

INSPECTION REPORT

**Convent of Jesus and Mary RC Language
College**

London NW10 4EP

LEA area: Brent

Unique reference number: 101561

Headteacher: Mary Richardson

Reporting inspector: Mark Woodward
11049

Dates of inspection: 7 – 11 February 2000

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Girls
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Sister Dolores Lynn
Date of previous inspection:	20 March 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a girls Catholic school of average size that has recently adopted Aided status after having been grant-maintained. For three years it has been a specialist Language College and it was invited to apply to become a Beacon school at the start of this year (2000). The pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Around 35% are from European heritage, 28% from African or Caribbean heritage and 19% from Anglo-Celtic heritage. There are 12% of the pupils who have English as an additional language, but only one is in the early stages of language acquisition. There are also 27 refugee and 14 traveller children.

A higher than average proportion of the pupils, 23%, is eligible for free school meals. The proportions of pupils having special educational needs or statements of special educational needs are broadly average, the great majority of them having moderate learning difficulties.

Pupils currently entering the school are achieving standards that are broadly average compared with pupils nationally. Standards on entry have improved in recent years.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is very effective. Standards have risen consistently over the past 14 years and at GCSE they are now well above the national average. Value added measures confirm that the great majority of pupils make very good progress up to the end of Key Stage 4 and that they make satisfactory progress in the sixth form.

The pupils are expected to work hard in order to maximise their examination results. This drive for high standards starts with the headteacher who ensures that the message is taken on by the teaching staff. It is one of the key reasons for the success of the school. The quality of teaching is generally good. The school receives an income per pupil which is very high compared with the majority of schools across the country. It is very effective in using its resources to promote high quality learning and has significantly enhanced the life opportunities of the pupils. It therefore provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher is an outstanding leader. She has provided the impetus behind the substantial improvements that have been achieved by the school in recent years.
- Standards at GCSE, including the core subjects, are very high.
- Pupils are expected to produce work of a high standard.
- The achievement of pupils is very good at GCSE and good across their time in the school.
- The school has a very strong spiritual and moral ethos, and a clear Catholic identity.
- Staff have very good training and development opportunities.
- The monitoring of the school's performance is very good.
- The school community is harmonious and culturally rich.
- The quality of teaching in drama, and by some teachers in other subjects, is very good.
- Innovative courses both in normal lesson times and after school create good challenges and learning support opportunities for the pupils.
- The school has fostered an excellent range of partnerships which have been very significant in promoting high standards of work and behaviour.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are very good.
- The procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance and behaviour are very good.
- Financial monitoring and control are strong.

What could be improved

- Standards are not high enough: in the mainstream modern foreign languages, except in the sixth form; and in information technology.
- At A-level, standards are not high enough in science and business studies.
- The information technology curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not meet statutory requirements.
- Some senior and middle management roles are not fully developed.
- The range of strategies used by some teachers is limiting the progress of the pupils.
- The planning of work to match the capabilities of all the pupils is in need of further development.
- Communications with parents have not been successful in making all of them aware of the opportunities available to their children and, in some cases, of allaying their concerns.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

The strengths of the school substantially outweigh the areas in need of improvement.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1995. Since then it has made very good progress. Standards have risen, particularly at GCSE where the proportion of pupils gaining 5A*-C grades has risen from 41% to 61%, whilst the proportion of pupils gaining 5A*-G grades has risen from 89% to 98%. At A-level, pupils have generally made good progress, although the results in 1999 were lower than in the previous two years. Nevertheless, the average points score of pupils entered for 2 or more subjects has risen from 10.5 to 14.6 between the two inspections which is broadly in line with the rise in results nationally. Pupils' information technology skills were judged to be good at the time of the last inspection. This is no longer the case.

The key issues from the last inspection have been tackled well. There has been an improvement in the approaches to teaching and learning although further work is still needed for which there are good role models in the school. A new special educational needs co-ordinator is working effectively to continue the improvements that the school has already made in this area. The sixth form curriculum is now a strength, and throughout the school the pupils have a wide range of learning opportunities both in the core curriculum and through extra-curricular programmes. The library has been improved considerably and the health and safety issues identified in music and science have been resolved. Some managers take a strategic role in the school. Some other management roles are insufficiently developed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	D	

Key

very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 were above average in 1999 compared with standards achieved by all pupils nationally and average in comparison with girls nationally. They were very high in comparison with the standards achieved by pupils in similar schools. Over the past 3 years, GCSE standards have been well above average, whilst they have been broadly average at A-level. GCSE results are high in English, mathematics, science, geography, food technology and drama. They are low in the mainstream languages, resistant materials and integrated humanities. A-level results are high in performing arts, languages, art and geography. They are low in science and business studies.

The grades in the table are comparisons made with pupils in all schools across the country. As these include boys (who perform less well than girls), the school's graded performance is higher than it would be if it were compared only with the performance of girls. Nevertheless, the school's results have risen substantially over the years and are significantly higher than they were at the time of the last inspection both in comparison with pupils nationally and pupils in similar schools. Challenging targets indicate that the school feels that it can make further gains, for example, it expects to have 73% of the pupils achieving 5A*-C GCSE grades by 2003. GCSE targets for 2000 and 2001 are to maintain current levels of performance. These are appropriate because they are still challenging in the light of pupils' prior levels of attainment.

The achievement of pupils is high at the end of Key Stage 3, very high at the end of Key Stage 4 and average at the end of the sixth form.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The attitudes of the pupils are very good. The great majority are highly motivated, concentrate well and respond enthusiastically to the opportunities and challenges offered by the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the majority of pupils is very good. This is a direct result of the school's positive work ethic. A minority of pupils show poor behaviour. This is dealt with firmly which explains the relatively high incidence of fixed term exclusion.
Personal development and relationships	The school is a tolerant community where pupils and teachers generally have very good relationships. Because of the wide range of educational opportunities open to the pupils, their personal development is also very good.
Attendance	Attendance is above national averages and punctuality to lessons is mostly good. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form are mostly satisfactory.

Pupils are encouraged to contribute to the day-to-day life and management of the school through the school council and other out-of-class activities. This is particularly evident in the sixth form where, for example, the magazine is run by the students and some others take responsibility for managing the video conference link with South America. The charitable work of the pupils is considerable.

A number of pupils talked very positively about the way that school practices and programmes had improved their attitudes. One girl in Year 9 spoke confidently about the benefit that she had gained from moving to a lower set where she found the work better matched to her abilities. This, she said, had improved her attitudes to work and her motivation, which in turn was resulting in her producing work of a higher standard. Another girl in Year 11 said that her mentor from HSBC had helped her to improve her behaviour and take a more positive attitude to her work.

Relationships between pupils, adults and between the different ethnic groups are very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
	Good	Good	Good

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 99% of the lessons seen; good or better in 59% and very good or excellent in 15%. There was one unsatisfactory lesson which was the result of an unfocused approach to exploring the Malay language. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good at Key Stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form the quality of teaching in mathematics is good; in science it is just satisfactory. No lessons were observed in the sixth form in English.

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Whilst the overall quality of teaching is good, it is not uniformly as good as the examination results suggest. In some subjects, such as drama, the teaching is very good. In this subject, teachers are dynamic, enterprising and knowledgeable. They set the pupils challenging and varied tasks, which motivate them and enable them to extend their skills and understanding. Some teachers in other subjects, such as science, do not use as wide a range of techniques and this has a lower impact on pupils' motivation and standards. Whilst work is better matched to the capabilities of the pupils than at the time of the last inspection, there is still further work to be done in this area at all ability levels.

The quality of pupils' learning is good. This is because of good teaching and most importantly because of the ethos of hard work and high standards that the headteacher promotes.

Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well. Successmaker plays an effective role in this area. A considerable amount of time is devoted to the programme, particularly in Year 7, but this is time well spent.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall, the curriculum is good. There are a wide range of innovative schemes to stretch and support the pupils in their learning. Statutory requirements for the provision of information technology are not met at Key Stage 4.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The impact of Successmaker is high in developing pupils' core skills. Some departments such as science and mathematics create good individual education plans but they do not reflect all the issues in the pupils' whole school plans. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is improving following the appointment of the new co-ordinator.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Whilst a high proportion of the pupils have English as an additional language, only one is at an early stage of language acquisition. There was no evidence seen of pupils being restricted in their learning by insufficient language support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is a major strength of the school, in particular the provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development. The Sisters of the Order make a major contribution in this area. International links are very strong.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for the pupils very well. Attendance, good behaviour, positive relationships and personal development are all promoted and monitored very well.

The pupils are offered a very wide range of curriculum opportunities. The video-conferencing facility is used to offer two courses in the sixth form and also to enhance cultural links across the world. Gifted and talented pupils are supported through specialist courses after school, and pupils at risk of under-achieving are given extra tuition both after school and on Saturday mornings. Holiday revision clubs and summer schools are also successful additions to the curriculum. The Sisters of the Order have a strong presence in the school and they enhance the opportunities that the pupils have to celebrate their Catholicism. The school has a strong Catholic identity.

The curriculum for information technology does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4. It is intended to be taught by all the subjects but at present they are not covering the Programmes of Study sufficiently well. This is the reason for the decline in standards since the last inspection.

The school is a safe and secure environment. The educational and personal support provided for the pupils is very good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. Whilst most other management roles are effectively carried out, there are some that are under-developed.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors provide a good service to the school. They are kept well informed by the headteacher and monitor the school's performance effectively.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is very good at tracking the individual performance of pupils and of monitoring the effectiveness of teachers. It has good systems for measuring pupils' progress towards GCSE and A-level and has a robust line management structure. The school has only just developed a clear understanding of each year group's performance on entry.
The strategic use of resources	Staff training and development has been a major factor in raising and maintaining the standards achieved by the pupils. Resources are used very well. The headteacher has been very effective in securing additional resources for the school and these have been very well used in improving the educational provision.

The drive behind the success of the school is provided by the headteacher. She has a clear vision of the quality of work that she expects from both pupils and staff, rigorously monitors whether this is being achieved and takes action to tackle weaknesses. The strong line management structure forms the basis of monitoring and action planning. Some senior and middle management roles are not fully developed because of the inexperience or skill deficiencies of staff.

The accommodation has been improved substantially in recent years. Most departments have good working facilities. The exception is music where the lack of practice rooms limits the quality of composition and performance that can be achieved.

The school has very good financial control although the contingency fund is high. Purchases are appropriately subject to best value principles.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high standards achieved by the pupils • The school expects the pupils to work hard • The good behaviour and personal development of the pupils • The good quality of teaching • The good quality of leadership and management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards in modern foreign languages and information technology • Information about the progress made by the pupils • The response of the school to parents' concerns • The quantity of homework • The availability of lockers • The organisation of parents' evenings

The inspection team agreed with the parents about the school's strengths and the need for standards to be higher in modern foreign languages and information technology. They also agreed that improvements could be made to the organisation of parents' evenings to reduce waiting times and to the ways that the school responds to parents' concerns. Inspectors feel that parents are well informed about pupils' progress through the information regularly recorded in the termly curriculum planners.

They also noted that, whilst there are no lockers or lockable desks for 2 classes in the school, all other classes have some access to secure storage space. Homework set during the inspection week was of an appropriate quantity for the ages of the pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The headteacher is an outstanding leader. She has provided the impetus behind the improvements that have been achieved by the school in recent years.

1. The headteacher has been the crucial factor in the success of the school. She has a clear vision of what needs to be done and how best to do it and this is communicated through the challenging targets that are set for school and staff performance. The impact of her methods can be clearly seen in a comparison of GCSE results. In the year following her arrival at the school, 9% of the pupils gained 5A*-C grades; in 1999, 61% of the pupils gained 5A*-C grades.
2. She is visible, strong and decisive; qualities which give her a powerful presence among staff, pupils, governors and the wider community. She is highly organised and expects the same level of organisation from staff. This is a key factor in the raising of standards.
3. Under the headteacher's leadership a substantial number of initiatives have been developed which have been very beneficial in raising pupils' educational opportunities. Of particular note are those that improve the access to education of pupils with low standards on entry to the school, such as the 'Successmaker' lessons, and those that stretch the most able pupils such as the 'gifted and talented' after-school programme.
4. The turnover of staff is slightly lower than London averages but high when compared with schools across the country. This makes the maintenance of high standards particularly difficult and therefore the achievement of the school even more impressive. The high level of investment in staff development is a major factor in explaining this success.
5. The headteacher's leadership has attracted the attention of leading figures in the public and private sectors, which has benefited the school through the provision of additional resources. She has also made a significant contribution to national education policy formation.

Standards at GCSE, including the core subjects, are very high.

6. GCSE results have been well above average over the past 3 years in comparison with pupils' results in other schools and very high in comparison with the results achieved by pupils in similar schools. The comparison is made with all pupils across the country, which is favourable to the school because, on average, girls achieve higher results than boys.
7. In both 1998 and 1999, pupils achieved higher GCSE results in English, mathematics and science than they did in the majority of their other subjects. GCSE English results are particularly high despite many changes of teachers. The reason for this is that good practices have been built up in the department which have been passed on to incoming teachers; for example, the pupils are expected to do a great deal of re-writing in order to improve their work. This is effective in teaching them to strive for quality.
8. Pupils also perform particularly well at GCSE in geography and drama.

Pupils are expected to produce work of a high standard.

9. The ethos of the school encourages pupils to work hard; for example, pupils are given planners on a termly basis which outline the work that they will cover and include assessment information which reminds the pupils of the standards they have achieved. This is also an effective way for parents to find out how their children are performing, although some parents are apparently not aware of this opportunity.
10. Pupils say that they are pleased to be at the school because it encourages them to work hard and succeed. One girl in Year 9 explained that she had moved into a lower set because she had not coped with the pace of work in her former class. She described how her motivation and work quality had improved as a result.

The achievement of pupils is very good at GCSE and good across their time in the school.

11. The performance of the pupils at GCSE is very good. This can be seen most particularly through the results of value-added analyses. As a group, the pupils who took GCSE in 1999 entered with lower than average reading ages, around a third of them 2 or more years behind their actual ages. Their well above average GCSE results clearly point to major gains in learning whilst at the school. Other value-added analyses provided by reliable testing methods also indicate that the pupils improve their performance significantly whilst at the school.

The school has a very strong spiritual and moral ethos, and a clear Catholic identity.

12. The school strongly reflects Catholic beliefs and the philosophy of the founder of the Order. Obstacles to failure are tackled and pupils are encouraged to reach for their dreams; they are shown how to succeed; individuals are nurtured, encouraged to participate in the life of the school and to collaborate effectively.
13. At Mass, the pupils show reverence and feeling for the spirit and purpose of the celebration. They observe and participate fully, almost all of them taking the sacrament.

Staff have very good training and development opportunities.

14. This occurs on a day-to-day basis as well as through organised courses, because the headteacher's demands on staff are very effective training mechanisms in their own right. The loss of a significant sum of money from the training budget following the move away from grant-maintained status is of serious concern to the headteacher and highlights a major limitation nationally in the ability of schools to effect change and raise standards without appropriate levels of funding.

The monitoring of the school's performance is very good

15. The headteacher has developed very effective systems for evaluating the performance of the school. She has a very clear view of where the best quality work is done and where improvements are needed. The line management structure of the school is very effective in monitoring performance, heads of departments and pastoral heads meeting with their line manager on a weekly basis. Out of these meetings, judgements about progress are recorded and targets are set. This ensures that the meetings result in action.
16. Examination results are carefully analysed by subject and by teacher and these are shared with the staff. This enables managerial discussions to take place using secure factual information. Also, the headteacher receives lesson plans from all teachers at the start of each week. This enables her to ensure that teachers are well prepared and that they are planning to meet the needs of all the pupils on a day-to-day basis.

The school community is harmonious and culturally rich.

17. Relationships in the school between pupils and between pupils and teachers are very good. There is a wide range of cultures represented in the school and they work together well.
18. The school works hard to develop pupils' respect for cultural diversity both within the school and wider communities. The Language College has introduced a wider range of languages to the pupils and supported those with native or near native skills in some languages. It has also extended its influence into the community and other schools. International links are a strength of the school. There are video conference links, for example with Brazil, work experience opportunities abroad for sixth form pupils and an international day to which all departments make contributions.

The quality of teaching in drama, and by some teachers in other subjects, is very good.

19. In drama teachers use a wide range of teaching styles to stimulate the imaginations of the pupils. Pupils are challenged to think and reflect by working through ideas with each other and the teachers. Prejudices are challenged. There are continual opportunities created for pupils to experiment and to discuss their work. This motivates them and enables them to learn from each other and to develop greater understanding. Pupils from Year 7 to the sixth form show great enthusiasm for drama.
20. In an excellent English lesson on 'To Kill a Mocking Bird', the teacher used questions very skillfully to explore some challenging themes in the book. Characters were dissected, the pupils being challenged to explain their behaviours and to speculate on how they might behave under different circumstances. The pupils' concentration levels were very high because they were being intellectually stretched.
21. An excellent lesson was given to the sixth form on writing personal statements for university applications. The teacher showed a high level of knowledge about the impact that various approaches had on university entrance selectors. Students were very effectively shown what to include and how to include it through a mixture of description and exemplification. Oxford University has commended the school on the high quality of students' personal statements.
22. In a very good Year 7 mathematics lesson, the teacher used a wide range of techniques to enhance pupils' understanding of decimals and retain their interest. All the pupils were involved in the lesson through the teacher's effective questioning and reviewing techniques. Relationships with the pupils were very good.

Innovative courses both in normal lesson times and after school create good challenges and learning support opportunities for the pupils.

23. 'Successmaker' lessons are very well organised and are effective in boosting the core skills of the pupils. The pupils have a clear understanding of the tasks that they have to complete, how to complete them and how to organise their time most effectively. Teachers are aware of the assessment procedures and are able to support the learning of the pupils well. The motivation of the pupils is high. They want to improve the accuracy and speed of their work and work very hard during the sessions. The elements of self-motivation and organisation are major additional benefits to this effective programme.
24. An example of an initiative to support pupils who are not achieving standards that reflect their capabilities is the 'critical pupils' programme which offers study support on Saturday mornings. The impact of this is very significant. Pupils who attended the programme largely achieved GCSE results that reflected their potential whereas in the mock GCSE examinations they had performed poorly.
25. The most able pupils are also encouraged to produce their best work and to aim high. This year, 4 pupils have received offers from Oxbridge following the very good preparatory work conducted in the 6th form by the head of geography. The school has also arranged for pupils to attend master classes, for example in mathematics. Around 50 pupils attended lectures at the Royal

Institution on Saturday mornings which they found very challenging and stimulating.

26. Using a grant from the Sutton Trust, the school has set up a school for gifted and talented pupils which runs after school each week. Distinctive programmes are offered to the pupils; for example, during the inspection week they were working on alterations to the school's web site. The pupils were selected for the programme on the basis of their performance in National Curriculum tests and other assessments.
27. Pupils are offered a wide range of experiences to try and broaden their horizons. A good example is the visit made to Eton by a group of 11 pupils who studied there for 6 days (the headteacher gaining the funding for 45 pupils from Brent to make the visit, from the Sutton Trust and Eton). Pupils reported that they gained confidence from realising that they were as capable of doing the work as the Eton pupils.
28. Video conferencing is used extensively and imaginatively. Two A-level courses are taught in this way which enables a broader range of courses to be offered to the students. This is a well-managed programme that the students appreciate. Other curriculum areas, such as geography, benefit from video conferencing through international links. It is also used for management purposes, regular contact being maintained with a school in the United States to compare progress with mentoring programmes.

The school has fostered an excellent range of partnerships which have been very significant in promoting high standards of work and behaviour.

29. A key partnership is with the Sisters of the Order who give the pupils a high level of pastoral and, in some cases, academic support.
30. A teacher of Italian is funded by the Italian embassy. This adds another significant dimension to the Language College curriculum.
31. Alongside financial support, HSBC helps the school in other valuable ways. There are currently 9 members of HSBC staff mentoring 12 pupils who are, or were, under-achieving for a variety of reasons. The meetings are fortnightly for an hour, and the pupils are very positive about the impact that the programme is having on their attitudes to work and their standards of achievement.
32. The Square Mile Club links the school with City of London Boys' School and encourages study and social links between sixth form students. Around 10-12 students benefit in a programme designed to raise their aspirations.

The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are very good.

33. Pupils generally behave very well in the classroom and around the school. Their attitudes to work are also generally very good. They respond well to the challenges and opportunities offered by the teachers and are appreciative of the positive climate for learning that has been developed.

The procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance and behaviour are very good.

34. In a small proportion of lessons and in a form period there were examples seen of pupils behaving in an unsatisfactory way despite the hard work of teachers. This provided the inspection team with good examples of how effectively the school's procedures for promoting good behaviour are, as generally the school is very orderly.
35. The introduction of the conduct book has been very effective. The performance of individual pupils in each class is recorded and reviewed on a daily basis. This rigorous procedure shows the pupils that immediate action is taken to cut out unsatisfactory behaviour.
36. The school's procedures for promoting good attendance are excellent. Weekly checks are examined by the headteacher, targets are set and outcomes are displayed in form rooms. The school is not afraid to challenge parents about the legitimacy of absence notes. This has

offended some parents but has improved attendance levels. The school reports that some of its procedures have been taken up by the local education authority.

Financial monitoring and control are strong.

37. All spending is carefully costed and monitored. Principles of best value are secure. The school appropriately continues to follow the guidance of the Financial and Business Procedures Manual which was a requirement for grant-maintained schools.
38. The school has successfully accumulated a considerable surplus which stood at over £500,000 at the end of the financial year 1998/9. This was achieved through the advantageous funding of the grant-maintained schools, the skill and determination of the headteacher in winning additional funds and the effectiveness of financial control. A considerable proportion is now appropriately being released for building improvements but at the end of the financial year 2000/2001 8.3% of the budget will remain as contingency, which is high.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards are not high enough: in the mainstream modern foreign languages, except in the sixth form; and in information technology.

39. GCSE standards have neither improved nor declined following the adoption of Language College status; in the mainstream languages they have been below average for many years. GCSE A*-C results in French have been below national and school averages throughout the majority of the last 10 years. A*-C results in Spanish have fluctuated, but overall they have improved, and are now broadly in line with the national average. GCSE results of small numbers of pupils in minority languages are consistently above national averages.
40. There are three main reasons for the under-performance of the mainstream languages at GCSE. Firstly, the languages are not used sufficiently for communication in lessons, English is used too often for confirmation of understanding and classroom organisation. Secondly, the atmosphere in the department is not conducive to language learning. There is too little display and use of authentic materials, classroom layouts are not suitable for practising speaking and listening and too many classrooms are away from the main languages area. Thirdly, there has been a great turn-over of teaching staff which has adversely affected the continuity of pupils' learning.
41. GCSE results in information technology are well below the national average but only a small proportion of pupils take the course, 15 in 1999. Of these, the great majority achieved results that were in line with or above their results in other subjects. The remaining pupils do not have dedicated information technology lessons and the other subjects do not adequately cover National Curriculum requirements. Therefore many pupils do not gain appropriate information technology skills by the end of Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 3 the most able pupils do not have an information technology course in Year 9 and have 50% less time for the subject than other pupils in Year 8, which prevents some of them from making appropriate progress.

At A-level, standards are not high enough in science and business studies.

42. A-level results in science, particularly in chemistry and biology, are significantly lower compared with results in other subjects. In 1999, in both chemistry and biology, the proportions of students gaining A-E grades and A-C grades were below the national average. The predicated results of the pupils were not achieved as indicated by the school's Alis analysis.
43. The quality of teaching is the principal reason for the below average science results. The emphasis is too much on learning rather than understanding. The examination is taught to, facts are presented clearly but the lack of vitality in the lessons does not stimulate the students' interest. As a result they do not appear to reflect on what they are taught and do not ask questions that indicate they are considering the subject in any depth. There are also insufficient linkages made between the 3 scientific areas, for example in redox and in organic chemistry.
44. Based on value added data, A-level and GNVQ results in business studies were low between

1997 and 1999. The 40% failure rate at A level in 1999 was high. A new teacher was appointed at the start of the current academic year and standards appear to have improved.

The information technology curriculum at Key Stage 4 does not meet statutory requirements.

45. Only a small proportion of pupils have sufficient tuition in the use of information technology at Key Stage 4 to enable them to meet the standards expected by the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. There has been a good attempt to map the teaching of the National Curriculum requirements across the other subjects, but in practice this is not sufficiently well embedded in schemes of work and the skill levels of the pupils are therefore too low.
46. There are weaknesses in the curriculum at Key Stage 3 in that not all the pupils receive appropriate information technology experience throughout the three years; however, there are just about sufficient opportunities for National Curriculum requirements to be satisfied. The most able pupils have the least information technology teaching at Key Stage 3 and make least progress unless they gain additional experience outside school hours.

Some senior and middle management roles are not fully developed.

47. Some of the management roles are not fully developed; for example, the responsibility for information and communication technology throughout the school is not held by a single manager. This inhibits the development of both pupils' and teachers' information and communication technology skills and the medium's use throughout the school.
48. The arrangements for the management of languages in the school are not sufficiently cohesive. Two roles have been created, one to manage the teaching of languages as part of the standard curriculum and one to manage the other aspects of the Language College. This division is helpful in splitting work-load and both managers have performed well in their separate areas, but it is not effective in creating a co-ordinated approach to the development of language teaching throughout the College.
49. The headteacher has high expectations of staff performance and has clear ideas about what teachers and managers should be doing. Some of this appears in the form of detailed directions about day-to-day practices. This has proved to be successful in raising standards but it limits opportunities for teachers and managers to develop their subjects and areas of responsibility in an individual way. If staff feel that change would be beneficial, they have to convince the headteacher and senior management that it would result in pupils achieving higher standards.

The range of strategies used by some teachers is limiting the progress of the pupils.

50. A significant proportion of the teachers rely too much on instructing the pupils from the front of the classroom. This can be an effective teaching method, but used on its own it limits the opportunities for pupils to explore ideas and to consolidate their learning. It is a feature of some science lessons; for example, in a Year 10 lesson about the length of hydrocarbon chains, pupils took notes from the teacher and responded to questions about facts. They dutifully completed tasks without showing evidence of scientific interest or enquiry. A-level science lessons were similar, and this is one of the key reasons why science A-level results are too low.
51. In a number of lessons, for example in a Year 10 French lesson about family relationships and a Year 8 English lesson on 'Shirley Valentine', pupils who did not readily contribute to discussions or provide answers to questions were not challenged to do so.

The planning of work to match the capabilities of all the pupils is in need of further development.

52. The school has developed some good programmes for supporting the work of pupils of all ability levels. In lessons teachers are less good at matching work to pupils' needs and abilities; for example, in a Year 8 geography lesson, the class test was pitched at too high a level for some pupils and too low a level for others. In a Year 11 Italian lesson the exercises were too easily within the capability of the more able pupils.

Communications with parents have not been successful in making all of them aware of the opportunities available to their children and, in some cases, of allaying their concerns.

53. Parents raised a number of concerns through the questionnaires and the meeting that were found to be unjustified. A significant proportion of parents, 13% of those who returned the questionnaires, said that they were not sufficiently well informed about their children's progress. However, the pupils have termly planners in which assessment grades are recorded and these are as available to parents as their children make them.
54. Parents are also concerned about the availability of lockers because of the weight of books that they have to carry around. In fact, all but two classes have access to lockers or lockable desks.
55. A significant minority of parents said that the school was not sufficiently responsive to their concerns indicating that communication arrangements are not always effective.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Improve standards in the mainstream modern foreign languages and in information technology.
- Improve A-level standards in science and business studies
- Meet statutory requirements for information technology at Key Stage 4.
- Ensure that all senior and middle management roles are fully developed.
- Ensure that all teachers use the most effective teaching strategies to raise standards and promote pupils' personal development.
- Ensure that all teachers plan work to meet the needs and abilities of all the pupils.
- Make parents aware of all the opportunities open to the pupils and respond more effectively to their concerns.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

56. The school agreed that issues surrounding the Language College and the matching of work to individual pupils' needs should form part of the inspection focus and these have been referred to in other parts of the report.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	76
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	11	44	40	1	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1003	146
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	230	

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y13	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	31	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	112	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	120

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	21

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999		177

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	149	113	109
	Total	149	113	109
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (65)	64 (48)	62 (45)
	National	63 (65)	62 (59)	55 (56)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	50 (28)	38 (28)	25 (15)
	National	28 (28)	38 (38)	23 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	135	112	135
	Total	135	112	135
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (72)	63 (48)	76 (69)
	National	64 (62)	64 (63)	60 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	35 (37)	37 (33)	35 (39)
	National	31 (30)	37 (37)	28 (30)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999		157	157

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys			1*
	Girls	96	153	158
	Total	96	153	159
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	61 (58)	98 (98)	100 (99)
	National	48 (46)	88 (88)	94 (93)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	43 (43)
	National	38 (37)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

* an external candidate

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999		83	83

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School		14.6	14.6 (17.6)		2.7	2.7 (2.6)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	100
	National	72.9

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	132
Black – African heritage	148
Black – other	55
Indian	3
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	3
White	644
Any other minority ethnic group	18

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	40	
Black – African heritage	21	
Black – other	1	
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	26	1
Other minority ethnic groups	2	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	59
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	231.3

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 2	
Key Stage 3	29
Key Stage 4	27

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	3,172,765
Total expenditure	3,324,687
Expenditure per pupil	3,314
Balance brought forward from previous year	534,523
Balance carried forward to next year	382,601

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1003
Number of questionnaires returned	181

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	33	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	56	37	4	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	30	5	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	50	36	10	3	1
The teaching is good.	54	37	5	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	36	9	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	30	6	4	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	18	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	50	37	6	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	64	29	4	1	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	31	3	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	54	32	6	2	6

Other issues raised by parents

All other issues raised by a number of parents appear in the main body of the report.