

# INSPECTION REPORT

Stantonbury Campus  
Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique Reference Number: 110526

Co directors: Lesley King & John Wilkins

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Reporting inspector: Alan Kent T3696

Dates of inspection: 15 – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708426

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
Type of control:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	12-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of co-chairs of governors: [where appropriate]	Brenda Verity Pip Surgey
Date of previous inspection:	6-17 <sup>th</sup> March 1995

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David Bray	Music	
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	Performing arts (Dance)	
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Liz Hale	History	
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London WC2B 6SE

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## **MAIN FINDINGS**

### **What the school does well**

- Very good leadership and management which give clear educational direction.
- Overall standards of attainment at GCSE are above the average for similar schools, and students make good progress.
- In the sixth form, students attain grades which are higher than might be expected at advanced level. They make very good progress.
- A high proportion of good and very good teaching, particularly in key stage 4 and the sixth form.
- The overall quality of education provided in the sixth form is a strength.
- Very good relationships between staff and students, and between students, raise students' expectations for success.
- The very good ethos raises levels of achievement in all aspects of students' experience on the campus.
- There are very good links with parents and the wider community. The community provision on the campus greatly enriches the opportunities for student development and learning.
- The support, guidance and care for students' welfare is good, and there are very good procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour.
- Provision to support students with special educational needs, and those whose first language is not English, is good.
- The community facilities enrich students' curriculum experience and have a positive effect on raising standards, particularly in the arts and physical education.

### **Where the school has weaknesses**

- I. There is a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in year 9. In these lessons, some students do not make enough progress in their learning.
- II. In some subjects, the curriculum provided in year 8 does not join up well with the curriculum that students have experienced in their previous schools.
- III. Standards of attainment in mathematics are well below national expectations, particularly in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).
- IV. There are a number of statutory requirements that are not met, including provision for an act of collective worship and insufficient religious education in the sixth form.



The strengths of Stantonbury far outweigh the weaknesses identified in the inspection. The school is in a very good position to continue to improve and raise standards of achievement even higher.

· **How the school has improved since the last inspection**

Stantonbury has made good progress since the last inspection in March 1995. Levels of student attainment are rising, and in GCSE in 1999 the improvement was above that achieved by schools nationally. In addition, the quality of teaching observed was better in this inspection than that previously recorded.

Governors have reviewed and restructured their working practices and are now effective across their wide range of responsibilities. Improvements have been made in the arrangements for sixth form education and also in the provision of information technology, which are having a good effect on raising standards. The Campus Development Plan, and the planning process which produces it, enable secure decision making.

Satisfactory progress has been made in promoting students' spiritual development, and work is continuing on this issue. Satisfactory progress has also been made in raising the standards and quality of provision in modern foreign languages.

The Campus has clear aims, priorities and targets, and is well set to achieve further improvement in the future.

## Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds in national tests, GCSE and A/AS-level examinations in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			ey
			<i>well above average</i> A
			<i>above average</i> B
			<i>Average</i> C
Key Stage 3 Test			
English	D	E	
Mathematics	D	D	
Science	C	C	
Overall	D	D	
GCSE Examinations			<i>below average</i> D
5 or more A*-C	C	C	
5 or more A* -G	B	B	
Average points score	C	A	
A/AS – levels	C		<i>well below average</i> E

Many students enter the school with low standards of previous attainment. They make satisfactory progress for the first two years and standards improve, but they are still below standards reached by similar schools. Standards of attainment in English are higher than recent key stage 3 test results indicate.

There is considerable improvement in the GCSE results when compared with students' previous performance. Students make good progress and attain standards which are higher than those achieved in similar schools. A good proportion of students gain a high number of the top grades.

Students in the sixth form attain grades which are often above those which might be expected. They make very good progress.

The examination results in 1999 showed a further improvement. The results attained at A – level have improved at double the national rate of improvement.

Whilst the rise in standards of attainment as students move through the school is seen across the range of subjects, standards in mathematics are considerably lower and need to be improved.

## Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 8-9	Satisfactory	English, history, geography & religious education	Mathematics, French, science, design and technology
Years 10-11	Good	English, integrated humanities, dance, drama	Mathematics, French
Sixth form	Very good	All subjects	
English	Good		
Mathematics	Satisfactory		

Teaching is much improved since the last inspection. In well over half of lessons across the age range the quality of teaching is good. This includes a quarter of lessons where teaching is excellent or very good. Teaching is of satisfactory quality in the large majority of the remainder. However, overall, one out of every ten lessons has weaknesses, with a high proportion in year 9.

The quality of teaching in the sixth form is a strength, with well over two thirds of lessons being at least good and, of those, a third being in the very good or excellent category. It is also very strong in key stage 4, where unsatisfactory teaching is rare and over half of lessons are at least good.

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

## Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Behaviour is good. The vast majority of students behave well and demonstrate good levels of self-discipline. A few boys, particularly in year 9, show some unsatisfactory behaviour in class.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is very low.
Ethos*	The school promotes high expectations of students both in their work and relationships. They respond to this challenge very well and ethos is very good.
Leadership and management	The co-directors and senior managers of the school provide excellent leadership and educational direction. The governors, and other staff with management responsibilities, provide good support.
Curriculum	The school meets its aim of providing a broad, balanced, entitlement curriculum for all students. The curriculum enables the majority of students to take ten GCSEs, and a good range of A-Levels is offered in the sixth form.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Overall provision is good and makes a positive contribution to raising students' achievements. Moral and social development are promoted very well, cultural development is good, and spiritual development is satisfactory.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The school is well staffed with suitably qualified teachers and a very good allocation of associate staff who support the work of teachers and the learning of students. The accommodation is good and the community facilities enhance the quality of education for the students. Learning resources are good, and the recent improvements in information technology have provided excellent facilities.
Value for money	The school provides a good standard of education overall, and uses its resources efficiently. It is providing good value for money and very good value in the sixth form provision.

*\*Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

## **The parents' views of the school**

### **What most parents like about the school**

- V. Parents find it easy to approach the school to deal with problems.
- VI. They state that the school encourages students to get involved in a wide range of activities.
- VII. There was very strong support for the attitudes and values that the school actively promoted.
- VIII. Parents felt very well informed about their child's schooling.
- IX. At the meeting, parents thought that student behaviour was good.
- X. Parents stated that Stantonbury produced well-rounded individuals who were well prepared to succeed in the wider world.

### **What some parents are not happy about**

- XI. Some parents are not satisfied with the
- XII. There were some views on the questionnaire
- XIII. Some parents thought that work  
ugh to work done in previous schools.

This inspection report strongly supports the positive views expressed by parents.

The homework provided by the teachers across all subjects is generally good, and promotes students' learning.

There are some problems with a few boys in year 9 whose behaviour is not good enough. The school is taking active steps to deal with this situation.

More could be done to improve the connections between the work provided in years 8 and 9 and that done by students in their previous schools.

The large majority of parents believe that Stantonbury is providing a good quality education for its students with a number of significant strengths. This belief is well founded.

## · **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

XIV. Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in year 9 by:

- ensuring that lesson planning provides a variety of activities, with appropriate allocations of time;
- taking action to engage and motivate the few students, particularly boys, in a class who have a poor attitude to learning;
- maintaining pace and challenge for all students;
- providing additional extension work for the more able students.  
(Paras 43,47,48,146,147,156,168,180)
- Ensure that the curriculum provided, particularly in year 8, takes due account of the wide range of previous learning of the students, who come from a number of different schools.  
(Paras 12,48,98,157,185)
- Continue to support and strive for the raising of standards of attainment in mathematics  
(Paras 21,22,141-150)
- Identify examples of good and very good practice that are taking place and use them to improve the quality of education provision across the campus.  
(Paras 51,67,76,104, 198, 271, 278, 297)
- Attend to the matters identified in the report where statutory requirements are not met.  
(Paras 55,56,97, 108, 225, 286, 292)

## · **INTRODUCTION**

### · **Characteristics of the school**

- 1 Stantonbury Campus is an established community school that provides a comprehensive education for students aged 12-18 years. In addition, there are extensive community facilities which are available and used to support the students and their learning. Although it was founded as two schools, the campus is now fully integrated as a single institution, with a joint governing body. The headteachers are co-directors of the whole campus.
- 2 The majority of students live in Milton Keynes and come from the full range of social and economic backgrounds. There are 2581 students in the school with an even balance of boys and girls. There are about 470 students in the sixth form.
- 3 There are 204 students from minority ethnic groups, and about half of these students receive additional support in their learning. 86 of these students come from homes where English is not the first language in common use.
- 4 About 15% of students are entitled to free schools meals, and this is broadly in line with the national average for comprehensive schools.
- 5 The intake of students to the Campus represents the full range of previous attainment, but there are more students below average attainment than above. There are 561 students entered on the Campus register of special educational needs, and 104 of those students have statutory statements. This is above the national average for comprehensive schools.

- 6      Eighty four percent of students continued in the sixth form or further education or training in 1999. At the end of the sixth form, over 130 entered university, including many taking a gap year and those following foundation arts courses.
- 7      Stantonbury Campus states that its purpose is to enable each individual to acquire the personal qualities, attitudes, skills and qualifications necessary for personal fulfillment and active social responsibility in a rapidly changing world.
- 8      The operation of the Campus aims to combine the flexibility and richness of resources that size brings, with an organization that allows each student to feel secure and special and that encourages individual challenge.
- 9      It emphasises its fundamental belief in the equal value of all members of its community, and a determined optimism about the potential of each one.

## Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>2</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	270	267	537



National Curriculum Test Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	130	166	122
	Girls	178	149	106
	Total	308	315	228
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	57.4(57.0)	58.7(53.9)	42.5(53.8)
	National	63(65)	62(59)	55(56)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	16.8(17.6)	27.6(26.7)	9.3(22.5)
	National	28(35)	38(36)	23(27)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or Above	Boys	164	172	180
	Girls	188	175	165
	Total	352	347	345
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	65.5(69.9)	64.6(70.5)	64.2(66.0)
	National	64(62)	64(63)	60(62)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	30.0(30.3)	30.0(30.2)	25.3(26.9)
	National	31(30)	37(37)	28(30)

### Attainment at Key Stage 4<sup>3</sup>

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest Reporting year: 1999		Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		1999	241	219	460
GCSE Results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A* to G	1 or more grades A* to G	
Number of pupils	Boys	99	225	230	
Achieving	Girls	116	203	211	
standard specified	Total	215	428	441	
Percentage	School	47(41)	93(93)	96(97)	
achieving					
standard specified	National	47(46)	88(87)	94(93)	

Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and percentage of <i>such pupils</i> who achieved all those they studied:	Number	% Success rate
School	0	-
National		-


### Attainment in the Sixth Form<sup>4</sup>

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 who were entered for GCE A/AS examination in the latest reporting year: 1999	Year	Male	Femal e	Total
	1999	65	86	151

Average A/AS points score	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A levels or equivalent		
per candidate	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	15.6	17.5	16.9(15.6)	4.2	5.0	4.6(3.1)
National	17.1	17.6	17.1(17.8)	2.7	2.8	2.8(3.0)

Number entered for the IB Diploma, and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved this qualification:	Number	% Success rate
School	0	-

National  -

Number in final year of approved vocational qualifications and percentage of <i>such students</i> who achieved these qualifications:		Number	% Success rate
	School	69	92.8
	National		72.0

- .....
- 3 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year
- 4 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	8.8
	Absence	National comparative data	8.3
	Unauthorised	School	0.2
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

- .
- .
- .

## Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	19
	Permanent	1

## Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	23
	Satisfactory or better	90
	Less than satisfactory	10

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

#### **Attainment and progress**

- 10 On entry to Stantonbury Campus, student's prior attainment covers the full range that is recorded nationally. However, national based tests and the results gained a year earlier, at the end of key stage 2, show that more students are below the national average expected for their age than above. The proportion of students with special educational needs is greater than the average found nationally in comprehensive schools.
- 11 At the end of key stage 3, when students have been at Stantonbury for two years, their levels of attainment in national curriculum tests are below national expectations. However, most have made satisfactory progress, considering the low base from which they started. In English and mathematics their performance is below the national average for similar schools. In science, performance is variable, being either close to or below the national average for similar schools.
- 12 In lessons, there is satisfactory progress in years 8 and 9. However, progress in year 8 is sometimes held back by the wide range of curriculum and learning experience that the students have had in their previous schools. In year 9, some groups of students, particularly boys, make unsatisfactory progress because their attitudes to learning are not good enough. The school has been taking steps to remedy this situation. This unsatisfactory progress is most marked in art, mathematics, design and technology, music and science.
- 13 In the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) students attain levels which are above average for schools of a similar type. The results for 1999 were at the national average for students who gained five or more grades A\*-C. This is better than the national average for similar schools. The proportion of students who gain five or more grades A\*-G was above the national average. Overall, the students show a significant improvement in comparison with their performance at the end of key stage 3. They make good progress.
- 14 In GCSE, the girls attain standards which are higher than those of the boys, but this difference matches that which is recorded nationally. Students who come from families where English is an additional language achieve good levels of attainment. They obtain the same proportion of five or more grades at A\*-C and, on average, gain one more grade C than other students in the school.
- 15 Students of all abilities make good progress. Those students with special educational needs attain higher level grades at GCSE than might be expected. They make significant progress in their learning, their personal development and raising their self-esteem.
- 16 Targets have been set for improvement in national tests at the end of key stage 3, for GCSE and advanced level (A –Level) and vocational courses. Two of the three statutory targets set for the year 2000 were achieved in 1999. The improvement in attainment is rising slightly faster than that recorded for schools nationally.
- 17 In the sixth form, the level of attainment across the wide range of subjects at advanced level is in line with the national average. When compared with their level of attainment at GCSE many students attain higher grades at advanced level than might have been

expected. They make very good progress and sustain a good commitment to completing their courses. Overall, levels of attainment at advanced level have been rising twice as fast as the national trend.

- 18 The students who take the National Vocational Qualification at intermediate and foundation levels have a good record of successful completion of course. This has been a significant improvement in recent years. Students who take the BTEC course also have a good record of success. All these students make good progress through their courses.
- 19 In English the results of national curriculum tests at the end of year 9 are below national expectation. However, these results are an improvement from the low standards on entry and students have made sound progress. In GCSE, the results are below national average, but show a significant improvement when compared with entry standards. Overall progress is good and students' work develops maturity and structure. At advanced level, examination performance is good. Generally good progress is made.
- 20 Standards in literacy improve for all students in their first two years in the school. Drama work enhances oral skills considerably and reading skills are developed well. This good progress continues in key stage 4 and written work develops well, but technical accuracy remains a problem for a number of students.
- 21 At the end of key stage 3, in mathematics, students attain standards below the average for similar schools. Students make generally satisfactory progress from their entry into the school. Progress in the present year 9 is unsatisfactory. In GCSE mathematics, students are attaining standards, which are significantly below what should be expected. Progress is unsatisfactory. At advanced level there has been an improvement and standards are now slightly above national averages. For these students progress is satisfactory.
- 22 Standards of numeracy are below the level that would be expected throughout key stage 3 and 4. The use and application of number across the curriculum is not co-ordinated and this has an adverse effect on standards. Basic numeracy is often a barrier to developing higher levels of skill.
- 23 Levels of attainment in science at the end of key stage 3 are variable, being either close to or below national average from one year to the next. Progress is unsatisfactory and this is particularly seen in some lessons in year 9. The results at GCSE show a marked improvement from key stage 3 and progress is good. The students have made up the previous deficit in all aspects of science. At advanced level, attainment in physics is in line with expectations, but standards in biology and chemistry are consistently below those in physics.
- 24 Standards of attainment in design and technology at the end of key stage 3 are close to national averages. Students generally make satisfactory progress, but progress in year 9 lessons for some students is unsatisfactory at present. Results in GCSE are significantly better and are at the national average. This is achieved by many students and they make good progress. There are very good standards at advanced level and students make very good progress to achieve results above those which might be expected.
- 25 In both history and geography, within the integrated humanities course, the standards of attainment at the end of key stage 3 are at the national average. Students make good progress. At advanced level history results are above expectations and in geography they

are at the national average. In both subjects students make very good progress.

- 26 Humanities is taken by all students at GCSE. They achieve standards which are well above the national average. Students make good progress. The work in integrated humanities as a whole makes a significant positive contribution to developing students' literacy skills.
- 27 Religious education is also taught within the integrated humanities curriculum. Standards of attainment at the end of both key stage 3 and key stage 4 are at national expectations. Students make satisfactory progress and are good at reflecting and responding to questions of belief. There is very little provision for religious education in the sixth form.
- 28 In French, students attain standards lower than the national average by the end of key stage 3 and make unsatisfactory progress. However, students studying German and Spanish reach standards which are in line with the national average, and they make satisfactory progress. GCSE results are in line with national averages and are on a rising trend. Students make satisfactory progress. At advanced level, standards are in line with expectations and students make satisfactory progress.
- 29 Standards of attainment in information technology are in line with national averages at key stage 3 and students are making good progress. Standards in key stage 4 are below expectations, reflecting the point that has been reached in developing the curriculum. In the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress overall, with sound standards being achieved.
- 30 Students make satisfactory progress in art through key stage 3, and attain standards which reach the national average. Progress is good in key stage 4 and results in GCSE are well above the national average. Advanced level results are also well above the national average, and students make very good progress.
- 31 In music, standards are below national averages at the end of key stage 3, and students make unsatisfactory progress. In key stage 4, progress is unsatisfactory and results at GCSE are below national averages. At advanced level, standards are at the national average and students make satisfactory progress.
- 32 At the end of key stage 3, in dance, standards of attainment are at national expectations and students make good progress. These standards are maintained in key stage 4 and students make very good progress. In the sixth form, standards at A-Level are in line with expectations, and they are good in performing arts courses. Students make very good progress.
- 33 Standards of attainment in performing arts are above national expectations at the end of key stage 3 and students make good progress. GCSE results are in line with national averages, and this is achieved with a much larger number of students than would normally be entered. Students make good progress. In the sixth form, standards are in line with expectations for advanced level, and are high in the BTEC course. Students make very good progress.
- 34 In physical education standards are generally in line with national expectations at both key stages and in the sixth form. Some students achieve high standards, and they are well supported with a good range of extra-curricular activities. Students make satisfactory progress in key stage 3, and good progress in key stage 4 and the sixth form.



## **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

- 35 Most students have positive attitudes to learning and this is usually linked to good relationships and good teaching. For example, in nearly all English lessons students react with interest and enthusiasm to the active teaching styles and in religious education they are reflective. However, in some mathematics lessons students frequently lack concentration and some show a lack of respect towards teaching staff. Attitudes improve as students move through the school and are supported in gaining maturity. Some students in lower ability groups in key stage 4 show limited interest and can be disruptive, for example in modern foreign languages. Students in the sixth form are motivated, interested and frequently enthusiastic, joining in with discussions and debate.
- 36 Where attitudes are less positive it is usually linked to weaker teaching and classroom management and the immaturity and unsatisfactory behaviour of some boys, especially in some year 9 classes. Some younger students find it more difficult to concentrate and listen well.
- 37 When given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, for example through projects in information technology (IT), coursework in humanities and presentations in English lessons, students are enthusiastic and very responsive. Students with special education needs, or English as an additional language, work well, particularly when supported, and are positive about their learning. Overall, students attitudes to learning are good.
- 38 Behaviour is good and the campus is a well-ordered community. Parents are impressed by the good standards of behaviour when they visit the campus. The vast majority of students respond sensibly to the code of conduct and the emphasis on mutual respect, and they demonstrate good levels of self-discipline. Property is well cared for and displays are valued. Students are generally careful with equipment, particularly in IT. Most students, especially the younger ones, value the Campus Achievement Scheme and are accepting of sanctions. A relatively small number of students, usually boys, find it more difficult to behave appropriately and this can disrupt learning. Exclusions are low and falling and are well below the national average.
- 39 Very good relationships are a strength of the school. There is a strong sense of identity within the hall structure and students feel valued as individuals. Relationships between students are very good and they support one another well in lessons. They are good at working together in a variety of groupings. When given opportunities to listen to the views of others, and be reflective, they respond well and often with sensitivity. There is little harassment or bullying and students feel secure and confident that any issues will be dealt with promptly. Relationships with teaching staff and other adults are particularly good and reflective of the strong, positive ethos of the school.
- 40 Personal development is good and by the time students leave parents commented favourably that they are well-rounded, confident young adults. Many students respond positively to the wide range of extra-curricular activities and a significant number participate in additional modern foreign languages courses. Sixth form students are involved in aspects of community service and are helpful to younger students, for example, through paired reading across the campus and a buddying scheme in one of the halls. The sixth form council is active and a hall council has been successfully established this year in one of the halls, with a positive reaction from all age groups. Opportunities are given to enable many students to develop responsibility in group activities and, when provided, for example in assemblies, students are very willing to get involved. The positive attitudes, good behaviour, very good relationships

and good personal development which have been sustained since the previous inspection have a very positive impact on attainment and progress in the school.

• **Attendance**

- 41 Attendance is satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. For the last four years attendance has remained at a similar level, just above 90%, and last year it was 91%. Authorised absence is slightly higher than the national average and last year it was 8.8% although unauthorised absence at 0.2% was well below the national average. The school believes there is little undetected truancy. Most students attend regularly and punctually and parents report that their children enjoy coming to school. However, the level of absence of a small number of individuals is high and this has an adverse affect on their attainment. Some students are absent due to genuine illness, and there are some who have particular problems and they are supported by the school or appropriately referred to the Education Welfare Officer. The amount of term-time holidays is high, particularly in the autumn term and at the end of the summer term and the school has concerns about the level of parentally condoned absence for some students.
- 42 Punctuality is generally satisfactory and most lessons start promptly. Many students are self-disciplined and well organised about their personal time keeping, necessitated by no warning bells. There is a significant amount of lateness to registration in the afternoon.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

### • Teaching

- 43 Teaching is much improved since the last inspection. In well over a half of lessons across the age range the quality of teaching is good. This includes a quarter of lessons where teaching is excellent or very good. Teaching is of satisfactory quality in the large majority of the remainder. However, overall, one out of every ten lessons has weaknesses, with a high proportion concentrated in year 9. Teaching in all years is rarely poor, but the shortcomings of the teaching in year 9 have an adverse impact on progress and this is a key issue to address.
- 44 The quality of teaching in the sixth form is a strength, with well over two thirds of lessons being at least good, and, of those, a third being in the very good or excellent category. It is also very strong in key stage 4, where unsatisfactory teaching is rare and over half of lessons are at least good.
- 45 Good lessons were observed in all subjects during the week of the inspection. Good teaching was seen in a high proportion of lessons in English, the performing arts and humanities subjects, and in the large majority of subjects in the sixth form.
- 46 In lessons where teaching is of good or very good quality students consolidate prior learning well or acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills which enables rapid progress. In these lessons, teachers:
- have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and plan learning carefully to cover the programmes of study or examination syllabus. This is the case in all subjects and teachers' subject knowledge is a strength;
  - set high, but realistic expectations, which are explained well to students so that they know what to do, and by when. In drama, teachers make learning objectives clear, questioning skills are excellent and expectations are high. This is also the case in art, where students are involved as demonstrators and dialogue with teachers is challenging;
  - plan a variety of activities, using a range of resources and strategies, which sustain interest and engage students for the full lesson. This is evident in modern foreign languages, in English and in physical education, where activities are provided in succession, with good coaching points and a specific time scale. This creates a sense of urgency and ensures perseverance and concentration. For example, in English, active involvement is encouraged through use of drama conventions;
  - match tasks to the different needs and levels of understanding, so that those who learn at a faster pace are not held back, and those who need support are helped effectively. This is strength in humanities subjects;
  - promote firm, but positive relationships, which give encouragement and praise, but make expectations of behaviour clear. Good oral encouragement is given, for example in religious education, where teachers know students well, and in music where supportive comments help motivation;
  - assess students' work regularly and indicate clearly how to improve. Day to day

assessment is a strength in special educational needs, because students are aware of the criteria used to mark their work, and are provided with clear guidance on how to improve. This is also the case in the sixth form where students receive high quality tutoring;

- and set challenging homework regularly which extends work done in class and leads to further progress in learning. This is a positive feature in many subjects and is particularly effective in geography and in modern foreign languages.

47 Unsatisfactory teaching is a reason for concern in year 9. Although a third of the teaching in year 9 is at least good, a quarter of teaching has weaknesses. The weaker teaching is found in some lessons in design and technology, mathematics, French and science, although in these subjects, good teaching was also observed. The percentage of unsatisfactory teaching in years 10, 11 and the sixth form is very low.

48 Where teaching is weak and does not promote high standards and rapid progress, teachers fail to:

- meet the needs of students and their differing levels of prior attainment. This is particularly the case in year 8 where insufficient notice is taken of work covered in previous schools. For example, in French, students repeat work which is often too easy. This is also the case in year 9 where, in some subjects, teachers are not always aware of work covered in year 8, or they do not plan sufficiently to ensure that content builds on prior learning and is at a higher level. This is affecting the progress of some of the more able students;
- manage behaviour in accordance with the school's code of conduct. In these lessons, poor behaviour, which ranges from casual chatter to lack of respect, is not addressed with sufficient rigour and impedes the learning of others. In some cases, overt lack of engagement and effort is not challenged;
- use a variety of teaching and learning methods to ensure good use of time, particularly in longer lessons where students have the same subject over two hours;
- maintain sufficient pace. This leads to lack of interest and poor progress, for example when some students complete the work rapidly and become bored because of slow completion of work by others and the lack of teachers' attention to their needs.

49 Across all subjects, homework is set and is generally appropriate to extend learning. Challenging homework is particularly effective when it enables preparation for the lesson and leads to higher standards. For example, in geography year 9, students were asked to write a report on class discussion of hydrology. This consolidated their learning. Sometimes, homework is only finishing off class work and this is not always effective in challenging students enough. The use of students' planners is very good and promotes good organisational skills, particularly for the management of coursework at key stage 4. The majority of parents are satisfied with the work that their child is expected to do at home. Inspectors confirm the view of parents. Teachers ensure that relevant homework is set and they insist on its completion. The provision of homework has improved substantially since the last inspection.

50 The teaching of students who have special educational needs is good. The specialist teachers have a high level of knowledge and understanding, with appropriate expectations of what can be achieved by each individual student. These teachers have a very good knowledge of

mainstream provision, including knowledge of A-level work. They use a wide range of methodologies, and multi-sensory teaching enables students who have learning or physical difficulties to access the topic in hand and complete tasks successfully. On a few occasions, mainstream teachers do not provide a sufficiently specific purpose for the tasks, and planning to ensure the successful attainment of Individual Education Plan targets is inconsistent. However, mainstream teachers receive good advice and support from their special needs colleagues.

- 51 The marking of students' work is regular. Most teachers give good oral feedback to students in class. Marking is helpful in the examinations years because teachers are very aware of examination criteria and provide precise guidance. For example in humanities, written assessment is a strength because marking is very detailed and leads to better coursework. In English, day-to-day assessment contributes positively to progress. There is, however, some variation across and within subjects in the quality of feedback given through marking and assessment. In the sixth form, it is regular and students understand their strengths and weaknesses.

- **The curriculum and assessment**

- 52 The school meets its aim of providing a broad, balanced, entitlement curriculum to all students. The provision is satisfactory at key stage three and good at key stage four and in the sixth form. The strengths at key stage three are in mathematics, English, physical education and information technology, where the schemes of work ensure good coverage of the national curriculum programmes of study and attainment targets. Weaknesses in this key stage exist in science, design technology, art and French.
- 53 The key stage four curriculum enables the majority of students to take ten GCSE's, with integrated humanities and English together adding curriculum value in the form of GCSE drama. Coverage of information technology is variable, and at present is insufficient to enable students to reach appropriate higher levels. A very good range of GCE A-Levels is offered in the sixth form, with vocational programmes being limited to GNVQ foundation and intermediate levels and BTEC. There are satisfactory arrangements for the extension of curricular opportunities for additional modern foreign languages at key stage 4.
- 54 The curriculum provision is enhanced through hall days, when the timetable is suspended and curriculum areas offer extended learning experiences linked to themes within the schemes of work. There is evidence that some of these days are clearly linked to the curriculum, (Shakespeare Days in English).
- 55 The Arts College status and Sportsmark award, recently gained by the school, have provided opportunities to enrich the curriculum. Students in year nine study either an enhanced physical education or arts curriculum and allocation to the specialism is carried out using student attainment data. One outcome is that a few students' study no music in year 9, thus statutory requirements are not met in this subject.
- 56 Statutory requirements are not met for religious education in the sixth form and information technology at key stage four. At key stage 4 a few students undertake extended work experience programmes, but the school does not comply fully with the necessary regulations for disapplications from the National Curriculum.
- 57 Provision for students with special education needs is good. Breadth and balance are maintained by supporting students in mainstream classes, and this support is particularly good in English, mathematics and integrated humanities. Students are withdrawn for extra tuition for reading and numeracy programmes, as well as for GCSE course work support. A range of differentiated work folders is being developed with access through the information technology network. The schemes of work and use of 'Success-Maker' to develop numeracy and literacy using information technology ensure all students can acquire appropriate skills. Very good provision is made for sixth form students who have specific learning difficulties. Curricular provision for students for whom English is a second language is good. Students

are encouraged to take community languages at GCSE, and the promotion of positive multi-ethnic images occurs across the curriculum.

- 58 Planning for continuity and progression in key stage 3, building on students' previous learning in other schools, is unsatisfactory except in English and mathematics. The strengths in English and mathematics relate to focused liaison programmes with middle schools and schemes of work with effective development of skills. In information technology the development of skills through key stage 3 is good. The modules in design and technology are free standing so planned opportunities for sequential learning do not occur. In mathematics there is insufficient building on basic skills as students progress through the school to bring out higher order attainment. There is limited planning for developing key ideas and beliefs in religious education.
- 59 Continuity and progression through key stage four is satisfactory overall. It is very good in design technology where schemes of work provide clear focus for the development of both designing and making skills. It is also good in English and integrated humanities. However, practice is unsatisfactory in music, mathematics, information technology, art and religious education where schemes of work do not promote a sequential approach to the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. Continuity and progression is good in the sixth form, with very good provision in history and design technology.
- 60 Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Students benefit from a wide ranging programme of events, including residential and exchange experiences in this country, Europe, Africa and India. The superb physical education facilities are available to students outside of the school day for competitive games and other sports. There is a wide range of opportunities for competitive sport and for supporting the curriculum activities and this has a very positive effect on raising students' attainment. The theatre attracts professional and semi- professional performers and all theatre work is linked in some way to the statutory curriculum with students also involved as performers and backstage.
- 61 The curriculum is supplemented by a well developed tutorial programme which includes careers and health education, study skills and citizenship. The programme is delivered in a way that promotes a variety of skills including, oracy, debating and literacy skills. The careers education and guidance programme is very good and delivered using a good range of resources. Very good careers materials are also available in the school library. All students undertake a work experience programme which is linked to the curriculum.
- 62 Procedures for assessing students' attainment at key stages 3 and 4 are satisfactory and very good in the sixth form. These procedures enable students to make appropriate choices at the age of sixteen when they move onto the next stage of their education, and also ensure that students make appropriate choices when moving onto higher education at the age of eighteen.
- 63 There is a school wide assessment policy, with the flexibility for subjects to adopt specific strategies as appropriate. Half yearly reviews assess student progress against "aim for grades"; and an annual report and parents' meeting are used to discuss student attainment and progress. These systems also enable effective action to be taken to identify targets and improve students' progress. There are good strategies to support improvement, including mentoring, peer buddies and after school clubs.

- 64 Since the last inspection effective added value systems have been introduced, based on both data that indicates students' potential and their current achievement levels. These are good developments and are supported by departmental approaches to tracking attainment. Practice, however, varies across the school. It is a strength in English where teacher, student and group assessments are regularly recorded. It is also good in design technology where accurate formative written feedback, particularly at key stage four, enables appropriate targets to be set. It is less effective in some other subjects. For example, in mathematics standardised marking systems are used but insufficient feedback is given to students.
- 65 Systems are particularly good in the sixth form where regular, consistent and accurate marking contributes effectively to student progress. As well as English, there is very good practice in sociology, design technology, politics, economics, geography, information technology and psychology.
- 66 The use of assessment to inform planning is satisfactory in key stages 3 and 4 and good in the sixth form. However, practice across subject departments is variable. It is unsatisfactory in special education needs where individual education plans are insufficiently focused on targets and are not informed by outcomes of diagnostic tests. In science, it is unsatisfactory at key stage three where teacher assessments are carried out but not used to inform planning. It is also unsatisfactory in information technology (at key stage 4) where systems do not yet exist for the particular needs of the subject.
- 67 Good practice can be found in English across all key stages in sixth form history, information technology, science and mathematics. This practice is characterised by effective tracking of students, clear expectations of record keeping and departmental discussion of improvement strategies.

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## **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- 68 The school is a well ordered community where all students are valued as individual learners and benefit from a clear ethos promoting equality and optimism. The moral and social development for students is a particular strength of the school. Overall, provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development makes a positive contribution to raising students' overall achievements.
- 69 Students understand the difference between right and wrong, and through the code of conduct are encouraged to develop respect for themselves, others, learning and the environment. The code is accepted, clearly understood and has a positive impact on learning. Members of staff provide excellent role models; they treat students with care and respect. The ethos of the school supports good moral behaviour. Student loyalty to their individual hall and hall staff further supports moral learning and development. Through the parents' meeting and questionnaire return, positive support was expressed by parents for the values and attitudes promoted by the school.
- 70 There are many good opportunities in the curriculum to explore and discuss wider moral issues. The personal and social education programme teaches students to consider moral questions in the context of their own experience and beyond. Students develop confidence to explore moral issues in a variety of ways through tutor programmes, assemblies and group activities. In religious education students explore issues including violence and abortion. Humanities and English provide many good opportunities to examine moral questions. In discussion of appropriate use of the Internet, students investigate morality in the use of information technology in society. Physical education emphasises team spirit and playing by the rules. There are good opportunities in the GNVQ subject areas, and within the sixth form core programme, for older students to investigate and debate values and issues of right and wrong.
- 71 Social education is well developed in school. Hall pastoral structures play an important role in promoting social development for groups and individuals. Relationships between student themselves and with staff are respectful, tolerant and friendly. Parents report that they are very pleased with the good quality of relationships in school between staff and students.
- 72 Tutorial time and the personal and social education programme contribute well to social development. Year 8 students benefit especially from a residential experience, which promotes social cohesion and allows for tutor group identity to develop. The school makes good provision for students to take personal responsibility as learners, for example, by completion of their planners, to note work, achievement, targets and credits awarded. Students work well together. There are many instances of collaborative work in the curriculum, especially in performing arts.
- 73 Achievements are celebrated widely both in hall and in the campus newsletter and noticeboards. There are good opportunities for social development through extra-curricular and sports activities. Students are encouraged to represent their hall in sporting competitions and during sports day.
- 74 Students have some opportunities to exercise responsibility in the wider school community, for instance in one hall a pilot scheme for year11 students to 'buddy' year 8 students to assist in their introduction to the school. The school council for the sixth form, and hall council in one hall, provide opportunities to represent student views and to influence the decisions about school issues. Sixth form students contribute positively to their understanding of citizenship

and responsibility through paired reading schemes for younger students, or work in the campus gallery or theatre as part of campus service.

- 75 Pre-work experience employment interviews allow year 10 students to consider work roles in the community and to take responsibility for visitors to the campus. An 'Equal Choices' initiative encourages students from ethnic minority groups to develop social skills and confidence to make good use of work shadowing and work experience.
- 76 The promotion of spiritual development has strengths but also some weaknesses. Overall the provision is satisfactory. There are powerful learning opportunities provided through religious education, English, performing arts and humanities, for students to reflect and develop spiritual awareness. For instance, empathy and self-knowledge are fostered in considering poetry and photographs of the First World War in English. In religious education students consider the values and spiritual life of American Indians, and in humanities they look at the impact of belief on the environment. Performing arts provides for students to reflect on the human condition, dilemmas and morality.
- 77 Access on the campus to an ecumenical centre promotes individual worship opportunities and sensitive arrangements are made for Moslem students to worship during Ramadan. Visits from Moslem groups or the Salvation Army, to consider elements of spirituality with students, are planned into the Personal and social education programme. Students of all ages have opportunities to reflect on the purpose and meaning of art through visits to the campus art gallery.
- 78 However, there is not a planned approach across the whole school to ensure spiritual learning of good quality for all students. A sense of wonder and curiosity is underdeveloped in science and there is little evidence of consideration of spiritual learning opportunities in maths or information technology. Where provision is good it is not represented in subject handbooks or schemes of work in a planned way. The school recognises this and the spiritual and moral education policy is currently being reviewed.
- 79 There is no daily collective act of worship for all students, because the school is unable to arrange it within the available accommodation without disrupting the learning programmes.
- 80 The school offers an appropriate range of opportunities to promote cultural development through the taught curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The on-campus Gallery and theatre are well utilised to enhance cultural learning and awareness through art, dance, drama and music. Cultural awareness is well supported through the use of artefacts and teaching resources from the Milton Keynes World Education Development Centre on site. Students recognise and value the learning opportunities that these facilities present.
- 81 Investigation of other cultures and beliefs is a strength in the humanities curriculum, where students examine, for instance, the Amish community. In English, schemes of work incorporate literature of other cultures, providing students with good insight and understanding. However, opportunities for cultural awareness are not planned into music schemes of work. Learning benefits from an active exchange programme with France, Spain, Germany, Tanzania and India.

82 Overall provision for students cultural development is good.

- **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

83 School arrangements for student support and guidance are good and provide a secure base from which all can learn and progress.

84 Pastoral support is efficient, responsive and valued by parents and students. Tutors are pivotal and ensure coherence and continuity for academic and personal support and guidance. Hall staffing structures, modified since the last inspection, include pastoral and curriculum staff to provide a flexible and consistent approach, to student support. Parents and students comment positively on the benefit of tutors moving through the years with their students. Hall staff, linked to special need support, careers education and English as an additional language support, ensure that students and staff have specialist referral sources for guidance and support. Sixth form tutors remain with designated years, thereby developing an expertise to guide and support students in transition to higher education and other opportunities after the sixth form.

85 In all age ranges, tutors work closely with their students in tutorial programmes, they know them well and monitor progress day to day, using the student planner. The personal and social education programme creates good opportunities for students to explore personal development issues with tutors and to discuss concerns. Regular planned progress checks allow tutors to more formally monitor academic progress, behaviour, attendance and contribution in class. Programmed opportunities to discuss progress and targets individually with tutors help students to plan their learning. Guidance provision at early stages ensures that year 8 and year 12 students are settled on their courses and able to participate fully in learning.

86 Procedures to identify causes of concern in academic subject areas, behaviour or attendance are clear, well implemented, and work to ensure that if difficulties occur they are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

87 School arrangements to guide and support year 8 and year 12 students at transition are thorough, unhurried and involve tutors well. Parents report that year 8 transition is seamless. The Careers Service work is well integrated into the school personal and social education programme to maximise student opportunities for guidance. In most subject areas day to day support and monitoring of student learning is good, target setting is used to good effect in English. In mathematics however, monitoring is not sufficiently developed to identify students' strengths.

88 Individual learning support for students with special educational needs, or English as an additional language, is particularly good, with early identification of need and student specific response. Support for these students extends to careers education and work experience.

89 The school makes good use of external support agencies; meetings are regular and support well planned. Sixth form students benefit from up to five opportunities over the two years to

formally review progress. Tutor and student interaction is good and guidance for all year 12 and 13 of a high quality.

- 90 There are clear procedures to promote good behaviour and respond to transgression. These are followed fairly and consistently. School staff maintain a high level of expectation of good behaviour, which is mostly well met. Where discipline measures apply it is with clear regard to the school ethos of determined optimism. Good behaviour is affirmed and response to unacceptable behaviour stepped and appropriate. Students are well behaved in most lessons. There is no evidence of racial, gender or ability group harassment. Bullying is rare and, where it occurs, it is dealt with promptly and effectively.
- 91 Tutors ensure that parents are involved and aware of steps to address student transgression or non-attendance, as well as to celebrate positive steps and achievements. Groups identified as in need of additional support for attendance or behaviour benefit from initiatives such as the befrienders scheme, which provides positive adult role models from the community.
- 92 Arrangements for child protection are clear, in place and implemented. A deputy headteacher is the designated teacher, with another named teacher available in the event of absence.
- 93 Student health and welfare is positively promoted. A school nurse on site provides a source of referral for all. Specific medical conditions are recorded and relevant staff made aware of necessary response strategies. An example of this in practice was seen when a student became ill in class; staff ensured appropriate support for the student whilst continuing to reassure and teach the remaining students effectively.
- 94 Health and safety procedures are in place and risk assessments in subject areas are completed. Teacher presence on site at break and lunch times ensures that students have good access to staff in the event of need.

- **Partnership with parents and the community**

- 95 The school has sustained and improved the very good partnership arrangements with parents and the community since the last inspection. Parents are very supportive of this popular, oversubscribed school, and the recent evenings for prospective parents and students were very well attended showing its current high standing in the local community. There is no parents association and only a very small number of parents actually help in school, but parents actively support students in various activities, and through their work at home, and this is greatly helped by the excellent student planner which is well used as a means of additional communication.
- 96 There is a commitment to genuine partnership with parents, and campus staff are highly effective in liaising with parents over a wide range of issues to support individual students. Written communication is of a very high standard with a distinctive house style. Parents are very well informed through the annual mailing of a considerable range of well presented information. The booklet, which summarises important policies, is particularly good, as is the Home School Agreement. Curriculum information is very thoroughly presented in booklets for each year group and gives parents a very clear understanding of what their children are studying. Information for sixth form students is equally thorough and helpful.
- 97 Parents are well informed about progress through the interim reports, annual reviews and good opportunities to meet with staff at consultation evenings. Annual reviews are comprehensive and the school has made improvements to the format. There are still some

inconsistencies, and not all subjects report fully at the end of key stage 3. (Religious education, and music). Very good arrangements are made for induction into the school and all parents and students have a useful admissions interview.

- 98 Links with partner schools are strong and well established. There is particularly effective communication to support pastoral transfer for those who might have any difficulty, including students with special educational needs. The campus shares learning information with its partner schools, and liaison within core subjects is ongoing and particularly effective in English. However, there are some weaknesses in the transfer of information which can result in a lack of continuity and progression for some students in year 8.
- 99 Links with the community and external agencies are extensive, and arts college status has resulted in further developments, especially the provision of funding to support initiatives which benefit adults and students.
- 100 A very strong feature is the planned benefit to students through enhancements to learning and personal development. Business links are well developed and support a very effective work experience scheme and careers guidance, for example, year 10 students benefit from employers coming in to provide mock interviews as part of the preparation for work experience. The Adult Continuing Education programme, managed by the school, benefits not only the local community but also staff and students who are able to participate in courses. For some students this is particularly valuable as an enhancement of their studies.
- 101 The theatre and Gallery provide numerous opportunities and workshops for many feeder schools and other schools in the surrounding area. It also provides high quality interaction with professionals from the world of art, dance, drama and music for many campus students. This is a considerable enhancement to their learning. The campus is used for many lettings, and the management of the leisure centre by the school has resulted in the development of aspects of fitness and leisure which also benefit students' learning. These forward thinking developments, and a strong desire to work with business and the community, have a significant impact on students' attainment, progress and personal development.

## - **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### - **Leadership and management**

- 102 The co-directors of the campus provide excellent leadership and educational direction, which is equally well provided by the senior management of deputy heads, heads of faculty and heads of hall. This is characterised by the determination to promote the aims, values and beliefs of the school in a coherent manner to all students and parents.
- 103 The governors of the school provide good support in leadership and educational direction, and have responded very well to the issues raised in the last inspection. There is now a very effective structure of committees, reports and review processes which cover the full range of their responsibilities and accountabilities. The work of governors actively and consistently helps to promote expectations of higher achievement and the supportive ethos throughout the school.
- 104 Most other staff who have leadership and management responsibilities carry out their roles well. Generally, throughout the campus, monitoring of teaching and curriculum

development is good. There are secure systems of regular monitoring, or for response if problems are seen to be developing. However, more could be done to spread examples of good systems or practice across the campus.

- 105 There is a very positive ethos throughout the school which promotes high expectations of students both in their learning and in their relationships. At the heart of this is the very good example of adults in the school who set high standards for themselves and also for the students. The students are treated as young adults and are encouraged to develop and respond to this expectation.
- 106 The campus development planning process is very good, with clear layers of responsibility and levels of detailed planning. However, in a few cases, the outcomes of plans are not clearly focussed on the identification of improvements in learning and attainment. Governors are involved appropriately in the planning process. They debate and approve proposed plans, and actively monitor progress with a rolling programme of direct reports from staff who are responsible for specific plans.
- 107 The leadership and management of Stantonbury Campus is very good. It is clearly striving to raise achievement and maintain the high quality of the educational provision.
- 108 Statutory requirements are met except in the following matters.
- Provision for a daily act of collective worship.
  - Provision of religious education in the sixth form.
  - Details of reporting for religious education, and music.
  - Provision of music for a few year 9 students.
  - Matters related to students with special educational needs, as detailed elsewhere in this report.

• **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

- 109 The school is very well staffed with 150 teachers of whom 136 are full time. There is a similar number of male and female teachers, a good balance of experience and youth and 47 have been at the school for 5 years or less. The teachers are well qualified, and well deployed.
- 110 Recent changes in the balance of the numbers of staff with pastoral responsibilities in hall have resulted in an increased number of staff with curricular responsibilities. This has not resulted in any reduction in the pastoral support for students. It has increased the opportunities for staff to gain experience in a range of roles.
- 111 The generous allocation of associate staff, of whom 28 support students with special educational needs and 24 are educational support or technical staff, complements the teaching role well. The number of administrative associate staff at 34 is more than seen elsewhere, but innovative use is made of the posts, which include the personnel co-ordinator and the professional assistant, to ensure the smooth running of the whole campus. Good lines of communication exist and are used well.
- 112 All staff have job descriptions and induction programmes, including very good and effective support and guidance for all new staff, associate and supply staff, as well as new teachers.

The programme for the 10 newly qualified teachers is good and meets the new legislative requirements. The wide programme of professional development opportunities is well co-ordinated to clear priorities and extends to all staff. This includes both in-house and outside training. This has resulted in developments that have had real classroom impact and provided qualifications for staff which have extended their career opportunities. Several staff are supported to study in their own time for external accreditation, and City and Guild qualifications, NVQs and degrees have been gained in this way.

- 113 The school operates an effective appraisal system of all individual staff and a complementary rolling programme of classroom observations is in place, carried out by the senior management team. Written reports have been prepared on three Faculties so far. The Investors in People Award was reconfirmed in 1999. The personnel and organisation committee of the governing body is actively involved in all staff issues, monitoring changes and receiving reports.
- 114 Following the last inspection the school has made good progress in addressing the issue of staffing the GNVQ programme, and the staff appointed since then have a good vocational background.
- 115 The campus is situated on a large site and comprises a number of separate buildings, which are well maintained throughout. In addition to the main halls the campus has, since the last inspection, taken over the direct management of the Leisure Centre, the Gallery and the Theatre. The acquisition of these community facilities has enriched the students' curriculum experience, particularly in physical education and the arts.
- 116 Overall, the provision and quality of the accommodation is good; provision for physical education is excellent, and for performing arts and design technology is very good. Whilst accommodation for English and humanities is satisfactory some of the rooms are too small for large groups to use drama or other practical methods of learning. Provision for music is poor. The rooms are small and cramped, and there is limited opportunity for small group work in composition, which has a detrimental effect on progress.
- 117 The management of the accommodation is good. Recently a site manager has been appointed to manage the maintenance, caretaking and cleaning teams. There is a rolling programme of refurbishment and decoration, the buildings are kept clean and tidy, and the display work around the school is good.
- 118 The health and safety issues in the previous inspection report have been completely addressed. A new outside store has been built for the storage of chemicals and the regulations are now met. However some of the brick paths around the campus are worn smooth and are a possible health and safety risk, particularly when wet. There is a rolling programme for the replacement of these paths.
- 119 The provision of learning resources across the school is good. There is a formula, agreed with heads of faculties, for the allocation of budgets which is open and transparent and based on student numbers and the varying resource needs of individual subject areas. In addition to this budget, faculties are able to seek extra funding for specific curriculum developments, as indicated in their faculty development plan. Monitoring of the use of this additional funding is undertaken by a deputy headteacher against success criteria and this ensures that funds are being used to achieve the stated aims of the faculty and the school.
- 120 All faculties have at least a satisfactory range of books for teaching and in many the range of

books is good. The provision and use of books, materials and other specialist resources is very good for students with special educational needs and this makes a significant contribution to the progress these students make. In art, however, there is a limited range of materials and equipment available, particularly for three dimensional work, which is currently being addressed by the faculty.

- 121 The Campus Development Plan for resources has focused on the development of the library and information and communication technology facilities as a learning resource for the whole campus. The information and communication technology development has provided the campus with 11 information technology suites, as well as small clusters and stand-alone machines in open areas, staff rooms and faculty offices. The current provision for computers is excellent with an up to date single network across the campus. The student to computer ratio of slightly less than 9:1 is better than the national average.
- 122 The project to refurbish the library has increased the loan stock of books, videos and CD ROM's, and improved the study area with appropriate furniture, 20 computers, Internet access, video viewing and editing facilities and the provision of a good range of newspapers and periodicals. The library also incorporates a careers centre and a staff development library. It is well used by staff and students, with all year 8 and sixth form students having an induction to the library in their first term. There are good links with faculties, through the regular meetings with the senior librarian and faculty representatives, to ensure there is a good match of reference books and other resources to meet the demands of the curriculum. For sixth form students the library provides an excellent facility for developing good independent study skills.
- 123 The overall provision of staffing accommodation and learning resources is very good and has a very positive effect on the quality of education provided and the standards that students attain.

• **The efficiency of the school**

- 124 By pooling the funds allocated to the two schools which make up the Campus, and operating as one school with a single staffing structure and a single budget, the total income and expenditure is very high, over £8 million. The amount spent per student is also high. The management makes effective use of these resources to continually improve educational standards. For example, the school has been able to put together substantial internal and externally raised funds to make a massive investment in information and communication technology over the last 18 months. Benefits from economies of scale, such as having only one head of each subject, are invested in supporting teachers to do their jobs well, in ensuring the smooth running of this complex establishment, and in maintaining the site and educational resources to a good standard.
- 125 Financial procedures are very well documented and the school's auditors confirm that they meet all requirements. Governors are fully briefed about the setting of the budget and they monitor it closely at the Finance Committee meetings. All variations between budgets are now reported to the committee, as suggested in the last inspection report. The school has a broad idea of its financial commitments for the next two to three years, but there is considerable uncertainty of budget levels from April 2000, because the school has moved from Grant Maintained to Foundation status. Furthermore, its LEA, Milton Keynes Council, is a new unitary authority, so financial arrangements are different. As a result the school decided to build up reserves in the current year, adding to a large existing carry-forward, in order to protect the quality of education for students in the next two or more years. Should



this ultimately prove to be unnecessarily cautious, the governors have a priority list of capital investments they wish to make to further improve standards. There are no major ill effects of the current economy, only minor deficiencies in resources, in the present year.

- 126 The school has a higher than average pupil teacher ratio and the teachers are in contact with students for more hours per week than average. The numbers of classroom support assistants, special needs assistants and administrative staff are extremely high for the number of students. This is the result of a clear and deliberate policy, and is proving to be effective in maintaining a good quality education and keeping the school administered smoothly. Teaching staff are deployed very efficiently and effectively. The sixth form is run economically, with larger class sizes than usually found. The classroom support staff make a substantial contribution to students' progress, with particular strengths in the classroom support for students with special needs, and in the unusually good provision of in-class support for classes using information and communications technology (ICT). The school spends more than it might be expected to on special needs provision, by virtue of its commitment to these students, and they make better than usual progress.
- 127 Detailed financial planning for all items requiring major expenditure supports school improvement. Subject areas receive an annual formula grant from which they finance routine aspects of improvement, and may make a case to governors where more substantial changes are needed. A recent example was a large scale updating of resources in mathematics, and in ICT. The extensive new computer facilities, with over 300 modern computers, are very well distributed around the campus, so there is at least one cluster of machines, enough for whole-class use, in every main building, all on the school-wide network. These are supported by a team of four technicians, whose work makes the whole operation run smoothly with very few technical problems. This is an example that shows how the large scale of the school, well managed, is providing quality and efficiency benefits rarely seen.
- 128 The school provides, overall, a good standard of education and uses its resources efficiently. Coming in with below average standards, students make good progress by the ages of 16 and 18, so their attainment has improved to reach national averages. Social and moral development is a particular strength. Although the school's income and expenditure are above average, the funds are spent wisely. It therefore gives good value for money overall, and very good value in the sixth form.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

- 129 Standards of attainment in English, for a significant number of students entering in year 8, are well below the expectation nationally and for similar schools. This is shown by the key stage 2 test outcomes and other national based tests. By the end of year 9, attainment is below the national expectation and below that for similar schools. Despite being below national expectation, the results constitute improvement from the low point of entry for many students. Attainment is sound and sometimes better in the majority of lessons in key stage 3. Standards are sound in all lessons in year 8, however, they are less secure in year 9 where the majority are sound but a small minority have some weaknesses. Students make sound progress in years 8 and 9 through the focused literacy programme operated within the Integrated Humanities and English faculty. Literacy is improved, though significant numbers of students still have problems with spelling and grammar by the end of the key stage. However, there is a firm foundation laid for the significant improvement made in the next key stage at GCSE.
- 130 Standards of attainment by the end of key stage 4 are sound overall when current work in years 10 and 11 is considered alongside GCSE outcomes, which are in line with those for similar schools. There is significant improvement in the attainment of students when compared to the position of many on entry in year 8. Overall progress for the majority of students in years 10 and 11 is good. Standards of attainment are sound or better in the majority of lessons at key stage 4, with a quarter good or better. They are similar in both years, however, standards in a third of year 11 classes are good or better compared to a fifth in year 10.
- 131 GCSE English and English literature results indicate gradual improvement, except in 1999 when English Literature dipped. However, there is an appeal for significant re-marking following the sample re-mark where many students were moved to a C grade. There is a policy of maximising entry for GCSE English and English Literature. The difference between boys' and girls' attainment is at the national average, however, there is a grouping of boys at the D-E grade boundary which is a faculty target for improvement. In addition to the English GCSE examinations, the faculty offer MEG GCSE Drama, as extensive use is made of drama as a learning tool during the integrated courses. This results in a large entry, and, overall, grades attained are good.
- 132 Standards of attainment in the sixth form are at least sound in all lessons, with evidence of some students attaining well. The faculty offers two routes to A-Level accreditation: English Literature and combined English Language and Literature. The overall standard of examination performance is good and above national expectation with good progress made. Those students with English as an additional language are given effective extra tuition to help them access their studies.
- 133 Literacy standards are effectively improved on entry in year 8, though by the end of year 9 test outcomes are still below national expectation. Value has been added, however, through the coherent application of the literacy programme and the general emphasis on literacy skills, particularly within the faculty. Good literacy links have been made across the curriculum with other subjects, e.g. science and physical education. The work samples demonstrate a growth in length, quality, accuracy and presentation over the two years, with

significant growth in literacy over the next two years of the GCSE course. Results are below national expectation, but they are slowly improving overall, year on year. Literacy standards in the sixth form are at least sound and often better. Speaking and listening skills are advanced well, though many students enter year 8 with poor listening capabilities.

- 134 The emphasis placed by the faculty in particular on group work, drama and collaborative learning advances oracy skills considerably. Reading skills show considerable variation on entry but are developed well for the majority as they progress through the school. Good examples of competent reading aloud were heard. The English course places emphasis on working through literature and students learn effective strategies for accessing text. Written work is the weakest of the three areas in year 8. As with the development of the other areas, competency and confidence increases over the course, however, technical accuracy remains a problem for a number of otherwise competent students. For those students with significant weaknesses and statements in literacy, support works well in advancing skills and confidence for students with special educational needs. They make good progress. Since the last inspection report, the faculty has maintained its efforts to strengthen literacy capability for many of the students and the new literacy strategy is helping to secure coherence across a wide area of the curriculum.
- 135 Lessons are made interesting and enjoyable by planning in a range of activities, with an appropriate mix of whole class learning and group work in order to sustain motivation. Students appreciate the emphasis on drama as a means of exploring text and situations, and this results in large numbers successfully sitting the Drama GCSE. A-Level lessons are challenging within a seminar format.
- 136 The vast majority of students are polite and courteous, with teachers providing good role models. The quality of relationships is an area of strength. A minority of boys demonstrates poor behaviour and low motivation and can be disruptive and unfocused. This is particularly so in some year 9 classes. For the most part, however, students persevere at tasks and take pride in their achievements, with many students developing mature attitudes to work and demonstrating the ability to work independently. The faculty places importance on group work and collaborative learning and there is a willingness to work in mixed gender groups. Drama helps develop collaborative skills effectively, and students are encouraged to respect the views and performances of their peers. Again, teachers are good role models in the way they value the ideas and work of the students. The emphasis on group work plays an important role in developing independence, initiative and organisational skills. By the time students reach key stage 4 they have developed significantly as independent learners.
- 137 The quality of teaching overall is at least sound and better in the vast majority of lessons, with just over three-quarters good and better. A very small minority of lessons has some weaknesses. At key stage 3 nearly all teaching is at least sound, with just over half good or better. At key stage 4 nearly all of the of teaching is at least sound, with most lessons being good or very good. At both key stages there is a small minority of teaching with some weaknesses. In the sixth form all the teaching is at least sound, with three-quarters good or better. The head of faculty gives very effective and dynamic leadership to English, providing very competent management and organisation to this large complex faculty. The hall curriculum management teams give good support and there is strong principled commitment to the curriculum within an excellent ethos for learning. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the English course requirements are generally very good, including that of many of the humanities staff, who have become proficient through commitment and experience.

- 138 Generally, teachers have explicit high expectations of both behaviour and motivation. Planning is often meticulous and the effective schemes of work are well-planned within clear formats. Being an integrated faculty, there is frequently good cross subject planning so that learning is harmonised, e.g. the First World War topic creates opportunities for the written work in English to be informed by historical contemporary resources. This is an area of some strength, however, opportunities are not always fully realised. A strength of the faculty is in the wide use of active learning strategies. Drafting and the focus on key words are widely used skills. Information technology is used well to enhance written outcomes though it is an area for further development.
- 139 Teachers are generally very good at using questions to bring out pupil knowledge and to encourage them to have confidence in their ideas. Student management is generally effective owing to the quality of relationships between staff and their teaching groups. There is good use of the merit system and general praise to motivate. In the small minority of lessons where there is poor behaviour it is often a result of weaknesses in classroom management, insufficient differentiation of tasks and materials, and low motivation, particularly amongst boys. The quality of management is exemplified well where teachers manage active learning and drama with the minimum of fuss and noise in small rooms, with large classes. Appropriate time lines give learning pace and a sense of urgency. Resources are used well and the in-house photocopied materials are of good quality. There is evidence of differentiated materials being used, most often to support the less able.
- 140 The faculty contribute significantly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. An excellent example of spiritual development was seen in a year 11 English lesson on the First World War, when the effective and emotive reading of the poem 'Dulce et decorum est' by the teacher produced tangible emotional engagement on the part of the students. The faculty provide good extra-curricular experiences of theatre by bringing companies into school and taking students to the theatre. Writers have also been brought into school to run workshops.

• **Mathematics**

- 141 The mathematics department is led well and students receive a broad curriculum. Significant steps are being taken to raise standards and make improvements throughout the faculty. However, at present, many students are making insufficient progress and are achieving standards which are lower than national expectations.
- 142 The recently appointed mathematics co-ordinator is providing effective leadership and has prioritised new developments well, including improved schemes of work and more purposeful teaching styles. The improvements still require further development and have not yet had an impact on raising standards.
- 143 Attainment in national tests at age 14 are below national averages. There has been a small improvement in results over the last three years, but standards have remained consistently lower than in similar schools. Results at GCSE are well below national averages. Students are performing significantly worse in mathematics than in their average across other subjects. Boys are achieving slightly better results than girls. There has been an improvement in A-

Level results, which are now above national averages with, in 1999 15 students from an entry of 17 gaining an A\*-C grade and all passing the examination. The attainment of students retaking GCSE is sound. Overall, students enter the school with below average standards in mathematics; they then make sound progress to maintain their standards during key stage 3, but make unsatisfactory progress during key stage 4 to reach standards which are well below the average. A-Level students make good progress and sixth form GCSE re-take students make good progress.

- 144 Standards of numeracy are below those normally seen. There is no co-ordination of the use and application of number across the curriculum and this has an adverse effect on standards. The lack of basic numeracy is often a barrier to developing higher level skills where poor recall of division and multiplication facts and poor understanding of functions adversely affect progress in probability. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to improve numeracy, such as in science where inappropriate and inaccurate use of measurement, tables and graphs goes uncorrected. There are a few examples of high attainment. For instance, high attaining year ten students can expand brackets to evaluate quadratic expressions and some year eight students can identify all the outcomes of a combined experiment such as throwing two dice. Only on very rare occasions do students achieve better than expected, based on their prior attainment, such as a low set in year 11 developing a good understanding of correlation. A significant proportion of students achieve standards which are too low, such as some year 9 students who cannot interpret tables of values to produce co-ordinates or are unable to plot co-ordinates on a graph.
- 145 Although most students' attitudes and behaviour are at least satisfactory there is a proportion of lessons where it is unsatisfactory. Most students settle to work quickly and many listen attentively, but only about half work consistently through a lesson. Almost all students respect the views of others, even when wrong, and many make well disciplined contributions to discussion; but there are too many occasions when several students are shouting out at the same time. About two thirds of groups show high levels of respect for their teacher, but in other groups students disregard a teacher's command or only obey it for a brief period. Students only show strong interest or enthusiasm on rare occasions, such as when using computers. Generally, their attitude to learning is too relaxed with too many students making poor use of their teacher's expertise.
- 146 Although the majority of teaching is at least satisfactory there is a proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Unsatisfactory teaching is concentrated in year 9 and in key stage 4, where it represents one third of lessons. There is some very good teaching in the sixth form.
- 147 Most teachers have good subject knowledge and present concepts well, but a few provide insufficient detail. Most teachers identify clear objectives for their groups, but often do not provide sufficient challenge or summarise achievement effectively. Many teachers use questioning well to keep students alert and to check understanding but others do not, resulting in students being unsure how to tackle their work. Over half of teachers have good classroom management, making expectations of behaviour clear and challenging inappropriate behaviour quickly and effectively. Other teachers have not established a well-disciplined working atmosphere. They spend long periods of time repeatedly challenging poor behaviour, with only short term effect, or fail to notice or correct inappropriate behaviour sufficiently quickly. Opportunities to use a wide range of teaching styles or resources to sustain interest are often missed, such as not using an overhead projector resulting in a rushed, confusing white board presentation. Mental warm-up activities are insufficiently used to re-inforce previous learning, or bring several related aspects of mathematics together. A teacher's presentation is occasionally poorly matched to a subsequent talk, such as when presenting pie chart construction and setting questions on interpretation. A few teachers fail to use an identified common weakness as a whole class teaching point.

- 148 On some occasions a teacher combines several high quality teaching features and achieves very good student progress. For example, in a year 11 low attainers lesson, on completion, the teacher had established a very positive working atmosphere, prepared work which represented a strong challenge and ensured that all students met the objectives. Verbal and visual presentations were very clear, questioning ensured high levels of concentration from all students and there was a consistently high working pace throughout the lesson. This resulted in very rapid progress from no prior knowledge at the beginning of the lesson to students being able to answer examination questions by the end.
- 149 The curriculum is broad and balanced, but there is far too little use of computers. Schemes of work have been improved, but they identify a narrow range of teaching styles and resources, and too little emphasis on building on prior skills. There is an accurate, standardised assessment system, but this is insufficiently used to inform students of their strengths and weaknesses, to set targets or to inform curriculum planning. Monitoring of teaching is good, but there is still not enough observation of lessons to extend good practice. Development planning is structured well, but there is insufficient identification of targets for raising standards or sufficiently precise success criteria, making effective monitoring difficult. Accommodation is good, but the opportunity to use specialist rooms to create a stimulating mathematics environment is often missed. There is an effective provision of books in very good condition, but insufficient resources, especially computer software.
- 150 Since the previous inspection there appears to have been a decline in standards at the end of key stages 3 and 4 and in numeracy throughout the schools. There have been improvements in the pace of learning in GCSE retake lessons and in standards at A-Level. There is still very little exceptionally high quality teaching and teaching still tends to be within a limited repertoire. There is still a lack of challenge for some students, particularly high attainers.

## **Science**

- 151 Students receive a sound science education and are achieving improving exam results at GCSE. Standards at key stage 3 are less consistent.
- 152 Students start their science education in year 8 at a standard slightly below that expected for their age. Progress during years 8 and 9 is too erratic. Their practical and investigative skills are below those expected for their age and they do not sufficiently develop an understanding of the important ideas of science, particularly the more able students, to close this gap in standards. The extra support and materials for students with special educational needs helps them to make good progress. Overall, there is insufficient progress made by students over these two years. By year 9 most can neutralise an acid with an alkali using their knowledge of the pH scale, but do not understand sufficiently to explain the process of neutralisation. Attainment is below that normally expected and in the 1999 national curriculum test results were below the national average, particularly at the highest levels. The results were also lower than those achieved by schools with students from similar backgrounds.
- 153 Students make much better progress in their learning during the next two years and the gap in attainment is closed. Over the two years of key stage 4 progress is good, including for those students with special education needs. There is an upward trend in GCSE results and in 1999 students gained grades A\*-C, close to the national average. This is better than achieved in most other schools with students from similar backgrounds. The school is particularly successful at enabling a high proportion of 16-year-olds to gain qualification in double science GCSE. There is not a long tail of under-achievement. Girls' results have been above boys' for

the past three years. Current standards being achieved in lessons are also largely in line with the national picture, except at the highest levels. Attainment is well balanced across the areas of biological, chemical and physical science, as well as in investigative ability.

- 154 In sixth form lessons students make good progress, working at a standard expected in the three main A-Level sciences. Results in A-Level physics exams over the last five years have been equivalent to the national average. Results in chemistry and biology A-Level exams have been weaker. Overall, achievement in A-Level science exams is below the national average.
- 155 Teaching is most consistent and strongest in the sixth form lessons; in GCSE classes it is not so consistent but nevertheless satisfactory overall. A strength across the age range is the teachers' consistent professional commitment to the principles of the faculty. In lessons in these four years students respond positively to the teaching, showing increasingly mature attitudes as they progress through school and taking on good responsibility for their learning. In these years the behaviour of students is good.
- 156 At key stage 3 the teaching is far too variable and thus unsatisfactory. With this age range the teaching is less tightly organised, with insufficient to engage and stimulate students. It is at its most acute in year 9 lessons where students' attitudes are weakest, and staff have more difficulty motivating a minority of youngsters and in preventing subsequent poor behaviour disrupting the learning. In contrast, some lessons with this age range are much more successful. The excellent teaching of a year 8 class, engaged the whole class in learning about Archimedes and displacement of water through a firm but friendly insistence on compliance with homework demands and on total attention to instructions, and to listening to the contribution of other students. Despite the work being pitched at an appropriately challenging level, all students were encouraged by the teacher's infectious enthusiasm to participate, with consequent success well recognised and celebrated in class. Elsewhere in the faculty the active promotion of curiosity, interest and enjoyment is less well promoted.
- 157 In most areas the curriculum is broad and well balanced, but the planning in years 8 and 9 does not sufficiently build on and extend earlier learning. There is very good equality of access for all students, including those with special educational need.
- 158 This exceptionally large and complex faculty is well led and a high degree of team work and professional cohesion achieved. It runs smoothly and efficiently on a daily basis. There are short-comings in the available specialist teaching spaces and in preparation spaces; levels of books, equipment and specialist apparatus are satisfactory. Despite the size and complexity of the operation, resources are efficiently managed and staff very effectively deployed. Since the last inspection there has been revision of courses, production of support materials, purchase of textbooks, improvement in the learning environment and greater gathering and tracking of test results. These activities have contributed to improvements in attainment by girls and rising GCSE results, but there has been insufficient improvement in attainment at key stage 3 or in A-Level results. A major challenge for the faculty now is to raise the level of strategic management for improvement to match that of its operational management, partly through a more analytical and critical evaluation of its effectiveness. This needs to focus on gaining greater consistency in teaching and raising attainment at key stage 3.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Design and Technology**

- 159 Since the last inspection the subject has continued to maintain its performance in both the GCSE and A-Level examinations. In 1998 GCSE students performed better in design and technology than the school average for subjects. The results were, however, below national averages for the higher grades. In 1999 the results improved and are now just below the national average, even though they did not fully achieve the national average of A-C's for those students taking the subject. Considering the high proportion of students who take the examination in this subject, their overall performance is significantly above the national average for GCSE.
- 160 In the A-Level, students' performance in the 1999 examinations was above the national average for the subject. Across the subjects in the school this was the best A-Level result for 22 of the 31 students taking this subject.
- 161 The attainment of students in key stage 3 is typical of students' performance nationally. When designing the 'Cheesy Potato Bake' in food and 'Ties' in textiles students are able to use labelled sketches in the generation of ideas, and show evidence of planning, attribute analysis, costing and evaluation when investigating products. In resistant materials, when designing in the 'decorative boxes' project there is a limited investigation of decoration with which to apply to a box and a lack of exploration of ideas. In the 'mechanical dog' project students do not generate different ideas and are limited by drawing skills. The quality of the portfolio in respect of drawings, layout and organisation is inconsistent across the different groups in resistant materials, but is better in food and textiles.
- 162 When making 'Ties' and 'Cheesy Potato Bake', students demonstrate planning of their work by the use of step by step instructions. This planning and accuracy of making is not as well established in resistant materials. Students use a range of tools and processes safely, and with increasing precision and control, when applying tie and dye and batik techniques. When making the 'mechanical dog' students are able to use a range of tools and processes reasonably well, though some do not use them correctly, particularly with reference to health and safety requirements. Some students do not show adequate progress in designing, such as using drawings or their knowledge and understanding to improve designs. They are better at developing making skills and improve their competence and confidence in working with materials.



- 163 Attainment of students in key stage 4 is good. When designing, students are able to develop criteria for analysing food and use them to assess their own food product and draw out conclusions. They are able to apply test procedures to a range of fabrics, record the results and make comment. In resistant materials, students are able to identify a range of appropriate sources of information, mainly text and magazine based, to generate ideas. They are able to develop criteria for their designs, which take into account appearance, function, reliability and the uses and purposes for which they are intended, and use these to formulate a design proposal. In all media areas there is a good range of designing strategies being used, together with the generation of ideas using a good range of graphic media. When making in food students are able to match their choice of utensil with the food being prepared, together with taking the correct health and hygiene measures such as using different preparation boards for meat and vegetables.
- 164 In graphics, when modeling prototypes, students choose their materials for modeling and give reasons why they are using it. In resistant materials they are able to adapt their methods of manufacture to changing circumstances in their designs. They are able to test and undertake evaluation of how their products would perform in use by carrying out user evaluation. Some good quality products are a result of this process. Students make good progress in the development of both their designing and making skills and improve the quality of the graphic techniques used. Practical skills and techniques are further explored and become more accurate as the products evolve. There is limited progress in students being able to recall taught knowledge and understanding of materials and apply it effectively. This adds to the difficulty of preparing students for the terminal examination when this theory is insufficiently focused to the needs of the examination questions.
- 165 Attainment of students in the sixth form is very good. When designing, they are able to produce plans and work from them through each stage of the manufacture of the product. With reference to design criteria they are able to seek out information to aid their design thinking. They can arrive at a justifiable optimum solution through modeling, and communicate key features of their design. When making they work to a high degree of precision and truly reflect the quality requirements detailed in their portfolios. Students produce work from plans that specify how each stage in the making is to be achieved and how to make best use of the time and resources available. They are able to make informed decisions about their choice of materials that they intend to use for their ideas and give solid reasons for their choice. Students are making very good progress in all aspects of their designing and making. Gains in investigations of materials are evident and students are able to draw conclusions which help their selection of materials and techniques to complete their design proposals.
- 166 Progress of students with special educational needs is good, with many achieving a grade in their GCSE above that which would normally be expected.
- 167 Students are generally well motivated and are keen to get on with their work. They are able to sustain concentration when working on the various tasks, but there are occasions when students drift off task and are not well focused on the activity. Students are very courteous and demonstrate trustworthiness by taking responsibility for their own learning, particularly in the GCSE graphics group, and they listen attentively to their teachers. Relationships are very good and there is positive interaction between teachers and students. Students, particularly in the GCSE and A-Level groups, demonstrate some high levels of initiative and take a keen responsibility for their projects.
- 168 The quality of teaching overall is sound, with better teaching in key stage 4 and sixth form, but is less satisfactory in key stage 3. The characteristics of better teaching occur in those lessons in which the students are effectively managed and there is a clear structure of

learning and review. This enables students to celebrate their progress and achievements. It is also good where the tasks are timed with a clear target to be achieved, as in the graphics GCSE. In key stage 4 and sixth form teachers are very good at individually supporting the students in creating their portfolios of work. Less than satisfactory teaching was observed in those lessons when poor classroom management led to poor progress being made, particularly in the manufacture of the mechanical dog.

- 169 The use of stimulus materials is not always well used, with a number of examples of students copying from books and teachers writing out on the board from a book. Insufficient focus is being made of the support booklets. Where they are used teaching is good. Some of the planning lacks imagination and is pedestrian, particularly at key stage 3 where the planning is teacher dominated and does not provide for the development of creativity.
- 170 The department has been very thorough in the development of assessment procedures in all key stages. Results from the GCSE and A-Level are fully evaluated and analysed. They are discussed with the students to identify areas for further development to raise attainment within the GCSE portfolios. The head of faculty provides good leadership, is methodical and ensures procedures are in place and well organised. He has set himself and his students very high expectations in teaching, learning and organisation and achieves them well. He should now model and promote this practice across the faculty to ensure consistency of good practice. Although there are some very attractive and well presented areas within the faculty, there are a few environments which do not provide the ambience of a quality experience. Some untidy and poorly maintained workshops and display areas have a detrimental effect on the students' motivation and achievements.
- 171 Examination attainment at GCSE has remained at about the national average since the last report and A-Level results have also remained very good overall. Attainment at key stage 3 has also remained the same but there is little evidence demonstrated to suggest that students have extended their knowledge and understanding of the media areas subject content. The original health and safety issues have been dealt with.

· **Information Technology**

- 172 The school is at a key point in its plan to make extensive improvements in information and communication technology (ICT). Effective and committed leadership from the co-directors and senior staff has led to substantial investment in a modern high-performance ICT network, with about 275 modern computers for use in teaching and a further 40 for administration and staff use. This has been coupled with a comprehensive programme of staff training. The school is now in a strong position to make significant improvements in students' achievements in the subject of information technology (IT).
- 173 Teachers' assessments of students' attainment at the end of year 9 suggest that a high proportion achieve the standards expected nationally. The quality of work in the school at present is not so high. Standards in communication and data handling are average and above. Standards in modeling are average, and in measurement and control are a little below average. Because students start below average at the beginning of year 8, progress over years 8 and 9 is good overall. Those with special needs make very good progress with IT, and use it a great deal to help their general learning. They benefit considerably from the high level of in-class support from both special needs assistants and the IT learning support assistants. The use of very good software, such as 'Success Maker', 'Ovation' and specialist programs in the special need bases, is enhancing special needs students' general progress.

- 174 However, progress in individual lessons at key stage 3 is uneven, and in about a third it is unsatisfactory, with little being learnt, as a result of low-level tasks or unsatisfactory teaching. In the other lessons, students rapidly learn how to use the network, the 'Windows' operating system and key software systems such as word-processing, graphics, desktop publishing, and slide-show presentations. The overall progress is achieved as a result of the better lessons, by the scheme of work in the IT course, by the access to such good technology, and aided by the contributions from other faculties such as design & technology, humanities, and English. Potential exists for improvements in measurement using ICT, by the recent purchase of data-loggers in science, but these are not yet in use.
- 175 There is no assessment data for students' IT achievements at the end of years 10 and 11. Although students of this age are competent users of IT, they are not covering the full programme of study set out in the National Curriculum, and consequently their levels of achievement are below what is expected nationally. They can log on to the network, access their files and are confident in using computer software as required in their lessons in other subjects. There are good examples of the use of ICT in English, humanities, languages and design & technology, and further good examples of students using ICT independently to word-process their coursework. Each faculty is charged with the responsibility of using ICT in their teaching, and this is well supported by the excellent provision and location of class-sized clusters of computers in each of the five halls and in the two specialist blocks.
- 176 However, at the present stage of development, students at this age (key stage 4) are not given a guaranteed coverage of the full IT curriculum. For example, the curriculum does not give all students the opportunity to learn how to: design computer models or procedures with variables to meet specific needs; identify the advantages and disadvantages of different data-handling systems; or select the appropriate ICT facilities for specific tasks on their own initiative. Assessment and record keeping relies largely upon students keeping their own notes in their planners and drawing on this for the Record of Achievement. This is not adequately monitored to check it is being done, and relies too much on the students' own judgement of the quality of their work.
- 177 There are four distinct aspects of IT in the sixth form, GNVQ at intermediate level, A-level information technology, the Cambridge IT modular certificate and general use of ICT by students. The excellent level of access to computers, and carefully controlled access to the Internet, means that sixth formers can make very good use of ICT to support their other studies, and many do so. This is particularly notable in all the vocational courses, where students have been effective in using word-processing, scanning graphics, setting up tables of data and producing appropriate graphs within their GNVQ assignments.
- 178 As the A-level course is new, there are no previous results to comment on. Current students are working at the standards expected for the course, and the quality of their work suggests that all are likely to achieve a pass with about half gaining a high grade. This represents sound progress. The GNVQ groups start with lower GCSE grades, typically grade D, and are making slow progress in lessons, but the files of last year's class show they made good progress over the whole course, with nearly everyone gaining the qualification. A student with special needs had made excellent progress with his grasp of IT and completed the assignments fully. The Cambridge certificate course is a good opportunity for students to improve their IT by studying a selection of topics to their choice. The teaching of this is largely good quality individual coaching, and the students made good progress in both the lessons seen.

- 179 Students nearly always enjoy their IT work and in most lessons they concentrate well. The pace of learning, and the behaviour of a significant minority, deteriorates markedly in some of the lessons in years 8 and 9, where they are expected to do a repetitive or unstructured task. Examples are when students type a letter for too long a time, or are given a low-level activity such as collecting basic data. Otherwise, behaviour is good, and the majority of students try to concentrate, even in the unsatisfactory lessons. On the few occasions where they have to share computers they collaborate equably and often benefit by learning from one another. They respect the equipment very well, and appreciate very much the efforts the school has made to provide so much up to date technology. Many students are confident enough to try to resolve minor operational problems, when the computer appears not to do what they expected, or wanted. They seek help from their neighbour, before resorting to asking the teacher or learning assistant for help, and many are beginning to distinguish between problems likely to be caused by their own mistakes and problems caused by the technology. This shows a mature attitude and is a very positive feature. Higher levels of learning are restricted because there is a high reliance on the students' own ideas and the teacher's guidance. The school has relatively few printed materials, either for the lessons or in the library, from which students might learn further.
- 180 Teaching is good in the sixth form and sound overall. In years 8 and 9 there are some sound, good and excellent lessons, but about one in three has shortcomings, which makes for an unsatisfactory overall position at key stage 3. The best lessons were where the teacher had a clear idea of what the students would learn and broke the lesson down into well-timed activities that, progressively, brought about the learning. In a year 8 lesson, the class built on their work on presenting information by learning how to select required text from Internet pages and creating their own summary by copying relevant quotations from one document to another. The teacher quickly gave out and commented on the relevant homework, then gave very clear instructions about the purpose and methods, and set timed targets for what should be done and by when. Then followed a richly embellished demonstration whilst a student operated the computer for her. The computer output was projected onto a large screen so all students could see it clearly. The teacher monitored each student's progress, and drew the whole class's attention to specific points to push learning forward during the activity. Towards the end, the work was saved and printed, and the teacher drew the class together for a review of what had been achieved and to set an appropriately challenging homework about Internet Service Providers. Good lessons in the sixth form either followed a similar structure to that described, or included high quality individual tutoring, where teachers used their good subject knowledge, good relationships and influence with students to provide motivation and challenge.
- 181 In the unsatisfactory lessons, which were only to be found at key stage 3, the teacher was clear about what the students would do, but unclear about what they should learn. Such lessons usually started with some instruction and a demonstration of the process to be followed, after which the students would spend a long time working individually on tasks which were undemanding in terms of their IT skills. Examples were copying a lengthy supermarket till receipt into spreadsheet, or typing a letter to an imaginary pen friend. They spent most of the time thinking what to say and typing it. Many of the class lost interest, and the learning points which arose with individuals about correct typing conventions, or using the spell checker, were not reinforced to the whole class.
- 182 The strong features reported at the last inspection remain, except that key stage 4 students are not at present guaranteed teaching of the full national curriculum for IT. The school has, nonetheless, made very good progress in completely upgrading its facilities, training staff and establishing an exciting vision for the future of the subject.

## **Modern Foreign Languages**

- 183      There have been significant improvements in modern foreign languages since the last inspection. Despite staff changes, standards have been maintained, results at GCSE are higher, and the quality of leadership is now good.
- 184      Results in examination show an improving trend. In GCSE French, from 1997 to 1999, the percentage of students obtaining grades A\* to C, although still below average, has more than doubled. In German, results improved significantly, from 1998 to 1999. In Spanish, results in 1999 were affected by staffing difficulties. However students, now in year 11, are on course to achieve better results. Girls achieve higher results than boys do, although the gap is closing and the department has started to address this issue. The number of students entered for the A-level examination is increasing and results are in line with the average nationally.

- 185 In German and Spanish, attainment at age 14 is in line with expectation. Students start the study of these languages in year 8 and, by the end of the key stage, they can understand and respond to basic instructions. They display confidence in speaking and pronunciation is good. In French, students have studied the language for at least one year in their previous school and some for longer than that. By the end of the key stage attainment is below expectation. Although students can understand basic vocabulary and structures, they are not yet able to respond with sufficient clarity, accuracy and spontaneity. Progress, in years 8 and 9, is unsatisfactory in French because work is often repeated at the same basic level and does not build on previously acquired language. Progress in German and Spanish is satisfactory and, in some lessons, where teaching is particularly strong, progress is very good. For example, students can sustain a conversation and express opinions, as in a year 9 German lesson where students made a comprehensive description of people they know, and in a year 8 Spanish class where students talked with increased fluency about members of their family. In all languages, listening and reading skills are developed well.
- 186 Attainment, at ages 16 and 18, is in line with course expectation in all languages and progress overall is satisfactory, although progress is too slow when teaching is not sufficiently strong or when the teacher is new to the group. In years 10 and 11, students can understand grammatical rules; they cover a sufficient range of topics and written work is accurate overall. The area of weakness is the lack of real engagement in speaking, particularly in French. Students are not always able to make connections between grammatical rules and, in some groups, they are reluctant to speak in the language for the purpose of real communication. In the sixth form, progress overall is sound. Students are able to discuss topical issues, such as the power of the media, racism, political and social problems. Listening skills, and the ability to extract specific vocabulary from extended texts, are of a high standard. In all years, students who have special educational needs make good progress.
- 187 The study of modern foreign languages makes a positive contribution to the development of literacy skills. For example, students understand the difference between tenses, sentence construction and adjectival endings. The rigour of grammatical study contributes effectively to students' understanding of how the English language is constructed.
- 188 Overall, students response in lessons is good. Students are very keen, enthusiastic and willing to learn. On a few occasions, the behaviour of a small group, particularly boys, impedes the learning of others. However, this is rare and students are very courteous, they concentrate and show interest in their work. When asked to work in pairs, they do this effectively and respect others' views. This is a particular strength in the sixth form where students sustain a high level of concentration during listening activities. The attitudes to learning of students who study two languages are excellent. When given the opportunity, students are willing to take responsibility and respond well. For example, when using information technology to draft their work. These opportunities are still too rare across the full range of groups.
- 189 There is much strength in teaching, and some is excellent. There are, however, some weaknesses, in the teaching of French. In German and Spanish, teaching is good overall. The reasons for the good teaching are due to two major factors: teachers have high expectation of what can be achieved and they tell students, on many occasions, that mediocre answers will not be accepted. For example, they insist on longer phrases, ensure high quality in oral response, feedback is supportive but challenging, leading to rapid progress in all skills. In French, lesson planning is unsatisfactory because it does not ensure sufficient practise of high level skills. Much of the work is too easy; for example, topics done in year 10 have already been covered earlier and, although it might be appropriate to re-visit vocabulary, contexts and situations should become more relevant and should increase in

difficulty to suit the need of older learners. Planning for progression, year on year, is weak. Expectation of high standards is not always made clear in French. For example, one-word answers are too readily accepted, with poor pronunciation or extensive use of English not sufficiently corrected. This explains the unsatisfactory progress in speaking.

- 190 Most of the issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed, particularly those relating to the reading skills. Teachers attempt to match tasks to the differing needs of students. The issue of use of the target language by teachers and students remains to be addressed in some groups. Teachers have a high level of subject knowledge and understanding, they are very committed to their work and know their students well. Marking is done regularly, homework is always set and is appropriate. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory in French and German, and it is good in Spanish. Since the last inspection annual exchanges to France, Germany and Spain have been established and these make a positive contribution to raising levels of achievement of the students that take part.
- 191 The leadership and management of the faculty are good. Policies and procedures are made clear to all teachers, and the head of faculty is aware of strengths and areas in need of further improvement. Assessment systems are effective at key stage 3. In years 10 and 11, examination criteria are used to mark work, however there is insufficient sharing of assessment, in some groups, to help students know about their attainment and how they can improve. Statutory requirements are met, although in French there is insufficient coverage of some programmes of study, particularly those relating to creative use of language. Liaison with feeder schools is under-developed. Schemes of work in the sixth form are too vague. Course planning, particularly where students have three different teachers, is not rigorous enough to ensure progression. Foreign language assistants make a good contribution to the cultural and linguistic developments of students, however they need an on-going and specific programme of support and training. Teachers have good access to professional development. In some cases, the impact of advice and training has yet to materialise. The leadership provides clear educational direction, and the faculty has the capacity to sustain its recent improvement.

## Humanities

- 192 At Stantonbury all year 10 and 11 students take a humanities course which is taught with English language and literature and drama. They study key ideas in the modules: Culture and Beliefs, Co-operation and Conflict, Resources and Conservation, Persecution and Prejudice and Equality and Inequality.
- 193 By year 11, attainment of students is above that found nationally. Attainment is better in year 11 than in year 10. There is no significant difference between girls and boys attainment. These judgements are supported by recent GCSE results where 50% of students gained A\*-C compared with the national average of 41% for humanities.
- 194 Over the two years of the course students demonstrate good attainment in investigating issues over a range of topics. In their course work students use hypothesis testing approaches well to investigate attitudes to disability. This and other enquiries help students acquire a good range of practical skills, such as data collection through questionnaire analysis and data presentation through a variety of graphs, as well as the skills of applying and evaluating information. There is notable attainment in knowledge and understanding in some aspects of the course. This was seen in their work on the beliefs and society of the Amish or in the local case study illustrating recreational land use conflicts or the work on differences in development and the impact of tourism in Kenya. A significant attainment is that students have acquired the ability to reflect thoughtfully and sensitively on their values and other people's values, as in their work in year 11 where they consider the spiritual significance of place. There is good attainment in oral work. A major strength is that the proper emphasis given to reading and writing approaches in the linked English course enables students to write at length in a well planned and fluent way.
- 195 Attainment in humanities is above national averages, partly because the students use these language skills well to begin to analyse and to communicate their thoughts. Whilst there are many undoubted strengths in attainment there are some relative weaknesses. Overall their knowledge and understanding is less well developed than investigative skills. Sometimes students have insufficient knowledge to enable them to attain a deep understanding of such ideas as a "just war", "pacifism", "conscientious objector" or concepts such as "sustainable tourism" or "forest ecosystems". There is less evidence of students extending the skills they have learned in earlier years, for example, critically evaluating sources as part of work on the different historical interpretations of the causes of World War 1.
- 196 All students, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress in acquiring and consolidating their knowledge, understanding and skills. In a year 11 class these students used topic cards and books to find and sequence the events leading to the outbreak of war in 1914. They made significant progress in understanding chronology. Much progress is secured by the judicious use of writing frames and organisational grids which encourage structured extended writing of a good quality.
- 197 Across all the classes in years 10 and 11 students showed a good level of interest in the subject, a high level of concentration and all worked in a focussed way on the interesting tasks set. There was an atmosphere of learning in all the classes observed. Relationships between students and between pupil and teacher are good and this enables all students to develop their understandings and their appreciation of other people's feelings, values and beliefs. They have good opportunities for investigations which encourage initiative and responsibility but fewer opportunities to conduct independent research.



- 198 The teaching of humanities across key stage 4 is predominantly good, with a significant number of lessons judged very good or excellent. All the large team of teachers have good levels of relevant subject knowledge and pedagogic understanding. Work is well planned at both the faculty and the individual teacher level. Each lesson uses good resources and contains a structured sequence of varied tasks which build to a coherent whole. This requires students to work at good pace and offers appropriate challenge. Teachers have high expectations, good classroom management skills and give much support to individuals, orally and in writing. In a year 11 class the teacher led the large circle of students through pair and whole class discussion. They considered the spiritual significance of place as the teacher posed alternative developments which might affect an imagined local war memorial. Students responded to the teachers' demanding questions with careful thought, finally reading and reflecting on Sioux Indian thoughts on how people treat the earth and what the Genesis story has to offer. In another year 11 lesson the teacher used a case study of Sioux Indian society, a relevant video extract and demanding oral questioning to build her exploration of how and whether the environment influences social practices. In a good lesson on competing land uses in a local recreational area, students carefully studied people's different positions and the conflicting views of interest groups, in preparation for a role play activity.
- 199 Many lessons have elements of this kind of good teaching. But there is some inconsistency of challenge in the faculty and not all teachers are working at this high level. In a year 10 class, after briefly studying the background to the divisions within Northern Ireland, one teacher asked students to draw a simple timeline of key early historical events, whereas another, using the same resource booklet, asked students to use the information more fully in a more demanding table. There is some over-direction of the lesson by teachers. Whilst drama is used to support learning well, there is too little use of information communication technology, visits, visiting speakers and fieldwork.
- 200 The faculty offers a broad and balanced course in humanities to every pupil in years 10 and 11. The course offers many valuable insights in to human experience and social organisation, and makes a major contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The faculty might consider extending further the contribution the course makes to citizenship education and to the understanding of life in a multicultural society. Curriculum planning is good and well documented, although the precise learning outcomes need to be identified more clearly. Both the marking of work and the assessment procedures based on examination criteria, give useful feedback on students' current and predicted attainment. The large and complex faculty is very well managed and led by an energetic head of faculty with a clear vision and purpose. There are good monitoring and development planning procedures in place.
- 201 Since the last inspection the faculty has improved its examination results to be consistently above national averages for humanities. It has maintained its good quality of learning. It has improved the quality of teaching to its current high level.

· **History**

- 202 Students make good progress in history in years 8 and 9 as part of an integrated humanities programme so that by end of year 9 their attainment is in line with national expectations. All students continue to study GCSE integrated humanities at key stage 4. In the sixth form A-Level history is one of the option choices and students following this course can also take GCSE history at the end of year 12.

- 203 In year 9, teacher assessments are in line with national expectations. Students are able to recall and describe events and people of the period, for example in year 8 the main events of Henry VIII's reign. They can describe changes over time such as the religious changes from the time of Henry VIII to Elizabeth I. They can give some explanations of events such as the reasons for trade, as in the study in year 9 of why people went to Africa. The students are making good progress and developing their historical skills, including their ability to use a range of sources such as paintings, photographs, written material and maps to answer questions set. They are making good progress in knowledge and understanding of the national curriculum programmes of study. There is slower progress, and fewer opportunities, to use research skills within historical contexts or showing an understanding of how history can be interpreted from different points of view.
- 204 Students in the sixth form make very good progress, and attainment is well above course expectations. A-Level results for grades A to E and the higher grades A and B are well above national averages. GCSE attainment is also above national expectations. They are able to give explanations and reasons for specific events such as in year 12 looking at the reasons why the USA was reluctant to enter World War I. They can extract information and ideas from a range of sources and use this to put forward a particular point of view. They are making good progress in knowledge and understanding of the syllabus and in analysis such as in year 13 analysing the relative strengths and weaknesses of Stalin and Trotsky. Sound progress is being made in using a range of historical sources independently to synthesise and prioritise arguments.
- 205 The majority of students at key stage 3 show an interest in history, concentrate well throughout the lesson and are well behaved. There is, however, a small minority of students in year 9 which become noisy and spend time off task during the lesson. All students respond positively to the teacher and react well to a wide range of activities. Relationships between students and between teacher and students are very positive and provide a good basis for learning. In the sixth form there is a high level of interest and commitment to their studies, with all students demonstrating a very mature attitude to their studies.
- 206 Teaching is at least sound and is often good. In the sixth form it is often very good. Where teaching is very good as in a year 13 lesson analysing views on the Owenite Socialists and Mary Wollstonecraft, the teacher made the lesson objectives clear and set them within the wider historical context. A good range of source material was provided and the students were organised well to present their points of view. The teacher encouraged the students by giving them good positive feedback, including a number of points for further development. There was very good use of questioning to help the students think through their ideas and to check their understanding and ensure there was a depth to the study. The teacher demonstrated a good command of the subject. Where teaching was satisfactory as in a year 9 lesson on the open field system, there was a well planned activity to engage the students interest and the teacher worked hard to keep the students on task. There were good relationships and the teacher maintained a positive attitude and support for the students. However, the aims of the second activity were not clear and not shared with the students and timing was not given for the task, resulting in a lack of purpose for part of the lesson.
- 207 Students benefit from the integrated humanities programme at key stage 3 and cover the national curriculum programmes of study. However, the scheme of work is insufficiently clear about the learning objectives to ensure consistent coverage of knowledge, understanding and skills, or to ensure there is a clear progression across the years. Assessment is undertaken accurately at key stage 3 against national curriculum levels and in the sixth form against the appropriate examination criteria. However, the core assessment tasks are not sufficiently linked to learning outcomes, so that they are not always used effectively either for individuals or groups to inform future targets for improvement.

- 208 The integrated humanities faculty is very well led and managed. The ethos of the faculty promotes high standards and very good team working both within and across the halls. The head of faculty has a good understanding of all aspects of the faculty and is well supported by those teachers with specific responsibilities. There is good monitoring, and opportunities are given to share good practice. The faculty development plan identifies key areas for development, but is not sufficiently detailed at the subject level. There has been good progress in standards at key stage 3 since the last inspection and other positive aspects of the previous report have been maintained.

## **Geography**

- 209 In geography, students work with interest and attain standards similar to those seen nationally.
- 210 The students make good progress in years 8 and 9, so that by the end of key stage 3 their attainment is in line with national standards. They have a sound knowledge of places. In year 8 for example, they learn about their local area, and are beginning to understand some of the changes which are occurring with increasing demand for housing. In year 9, the students broaden their knowledge of places through the study of other countries at different stages of development, such as India and Italy. They gain a sound knowledge of specialist terminology, which they use confidently to describe the patterns and processes they see in the landscape. For example in year 9, the students can describe features such as waterfalls, and can explain how the processes of erosion and deposition change the shape of a river and its valley. The students gain valuable atlas skills, finding out about the regions of India in year 8, and map skills learning about the features of the Severn Valley. Students with special education needs make good progress as a result of the good support they receive in lessons.
- 211 Students who choose to study geography in the sixth form benefit from very good teaching, and therefore make very good progress. They have well-developed investigative skills, which they use to analyse and evaluate information in a range of human and physical contexts. For example, in year 12 they gain a good understanding of the changing social and political geography of the United Kingdom, which they apply in their work on developments in the local area. They have a good understanding of significant world events, such as the causes of natural hazards, and of how events like the recent earthquakes in Turkey can be predicted. The students can work confidently with a wide range of resources including maps, photographs and statistics, and gain valuable examination skills through work on decision-making exercises in both years 12 and 13.
- 212 The attitude of the students is very good. They work with interest and concentration in lessons. Relationships between students are very good so that they work well together, particularly in the sixth form when engaged in group discussions. The standard of behaviour is very good, and all the students can be relied on, not only in the classroom, but, for example, when taking part in investigations in the school grounds, or when working on the computers in the IT rooms.

- 213 The standard of teaching is good. Although not all the teachers are specialists, they all have a sound grasp of the subject and so teach with confidence and authority. In a year 9 lesson for example, the teacher had a good knowledge of rivers, so used a video sensibly, stopping occasionally to answer questions and give further explanations, some based upon first hand experience. The teachers of the year 12 and 13 classes are all specialist geographers, with a particularly good understanding of the requirements of the A-Level syllabus. This means they can set appropriate activities. For example, in a year 13 class, the teacher chose a decision making activity, using previously unseen resources about proposed developments in a fragile ecosystem of Australia. This provided an excellent opportunity for the students to practise their skills of analysis and evaluation in preparation for the examinations. The teachers all have good class management skills, so that they establish positive relationships with their students, and create an atmosphere in which the students try hard. Folders are marked regularly, and the teachers make helpful and encouraging remarks on the students' work. Homework is used well, to extend and complement the work in class. For example in a year 9 lesson on hydrology, the students were given the task of writing a report based upon the class discussions. The teachers make effective use of a range of resources, including IT, but there are some shortages of text books so that students in some year 8 and 9 classes have to share books, and do not have books to use at home. Similarly, students in the sixth form do not have access to sufficient quantities of up to date, specialist texts.
- 214 The leadership and management of geography are very good. The head of faculty gives a clear sense of directions, and makes effective use of team members to lead specific developments in the subject, for example in co-ordinating work in key stage 3.
- 215 The school has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning overall has improved, so that in key stage 3 the students have a sound knowledge across all aspects of the subject, and there are no shortcomings in teaching in the sixth form.

#### **Religious Education**

- 216 Across years 8 to 11, religious education is taught within the integrated humanities and English course. Students are offered a broad curriculum experience and achieve satisfactory standards.
- 217 Attainment at the end of key stage 3 is broadly in line with the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus. Students are able to reflect on and respond to some of the important questions of meaning and value asked by people. For example, they can explore and discuss different ideas about God. In creating a personal shield as part of their work on the topic *Myself, My City, My World*, students showed that they are able to identify the beliefs and values that are important to them, and understand the way in which they influence their attitudes and behaviour. Students are aware that religions often give different responses to important questions, and in their work on *Creation Stories* they were able to compare different accounts, recognising similarities and differences in beliefs. In their work on *Hinduism and Christianity*, students show that they have a sound knowledge of the main features of the faiths but their understanding of the important beliefs and concepts that are central to them lacks depth. For example, students can describe some of the events of the *Ramayana* and know how they are celebrated during *Diwali*, but have little understanding of the important teaching it contains for Hindus.

- 218 Attainment at the end of key stage 4 is sound overall and broadly in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. Students show good awareness of the way in which a person's beliefs and values can influence their attitudes towards a variety of issues. In their work on Conflict and Co-operation, students were able to identify and discuss the way that factors such as religious beliefs, personal experience, peer group pressure and relationships can influence a person's response to violence. Students also show a good understanding of the way that time and place can have a spiritual value to a person. This was particularly evident in a role play activity on war memorials observed during the inspection. In their work on the North American Indians, students showed that they are able to recognise the link between beliefs, lifestyle and attitudes to the environment. By the end of key stage 4, students understanding of the beliefs and concepts that are central to individual religions continues to lack depth. This means that they do not explore religious issues in sufficient depth. For example when studying the topic "Attitudes to War", students did not have sufficient knowledge of the religious teachings related to the concepts of Just War, Holy War and Pacifism, to enable them examine the issues raised in detail.
- 219 Across years 8 to 11, the great majority of students make satisfactory progress. In particular they make gains in their knowledge and understanding of the different ways in which religious beliefs can influence many aspects of the way that people lead their life. By the end of year 11, students make sound progress in the development of their discussion and evaluation skills, so that they can express an opinion and also consider a range of complex issues raised in the topics of study. In class support and individual guidance from the class teacher help students with special educational needs make sound progress. Some other students are not sufficiently challenged by their work.
- 220 Students have very good attitudes to learning. They enjoy the integrated humanities course and approach the topics of study with interest and enthusiasm. They show sensitivity to and respect for each other's views, particularly during the discussion of topics such as the importance and value of war memorials. Students are willing to ask and answer questions during the lessons. Relationships between students are good and they work well in pairs or small groups. Students in years 10 and 11, in particular, show a mature attitude to their studies and concentrate well on the tasks set.
- 221 The teaching is almost always at least sound and in a significant number of lessons there are many good or very good features. A major strength of the teaching lies in the very good relationships that teachers have with students. Most teachers know their classes well, and this creates an atmosphere of mutual respect in which a range of topics such as personal responses to the Natural World can be discussed. Teachers plan their lessons well and include a good range of well managed learning activities which provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own responses to moral and religious issues. For example, in a year 11 lesson on the theme of Resources and Conservation, the teacher included class discussion, pair work, role-play and time for personal reflection on War Memorials, to enable students to consider the spiritual importance of places to people.
- 222 Teachers have high expectations and this motivates students to produce good quality work. However in some lessons the tasks are not sufficiently challenging to enable all students to progress as quickly as they should. Although teachers have a good knowledge of the humanities topics that they are covering, their lack of specialist knowledge of religious education is a weakness because it means that in lessons important religious ideas and beliefs are not explored in sufficient depth to develop students' knowledge and understanding of different faiths. For example, in a year 9 lesson on Christianity, after an initial class brainstorming session, the teacher did not have enough knowledge to move students on in their understanding of the key beliefs of the religion.

- 223 The subject is well led and within the faculty there is a clear view of the positive and distinct contribution that religious education can make to the humanities curriculum. The key stage 3 curriculum has recently been reviewed and it is broad and balanced. The Agreed Syllabus requirements are met through a combination of thematic and in depth studies within the humanities units of work. Much work has been done in recent years to develop religious education within the GCSE Integrated Humanities course. The key stage 4 curriculum is broad and meets the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. However, there are insufficient opportunities for the in depth study of individual faiths at this key stage. Overall, there is insufficient planning for continuity and progression, and this means that teachers do not enable students to use and build on knowledge and understanding from previous work.
- 224 The faculty has established effective assessment procedures in humanities. The last inspection reported that there were not enough opportunities for assessing students' attainment in religious education at key stage 3. There are now sufficient opportunities for assessment, but the tasks are not sufficiently focused to give an accurate picture of students' attainment in the subject or support the planning of future work. More work needs to be done to develop religious education assessment in key stage 4
- 225 The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The amount of religious education in the humanities curriculum has been increased and students achieve satisfactory standards across key stages 3 and 4. The range and variety of resources has been extended to include artefacts and core textbooks, and this has made a positive contribution to the quality of education. Much work has been done to develop teacher's knowledge of the subject through training activities and faculty meetings. However, there is a need to continue this work further. Although some religious education is planned as part of the Beliefs and Cultures unit of the core programme, in the Sixth Form, this is still not sufficient to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.

## **Art**

- 226 The school has recently developed an art course for all key stages, in line with the visual arts strand of its specialist college status.
- 227 Evidence of previous work by students observed during the inspection does not therefore match the art curriculum currently being developed which has a closer match to the requirements of the national curriculum for art at key stage 3. The newly established role of campus art co-ordinator is evidence of the determination of the management team associated with art to realise the full potential of the subject. The strategies to integrate artist residencies into the curriculum, alongside the successful use of the Gallery as part of the learning experience for some students, exemplifies how the school is using specialist college status to promote school improvement in this area.
- 228 Work observed in year 8 and 9 lessons is mostly in line with national expectations for art, although reflecting predominantly two-dimensional skills, and knowledge about a narrow range of artists, craftworkers and designers. Students showed good observational drawing skills in working from contemporary artists in the gallery and in developing studies of still life in response to the drawings seen in Picasso's sketchbooks. Students' understanding and use of colour was constrained by limited opportunities to observe, mix, match and apply colour in response to first hand stimulus.
- 229 There is insufficient evidence, particularly of students ability to explore surface texture, structure or form, to make a judgement about end of key stage attainment. The use of sketchbooks is inconsistent and in some instances a first experience. They have much greater potential to promote investigative work into a wider range of media, methods themes

and artists to exemplify the visual concepts identified in the revised schemes of work.

- 230 GCSE art students were observed creating work of a good standard. Grades achieved by the first cohort of students in 1998/9 were well above national averages. They make good progress.
- 231 A particular strength is work which combines observation with imagination. For example, a year 10 group was observed drawing large dolls as a starting point for an imaginative composition which explored their disturbing character. Year 11 groups were observed making personal boxes in response to the 'Worlds in a Box' work of Jann Haworth. Some students understood the link between observation and imagination by relating to the work of Salvador Dali.
- 232 Another identifiable strength is students' ability to abstract work effectively. For example, year 11 students were observed making effective three colour lino prints by abstracting parts of a shoe. A year 10 group abstracted their facial image by skillfully applying complementary colour to a simplification of their drawings. Another group distorted these with the application of IT.
- 233 Observational drawing skills underpinned all, representing an improvement since the previous report. Students are less confident taking practical risks with their work or investigating artists themselves. Where introduced by the teacher, this element has generated work of a particularly high quality, for example the sample of work in response to Sarah Wrights' Gallery show entitled 'The Eclipse'. Work rarely diverts into an individual investigation of meaning, media, method and scale which differs from the specialist characteristics of their teacher.
- 234 Students in the sixth form achieve a high standard of art work. High grades are consistently achieved above national standards. Strengths are the depth of ideas and range of medium developed across the course in response to a wide range of problems set. There is limited evidence, however, of students' ability to make independent connections between their own art and that of other artists, particularly contemporary art beyond that used in the teaching. Personal feelings about art and artists is often less evident in their writing than in discussion.
- 235 Across all key stages students were observed making satisfactory progress in the majority of lessons, dependent largely on the pace set by the teacher and use made of a lesson structure which involved re-establishing the learning objectives. In a small proportion of year 9 lessons progress is limited by negative pupil attitudes towards their learning in art and, as a consequence, work lacks the quality and care of the majority of year 8 work. Curriculum liaison with contributory schools is a further issue for action in order to build more knowledgeably upon prior learning. However, the use of the Gallery by year 7 students, before they enter the school, provides a good foundation upon which to build.
- 236 In a number of instances the same lessons were taught in different key stages. Although the progress of key stage 4 students is good in lessons, the full potential of students at the school is constrained by curriculum experiences which have given limited attention to planning for progression. GNVQ and A-level art students' make very good progress due particularly to the intensive teaching style which sets challenge.
- 237 Art is popular with the students who pursue an art course. Students views, expressed during the inspection week, matched the generally positive approach to tasks seen in lessons. A good proportion choose art courses in the sixth form where they enjoy the challenges set by a range of teachers. Many progress to art related careers and courses beyond school.

- 238 The best response to homework is where students' clearly recognise the link to classwork, although a significant number of students do little to prepare for lessons or follow them up. This does improve as students progress through the school. A good example of extended study in the sixth form is the work inspired by the students' visit to Barcelona, which has provoked enquiry into Spanish artists and architecture. During the inspection week the 'Gilbert and George' exhibition at the Milton Keynes Gallery was also well used to provoke thinking about meaning and purpose.
- 239 Most teaching is satisfactory or better. A small proportion in key stage 3 was unsatisfactory due to the fact that poor behaviour by a small number of boys limited the learning for all. The majority of teachers are at their best with the older students. All teachers observed teaching in the Gallery excelled in that environment. The most effective teaching is characterised by high expectations, by very challenging dialogue and by informative demonstration involving students as demonstrators. Teachers have a good knowledge of individuals, an evident love of art and enthusiasm for the medium, as observed in a year 13 Batik session. They have an ability to recognise strengths in the work of individuals and expose these for the benefit of all, as observed in a year 10 portraits lesson and year 13 life drawing class.
- 240 In the least effective lessons activities extend for too long a period without whole group teaching, inadequate attention is given to long term planning and teaching continues without having established the full attention of all students.
- 241 The variable quality of specialist art facilities impacts upon the effectiveness of the teaching due to the limited space in some areas for teacher circulation around the room. The only area which invites 3D activity is separated from all other teaching spaces for the subject. However, there is very good access to IT in both areas. Display consistently creates a positive and stimulating teaching environment for learning. The presence of original art around the campus also contributes significantly to this.
- 242 The subject co-ordinator is aware of the teaching range on campus due to the start of a monitoring and evaluation function, and understands the need to facilitate a willingness of all to share in order to more fully address the variability of standards identified in the previous report. There is a significant amount of recent work which shows how the campus co-ordinator for the subject is supporting colleagues through documentation.

## **Music**

- 243 The music department has recently been through a period of change. This has resulted in a move to discrete music lessons (from the previous expressive arts course) and significant staff turnover. Within this context there is evidence that the department is responding positively to issues highlighted during the inspection, supported by a detailed and well resourced improvement plan.
- 244 The attainment of A-Level music students is in-line with course expectations. There is currently one student whose prior experience would indicate that a high grade would be expected. Work in folders and lesson observations indicate that the student is mostly working at expectation. In areas such as study of prescribed works attainment is below expectation, but showing signs of recent improvement. The improvement appears to be related to a



change of teaching staff. The work of past students on paper, in scores and in folders shows attainment at course expectations.

- 245 The attainment of BTEC Performing Arts students is in line with expectations. Students produce competent compositions and make some links with music they listen to. Students lack fluent performance skills and do not develop more extended compositions.
- 246 The attainment of GCSE students is below expectations. The most recent GCSE results showed an A\*-C pass rate considerably below the national average, but the examination was taken by a much larger proportion of students than is usual in most schools. Very few achieved higher grades. The attainment of students in lessons confirms this under performance. Students have limited performance skills and have very limited understanding of terms such as chords. Compositions are often short and under-developed. Several become confused by the concept of inversions or major and minor. Compositions and performances on tapes show that a few students with high prior attainment are working at a more advanced level. The school has recently moved to GCSE music from GCSE expressive arts. The 1998 cohort of students, who took the expressive arts course and specialised in music, achieved good examination results.
- 247 The attainment of year 9 students is below expectation. Although students are starting to find notes on keyboards they lack performance skills and several use alternate fingers from two hands or do not use their thumb. Consequently performances lack fluency and expression. A few students do not study music in year 9.
- 248 The progress of A-Level students is sound. Progress in lessons and in folders, or on computer software, shows a developing sense of musical style. More complex aspects of harmony are handled effectively and with increasing confidence. There has been rapid recent progress in knowledge about set works from the published music anthology. BTEC performing arts students make sound progress, but do not produce more extended or complex work. The progress of GCSE students is unsatisfactory. Many year 11 students are working at similar levels to year 10 students. A small minority have made negligible progress since year 9. Students have limited performance skills and compositions are basic and reflect their lack of musical understanding. Year 9 students make unsatisfactory progress.
- 249 Many aspects of progress are hindered by accommodation, which is too cramped for the number of students present to engage in meaningful, practical activities. Many share resources such as keyboards and this further hinders progress. On one occasion the poor behaviour of a minority of students in a year 8 class meant that very little progress was made. Students who have prior experience in playing musical instruments do not use their skills in class music lessons. They make insufficient progress. The small number of students who do not study music in year 9 make no progress at all after year 8.
- 250 The large majority of students have good attitudes to learning in all year groups. Most show interest in their work and concentrate well despite the high noise levels resulting from the over-cramped accommodation. A few year 11 students are reluctant to work. A few younger students are uncooperative and have poor attitudes.
- 251 Teaching is sound in all year groups. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a particular strength is the positive relationship with students. Comments are often supportive and this helps to motivate students. In a few instances this is coupled with a lack of challenge and has contributed to a lack of progress over time. Short term lesson planning is sound, but schemes of work do not encourage a sufficient sense of progression or skill development between year groups and across key stages. In one lesson a few disruptive students were allowed to

dominate the lesson and have a negative effect on progress. Good teaching occurred in a year 11 GCSE lesson when a group of students with low attainment and relatively negative attitudes were managed well. The teacher gave clear and appropriate tasks. Students received effective individual support and were able to make good progress.

- 252 The use of double lessons for examination groups often has a negative impact on attainment. The pace of students' learning slows during the second session and they find it difficult to maintain interest and motivation. The school has not assessed or reported to parents on the attainment of year 9 students against national curriculum requirements. Some aspects of assessment are good. For example, in a year 9 lesson students were given specific targets for improvement. Very little analysis is made of assessment information in order to plan teaching. This is a weakness. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory and have a detrimental effect on attainment. There has been a recent investment in some resources and the school has long-term plans to address the accommodation deficit. No issues for improvement were raised in the previous inspection report.
- 253 There is a good range of extra-curricular activities in music which supports the learning in the classroom and contributes to raising standards. As a result a number of students attain high standards and pursue higher education or music related careers when they leave the school.

## Physical Education

- 254 At age 14, most students are meeting national expectations in planning, performing and evaluating physical activities. Some students are exceeding national expectations in the performance of hockey and netball skills, but most students are not meeting expectations in gymnastics. Most students know how to prepare the body for specific physical education activities. In swimming, most students know and understand the basic principles of survival techniques. Several students show good technique in breaststroke and front crawl. In games, most students know, understand and can apply the basic rules of a game. In hockey, netball and basketball, most students can pass and receive the ball with a degree of accuracy. Most students can create and run into a space to receive the ball. Most students have a basic understanding of the definition of flight in gymnastics. Overall, students, including those with special educational needs, are making satisfactory progress in years 8 and 9.
- 255 In 1999, 35% of students achieved grades A to C in the GCSE examinations in physical education and games. This is below the national standard, but the school did have the largest number of students in the country taking these examinations. In the GCSE lessons seen, students attainment is in line with the full range of GCSE grades. A number of students are achieving high standards in health-related fitness, football and basketball. Most students are able to officiate using the correct signals in basketball. In football, students' passing, receiving and shooting skills are, overall, good. Students' performance of backstroke is in line with the full range of GCSE grades. Students are developing good understanding of the elements of health related fitness. They understand the use of specific machines to test different areas of fitness. In core physical education, students' performance of trampolining skills is overall in line with expectations, with three students showing good performance levels. Overall, students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in years 10 and 11.
- 256 In 1999 all twelve students who were entered for the A-Level examination in physical education, passed, with one student achieving an A grade. In the theory lessons seen students' knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspects of the subject is in line with average to high grades. Students know and understand the difference between aggression and assertion in competitive sport and the difference between psychological and physical aggression. Students make good progress in years 12 and 13.
- 257 Students' response to physical education is overall good in years 8 to 11 and very good in years 12 and 13. In the two lessons when the students' response was unsatisfactory it was a result of the unsatisfactory teaching. Students normally listen well to instructions. They co-operate well in pairs and small groups. They are usually willing to answer questions. Most students are willing to give and receive constructive criticism. Most treat equipment with respect. Students usually enjoy their physical education lessons.

- 258 The quality of teaching is overall satisfactory in years 8 and 9 and good in years 10 to 13. When teaching is good, lessons are well planned with tasks chosen appropriately and built up in small, manageable stages to enable students to learn new skills or improve the performance of skills previously learned. Very specific, relevant coaching points are given, with specific individual and whole class feedback made relating to these points. There is good use of question and answer to extend students' knowledge and understanding of appropriate tactical play in games situations. Students are given opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of each other's performance and the teacher checks the validity of that feedback. Unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by a lack of subject knowledge in gymnastics, a lack of appropriate teaching strategies, and there is poor management of students' behaviour when tasks are insufficiently challenging.
- 259 The curriculum is broad and balanced in years 8 and 9, with students taking part in swimming, athletics, gymnastics and games. Most year 8 students have a residential experience when they take part in outdoor and adventurous activities. There is a choice of activities in years 10 to 13. Students have access to examinations in GCSE physical education, GCSE games, A-Level physical education and the Sports Leaders' Award. The curriculum is considerably enriched and enhanced by the very good extra-curricular opportunities provided by the school staff, by staff at the on-site Leisure Centre and by coaches from local clubs.
- 260 The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities for boys and girls including recreational, tutor group, hall and school competitions. Achievement at local, regional and national level is good. Currently pupils from the school are champions in a wide range of activities. One student is British Gymnastic champion and another is British Junior table tennis champion. The school has very good links with local senior and professional sports clubs in athletics, basketball, gymnastics, hockey, swimming and trampolining. The school achieved the Sportsmark Award in 1998 and represented Milton Keynes in the National finals of the Top Link programme.
- 261 Assessment procedures are good and reports to parents give relevant information on what students know, understand and can do. Statements of students' achievements in relation to national curriculum levels are, however, misleading, as at present no such levels exist. No liaison takes place with contributory middle schools on the content of the physical education programme. This hampers continuity and progression when students transfer to Stantonbury. The subject contributes well to the students' social and moral development. Students are taught to abide by the rules of games and to accept the decisions of officials. Students are given ample opportunities to develop social skills through working in groups and teams. Students are able to take responsibility through their appointment as Hall Sports Captains when they are involved in organising and selecting teams for inter Hall and inter tutor group competitions. Students in years 12 and 13 have recently been involved in organising a Sports Festival for local middle schools.
- 262 The department is very well managed. Documentation is very thorough and covers all imaginable eventualities. Monitoring of teaching has taken place for half of the staff involved in teaching GCSE theory lessons, and effective feedback and assistance has been given to help redress weak teaching. Regular meetings are held to discuss curriculum development. Very good resources and excellent facilities help to provide a very effective learning environment.
- 263 The faculty has worked hard to maintain the high standards outlined in the previous inspection report.

## **Performing Arts**

- 264 The performing arts faculty is a relatively new grouping of the subjects of drama, dance and music. The faculty has particular significance in the school as a result of specialist arts college status being awarded, and an exceptionally strong creative ethos has been established and sustained. The leadership and management of this developing area is very good. Excellent facilities, including classroom spaces, drama and dance studios and a professional theatre, are used well to enable students to celebrate and practise the performing arts to a high standard. There is coherent and effective provision for the performing arts at key stage 3, and particularly good provision at key stage 4 and in the sixth form where students have very good curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. Drama, dance and, to a lesser extent, music are combined effectively in A-level and BTEC performing arts courses.

### **Drama**

- 265 In drama, students benefit from very good teaching and curricular provision. They enjoy the subject, achieve good standards and make good progress.
- 266 By the end of key stage 3, students attainment is above expectation. They are familiar with a range of drama conventions and have developed confident performance skills. Their knowledge and understanding of drama and, in particular, their imaginative engagement with role play and exploration of character is good. The majority of students participate in drama activities with pleasure and interest. In some cases, the attainment of girls is higher than that of boys and this is linked to girls often being better focused on the tasks set.
- 267 By the end of key stage 4, students consistently attain standards close to the national expectation at GCSE but, given the very large number of students entered for this examination, this represents a considerable achievement. Evidence from lesson observations and work scrutiny indicates that the attainment of students currently in key stage 4 is above average. The majority of students create drama in imaginative ways and develop ideas with confidence, conviction and creativity. Students' mature attitude and seriousness of purpose leads to drama work of greater depth than is usual. Students are skilled at exploring and refining drama in a variety of contexts. Many students are less skilled at the evaluative aspects of drama work, and written tasks are often markedly weaker than practical and performance skills.
- 268 Attainment in the sixth form is above average. Attainment at A-level is consistently in line with course expectations for theatre studies and performing arts. Attainment in BTEC performing arts is above average; all students entered for this examination in 1999 gained full diplomas. The standards of students currently on roll are above expectation, with most students demonstrating a strong commitment to their studies and a high level of confidence and conviction in both performance and discussion. Students' collaborative and co-operative skills are very good and they show a good understanding of texts studied. Most demonstrate good analytical and evaluative skills.
- 269 Throughout the school, students of all ability groups, including the most able and those with special educational needs, attain good standards in drama. Students make good progress in key stage 3 and key stage 4 and very good progress is made in the sixth form. Girls make better progress than boys up to the age of 14 but after this point progress is equally good. Particularly good progress is made across the key stages in developing confidence in performance and discussion, and combining creativity with seriousness of purpose.

- 270 Students response to drama is very good. They listen and concentrate very well and engage in drama work with a high level of interest and pleasure. Behaviour is mature and responsible and there is a partnership of mutual respect that characterises relations between students and teachers. Students are highly appreciative of each other's efforts in performance. In a very few lessons in key stage 3, motivation was low and, in one case, the behaviour of a significant minority of boys was unsatisfactory.
- 271 Teaching is consistently very good and sometimes outstanding. Nearly all teachers have excellent working relationships with students and demonstrate a very high level of knowledge in order to make the subject accessible, interesting and enjoyable. The management of students in practical drama activities is authoritative and often inspirational. In one year 9 lesson, which introduced Brecht's work to students, the teacher combined working in role with an inspirational approach to questioning and very clear, well-judged instructions. Most teachers have excellent questioning skills, which are used to press students to reflect on their drama work and refine the quality of their thinking. Teachers constantly challenge students to produce better work. In one year 9 lesson teaching was unsatisfactory and this was when the management of students lacked authority, leading to a slow-paced lesson that made insufficient demands on students.
- 272 Students benefit from a very stimulating and challenging curriculum, with a strong emphasis on creativity and evaluation. The frequent and varied opportunities for reflection make a very good contribution to students' spiritual development. The faculty is led very effectively and is responding well to the improvements and challenges associated with specialist arts college status. The Campus Theatre makes an excellent contribution to enriching the curriculum and students have access to an exceptional range of high quality performance. This makes a significant contribution towards the high status which drama and the performing arts have in the school. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

## **Dance**

- 273 Dance is taught within the performing arts faculty and is taught separately from physical education.
- 274 At age 14 most students are meeting national expectations in composing, performing and appreciating dance. All students can copy accurately a dance phrase. All students can compose and perform a simple dance phrase with a partner and can perform it showing some dynamic contrasts. Most students can use correct technical language to describe accurately the dance phrases they have seen. Overall, students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in all aspects of dance.
- 275 1999 was the first year that students were entered for the GCSE examination in dance. The number of students achieving grades A \* - C was well below that found nationally and this does not reflect the very good teaching and learning that is taking place in the subject. The predicted grades for 2000 are better. In the lesson seen the standards of performance of the set study are in line with the full range of GCSE grades. Students made very good progress in the lesson observed in learning the set study, and in the quality of its performance.
- 276 Three of the four students entered for the A-Level dance examination gained passes in 1999. Year 12 and 13 students can all read and perform a basic labanotation score. They know and understand the important contribution made by costume, set and lighting design to the effectiveness of the whole dance image. Students studying dance as part of the A-Level

performing arts are achieving levels of performance, composition and appreciation in line with average to high grades. They can all interpret meaning accurately when analysing works of professional choreographers. Students on the performing arts BTEC course are all meeting or exceeding the national standard for a pass for the dance aspect of their course. All students can compose a tango and perform it in the correct style. All students are making very good progress in all aspects of dance.

- 277 Overall the students' response to dance is good. Most students work well with each other when composing in pairs or small groups. Except for a minority of boys in key stages 3 and 4, most students are able to work independently of the teacher to practise and refine their compositions and performance. Students give and respond well to constructive criticism. Whilst some students are lethargic at the beginning of some lessons, the positive attitude and quality of the teaching soon motivates them.

- 278 The quality of teaching is very good at key stages 3 and 4 and excellent in years 12 and 13. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject. Lessons are very well planned with clear objectives which are shared with the students. Tasks are set very clearly and are chosen well to bring about the desired learning outcomes. A range of appropriate teaching strategies is used, including teacher and student demonstrations to clarify tasks or to extend the students' knowledge and understanding of the correct dance technique and style. Discussion between students is handled skilfully. This was demonstrated particularly well in a performing arts BTEC session when students were discussing the appropriate style for the tango. Students are given ample opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of their own and other people's composition and performance. Very good teacher feedback is given to enable students to improve the quality of their practical work, but more specific comments are needed to enable all students to improve the quality of their written work. The excellent use of resources, including videos of professional dance works, promotes links between the students' work and that of the professional dance world. Teachers have very good working relationships with their students.
- 279 The curriculum is broad and balanced and gives students good access to a range of dance styles, including those from Asia and Africa. Progression and continuity of students' learning is clearly identified in the well-written schemes of work for students at the school, but limited liaison takes place with feeder middle schools to identify students' prior attainment in dance before they enter Stantonbury. The subject contributes well to students' social and cultural development. Students are given good opportunities to take part in performances and to attend performances and workshops, both on and off the campus, given by professional dance artists and companies. There are very good links with the on-site theatre. The very good resources and excellent accommodation all contribute well to students' learning. The subject is very well- managed with very supportive working relationships established in the subject area.
- 280 The high standards mentioned in the last report have been maintained. The quality of teaching has improved from good to very good.

· **Special Educational Needs**

- 281 All students with special needs make good progress in mainstream subjects, especially English, maths, science, humanities, design and technology, drama, art and modern languages. These students increase their levels of attainment by the end of key stage 3, and attain higher than expected at key stage 4, achieving a wide range of accreditation, including good attainment at GCSE. They achieve higher than expected levels of attainment in information technology skills. They make good progress in developing extended writing skills, by extending their vocabulary and writing styles. Progress towards targets relating to reading, spelling and numeracy in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs) is sound. There is inconsistency in the identification of targets and planning for the development of literacy and numeracy skills, so that ease of reading, accuracy in spelling and numeracy and more independent learning by year 11, is not always fully achieved by these students.
- 282 Students with learning and behavioural difficulties make very good progress in developing self esteem because of the success they achieve through the quality of in-class support, and their very good inclusion in all learning activities. They have a very positive attitude to learning, and they behave very well in most lessons. They form very strong relationships with special needs support staff, and relate very well to other students. They ask for help confidently and appropriately, and are able to cope with mistakes and difficulties because of the supportive environment. Most students with emotional or behavioural difficulties begin to take responsibility for their behaviour. These students are appreciative of the efforts made by support staff on their behalf.



- 283 The attendance of students with special needs is sound. Where these students do have attendance difficulties, the support staff work hard to overcome any school-based problems, and to encourage their regular attendance.
- 284 The teaching of students with special needs is good. Support staff have very good expertise in special needs, and have good expectations for these students' academic achievement. For individual programmes they use well-matched commercially produced schemes and multi-sensory approaches to develop literacy and numeracy skills. They support flexibly in class, by working with individual students, groups of students and sharing and developing teaching and materials with subject staff. In-class support is sometimes used to consolidate spellings.
- 285 Planning by subject teachers and support staff to ensure the successful achievement of IEP targets is variable but sound over-all. It ranges from very good to weak practice. Many subject staff are unaware of these students' targets. The use of day-to-day assessment, which identifies strengths and weaknesses in these students' learning and informs the next step in planning within their IEP, is weak, although there is some good practice. As noted in the last inspection, there are no commonly agreed procedures for recording progress towards IEP targets, either for withdrawal or in-class support.
- 286 The curricular provision for students with special needs is good. A more flexible, work-related curriculum is provided for a few students, although these do not fully comply with the section 363 (disapplication) arrangements. Intensive work on literacy and numeracy skills is provided for students with statements. Other students on the Code of Practice develop literacy and numeracy skills through the use of an integrated learning programme, and paired reading with year 12 students. Support staff provide very good information and advice to subject staff on the learning and behavioural needs of individual students. There is a growing range of accreditation to meet the needs of these students, and there are plans to provide accreditation for the key stage 4 withdrawal group. In years 12 and 13 the curricular provision is now very good because of the opportunity for accreditation appropriate to the needs of these students, and the high quality of in-class support and work on developing literacy skills.
- 287 Assessment of the special needs of students is good. There are very good links with feeder schools to provide for their needs in year 8, and very good procedures for identifying and assessing these students internally. Good use is made of diagnostic tests to monitor individual progress, although the range of diagnostic tests is not used consistently. Support staff make good use of the school systems for monitoring academic achievement and progress. A computerised system of recording Code of Practice arrangements and reviews has been introduced, but good practice in its use has yet to be embedded, and insufficient use is made of diagnostic data to plan IEP targets and individual programmes.
- 288 The monitoring of progress towards IEP targets is unsatisfactory. The information given in each IEP is variable, and there is some confusion between targets and arrangements. The Annual Review Progress Report does not clearly report progress towards the targets from the previous year, and targets set are not always measurable or time-related. The reporting of transition reviews does not always indicate planning for the next phase in learning, or record new targets. Most students have little sense of involvement in their IEP targets.
- 289 Support staff provide good opportunities for teaching the principles of right and wrong to students with learning or behavioural difficulties, and facilitate moments for reflection about behaviour.

- 290 There is very good practice in the day-to-day support of students with learning and behavioural difficulties, and support staff have promoted some very effective measures to ensure successful integration of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. For example, students with behavioural difficulties who enter year 8 are given extra support and guidance, to ensure a smooth transition and successful start to a new phase in their education.
- 291 Since the last inspection, support staff have ensured that the involvement of parents of students with special needs is good. They provide very good information about their work with these students, and their resulting achievements. There are some good links with the community, particularly with local special schools, and with businesses willing to accept students with difficulties.
- 292 Leadership of the special needs provision is good. Since the last inspection, the appointment of a new head of faculty has ensured the development of a very strong team, committed to ensuring the inclusion of students with special needs, and to their good achievement. Development planning is linked to the school priorities to raise achievement, and is monitored well. Monitoring of the provision is sound. A range of evidence is used, but there are insufficient procedures to monitor the quality of planning, teaching and recording of progress in IEPs. The governors' annual report to parents does not comply with statutory requirements.
- 293 The provision of staffing, accommodation and learning resources to meet the needs of students with special needs is very good, and contributes very well to raising their achievement. There is a very good provision of well qualified and experienced teaching and support staff, which matches the needs of the students. The special needs managers have developed very good arrangements for the induction, appraisal and professional development of support staff.
- 294 The school makes very good use of special needs funding, and contributes significantly more funding, through its commitment to students with special needs. For example, additional speech-therapist time is bought in. Since the last inspection careful consideration has been given regarding the most effective level and deployment of support staff in order to provide maximum support for all students on the Code of Practice stages. Very good use is made of special needs learning resources and accommodation to promote their achievement.

## **Sixth Form**

- 295 The standards achieved in sixth form courses are good and have improved consistently over the last four years. A-Level examination results are above the national average for comprehensive schools and in line with the average for all schools in 1999. There has been a substantial improvement since the previous inspection and results have improved twice as fast as the national trend. The completion rate on General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) programmes is very good for both intermediate and foundation level courses. The proportion of awards gained as a merit or distinction has improved, although it is a little below the national expectation. Boys and girls are equally successful, on both academic and vocational courses. A majority of students makes good progress in learning and a significant proportion of students, who start an advanced level programme with an average points score for GCSE attainment that is lower than is usual, make very good progress. Students with specific learning difficulties make very strong progress.

- 296 Students work diligently, communicate with confidence and develop the ability to address their work analytically. They gain enjoyment and satisfaction from their studies and conduct themselves well on campus, welcoming the responsibility of providing an example to younger age groups. They exhibit strong loyalty to the school and personify its values; their maturity and the good relationships formed with each other and with their teachers are strengths and contribute to the high levels of personal development achieved.
- 297 The quality of teaching in sixth form courses is good or very good. Teachers are in command of their subject and support students' learning by sound preparation, energetic presentation and well planned, challenging homework tasks. Questioning is used skilfully to test and deepen students' understanding and large A-Level groups are managed successfully. When teachers shared lesson plans and timing with students, good pace and increased concentration were noted; this was a frequent feature of GNVQ lessons. Expectations are high in general, although deliberate strategies to stretch more able students were not evidence in all subjects. On the Foundation Level GNVQ programme good practice was noted in differentiation; both assessment methods and activities were designed to meet the needs of individuals or sub-groups. Key points are reinforced effectively (for example, in Psychology, models of memory were explored through experiential and theoretical learning) and clear guidance is provided on common skills, such as essay writing.
- 298 The curriculum offered is broad. There is a wide range of choice, both of A-Level subjects and of intermediate level GNVQ vocational areas. The breadth of individual A-Level programmes is enhanced by the addition of a fourth subject option in the first year of study. Some students opt for a contrasting choice, whilst others extend specialisation. GCSE or AS certification is available for students who do not wish to continue with four subjects to the full A-Level examination. All students participate in a core programme which includes units on careers guidance, health and religious education and cultural awareness, and an A-Level General Studies course can be followed in the second year of study. A variety of extra-curricular activities are offered and students can develop further key skills capability in communication, application of number and information technology. GNVQ students extend their repertoire of these skills significantly and acquire new areas of expertise. Excellent support is provided on an individual basis for any student who needs additional help to improve language skills. There is insufficient provision of religious education to meet statutory requirements and access is not provided to a wide range of advanced level vocational provision; at this level it is difficult for students to combine vocational and academic learning and career or work-related experiences are not widely developed.
- 299 Assessment procedures are accurate and reliable and GNVQ internal verification is secure. A system of progress checks and interim review has been introduced to track students' progress and is working efficiently and effectively. A good completion rate has been achieved and students feel well informed on their overall position. A wide ranging database has been established recently and this will assist more sharply focused target setting to be implemented.
- 300 Sixth form provision is well managed and leadership is strong, demonstrating good judgement and determination. Partnership is valued and close teamwork is practised skilfully. Committed team leaders and tutors establish excellent relationships with students, and a caring approach is backed up by sheer hard work. Review processes are in place to monitor and support the quality of teaching and the curriculum, and very efficient use is made of staffing. The current national reforms are grasped clearly and issues have been appraised thoroughly. The school's aims are embodied whole-heartedly in the ethos created and lived-out in the sixth form context. There has been significant improvement in all of the issues identified in the previous inspection report, including: appropriate guidance and induction arrangements, satisfactory attendance patterns, prudent resource management and a robust

management structure. The sixth form provides very good value for money.

· **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

· **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 301 The school was inspected by a team of 24 inspectors who observed 431 lessons covering 329 hours of teaching in the equivalent of 105 inspector days. All teachers were seen teaching at least once, and most were observed a number of times. All the available work from a representative sample of nine students from each year group was inspected. Many students were asked about their work in the course of lessons, and planned discussions were held with students from each year group about their general views of the school.
- 302 School assemblies were observed and tutor periods were inspected. There were 54 planned discussions with teachers, support staff and governors, and informal discussions took place on many other occasions. The school provided a large amount of documentation which was analysed both before and during the inspection. A questionnaire was sent out to all parents (2581 in total), seeking their views about the school, and 589 replies were received and recorded, representing a 23% return. The Registered Inspector held a meeting before the inspection which was attended by 51 parents.

- **DATA AND INDICATORS**

- **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y8 – Y13	2581	104	561	327

- **Teachers and classes**

- **Qualified teachers (Y8 – Y13)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	144.25
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.9:1

- **Education support staff (Y8 – Y13)**

Total number of education support staff:	54
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	1419

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:		80.8
Average teaching group size:	KS2	N/A
	KS3	23.5
	KS4	23.5

· **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998
	£
Total Income	8424879
Total Expenditure	8417565
Expenditure per pupil	3354
Balance brought forward from previous year	440910
Balance carried forward to next year	448224

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent 2,581  
 out:  
 Number of questionnaires 589  
 returned:

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	15	62	12	7	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	40	52	4	2	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	21	49	19	6	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	25	59	10	3	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	25	52	15	5	1
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	30	54	10	3	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	31	56	10	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	21	62	6	10	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	25	53	17	4	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	15	51	21	9	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	34	51	7	4	1