are very good links made within careers education and the careers service. For example, a careers officer attends every parents' meeting to offer advice. Parents and students appreciate this support. Effective partnerships are developed with local employers and are well used for teaching and learning opportunities, for example in design and technology and business studies.
50. Most students demonstrate a good breadth of understanding of relevant concepts and are capable of applying them to differing work-related contexts. They demonstrate many of the skills, attitudes and qualities that are valued in the workplace. Often, the teaching approach effectively engages students in a practical way of learning. Teachers measure students' achievement and record their progress well.
51. The school recognises the importance of WRL and has systematically planned for its development. A policy has been introduced that has resulted in good practice being embedded within the whole curriculum. Statutory requirements are met and the programme offered provides coherent opportunities for all students in Years 10 and 11. The sixth form too benefits from this initiative. Within departments, curriculum area leaders are taking responsibility for the implementation of WRL and teachers acknowledge the potential value of WRL. There is a willingness to make the necessary changes to the curriculum. This is underpinned by the firm direction given

by senior and middle managers to develop this aspect of the curriculum in order to help students improve their employment prospects and become effective citizens. The leadership and management of WRL in the school are good.

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

- Students' achievement is good; test and examination results are better than those in similar schools.
- Good student management by teachers creates constructive working relationships in lessons.
- Technical errors in students' writing are a barrier to higher standards.
- The department is well led, and its work is well organised.

- Best practice in assessment in the department is not fully consistent between teachers.

Commentary

52. The results of the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 are in line with the national average, but above the average for similar schools. These results show a very big improvement over those of previous years, with more students at the level expected nationally. However, the proportion reaching levels higher than those expected nationally remains below average. The GCSE results for English in 2004 are well below the national average, but again above the average for similar schools. More students gained higher grade passes (A*-C) than in previous years. Results are also well below the national average in English Literature. This is partly a result of a changing school policy. In 2004, for the first time, all students in Year 11 were entered for the examination. Previously, results were in line with or above the national average, but only one third of students took the subject. In both GCSE examinations in 2004, girls did considerably better than boys, and by a margin greater than that found nationally.
53. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below those expected nationally. Achievement is good throughout the school, including that of students with special educational needs and of students from Traveller backgrounds. In Years 7 to 9, teachers work hard to develop reading skills in lessons. Students understand the surface meaning of texts well, but find analytical, close-reading techniques difficult. Wider reading is encouraged through the effective use of the school and class libraries. Teaching assistants also provide good extra help for lower-attaining students. Written work is set and marked regularly. Students try to develop ideas well and produce some imaginative descriptive work. There is not sufficient consistency in teachers' expectations for more extended writing in some classes. Their expectations are not sufficiently high, and homework is not used sufficiently well. For most students, errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation reduce the standards attained, despite the school's focus on developing students' competency in literacy.
54. Teachers have good expectations for GCSE coursework. Students are able to review and redraft essays, so that standards in coursework are higher than those achieved in external examinations. By Year 11, extended personal and creative writing is well structured and often expressive. Higher and middle-attaining students also write thoughtfully about the literature studied. Essays are developed in sufficient depth, with good use of textual detail to support arguments. But, technical accuracy remains a significant problem. Writing errors prevent many students from reaching the standard required for higher GCSE grades (A*-C). Most students take care to present their work well, however. There are examples of word-processed and desktop-published work in all year groups to show that ICT is used effectively to aid work in the subject. Speaking and listening skills are in line with national expectations throughout the school. Teachers make good opportunities for discussion in whole class, paired and small group work. While some students lack confidence, and find it difficult to give reasons for their views, most make a positive contribution. Achievement was very good in one Year 11 class for lower-attaining students, who spoke very well in a partly improvised performance of a courtroom scene based on Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men'. Students also listen well.
55. Teaching is good. Lessons are prepared thoroughly and teachers manage students well, creating constructive working relationships. A good range of teaching methods is

used, with some imaginative use of new technologies in classroom presentations. The timing and pace of lessons are not always well judged, however. Too many activities can lead to a rushed effort and a lack of time to evaluate achievement in final evaluative sessions. Expectations for higher attaining students are sometimes too low. However, students' learning is good. They acquire skills and knowledge well, though many students remain dependent on teachers for assistance. Best practice in assessment is not yet consistent between all the English teachers, especially in relation to the more specific use of assessment criteria in teaching and setting students targets to focus their efforts more clearly.

56. The subject is well led and managed. The head of department has introduced changes in practice to focus teachers' work more effectively and has begun a programme of lesson observations to monitor standards. Subject planning is well organised and kept under continuing review. Clear priorities for future development are identified, including the need to establish team working and the sharing of best practice more fully. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Literacy skills throughout the school are below those found nationally but this position reflects an improvement in students' skills compared with their standards on entry to the school in Year 7. The school recognises this as a priority for improvement, and the literacy co-ordinator is active in providing advice and training for staff. The school has achieved the Basic Skills Quality Mark, which provides a good framework for systematic consideration of strategies to develop literacy. There is a clear action plan and a member of the senior management team leads the work very well.
58. Effective techniques for teaching literacy are embedded in lesson planning for many subjects, and are also used in form tutor times. Specialist vocabulary is taught well in art and design, music and design and technology. Key words are displayed in many classrooms, including mathematics and religious education, though their use is not always reinforced sufficiently in lessons. Writing strategies, to help students structure and develop written work, are used to good effect in English, geography and history. The school also provides good additional literacy support for students with special educational needs. Best practice is not yet fully consistent, however. There are not sufficient opportunities to develop discussion and explore ideas in science and mathematics lessons. The expectations in respect of more extended writing are not sufficiently high in a range of subjects, including science and religious education. Much scope remains for further improvement, in particular in developing reading skills and the technical accuracy of written work. Not enough attention is given, in general, to correcting errors. Accuracy in spelling is a problem for the majority of students.

Modern foreign languages

The focus of the inspection was French, but one lesson was sampled in both German and Spanish. In the Year 11 German class, standards were below those expected nationally, whilst teaching, learning and achievement were all satisfactory. In Spanish in Year 8, the lesson was unsatisfactory. There was too much inattention and unnecessary noise for learning and teaching to be satisfactory. As a result, students' achievement was unsatisfactory. Standards were below those expected nationally.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most teaching is good and leads to good achievement especially in reading and writing.
- Students are not required to speak French enough.
- The use of ICT is a strength, especially in Year 11, and is used well to raise standards in writing.
- Students are not given sufficient opportunity to develop their skills as independent learners.

Commentary

59. Standards in French in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were well below the national average, with boys' results considerably lower than those of girls. However, all students who were entered gained at least an F grade, and this is above the national average. There were no A* or A grades. In the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 results were well below the national average with girls' standards higher than those of boys.
60. Current standards seen in Year 9 and in Year 11 are below national expectations. In Year 11 writing standards are below national expectations overall, although higher-attaining students demonstrate standards above national expectations. These students write extensively and fluently and are able to use past, present and future tenses with few mistakes. Pronunciation is a major weakness in Year 11 and, as a result, speaking skills are well below average. Reading skills are better in Year 10. In Year 9 higher-attaining students are able to use the perfect tense well and there is some evidence of extended, accurate writing. Other students are also accurate writers, but only use short sentences. Listening skills in Year 9 are in line with expectations for medium-attaining students, but lower-attaining students have some difficulties in understanding what they hear. As with older students, speaking is a weakness, partly through pronunciation errors and because of insufficient practice. In nearly all lessons observed students' achievement was good, especially in their writing and reading skills. Students with special educational needs made similar progress compared with the rest of their class. Generally boys perform less well than girls, especially in Year 11, but boys' speaking skills in Year 8 were higher than those of girls. Overall the difference in the attainment of boys and girls mirrors that found nationally.
61. The quality of teaching is good overall, but better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. This is a result of the limitations of some of the teaching in Years 7 to 9, especially the lack of strategies to ensure good behaviour and an orderly approach to learning. Overall the quality of students' learning is good. In most lessons students

learn well and make good gains in knowledge and understanding as a result of good teaching. Positive features include good planning, high expectations, good class control, very good use of ICT and different work for students of different attainment. There were however, areas of weakness: there was too much English heard in nearly all lessons, teachers lapsed into English too quickly and students rarely used French for real purposes. Whilst some students were encouraged to be independent learners in Years 10 and 11, there was no evidence of similar independence being encouraged in Years 7, 8 and 9. As a result the progress of some students was held back.

62. The assessment of students' writing is thorough, with good corrections and very good targets for the next stage of learning. Students are given good information about their National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades.
63. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department has a clear vision and provides a particularly good role model for other staff and the pupils. Management is satisfactory. There is not yet sufficient impact of the use of monitoring data on the quality of teaching and learning and on the standards students achieve.
64. Since the last inspection boys' standards at GCSE have improved, but overall results have remained the same and not kept pace with the national increase in attainment. In all other respects the picture is similar to the one painted in the last inspection report with several examples of good and very good teaching and learning and good achievement. Therefore improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and as a result students' achievement is good.
- The department works well as a team, which underpins the good work to improve standards.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support students' learning.
- There is a lack of consistency in lessons in ensuring that a variety of teaching strategies are used.
- Students are not given sufficient guidance on how they can improve their standards.

Commentary

65. The attainment of students on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below national standards. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were below the national average. The results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 were well below the national average. In comparison to results in similar schools they matched them in Year 9 but were well below these results at GCSE. Standards seen during the inspection overall match the improving trend seen in the school's most recent Year 9 results. They are below the national expectation in both Year 9 and Year 11.
66. Students' achievement is now good because there are improved systems in the department for providing examination support to students. This counters the low self-esteem many students have because of their levels of attainment on entry. For example, work seen in Year 7 students' books shows clear evidence of a basic weakness in number but by the end of Year 9 students' competence has markedly

improved. High-attaining students are able to manipulate directed numbers, show a sound grasp of Pythagoras and can use and recognise circle theorems. However, these improvements have not yet had sufficient time to filter through to have a maximum impact on standards by Year 11.

67. Teaching and learning are good overall. When teaching is good imaginative strategies, combined with clear explanations, are linked to shared lesson objectives. As a result, student contributions are increasingly an anticipated and encouraged aspect of these lessons. In one Year 10 class very clear explanations of data representation and underlying correct methodology were fully discussed and students were given effective opportunities to develop written, oral and practical skills. In less effective lessons students are too passive and fail to think about and do mathematics beyond routines. This occurs when the teacher fails to strike a balance between explanation and opportunities for student involvement in discussion, collaboration or independent work. Generally there is insufficient guidance to students so that they know what they must do to improve. Students with special educational needs and students with Traveller backgrounds achieve in line with their fellow students. This is mainly because the teaching material and the deployment of support staff are well matched to the students' needs. However mathematical targets are not as yet contained in individual education plans for students with special educational needs. Limited evidence was seen of the use of ICT in lessons although it is clearly mentioned in the schemes of work.
68. Leadership is now good. Leadership is effective and firmly based strategies are increasingly being developed to support improvement. Underpinning all this is the well-led team of teachers, many of whom share a vision and department responsibility to effectively tackle the challenging needs of students. Resources are now good, with sufficient teaching materials for every student and enhanced grouping arrangements to allow increasing numbers of students to take the Higher Level papers at GCSE. Collectively this position represents a good improvement since the last inspection, and is supportive of raising student attainment. Management is satisfactory. Some aspects of departmental documentation fail to identify guidance on teaching and learning strategies or how best to emphasise students' awareness of the means to improve.

Mathematics across the curriculum

69. The school plans for mathematics across the curriculum and this element is contained in the schemes of work of all departments. Students' competence in the use of mathematics is below national expectations. In science, with support, students' mathematical skills are used and developed appropriately so that most students are able to deal with number calculations, approximations and graphical representation. In ICT mathematical reasoning is used to support the use of spreadsheets. Students use routine number skills in modern foreign languages. In geography the use of profit and loss percentages is adequately coped with and in history graph work sufficiently displays shipwreck data. Technology uses ordering, sequencing and measurement with three-dimensional drawing.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The present attainment of students by the end of Year 9 is below the improved level secured last year and is well below the national expectation.
- The quality of teaching varies too widely in its capacity to promote effective learning.
- A very good curriculum is offered for Years 10 and 11, and a good assessment system is in place.
- The leadership and management have not yet been effective in resolving the inconsistencies in departmental provision.

Commentary

70. Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below the national average. Students' results in 2004 in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were below the national average, but higher than students' results in previous years. Attainment during the inspection for the current Year 9 is well below the national expectations. This reflects the level of satisfactory achievement in the current Year 9 when account is taken of the students' standards on entry to the school in Year 7. Students now in Years 7 and 8 achieve well and are attaining at levels just below national expectations. This reflects the improved stability in staffing in the science department. In the GCSE examinations in 2004 students attained above the national average for the proportion gaining A*-G grades, but well below average in terms of A*-C grades. Current attainment in Years 10 and 11 is below national expectations. The achievement of students during Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall. There is considerable variation in the achievement of different classes in the two years. The achievement of students in Year 10 is currently better than that of students in Year 11 and has been made possible by the improved stability in staffing in the department.
71. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The variation from very good to unsatisfactory teaching is linked to the variations in students' achievement. Learning by students in Years 7 and 8 is mostly good. In a small number of lessons very good teaching was seen to create good learning for students who needed much help to achieve well. The key strengths are that teachers make sure students keep on task, make every point clear to students, and are able to assess well and then show students how to make their work better. Learning for students in Year 9 was mostly unsatisfactory because too often the work set was too easy. This did not create enough interest so that in these lessons learning was weak. A more ambitious lesson for students in Year 9 led to underachievement because the students did not make the effort to act maturely or to think hard. Teaching for students in Years 10 and 11 varied in quality from satisfactory to very good. The best lessons led many students in Year 10 to achieve well and sometimes very well, such as students with learning difficulties and others with strong records of relatively high attainment. In contrast, teaching and learning for students in Year 11 was only satisfactory overall.
72. The leadership of science is satisfactory. Important changes in the way key staff are allocated to specific teaching groups have been effective. However, the inconsistencies in achievement in different years and groups have not been completely resolved. The management of science is satisfactory. The science team work well together. However not all staff are clear as to their roles, because of the lack of formal delegation of tasks. Students benefit from the way staff use the full and accurate assessment database, such as to tell students their levels and to organise teaching groups effectively. The curriculum, for Years 10 and 11, meets the needs and interests of students very well by offering three very different ways of studying science. The accommodation for science still includes some cramped and unattractive laboratories. The lack of the regular use of ICT in science holds back students' achievement. Time is lost in some lessons because

too few hours are allocated for technician support. The provision is much the same as that reported in the previous report though for a different intake profile. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for the students on the GNVQ course is good.
- The development of the “on-line” classroom is good.
- The range of ICT skills currently taught in Years 8 and 9 is limited.
- There is insufficient monitoring of students’ progress in ICT across subjects.

Commentary

73. The results in the GCSE examinations in 2004 are well below the national average. The GNVQ results are better and are just below national results. Over the past few years the department has experienced considerable disruptions in staffing and this lack of stability has seriously affected the continuity of teaching for some classes. Whilst some instability remains, the current situation is much improved. Standards seen in the inspection in Years 10 and 11 are currently just below national expectations. These standards represent good achievement for students who enter Year 10 with well below average standards. The students are currently making good progress in completing GNVQ units. The regular absence of a few students, however, is negatively affecting the progress that these individuals are making.
74. Teacher assessments reported in 2004 at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average. These assessments are insecure and are the result of the staffing disruptions in the department and underdeveloped assessment procedures. Standards seen in the inspection are well below expectations for Year 9. Students enter the school with varied experiences in using ICT but their overall standards are well below average. Their achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Whilst students make good progress in Year 7 completing a wide range of tasks and developing skills using spreadsheets, e-mail, logo, graphics as well as word processing, the introduction of GNVQ in Years 8 and 9 has limited the opportunities to develop these skills, particularly in control technology. The focus of the GNVQ is upon planning, analysing and evaluating and it is very difficult for students at the school who have well below average literacy skills to tackle the demands made by this new focus in Years 8 and 9.
75. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are good. Teachers are well prepared and focused upon examination requirements. They maintain good discipline and students learn quickly from good presentations of techniques to the whole class on electronic whiteboards. In Year 10 classes students made good progress in graphics. They understood the differences between the quality of bitmap and vector drawings in completing their plans for a business premise. Teaching is more varied in Years 7, 8 and 9 but is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are best in Year 7 where the teachers are able to teach a range of skills using a wide variety of software. The scope for innovation and variety is more limited in Years 8 and 9 because of the requirements of the GNVQ. Students’ learning suffers because of the demands of the course which are suited to older students with more developed literacy skills. Students’ attitudes and behaviour are generally good but the behaviour of individuals

in some classes causes some disruption. Punctuality is also a problem in enabling teachers to start lessons promptly and this has a negative impact on students' learning.

76. The leadership and management of the department are good. After a period of considerable disruption a degree of stability has been established in staffing. Resources have been improved considerably by getting sixth formers to build over two hundred new computers. The 'on-line' classroom has been constructed and launched. This is an impressive development, which enables teachers to mark and assess students' work on-line and the department can monitor the progress that students are making. Students can also complete work from home. The effectiveness of management is limited, however, by the range of technical and curriculum responsibilities currently undertaken by the head of department. This is limiting the support which he can give to inexperienced teachers and to the regular evaluation of teaching within the department.
77. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Whilst resources and procedures for assessment have improved significantly these have yet to impact on standards by the end of Year 9.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

78. Students' levels of competence with ICT are below those expected nationally. The use and development of these skills varies across the various subjects that they study. For example, in English and in modern foreign languages they make good use of word processing and desktop publishing to revise and improve their work and complete coursework. Similarly in geography students complete coursework using graphs and images in addition to word processing. In history they use the Internet to research mini-projects. In physical education the use by students is variable but they collect and analyse data and in music there is very good use of appropriate software for composition in Years 10 and 11. In other subjects the use of ICT is more limited and is unsatisfactory in science, mathematics, design and technology, religious education, and art and design in Years 7, 8 and 9.
79. Resources vary across departments but the number of computers available for whole school use has increased significantly in the past year and is in line with government recommendations. A management structure to monitor use has been in place since Christmas 2004 and there is good understanding of what needs to be done in terms of auditing and expanding provision. The assessment procedures for monitoring students' progress in ICT across subjects are not in place, however. Good use is made of ICT as a teaching tool in English, geography, history, and physical education using projectors and whiteboards and there is also some limited use made of this technology in mathematics. However, there is insufficient use made of ICT across subjects and this inconsistency is unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 7 to 9 engages students' interests and encourages them to work productively, resulting in good achievement.
- Teaching strategies in Years 10 and 11 do not meet the learning needs of all students.
- Marking and assessment arrangements are inconsistent and do not produce secure judgments of attainment at the end of Year 9.
- Staffing arrangements for classes in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

80. Standards on entry in Year 7 are well below national expectations and the range of geographical skills and understanding is unsurprisingly wide as the school draws from a large number of primary schools. At the end of Year 9, standards are closer to the national expectation and are below those expected nationally. Standards seen during the inspection confirmed that the difference between the performances of girls and boys reflects the difference found nationally, with girls performing much better. In the GCSE examinations in 2004 the proportion of students who attained a grade C or better was well below the national average. The percentage of students gaining A*-G grades was very close to the national average. The performance of girls was close to the national average although that of boys was well below. Overall, the standards seen in Year 11 during the inspection are well below national expectations.
81. Achievement in geography is good in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 girls make good progress and many achieve results better than attainment data collected throughout their time in the school would indicate. Boys, however, did poorly in 2004 and their achievement was unsatisfactory. Since an equal number of boys and girls were entered, achievement overall is satisfactory.
82. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are good in Years 7-9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Learning was most secure when teachers immediately engaged the attention of students with imaginative and well-pitched starter activities. A number of lessons provided opportunities for students to develop their understanding through discussion with their fellow students and allowed them to present their ideas to the whole class in a well-structured fashion. Such activities provided a sound platform on which greater confidence and independence in learning could be built. Higher-attaining students produced reasoned explanations and lower-attaining students also developed good answers with support from their teachers and from teaching assistants. Students displayed good attitudes to learning and these were reinforced by teaching that had high expectations in terms of quality and completeness of work. Lessons conducted at a brisk pace and in which learning activities were carefully matched to students' needs and interests were most successful. The geography of football, for example, engaged the attention of boys particularly and helped them to understand world trade and working conditions in less economically developed countries. Close monitoring of learning ensured good progress and the good management of teaching assistants ensured that the needs of students with learning difficulties were met. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 was based on the teacher's very good subject knowledge and students worked diligently. Few opportunities were provided for students to share their learning with fellow students. There was an emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge with insufficient scope for students to share their ideas, to develop their understanding through self and peer evaluation or to respond to open-ended questions or tasks.
83. Marking and assessment are inconsistent. Marking is carried out conscientiously but the departmental scheme is not followed by all staff. Teachers frequently provide

helpful comments, praise and encouragement and students know their target levels but do not always understand what they need to do to progress further. Assessment arrangements for determining National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 are insecure and do not match the standard of work seen during the inspection. Students' skills in literacy are developed through well-managed discussions and written work is supported through the use of appropriate strategies. The use and development of the skills of numeracy in geography are satisfactory. The use of ICT by teachers is good and although no use of ICT by students was observed during the inspection, good examples of the use of ICT were seen in students' work.

84. Leadership of the department is satisfactory. The proportion of students choosing geography as a GCSE course is above the national average and there are good displays that celebrate students' work. Management is satisfactory. There is a development plan and resources are managed well. The staffing arrangements currently in place for Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory although a number of non-specialists are working very effectively as a team ensuring that students' learning is not affected adversely. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are good and reflect the range of learning needs. Those for Years 10 and 11 do not match the current requirements for GCSE. Fieldwork activities are provided for Year 7 and for GCSE classes but those for Years 8 and 9 are too limited. Accommodation is very good and resources are good both in terms of books and ICT equipment.
85. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. The weaknesses in assessment have not been remedied and teaching methods have not been adapted sufficiently to meet the range of learning needs in Years 10 and 11.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall good achievement of students results from their positive attitudes and the good teaching.
- Students' learning does not benefit sufficiently from the teachers' consistent use of learning objectives.
- The subject makes a good contribution to the students' social, moral and cultural education.
- Subject-specialist leadership is now required to tackle areas such as assessment.

Commentary

86. The standards of students in the current Year 9 are below the national expectation. Given the well below standards on entry in Year 7, this constitutes good achievement by students, including those with special educational needs. The teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above the national average but these assessments were not secure and did not accurately reflect the National Curriculum level at which the students were working. Students in the current Year 9 can accurately describe events such as the Zeppelin air raids but inconsistently link cause and consequence to historical events. Students can answer questions using single sources, but are less secure in their ability to evaluate and contrast a number of sources.

87. The GCSE trend over recent years, including 2004, is for results to be in line with the national average at A* to G grades. For the higher grades, A*-C, the 2004 GCSE examination results were well below the national average, with evidence of boys, particularly, not performing as expected. Students' attitudes are good, but rushed, unfinished work of some boys reveals negative attitudes. Some girls achieve well, but overall students' achievement in Year 11 is satisfactory. Some underdeveloped literacy skills result in brief, descriptive, rather than evaluative, accounts. Whilst some students have difficulties in recalling past work, some good coursework on Bodiam Castle has been produced. Higher-attaining students write some detailed accounts, but their justifications of their views are inconsistent in quality.
88. Students' overall good achievement results partly from their positive attitudes to work, but also from some good levels of teaching. Lessons are well planned, and teachers produce some very good resources. Learning is best when refined learning objectives are presented, followed by short teaching and consolidation sessions. Students make notes that are well focused by the use of writing frames, which structure students' writing. Computer presentations about the weapons of the Great War, for example, add pace to lessons and concentrate students' thoughts. Lower-attaining students are well supported by classroom assistants. Students benefit from some very good guidance and targets, provided in teacher feedback. There are insufficient opportunities for students in examination classes to research and present their findings, either orally or in extended writing form and, if encouraged, this would aid students to develop their skills through wider reading and using Internet facilities for research. Students benefit from the good contribution the subject makes to the social, moral and cultural provision. The work produced as part of the successful programme about travellers has made a particularly positive impact on the attainment both of students from a Traveller background and of students generally.
89. Leadership and management are satisfactory. In the absence of a subject leader the head of humanities has overseen the development of the subject. Some positive developments have taken place, all focused on improving standards. The lack of subject specialist leadership hinders the more accurate levelling of students' work in Years 7 to 9. Good programmes of work have been written, although those for examination schemes in Years 10 and 11 are not yet finalised. The identification of more specific learning objectives and the identification of the progression of history skills are not yet realized in the schemes of work. Students are regularly assessed and are involved in target setting. Students' knowledge of National Curriculum level descriptions is insufficiently developed for them to use them to improve their work. The subject has satisfactorily tackled the issues from the last inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attainment is low on entry to the school but they make good progress in Years 7 to 11.
- Good teaching, especially in Years 10 and 11, enables students to achieve well.
- There is very good leadership and management of the department.
- There is an effective team of teachers who are committed to improving standards.
- The significant dip in GCSE results in 2004 was unsatisfactory.

Commentary

90. Students enter the school with very limited levels of religious knowledge and understanding and equally low levels in responding, evaluating and applying what they have learned from religion. Given the very low prior attainment, achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 9 and good by the end of Year 11. Students with special educational needs and with traveller backgrounds are especially well catered for and make good progress. They have high levels of self-esteem and are confident in asking for help when needed.
91. By Year 9 standards are well below the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus, with a slight improvement by the end of Year 11, where standards are just below the expectations of the short-course GCSE examination. In Year 7 students gain knowledge about Christian and Hindu beliefs and are beginning to explore the concept of reincarnation and why it is an important aspect of Hinduism. In Year 8 they have an empathetic understanding of the Pentecost event and are confident in expressing their ideas orally.
92. By the end of Year 9 students are able to identify key features of religion such as religious leaders, sacred writings and places of worship but are less confident in using specialist religious terms and understanding abstract concepts. They experience difficulties in recognising ways in which the beliefs of one religion can be expressed in different practices e.g. Roman Catholic and Methodist styles of worship or Baptism in the Anglican or Baptist traditions. They are, however, able to compare their own responses to puzzling questions with those of others and make links between beliefs and lifestyles by comparing aspects of their own experience. Students' oral attainment is better than that found in their writing but the students' literacy limitations are reflected in overall attainment well below national expectations.
93. All students follow a GCSE Short Course in religious education, with 20 students in Year 10 and 5 in Year 11 following a Full GCSE Course. Both groups are also taught in voluntary lessons after school. In 2003 the GCSE examination results, although well below the national average, were in line with what one would expect in a modern school in an LEA where students are selected by ability. However, there was a significant drop in the proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A*-C in 2004. This dip in results was due to a combination of factors, including the impact of non-specialist teaching, significant staff turnover, changes in groupings during the year and the disruptive effect of moving to new accommodation. The challenge now is to achieve results similar to or better than those of 2003, when five students achieved A* grades and four achieved A grades, establishing religious education as the highest achieving mainstream subject in the school for A*/A grades.
94. In Years 10 and 11, students demonstrate that they are beginning to grapple with moral and ethical issues such as abortion, euthanasia, marriage and family life. They are able to consider and reflect on ultimate questions. In Year 10 they make good progress in understanding how the Orthodox Church evolved, the differences and similarities between Orthodox and Catholic beliefs and are beginning to understand the complexities of the argument from design. In Year 11, those studying the full GCSE course have a satisfactory understanding of Zionism and are able to use key words such as Shoah, Holocaust and Diaspora with growing ease.
95. Teaching is good and has continued to improve since the last inspection. The good progress students make in relation to very low prior attainment on entry is undoubtedly due to good teaching which focuses on improving literacy skills, sets high expectations for both work and behaviour and continually challenges students to move forward in their learning. This is done within a context of care and support, and a genuine commitment to meeting the needs of individuals. All lessons are very well planned and structured to enable students to progress well in relation to their ability. Low-level disruption, when it occurred, was effectively defused by the teacher. In a Year 10 lesson students were challenged to really think about the argument from design and this, combined with well-structured worksheets and the imaginative use of ICT, enabled them to clearly write about its strengths and weaknesses. In another Year

10 lesson, the teacher held the attention of a potentially challenging group of students, as she led an effective lesson on the purpose of marriage for Christians, enabling them to formulate their own ideas and to gradually find out about and understand the differing marriage ceremonies within the Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Quaker traditions.

96. Leadership of the department is very good and its management good. The subject benefits from clear vision, a strong sense of purpose and a passionate commitment to improving teaching and learning. There are effective and supportive links with senior management within a culture of leading by example. The department's contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to citizenship is very strong. Since the last inspection the department has updated its schemes of work, set up an effective system for setting and monitoring targets, moved to new accommodation and significantly improved the numbers studying GCSE.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11, enables students to learn well.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning and these mature attitudes allow them to progress well.
- Computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) is insufficiently integrated into project work.
- Although there is a well-structured course in Years 7 to 9, insufficient attention is paid to control technology.

Commentary

97. In 2003, the students' results in the GCSE examinations were below the national average for A*- C grades, but for A*- G grades the results were slightly above the national average. The proportion of students entered was higher than in schools nationally. In 2004, the students' GCSE results were still below the national average for A* to C grades, but the proportion of A* to G grades was above average. The overall proportion of students entered for the different design and technology examinations was higher than that found nationally and every student gained an A*-G grade. The number of passes at the middle grades of D and C was above the national average, and relatively few students gained the lower grades of E-G. Students' results in design and technology in 2004 are slightly above the school's overall average.
98. The attainment of students in the subject on entry to the school is well below the national expectation. By the end of Year 9 the students have caught up and are mainly working at the national expectation, although few are working at the higher levels.
99. There are noticeable differences between boys' and girls' work. Girls tend to produce more carefully crafted drawings and work, whereas the boys tend to rush on, making more complex work less successfully. In addition, girls tend to transfer their knowledge and skills from their other subjects, so that their writing is better and their drawing more artistic.

100. The use of computer-aided design (CAD) is underdeveloped, although some use is made in Years 10 and 11 for GCSE coursework. The number of computers has recently increased but they are used insufficiently for tasks like research. Students do not gain regular experience of the use of computer-aided manufacture (CAM) as is required.
101. The progress of all students across Years 7 to 9 is good and students make good quality work showing that they are achieving well. Progress and the achievement seen in lessons are good with students having very good attitudes to learning. This, coupled with the good relationships that they have with their teachers, enables the students to complete work thoroughly, to a good standard overall and to work hard in class. Similarly the achievement of students taking GCSE examinations, including those with special educational needs, is good. Higher-attaining students in 2004 made good progress in their work and achieved A and B grades in the examination.
102. Teaching is good and enables good learning. Teachers are expert and this expertise rubs off on their students. They are enthusiasts and this enthusiasm translates into dedication for the vast majority of the students in classes. Assessment is thorough and both formal and informal feedback is given and improves standards effectively. Teachers are accessible and give freely of their time to help students to improve further, particularly in the examination years, when students can have help at lunchtimes and after school. Students with special educational needs are given very good help from their class teachers and this support enables them to achieve well and produce work of quality.
103. The further development of the subject is limited in two important ways. Firstly, in the earlier years in the school, insufficient attention is paid to project work that includes control elements, particularly electronics and mechanisms; and secondly, ICT is insufficiently used by students as a tool for learning.
104. Curriculum leadership is good and the department is now fully staffed with specialists, enabling it to develop the curriculum fully to meet requirements. Previously the recruitment of staff had been a problem, so the teaching of textiles was moved to the art and design department. Management on a day-to-day basis is good and teachers provide good role models in both the level of understanding of their subject and the careful way that they support learners. Wider provision for the subject is constrained by the existing facilities. Food rooms have inadequate extraction facilities and there is no dedicated graphics area. Rooms are small and cramped, limiting the range of opportunities on offer. Although the progress made since the last inspection by the department has been variable, it is satisfactory overall.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The strength in students' attainment in three-dimensional and relief work is a significant aspect of departmental provision.
- The high quality work in Years 10 and 11 reflects both the good teaching and the commitment of students.

- The assessment system is good overall but self-assessment is not used sufficiently.
- Some aspects of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 are too narrow.
- There is a lack of usage of ICT in Years 7 to 9 and this is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

105. Although standards on entry in Year 7 are well below the national average, they rapidly improve. By Year 9 they are below the national expectations, and the results in GCSE examinations have been consistently close to the national average over time, although there was a decline similar to that found in other subjects in 2004. The current Year 11 students show that such standards were a blip and they are working in line with course expectations. In Year 9 the students are working at levels below those expected nationally, but those levels represent good achievement given their standards in the subject when they entered the school.
106. Achievement is good at all levels. Students with special educational needs achieve and attain well. Good three-dimensional and relief work is a significant feature of the department, and world art is well used to influence students' work, as for example, in the masks and gargoyles project. Links to environmental and citizenship issues in textiles work are good. Some exciting work was seen, and this was reflected in the students' work, exhibited in the local art exhibition.
107. Teaching and learning are both good in Years 7 to 11. Teaching is characterised by a high level of expertise and good relationships, allied to good planning and lesson structure leading to a good working environment. Students develop appropriate skills and knowledge, and their understanding of the work they are involved in is clear. World art is well used to broaden students' horizons. Because skills and experience on entry are weak, application and productivity are variable, but the response to the teachers' enthusiasm is very good.
108. Leadership and management are good. The strengths of the department are well harnessed, and provision is broad including both photography and textiles. Management is efficient and effective. The three specialist staff have complementary skills. Although collectively the accommodation provided by the three rooms is good, one room is remote from the others, with a consequent inefficiency in the use and availability of resources. Accommodation is thus satisfactory overall. The curriculum is satisfactory, with some repetition of topics in Years 7 to 9. ICT is not used as a creative tool in Years 7 to 9. The department's good assessment system does not reflect National Curriculum criteria in all topics and insufficient use is made of self and peer assessment. Boys and girls have equal access to the subject's opportunities, and good strategies are in place to ensure this. Good practice was seen involving artists in residence working with Year 10 students. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The developments since the appointment of the new head of department have been impressive, and students are very enthusiastic about music.
- The ICT composition work in Years 10 and 11 is very good.
- There is a very good assessment system.

- World music only appears in one topic in Years 7 to 9; this is insufficient.
- Although the accommodation is in specialist rooms, soundproofing is non-existent.
- The lack of adjoining rooms limits teaching and learning styles.

Commentary

109. Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is well below the national average. However progress is rapid; standards are below national expectations by Year 9. These standards were reflected in the teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004. They are above national expectations in composition work in the Year 11 group. There were no GCSE results in 2004.
110. Achievement is good throughout Years 7 to 11. The impact of the new head of department over the last 18 months has been impressive. Music provision has become a positive feature of the school. Students' self-confidence in the subject is very good, and they are happy to share their music making with others in a public setting, knowing that they will receive high quality support to ensure their success. The positive response by students to the teachers' enthusiasm is very obvious. They are delighted to play their part in a developing success story. Instrumental teaching, performing groups and school productions are rapidly growing indicators of this success. Those with special educational needs attain and achieve as well as their fellow students. The successful use of Sibelius software to resource GCSE composition is productive, improving students' attainment. Standards are improving constantly.
111. Teaching and learning are both good. The new head of department has raised standards and expectations, and helped students to believe in themselves. The complementary skills of the subject staff are well harnessed, and there is a strong team. Planning is good and clear targets set. Relationships are very good, creating a very good learning environment. Above all, the teachers' enthusiasm is infectious, and students want to take part and to succeed. Students' learning is aided by a very good assessment system, which indicates clearly to them the standard they are at and what they need to do to improve.
112. Leadership and management are very good. Development has been remarkable, and is continuing. Leadership is characterised by inspiration and vision, with students responding very positively. Support from senior management is also very good. The accommodation is en suite and specialist, but lacks sound proofing. Also the lack of adjoining spaces for group working limits teaching and learning styles in class lessons. Group work is almost impossible. The curriculum is broad and balanced, but music from different parts of the world is limited to one specific topic. ICT is not yet consistently used across all year groups. The work of the artists-in-residence with Year 10 students, involving both art and design and music, has been very exciting and has had a positive impact on standards. Instrumental teaching is healthy and growing rapidly; there is an appropriate system available to enable students take advantage of this teaching, irrespective of their family circumstances, which confirms the school's ethos of valuing all students. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE dance results are well above the national average and represent very good achievement by the students.
- Leadership and management are good, making full use of the school's Specialist Sports College Status in working towards raising standards.
- Assessment systems and procedures do not give the department secure data and assessment is not consistently used as part of learning.
- Students achieve well because they are taught well and have positive attitudes.
- The curriculum in core physical education in Years 10 and 11 does not meet the needs of all students.

Commentary

113. The GCSE results in physical education in 2004 were below the national average. The courses are popular and many students' results were higher than in their other subjects. The achievement of the students who took GCSE was good in relation to their standards in the subject when they started the course. The GCSE results in dance in 2004 were above the national average and this represented very good achievement by those students who took the course.
114. Students join the school in Year 7 with standards below the national average. Throughout Years 7 to 9 all students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well and their standards are in line with national expectations. They make good progress because good teaching stimulates their positive attitudes towards the subject.
115. In Years 10 and 11, the standards in National Curriculum core physical education are in line with those in most schools. Students' achievement overall in core physical education is satisfactory. The students' positive response to opportunities to play, coach and referee invasion games enables some Year 11 students to gain accreditation through the Junior Sports Leader Scheme. Good participation by boys and girls supports progress and provides continuity in learning. Standards in the GCSE physical education classes are below national expectations. The students enter the course with well below average literacy skills, which significantly affects their ability to work on the theoretical elements of the course. Teaching develops this area well so that students make good progress.
116. Standards in GCSE dance are well above the national average. Standards are well above average in both theoretical and practical elements of the course. Students show very good commitment to their GCSE dance work, and achievement is very good.
117. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching and learning in dance are very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable, enthusiastic and present good role models for the students. Relationships are strong. In the most successful lessons, teachers ensure that students know what they are learning and why and regularly check progress by intervention with individuals and groups of pupils so that the students know what they can do and how to improve. Students in these lessons know at what level they are working, are given tasks which are appropriate for their level and are developing skills which enable them to take responsibility for their own learning. Students make good use of opportunities to enhance their learning through very good ICT provision. Not all lessons are as effective as this. In some lessons teachers do not use assessment as

part of learning. They do not ensure that students' literacy skills are developed. Students are too dependent on the teacher and work on tasks that are too advanced for their ability.

118. Leadership and management are good. The head of physical education is new to the post. She has a very good understanding of how the Specialist Sports College Status supports the development of physical education and sport in the school. The head of department acts as a very good role model for other teachers and the students. She has a clear vision of how to raise standards more quickly. There is a group of specialist staff who work very well as a team. They share good practice and are developing strategies to improve students' achievement. The department does not have secure assessment data for students on entry to the school and does not consistently use assessment as part of learning. Monitoring does not yet fully identify development areas in teaching and learning and so there is some inconsistency in teachers' practice. Students do not develop sufficiently basic literacy skills so that they are able to describe techniques and feedback as part of class evaluation. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not take sufficient account of the differing needs of the students. A very good extra-curricular programme enhances learning for many students. The department is very well supported by the management systems within the Specialist Sport College structure. The department has made good progress since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a curriculum which effectively meets the statutory requirements and covers successfully the three elements of citizenship.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- The school has an extremely effective School Council.
- Students have good attitudes and are confident in expressing their viewpoints.
- There has been an improvement in the performance of students at GCSE.

Commentary

119. Students enter the school with very limited levels of knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens. By the end of Year 9 they make good progress and their achievement is good. They are much more confident and can speak their mind about local and global issues. They have an empathetic understanding of nomadic people and travellers and of their rights as citizens. This, in turn, enables them to acquire a growing understanding of the diverse nature of British society. In Year 9 students are able to make effective links between what they learn about peer pressure and human rights issues. There are also opportunities for them to make informed decisions about moral judgements and consider how and why laws are made.
120. By the end of Year 11 students have a growing understanding of how the economy functions and have heightened their skills of enquiry and communication through active involvement in local schemes such as Youth Parliaments and the Youth Forum. In a Year 10 lesson they made good progress in exploring the theme of rights and responsibilities through support for

charities and their responsibility to help those more unfortunate than themselves. In another Year 10 lesson students, with the help of a visiting police officer, considered the links between drugs and crime. In a Year 11 lesson students collaboratively explored the controversial issue of genetically modified foods and their implications for society. In Years 7 to 11 students gain a developing understanding of democratic processes and have a clear understanding of other cultures, showing respect and considerable empathy.

121. In 2004, the school entered all students for the Short Course GCSE in citizenship. Eleven per cent of the students achieved A*-C grades and 62 per cent A*-G grades, with girls achieving significantly higher results than the boys. At present there is little performance data nationally with which to judge standards. However, the school has conducted its own evaluation and set itself robust targets to improve standards.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In Years 7-9 students benefit from a well planned programme of citizenship which is taught alongside PSHE by committed and enthusiastic tutors and through individual subjects. In Years 10 and 11 all students follow a Short Course GCSE course in citizenship. Teaching to support citizenship is good in religious education, geography and art and design. Religious education, in particular, fully supports and complements citizenship throughout all the key stages, helping students to become informed, thoughtful and responsible citizens who are aware not only of their duties and rights but of their responsibilities. Other subjects occasionally focus on citizenship issues when they arise but they do not have citizenship as an explicit part of their lesson planning. Overall lessons are well planned and effective use is made of discussion as a means of moving students towards making informed judgements. Students develop good attitudes and are confident in expressing their viewpoints.
123. Extra-curricular provision is excellent, providing rich opportunities for students to develop skills of participation and responsible action. The school has a strong tradition of the promotion of citizenship. The School Council is a clear example of democracy in action and is a model of good practice. The Council now meets on a regular basis and reports back to each individual year group. The members of the Council take part in full school assemblies, produce minutes which are distributed to all relevant parties, write a regular report in the school newsletter and in the annual governors' report to parents.
124. Students' understanding of local democracy is very effectively promoted through excellent links with outside organisations with which they work closely. These include the Parish and District Councils, Lenham Residents Association, Lenham Neighbourhood Watch and the Village Warden. Students from within the School Council now take charge of all fund-raising activities for the school which includes deciding on projects and how best to proceed. Recent projects include providing a water fountain for the students and a healthy food bar in the school canteen.
125. The school has a very effective Eco Group which has close links with the Healthy School Initiative and the School Council. Projects include the monitoring of energy and water, the installation of compost bins for the recycling of biodegradable waste and the provision of compost use in the garden, and the reduction of packaging used by the school canteen.
126. The school provides a curriculum which effectively meets the statutory requirements and covers the three discrete elements of citizenship. All students receive a written report regarding their progress within citizenship.
127. Leadership and management are excellent. Leadership is provided by an assistant headteacher who is passionately committed to the subject. He has an outstanding vision for the subject and has worked with the recently appointed co-ordinator to audit provision, update schemes of work, establish a pupil progress log, provide training and monitor teaching. The subject was not inspected at the last inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, four 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	4	25.0	78.3	0.0	21.6	5.0	28.5
Biology	2	100	63.5	0.0	10.4	20.0	19.8
Communication studies	2	50.0	87.2	0.0	24.9	20.0	32.8
English literature	1	100	86.2	0.0	17.4	30.0	29.7
Design and technology	3	33.3	72.6	0.0	13.9	10.0	24.3
Physics	1	100	66.4	0.0	14.8	20.0	22.4
Sports/PE studies	3	66.7	72.2	0.0	11.8	13.3	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	2	50.0	98.3	0.0	50.2	30.0	87.1
Biology	1	100	96.6	0.0	40.0	40.0	79.3
Communication studies	2	100	99.2	0.0	40.4	70.0	83.5
English literature	1	100	99.4	0.0	44.9	40.0	85.5
Geography	2	100	98.8	0.0	46.4	40.0	85.5
History	2	50	99.0	0.0	45.6	20.0	85.1

Mathematics	2	100	96.8	0.0	56.6	40.0	89.5
Physics	1	100	96.7	0.0	45.3	40.0	82.6
Sports/PE studies	2	100	97.8	0.0	30.9	40.0	75.4
Business	4	75.0	91.6	0.0	24.1	30.0	67.9
Health and social care	7	100	93.5	0.0	24.9	60.0	70.0
Performing arts	1	0.0	94.7	0.0	48.8	0.0	85.5
Information technology VQ	15	93.3	88.3	33.3	26.9	80.0	67.8
Leisure and recreation	13	92.3	90.7	53.8	18.3	84.6	64.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subject well, and provide closely structured support for students.
- Students do not have enough responsibility for developing their own learning. Resources to support independent study are limited.
- There are few opportunities to develop an interest in the subject outside the classroom.
- Poor attendance at lessons by some students limits their achievement.

Commentary

128. Standards on entry to the sixth form are below the national average. Small numbers of students have taken the subject at A-level in recent years. Results are well below the national average. In 2004, there was only one candidate. The student gained a pass grade. In 2003, there were four candidates, half of whom were successful. There have been more students at AS level in the last two years. Results are better at this level, but still below the national average. In 2004, 90 per cent of the results were at grades A to E, with two students gaining B grades. In 2003, 100 per cent of the results were at grades A to E, though none were at the higher grades.
129. The standards of work seen during the inspection were below course expectations. Achievement is satisfactory. The majority of students contribute constructively to class discussions, but some find it difficult to justify and explain views when challenged. The best coursework essays are mature and coherent, however. Writing by higher-attaining students, for example in character studies from Shakespeare's 'Othello', is informed by a clear personal response and well supported by detailed textual reference. The work of lower-attaining students shows less capacity to evaluate style and technique, and is sometimes marred by poor expression. Coursework is well presented, with students making good use of word processing skills to redraft and improve their writing.
130. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers monitor students' progress closely and are prepared to give additional personal help and guidance where it is needed. They know their subject well, and have a good understanding of examination and

assessment requirements. Coursework is assessed promptly, with detailed written comments that suggest targets for improvement. A balance between teacher input and student contribution was not always fully achieved in lessons, however. Teachers led most of the work and contributed most of the thinking, especially if students found concepts difficult. Students could be expected to take more responsibility for developing their own learning, through wider reading and research and by taking a lead in presenting ideas in lessons. Resources in school to support independent study are too limited. More generally, there are few opportunities to broaden students' horizons through external visits, such as study days and theatre trips. Poor attendance at lessons by some students limits their achievement, and can also hold up the work of others when they return to class.

131. The leadership and management of English in the sixth form are good. Planning for the subject is detailed and thorough. Teachers co-operate effectively to share and develop best practice. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The subject is becoming more popular, with a significant increase in student numbers and better achievement at AS level in the most recent years. The department is confident that this will be carried through to A-level results in the future.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

132. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are below national expectations. However, teachers provide effective support, with high levels of individual help in small teaching groups. There is also a continued focus on basic skills work in form tutor time, and students with special educational needs receive good additional support in their studies. In lessons, there are normally good opportunities for discussion and oral work, especially in drama, physical education and vocational subjects such as health and social care. Note making and extended essays are well-structured and detailed in history and English literature. Technical vocabulary is used accurately and appropriately, with good examples in mathematics, biology and media studies. ICT skills are also used well by students to polish and refine their writing. However, below average skills, in terms of the quality and accuracy of expression, continue to prevent many students from reaching the higher grades in AS and A-level examinations.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Retention rates on the courses are high which reflects the very good support students receive.
- There is insufficient recruitment of high-attaining GCSE students to secure improvements in the department's results and develop this new provision.
- The range of courses currently offered does not meet the wide range of abilities and career aspirations of students making the choices in Year 11.

Commentary

133. Results in the A-level examinations for 2004 met the individual students' expectations. The numbers of students in mathematics is low so no meaningful trends can be detected or comparisons made with the national averages. Both of the students entered in 2004 secured a pass at grade E.
134. Standards of work seen and the current results for AS modules suggest that students are at least working towards their predicted outcomes. Achievement is satisfactory. The school recruits from students who have achieved modest GCSE grades.
135. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers work very hard and give considerable support which is highly valued by students. Work is explained from first principles and teachers show good understanding of how best to effectively present new material. Learning is satisfactory, albeit heavily dependent upon teachers' input. For example, in a Year 13 class the three students were dealing with probability density functions and, with hints from the teacher, recognised the need to use and apply aspects of calculus. Teaching in this lesson was satisfactory but the students' ability to look beyond routines remains an issue for further development. Mechanics is more securely understood by students, assisted by the fact that some of them also study physics. In a Year 12 lesson some effective group work identified equations from GCSE to apply to solving elements of vertical motion under gravity. Overall the coverage of work is adequate, despite the relatively slow pace of lessons. Students' note taking is a weakness, which impairs their potential for revising from their books. The use of ICT to enhance their understanding of mathematics was not evident in lessons or in students' books. Students give very clear signals of their intention to succeed and work hard to achieve well.
136. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Examination requirements are clearly understood. Changes in module options reflect the department's intentions to model the provision to reflect the needs of students recruited to this course. Students are secure about the wisdom of their choice of subject, the retention rate is high, and students recognise the potential that higher qualifications have for their employment opportunities.

Mathematics across the curriculum

137. In A-level subjects, students have a sufficient grasp of mathematics required for the study of their subjects. For example, in physics, biology and business education, students are able to use their numeracy skills to tackle elements of the courses that require them.

SCIENCE

Biology, chemistry and physics are provided for study up to A-level. The focus for the inspection was biology.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The retention rates on the courses are too low and class sizes are small. Standards in recent years have been below national averages.

- The achievement of those students who complete their courses is satisfactory.
- Students learn well because they gain confidence, study hard and develop independence.
- Teaching is good because it is well managed, expert and tuned well to meet students' needs.

Commentary

138. Standards in recent years in A-level and AS examinations have been below the national averages. It is inappropriate to make comparisons with national averages because the numbers of students involved are too small. Few students have been entered for examinations in previous years. The retention rate is too low, now and in recent years. For the current AS course only two out of seven students who started the course remain on roll. Recently, almost all of the few who completed courses attained graded results. Overall achievement is satisfactory. The achievement of the current two students is satisfactory, in terms of progress from their prior GCSE scores. Lesson by lesson each student is achieving well.
139. Teaching and learning are both good. A key strength is that teachers generate confidence and trust from the learners. Teachers have expert subject knowledge; they offer clear instruction and use a good variety of strategies. Teachers assess well and then make clear to students how they should improve. The students work hard and organise well. There is a good level of independent learning from the students.
140. The leadership of A-level biology is satisfactory. The school has invested correctly to establish the new provision. Decisions are being considered to set up courses which may recruit a viable cohort. The management of the A-level provision is good. Key staff collaborate well so as to secure the detail of the required arrangements and resources. Students' needs are cared for well. There are enough facilities for study. A-level provision in science was set up after the previous inspection, and so was not reported on previously.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- E-learning enables students to work at home and school, and to send work to their teacher for marking and commentary. This helps to raise standards.
- Teachers enable students to learn very well about the technicalities of the subject and engage them on interesting and appropriate tasks.
- There is very good leadership and management that reviews the impact of teaching and learning and looks at new ways of improvement.
- There are very good relationships and commitment by both staff and students, with an expectation of high standards.

Commentary

141. Last year in the AVCE vocational A-level examinations 11 students were entered, with nine gaining a pass grade (A-E). This is below the national average. At AS level, students did not

'cash-in' their awards and so they have not been published.

142. The students' ability at entry for the AVCE course is well below the national average. The students on the AS AVCE course are working to gain an E grade, which is good progress for them. On the A-level course attainment is higher, but the range of potential grades demonstrated in the coursework is still below that expected nationally although the achievement of the students concerned is good.
143. Teachers have significant technical expertise and are enthusiasts in their subject. They are innovative in their use of ICT, both for teaching and learning, as well as in organising the work of the department. They are constantly developing new and more interesting approaches to teaching and learning, constantly raising standards.
144. Teaching is good because it is very well planned and students can identify what they should do, and by when. This enables good learning. Students can move further ahead under their own volition and so the more able can make good progress. Boys tend to be more interested in the technical aspects of the work, whereas girls are more interested in applying their knowledge. Teachers enable these differing interests to be developed and students know that the teachers will help them individually to maximise their learning. Because e-learning is used so effectively, with work being completed both at home and in school on-line, it enables constant progress to be maintained. Teachers assess and mark work regularly and students can identify what they have done well and what they need to do to improve, and resubmit their work accordingly. Lower-attaining students, and students with special educational needs, get individual support so that they too make good progress. It is the very good relationships between all parties, and the teachers' determination that their students will succeed, that encourages the students and they respond very effectively.
145. There is very good leadership which is producing a strong team approach to innovative learning and to developing the opportunities available to the students. Very good management identifies where things are good and what needs to be improved. Technology is very well utilised to enable learning to take place. As a consequence there is constant innovation. There is good accommodation for sixth form work although rooms do become overheated because of inadequate ventilation. The very good computer systems, many of which have been assembled by the sixth formers, support the innovative work of this department.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

146. Students use their ICT skills well to support the presentation of their work and the redrafting of coursework, for example, in English. The use of ICT as a research tool is more varied but there was good use of this in music technology and art and design.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

147. Design and technology was sampled, with one lesson seen in product design (food) with students from both Years 12 and 13 working together on practical tasks. The attitudes of all the students were good, and their folders included sound designs that were starting to be realised through experimental product development. Their achievement was satisfactory because students were well supported in their learning and relationships were good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

148. Art and design was sampled in the sixth form; one lesson was seen. Teaching and learning were good, and ICT was well used as both a research and developmental tool.

149. Music was sampled in the sixth form. One lesson of music technology was seen. Teaching and learning were good, and ICT was well used to support the students' skills in composition.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

150. Physical education was sampled in the sixth form. In the one lesson observed standards were below those expected nationally. Students entered the course with literacy skills which were well below average. Achievement was good because of the good teaching, which took account of the students' level on entry. The positive attitude of the students supported learning.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Sixth form grade

School grade

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	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3

Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	4	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	5	4
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3

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	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2

The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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