

INSPECTION REPORT

THE CARDINAL WISEMAN SCHOOL

Greenford

LEA area: EALING

Unique reference number: 101934

Headteacher: Mr Paul Patrick

Reporting inspector: Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick
24326

Dates of inspection: 3 - 7 April 2000

Inspection number: 186982

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive, Art and Technology College

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of students: 11 to 18

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Greenford Road
Greenford
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Postcode: UB6 9AW

Telephone number: 0208 575 8222

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr L Misquitta

Date of previous inspection: 12 – 15 February 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Moira Fitzpatrick	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
			What should the school do to improve further?
			How high are standards? a) the school's results and achievements
			How well are students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Husain Akhtar	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	How well does the school care for its students?
		English as an additional language	How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Geoffrey Binks	Team inspector	English	
		Special educational needs	
Kenneth Boden	Team inspector	Design and technology	
Niall Carr	Team inspector	History	
		Law	
		Sociology	
		Psychology	
		Sixth form	
Mark Gill	Team inspector	Geography	
David Gutmann	Team inspector	Business studies	
		GNVQ	
John Morrell	Team inspector	Music	
Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector		How high are standards? b) students' attitudes, values and personal development
			Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Jaqueline Pentlow	Team inspector	Physical education	
Andrew Piggott	Team inspector	Science	
Marguerite Presman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Phil Redican	Team inspector	Art	
Judith Tolley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
Jacquie Watson	Team inspector	Information technology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Number of full-time students:	1568	much bigger than average
Students with English as a second language:	17.5%	higher than most schools
Students entitled to free school meals:	24%	above the national average
Students on the register of special educational needs:	23.6%	above the national average
Average number of students per teacher:	16.5	about average

The Cardinal Wiseman School is an 11 to 18 comprehensive school. The school has a wide diversity of cultures within its population. The attainment of students on entry to the school is rising. The current Year 7 group of students had an above average attainment on entry to the school. This marks a change in level of attainment on entry for the school. In the past, previous year groups had below average attainment on entry.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Cardinal Wiseman School has made outstanding progress under the inspirational leadership of the recently appointed headteacher. It is a school with a great many strengths. Standards, in all aspects of the school's work, have risen significantly. The school's GCSE results have improved dramatically and are now well above the national average, placing the school with the top fifty most improved schools nationally. The quality of leadership and management in the school as a whole is excellent. The quality of teaching is very good. It is one of the school's many strengths. Relationships in the school are very good. Taking into account the rich learning experiences offered, the very good teaching and the high standards achieved, the school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher provides excellent direction for the work of the school.
- The school's excellent ethos supports the high standards to which all are dedicated.
- The school sets and achieves high standards in learning for all students.
- The very good quality of teaching is a strength of the school.
- The school promotes outstanding levels of respect for all within its community; relationships are very good.
- The school develops in its students very good attitudes, ambition and a belief in their ability to succeed.
- The school makes very good provision for students with special educational needs.
- There are very good procedures for monitoring and supporting students' academic progress.
- The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good; this is particularly so in the sixth form.
- The work related curriculum and careers education are excellent.

What could be improved

- The school's growth plan contains the appropriate priorities for the further development of its already very good provision. There are no key issues for action other than following the very well detailed growth plan.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made outstanding progress since it was last inspected in February 1996. All areas for action identified in the previous report have been successfully tackled. Standards of achievement have been raised in all subjects. The school has improved performance in GCSE examinations so that now is well above the national average. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and is now very good at all key stages. The range and quality of resources for teaching have been significantly improved, especially in information technology. The school has improved procedures for monitoring students' academic progress and personal development; these are now very good. There is now a comprehensive system of support for all students which ensures they have good access to the curriculum and are able to succeed with their learning. School development planning is excellent

and all resources are directed to raising standards. Given the outstanding quality of leadership in the school and the quality of the school's growth plan, the school is in an excellent position to continue to improve in the same manner.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14, 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests, GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
Key Stage 3 tests	D	C	C	A
GCSE examinations	D	C	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	D	D	E	

Key	
Very high	A*
Well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Results overall in the National Curriculum tests have shown a steady rise over the last three years and are now well above the results of similar schools and in line with the national average for fourteen year olds. Both mathematics and science show a consistent rise while results in English have fluctuated from well above the national average to in line with the average. Results in these tests are rising in line with the national trend. The proportion of students achieving five or more higher grades (A*-C), in the 1999 GCSE examinations, was very high compared with similar schools and was well above the national average. The proportion of students achieving five or more passes at all grades (A*-G), was very high when compared with both similar schools and all schools nationally. These results reflect the school's commitment to its mission achievement for all. Results at GCSE put the school in the top five per cent for achievement when compared with similar schools. The trend in results at GCSE was above the national trend over the last three years. While the results at Advanced level GCE in 1999, were well below the national average, these results reflect the prior attainment of students who sat the examination in 1999 and represent satisfactory progress for these students. Those students, who completed GNVQ courses in 1999, achieved results above the national average. The governors have set a target of 55 per cent of students gaining five or more A* to C passes in the GCSE examinations in 2000.

Standards of attainment for students at the end of Key Stage 3 are above the national expectation in English, science, history, design and technology, modern languages, drama and physical education. In all other subjects they are in line with the national expectation. For students currently at the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above the national expectation in English, science, drama, geography, design and technology and modern languages. In mathematics, information technology and physical education standards are in line with the national expectation, in music they are below and in art and in history standards are well above the national expectation for sixteen year olds. Standards at the end of the sixth form are above national expectation in science, design and technology, modern languages and sociology. In English, drama and information technology they are in line with the expectation; in mathematics, geography and music they are below, while in art, history, law and psychology standards are well above the national expectation. Students following GNVQ courses are achieving standards above the national expectation.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students respond very well to the high expectations of behaviour and work established by the school. They arrive at lessons well prepared, expect to work hard and do so. They enjoy school and take part in all that the school provides with enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The standard of behaviour is good in lessons, with many examples of excellent behaviour. Outside of lessons behaviour is also good; movement between lessons is orderly and students treat the school's property with respect. While the number of exclusions during the last year shows an increase, these have been for valid reasons.
Personal development and relationships	Students show a strong sense of personal responsibility; they support the learning of others in class, involve themselves in charitable causes and in the work of the School Council. They express their views openly and confidently. Relationships among students and between students and adults are very good; they are respectful, very supportive and make a significant contribution to the quality of learning.
Attendance	Attendance is in line with the national average. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

The high standards of teaching throughout the school promote good and often very good learning. In almost 80 per cent of the 231 lessons seen teaching was good or better. In only one lesson out of the total was teaching judged to be unsatisfactory. In 34 per cent of lessons the teaching was very good or excellent. This very high quality teaching is found at all key stages in the school and leads to good learning by all students including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. In English the quality of teaching is good in over three-quarters of lessons and in more than a third teaching is very good. In mathematics the quality of teaching is good overall and good or better in the majority of lessons seen, with a third of lessons very good. In all subjects there are many examples of very good teaching. Science teaching is good overall, with high expectations of what students can achieve. In geography and music, where teaching is good overall some excellent teaching was seen. In art, teaching is consistently very good in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In history, the overall standard of teaching at all key stages is very good and shows exemplary progress since the last inspection. In drama, the quality of teaching is very good overall, with some very good, mixed age, team teaching seen. The standard of teaching is very good in law, where the assessment of students' work is outstanding. In all lessons teachers have high expectations of students, they plan well to ensure good learning and good progress; they give clear explanations and conduct lessons at a brisk pace making very good use of time.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good provision at Key Stage 3, with the National Curriculum subjects enhanced by very good quality drama and personal and social education. Very good provision at Key Stage 4 with a wide range of

	courses going beyond National Curriculum subjects. The range of courses for both A-level and vocational accreditation in the sixth form is also very good, with over twenty subjects on offer. The school offers a wide range of good quality extra-curricular activities including homework clubs, after school classes for Year 11 students and the sixth form and Saturday morning classes.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good provision. Students are well assessed, their individual education plans are appropriate and good liaison between the special educational needs co-ordinator and teachers ensures that progress is well monitored. The quality of teaching for students who are withdrawn from lessons is very good.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Very good provision. Those students who have English as an additional language have good access to the curriculum through the effective support they get through the EMAG (Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant) team.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision is good; some aspects of it are very good. The Christian ethos of the school is evident in the many opportunities given for students to reflect, to seek and to give counsel and support. Moral development is very well promoted through policies and expectations which help students distinguish right from wrong and in teaching which has moral themes as a focus. The school offers many opportunities for students to appreciate the richness and diversity of their own and other cultures.
How well the school cares for its students	The school values its students highly and through careful monitoring on a wide scale, has a very good understanding of their needs. There are very effective systems for monitoring students' academic progress and personal well-being, which involve all staff at all levels in the school. The school's mentoring programme is particularly beneficial to students in preparation for their examinations. The school has a good home-school partnership and works closely with parents to support the achievement of their children. Regular newsletters and comments in the students' planners keep parents well informed.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is outstanding and the great strength of the school. At all levels high quality, informed leadership is focused on taking the school forward and on raising standards in all aspects of its work. The clarity of vision shared by all with management responsibilities contributes to the school's outstanding fulfilment of its mission.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are well informed, involved and very supportive of the school. They have ensured that the school fully meets statutory requirements. They show a good understanding of how the school should develop and take justifiable pride in its recent developments.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher, senior staff and governors have a very clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. The two year growth plan identifies very well the priorities for further development of the school. The headteacher is ambitious for students' success and ensures that the school is aware of comparable schools and how it might learn from them.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and administration are very good. The school makes very good strategic use of all resources. All spending decisions are based on raising achievement and are evaluated on that basis.

	The budget is effectively managed by the bursar, who makes efficient use of technology. The school evaluates the cost effectiveness of the services it buys and pays good attention to the need for competition to increase value for money. The school provides very good value for money because of the rich learning experience offered, the very good teaching and the high standards achieved.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the school is well led and managed. • That the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. • That the school helps their children develop mature and responsible attitudes. • That behaviour in the school is good. • That the teaching in the school is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison between special educational needs staff and subject teachers. • Communication between school and the parents of sixth form students. • The use made of the library.

Parents' views of the school are very favourable. They value the quality of education provided for their children and the progress their children make. Inspectors' judgements support these views of parents. The school is succeeding in raising standards of achievement for all students through a focus on good teaching, high expectations of behaviour and effort and responsible attitudes from students. A few parents are concerned that some teachers do not liaise enough with the special needs staff. Inspectors found that students with special educational needs were well supported to make good progress because of the effective links between classroom teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator. Some parents of sixth form students are concerned that they are not informed about their child's progress or lack of it. The school has very good procedures for half-termly assessment of all students' progress by subject. This information is carried by students in their daily planner which should be signed by parents regularly. Other parents have a concern that the library is not used enough. The library is open for use by all students from an hour before school begins till an hour after lessons finish. During inspection there was very good use of the library throughout the day by students from all years.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. On entry to the school, students' attainment in the current Year 7 was above average. This marks a change over the past three years, when the attainment on entry was below average.
2. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests for fourteen year olds, results in English show that attainment is slightly above the national average and well above the average achieved by similar schools. Girls perform better than boys in these tests, as they do nationally. Results in English tests have fluctuated during the last four years, but have remained above the national average. Results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests in mathematics show attainment below the national average and above the average of similar schools. Boys' results were better than girls' and in line with the national average for boys. Results in mathematics over the past four years show a rising trend. In the 1999 National Curriculum science tests, results were in line with the national average and well above the average of similar schools. While girls perform better than boys in the school, they do not perform as well as other girls nationally. There has been a rising trend in science results over the last four years. Taken over the last four years, the trend in students' performance in these core subjects has been in line with the national trend.
3. In the 1999 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, 62 per cent of students achieved five or more higher grades (A*-C) which is well above the national average and very high compared with the results of similar schools. The percentage of students achieving five or more passes at all grades (A*-G), 99.6 per cent was very high compared with all schools nationally and similar schools. The average student point score for GCSE passes was 45, which is well above the national average of 37.8. Both boys and girls achieved well above the average of their peers nationally. Taken over the last four years the trend in the student point score has risen faster than the national trend.
4. While results in the 1999 General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced level examinations were well below the national average, they reflect the prior attainment of students taking the examinations and represent good progress for these students. Results in the 1999 General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQ) were above the national average.
5. The pattern of GCSE results shows an improvement in almost all subjects in the past two years. Results were above or well above the national average in sixteen out of the twenty-three subjects examined in 1999. In those subjects where the improvement is not so marked, there are clear reasons for this. In design and technology and music, there is a rising pattern of attainment following the appointment of new subject managers. In business studies, a change of examination syllabus, better suited to the needs of students has been introduced and is raising the standards students reach. In English, results are well above the national average and, in science, they are above the national average. Results in mathematics are in line with the national average. The remarkable improvement in standards achieved in these examinations is due to the improved quality of teaching in the school, the effectiveness of very good and regular assessment procedures to monitor students' progress each half-term and the close working partnership the school has established with parents. The school also offers many additional opportunities for students to improve their standards of attainment through homework clubs, the A* Club and Saturday morning classes.
6. Evidence from classroom observation and scrutiny of students' work indicates that, by the end of Key Stage 3, they are achieving above the national expectation in history, design and technology, drama, modern languages and physical education. In all of these subjects students are keen to learn; very good relationships and high expectations ensure that they make good progress and consolidate their learning well. In history, students engage in discussion to discover not only what happened but why. In drama, very high expectations of independent learning from the teacher motivate all students to improvise and create drama through harmonious teamwork. In design and technology, students achieve high standards in their projects because of the well-planned lessons that combine design and practical making skills. In all other subjects at Key Stage 3 students attain in line with the national expectation.

In art, students are taught to use a variety of starting points for their work and, as a consequence, observational skills, memory and the imagination are all developed. Students acquire a good balance of skills and knowledge in geography and are able to explain patterns of migration and how some animal species are endangered. In mathematics, students have a good understanding of data-handling. By the end of the key stage, they know the geometry of two-dimensional shapes and higher attainers work comfortably with simultaneous equations. In music, students at the end of Key Stage 3 have made rapid progress in the last year from a low base of knowledge and skills. They compose independently, introducing harmonies to known tunes and they sing unaccompanied in four parts with confidence and enjoyment.

7. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Observations of lessons in English in Key Stage 3 show that students make good progress because they are fully involved by very good teachers. In all subjects, students with special educational needs are well catered for, either by in-class support or by specific planning for their needs by the class teacher. Liaison between the special needs department and class teachers is very good and ensures good learning for the students. Progress made by students who are dyslexic is also good because of the specialist help that is given in sequencing and ordering information, after using the "Inspiration" software on a computer. The school's records show that the majority of students move down or off the register by the end of Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 students on the register of special educational need are effectively supported to do well in GCSE examinations by the provision of guided study in the time made available by their study of single instead of double award science. In the 1999 GCSE results, over 99 per cent of students who had been on the special needs register achieved five or more GCSE passes.
8. Students are attaining slightly above national averages in English by the end of Key Stage 3. They are taught to read with insight and many read complex and challenging texts. Their writing is accurate and well presented. By the end of Key Stage 4, their attainment is significantly above the national expectation. They are perceptive readers, well able to discuss texts in depth and to express their own viewpoint convincingly. Standards of work at the end of the sixth form reflect the variation in ability of the students, though all are working to A-level standard. Higher attaining students have very good analytical skills and write fluently and cogently on the texts they are studying.
9. Teaching throughout the school promotes good practice in speaking, reading and writing. The vast majority of students speak confidently and work collaboratively to good effect, using talk to review and develop their learning. In history, they form hypotheses, analyse and make deductions. Students listen attentively and their listening skills are sharpened by the good explanations and clear instructions given by teachers. Students follow, respond and contribute to discussion with interest and enthusiasm. In all subjects, students are given opportunities for reading in class, reading aloud and reading for research. They read accurately and with understanding. Students' writing is well promoted in all subjects through the range of opportunities they are given to write for different purposes and different audiences. As a result, students write competently, with good attention given to spelling and punctuation. They know the value of planning, drafting, revising and editing their written work and, at all key stages, are encouraged to work hard at this process to raise their standards.
10. Students' attainment in mathematics is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. At each key stage and in the sixth form, students make good and sometimes very good progress. At the end of Key Stage 3, students have good data-handling skills and a sound knowledge of the geometry of two-dimensional shapes. By the end of Key Stage 4, students are able to carry out mathematical investigations independently and to present their explanations clearly.
11. Numeracy is well promoted across the curriculum. Good support is given to numeracy in the special support option at Key Stage 4. Students carry out good mental mathematics involving everyday situations with money and change given. In science, students are developing skills to find the line of best fit in their experiments; students measure accurately for work carried out in experiments. In Key Stage 4, students use formulae well when studying physical science. In business studies, data-handling, involving consumer surveys and drawing pie charts, line and bar charts, reinforces the students' numeracy skills. By Year 9, students are confident in using a database or a spreadsheet. In art, students carry out good work on reflective and rotational symmetry using information technology, drawing and photography. In geography, numeracy is less well developed than expected and is less well developed than literacy skills.

12. In science, students achieve standards above the national expectation by the ends of Key Stages 3 and 4. Students currently in Year 9 have made good progress in Key Stage 3. They have good research skills and are secure in their retention of knowledge about, for instance, adaptation in animals. Their investigative skills, while good, could be more fully developed. Students at Key Stage 4 have a good understanding and knowledge of all attainment targets. They make good progress because of well-planned lessons, which develop their thinking and reasoning. They show a good understanding of scientific principles and have good factual recall. Higher attaining students are challenged to work independently on their own research and achieve high levels of thinking as a consequence.
13. Students attain above the national expectation in information technology at Key Stage 3 and in line with the national expectation in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. By the end of Key Stage 3, students are independent users of information technology; they have good levels of knowledge and skills that they are able to apply in all subjects. At Key Stage 4, students develop their information technology skills in the subjects they study for GCSE. They have average skills and are able to apply them appropriately in all subjects. In the sixth form, students also develop information technology skills in the subjects they study. Particularly good use is made of these in art, where students produce digitised images of their work to develop colour and texture.
14. For students nearing the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is above the average standard in English, science, geography, design and technology and modern languages. In all of these subjects, their learning is at least good and is often very good. They acquire new knowledge and skills at a good rate and have good retention of what is learned. Students reach well above the average national standard in art, history and drama. In art, they make very good progress in all areas of study, achieving high standards in drawing and painting, textiles and photography. In history, they analyse events and are confident in drawing conclusions from primary and secondary sources. Their performance skills and knowledge of theatrical styles are above average and they make very good progress within lessons through their work on improvisation. In mathematics, sociology and physical education, students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is average. In music, attainment for students at the end of Key Stage 4 is below average, owing to a lack of work covered in previous years. However, under new leadership, the department is accelerating the learning of students in Key Stage 4.
15. Since the last inspection, the school has made remarkable progress in raising both the standards of achievement and the rate of students' learning. There have been substantial changes in the leadership of many departments. These new appointments, together with existing heads of department, form a strong cohort, with high expectations, common standards and very effective systems for raising standards of attainment. The monitoring of classroom performance is central to the work of middle and senior managers and, through this and consequent professional development, the quality of teaching has been transformed into a major strength of the school. Pastoral heads, working closely with departmental heads, support the good learning with very effective monitoring of students' progress and good liaison with parents.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Students respond very well to the high expectations of behaviour and work established by the school. They enjoy school and participate in all that the school provides with enthusiasm. For example, they work hard in lessons, attend enrichment classes on Saturdays where needed and many students participate in extra-curricular activities. The rate of student take-up of opportunities for drama, music and sports is high. Students make good use of the library. Students with special educational needs work hard, respond very well to the support that they receive and take part in their own learning. A high number of students stay on in the sixth form at the school. As at the time of the previous inspection, most students attend the school regularly and promptly. The overall attendance is average but unauthorised absence is below the national average.
17. The standard of behaviour is good in lessons, with many examples of excellent behaviour, particularly in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Students are very interested in what they are

asked to do and enjoy their work. Their behaviour is good outside lessons. Students are helpful, courteous and respectful. Movement between the lessons is orderly although some examples of energetic behaviour were seen in the narrow circulation areas. Students treat the school's property with good care. No oppressive behaviour was seen during the inspection. While the number of exclusions during the previous school year has increased, they have been for valid reasons. Correct procedures for exclusions were followed. The school's social inclusion strategies are working very well and there have been no permanent exclusions for the last two terms.

18. Students enjoy very good relationships with each other and with staff. Mutual respect is evident. Students collaborate well in groups during lessons, a good example was seen in a Year 8 geography lesson where group presentations were made on different endangered species. Students respect each other's feelings, values, beliefs and all groups of students work together very well.
19. Students express their views openly and confidently. They are listened to (*consultation arrangements are good*) and cared for, and this helps to maintain their very good interest in the school. Students apply themselves very well when given opportunities to take responsibility and to show initiative; for example, in the work of the school council, reading prayers in front of their colleagues in classrooms and helping in the school's library. But there are uneven opportunities for students to develop independence and personal initiative in their learning. Maturity grows well as students move through the school. The sixth form students organise themselves very well. They show a sense of personal responsibility and help younger students in their work by working as "buddies". Students who go on residential trips cope well with living away from home.
20. The previous inspection reported good standards; the overall picture is much stronger now.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching is very good overall. In over 99 per cent of the 231 lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory; in nearly 80 per cent of lessons teaching was good or better and in 34 per cent it was very good or excellent. In only one lesson was teaching judged to be unsatisfactory. This high quality, demanding teaching leads to good and often very good learning for students. Examples of outstanding teaching were seen in English, geography, information technology and music. In every subject there were examples of very good teaching seen.
22. Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. At that time, there were considerable variations in the standard of teaching and, in general, teachers' expectations were too low. Since then, a high percentage of new teachers has joined the school. There has also been a major re-focusing of the school's aims to secure achievement for all. This has led to considerable emphasis on raising the quality of teaching through a programme of rigorous monitoring, identification of training needs and the provision of professional development to meet these needs. The school has also developed a model of sharing good practice within departments, so that there is now an evenness of standards within and across departments.
23. Teachers' high expectations of students are a hallmark of almost every lesson seen. In an outstanding English lesson in Year 11, students made very good progress in their study of the poem, "War Photographer", because the teacher had prepared them well for discussion and then trusted them to develop the salient points in group discussion before joining a whole class discussion. Students work at a very good rate in such lessons and, in this example, were very pleased with their own mastery of difficult subject matter. In a Year 10 mathematics lesson on graphs, students responded very well to the teacher's high expectations for independent thought. They handled challenging questions well, those taking risks with their suggestions being well supported by both the teacher and the rest of the class. Within the lesson, not only did all students make very good progress as a result of the teacher's very high expectations, they also enjoyed the challenge and pressure to succeed and took pride in what the teacher believed they could do.

24. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they apply this very well in their lesson planning. In an information technology lesson, Year 8 students are very well motivated when the teacher shares the lessons outcomes with them. They make excellent progress in their learning because of the teacher's very good subject knowledge, which leads to well-focused teaching and demanding questions. In modern languages, teachers' expertise and fluency are used very effectively to conduct lessons in the foreign language, giving students the opportunity to develop very good speaking and listening skills. Their very good subject knowledge also means that they provide appropriate and well-sequenced activities, so that students build effectively on their previous learning.
25. All departments provide a stimulating range of teaching styles. In the sixth form, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) courses develop good qualities of independent learning in the students. Teachers plan activities so that students gather information from a variety of sources, such as case studies, textbooks, computer software and local industrial contacts. Students enjoy the challenge of presenting information in a variety of ways, such as reports, graphs and oral presentations. In many sixth form courses, such as law, psychology and sociology, the quality of learning is considerably enhanced by the methods of enquiry and research, of reflection, discussion and decision making. In drama lessons at all key stages, students learn through well-planned practical activities which challenge them to reflect and create, whilst developing very good collaborative skills. The practice of self and peer evaluation, seen in all drama lessons, increases students' involvement in lessons and gives them a very secure understanding of the knowledge and skills that they acquire. As a consequence, students make very good progress in the subject.
26. High quality, respectful and purposeful relationships are found in all lessons. Teachers take care to know their students well. Because of this they are able to manage them very well and to plan work which is interesting and challenging for them. Their skilful creation of a secure and purposeful learning environment supports students to make very good intellectual effort. In an outstanding geography lesson, Year 7 students were very well supported by the teacher's use of praise at the start of the lesson to motivate them to do well. The very good learning resources provided gave every student the opportunity to learn at an excellent rate and to reason confidently about complex factors affecting population migration in Kenya.
27. Students' interest is very well sustained because of the brisk and energetic pace at which lessons are conducted. Teachers' share the lessons objectives with students at the start and make them aware of how they are progressing within the lesson. In information technology lessons the objectives are written on the board so that students are able to assess their own progress within the lesson. In all drama lessons students are set practical tasks requiring high levels of concentration and effort in a limited time scale. In such lessons students learn at a very good rate and are aware of their progress.
28. Teachers' lesson planning and preparation are very good. The very good assessment procedures they use, in science for example, mean that they have a detailed knowledge of their students' learning needs and are able to plan work that is both accessible and challenging. Students' work is marked regularly with useful comments on what to do to improve. In many subjects teachers plan so that students are responsible for evaluating their own and others' work. This has great benefits both for students' own knowledge of their learning and in informing them of what they need to do to improve.
29. The standard of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is good overall, with some very good teaching seen. Good teamwork between subject and support staff is typical; for example in a Year 8 information technology lesson the good planning between the teacher and learning support assistant led to good learning by the students. The very good teaching by the learning support assistant combined with excellent record keeping have a very significant impact on progress overtime for students on the special needs register. Very good teaching by specialists in withdrawal lessons leads to good progress for dyslexic pupils. Subject departments make very good use of individual education plans, with useful additional subject targets identified for students with special educational needs, for example in a Year 7 English lesson, work was varied to match the levels of reading and writing competence to ensure that all could succeed. For the vast majority of students who have English as an additional language this is not a barrier to their learning. Those who are at an early stage of acquiring English are given very effective support in class by the support staff who are expert,

plan with the class teacher and monitor the progress of students for whom they are responsible. This effective provision results in good learning for these students.

30. Students have a programme of regular homework which is monitored by parents and tutors using the pupil organiser as a record. Homework is used appropriately to either prepare for, or to follow up class-work, or to provide opportunities for research. Response from parents indicates that the vast majority are satisfied with the work their children are expected to do at home.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?

31. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum. Statutory requirements are being met in all subjects. The weekly teaching time of 25 hours in Key Stages 3 and 4 meets the recommended time allocation. Compared with national averages, the time allocated for the study of two languages, science, music and English is low in Key Stage 3 but does not impact negatively on standards. At Key Stage 4, the school provides a very good range of courses leading to either GCSE or the National Certificate of Achievement. In the sixth form, in addition to a wide range of courses leading to A and A/S level, the school offers courses leading to GNVQ intermediate and advanced level accreditation in a wide range of vocations. Registration, assemblies and tutor time are organised as a part of the pastoral system. A number of students with special educational needs in Key Stage 3 are withdrawn from music, modern languages, physical education and English on a regular basis for extra help in basic skills. Consequently, these students do not receive their full entitlement in these subjects and their progress in them is hampered.
32. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum builds on good links with the main primary schools from which the school draws its students. These links are planned effectively to ensure that students' learning continues smoothly when they move from their primary schools and through the subsequent key stages. All National Curriculum subjects, together with personal and social education, information technology and drama, are taught throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. Sex education, drugs awareness and careers are taught through the very well-planned and comprehensive personal and social education programme, which spans all key stages. The range of subjects available is broadened significantly in the sixth form to include economics, law, psychology, sociology, photography, design and fashion, as well as vocational courses in art and design, engineering, leisure and tourism and business education, all leading to GNVQ accreditation at intermediate and advanced level. Students are also given the opportunity to take additional language units in Spanish and French. The Technology and Art College initiative has exercised a strong influence, particularly in the development of information technology across the school and in the development of links with local businesses and industry.
33. The curriculum is enriched by field trips and visits, as well as by visiting speakers. For example, all A-level science students go for a week to North Wales and attend sixth form conferences. Years 9 and 10 attend demonstrations by visiting speakers, representatives from the medical profession talk to A-level science students and there is an A-level geography field trip to Tunisia. Theatre workshops, visiting speakers and trips to the theatre enhance the English and drama curriculum. In geography, all Year 9 students have an introductory talk from the cultural liaison officers from the Japanese Embassy when they begin their study of Japan and students studying French and Spanish have conversation practice with French and Spanish native speakers. There are numerous visits to art galleries and museums. Revision classes are held on a regular basis by the majority of departments in lunchtimes and after school. In addition to this, students take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including the choir, drama and musical productions, charity events, the annual arts festival and a wide range of sports activities. Sixth form students help younger students with their reading and participate in community service.
34. The school maintains effective links with Initial Teacher Training institutions, such as King's College; this contributes to subject teachers' professional development and enables them to keep abreast of current methodology and thought. Excellent links with the local community are a particular strength of the school. The school takes full advantage of the networking

opportunities offered by the local community and excellent communication and liaison between all involved is a major factor in raising achievement in the school. For example, the community mentoring initiative provides valuable links with the community and this, together with the services of an on-site therapist, is having a significant effect upon ensuring that all students have equal access to the curriculum and make the most of the opportunities open to them. It is already making a considerable impact upon improving students' attitudes towards their learning and many students plan to become mentors themselves as a result of this experience. The excellent careers programme has become a focal point in the school and, through the school's links with the wider community, it enables students at all stages of their education to make informed choices about their future. All students in Key Stage 4 and students following vocational courses in the sixth form undertake work experience and there are plans in hand to extend these opportunities to A-level students.

35. Overall, provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Some aspects of it are very good. Spiritual provision is good. The Christian ethos of the school is clearly evident, both in the general atmosphere and in the many specific opportunities given to students to develop their awareness of this dimension of life. There is a chapel within the school buildings where students and staff alike can go to pray and be quiet. This is open from early in the morning and throughout the school day. The chaplains and a counsellor are always on hand to give spiritual guidance, general encouragement and help. Displays and religious artefacts around the school clearly indicate that the school motto, 'All things for Christ' is a reality within its everyday activities. A high priority is given to the teaching of religious education. Regular worship is provided both in year assemblies and in registration times and these times cover themes like Easter, discipleship, peace, the Holy Spirit, Good News and Christian unity. The quality of the worship in registration times is inconsistent - sometimes it is excellent, but at other times cursory. Mass is celebrated weekly and all students have a retreat day each year. Since the last inspection, much work has been done on making departments aware of how they can provide a spiritual dimension within their own subject areas. This has had an impact in some areas, but not all, and the school continues to work on improving provision in this area.
36. Provision for moral development is very good. The students are expected to behave well, care for others and have a clear sense of right and wrong. The Home-School Agreement clearly indicates that expectations are high in this area. Several other behaviour codes, including the Classroom Behaviour Policy and Code of Conduct, set out unambiguously the fact that students are expected to be at their best at all times, and that both in and out of school, they are to conduct themselves in a fitting way. The personal, social and health education programme has units of work which serve to strengthen this. Units of work include an awareness of smoking, drugs, sex, bullying and alcohol. Themes in year assemblies and tutor time also include moral issues, such as human rights, slavery, caring for the elderly, service, justice and freedom. Individual departments, such as design and technology and religious education make a study of issues which have moral overtones, such as renewable resources, the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus. The involvement of students in such things as Amnesty International, CAFOD and world debt also has a moral impact on them. The examples set by staff also serve as good moral guides.
37. Provision for social development is good. A substantial unit of work in the personal, social, and health education programme deals with the issue of citizenship. This prepares the students for life outside school. There are also units of work on personal hygiene, growing up, good relationships, respecting differences, people and prejudice, the environment and stereotyping. Clubs and activities within the school help the students to develop their social skills. These include sporting activities, musical activities and trips out, including retreat days and some visits abroad. Assembly themes and themes in the Prayers and Reflections have a strong social dimension and cover such topics as bereavement, reconciliation, freedom, courage, human rights, injustice and care for the sick and elderly. Opportunities to take responsibility are limited, particularly lower down in the school. Nonetheless, students can be monitors and representatives for the School Council and be involved in charity related events, such as bring-and-buy sales. Some students are also involved in chaplaincy work. There are opportunities to be prefects in the sixth form. Students can involve themselves in the school community through such things as drama productions and by contributing to the Mass by way of readings and musical contributions. Overall, however, more opportunities for the students to take responsibility and to show initiative need to be made available to them, as well as more general opportunities for independent activity.

38. Provision for cultural development is good. There are trips to museums and galleries, including the Richmond Museum, the National Gallery, the Science Museum and the Imperial War museum. There are also study trips to places of local and educational significance, such as Harlech Sand Dunes and Canterbury. Musical and drama activities also feature in school life with productions such as 'The Crucible' and 'Our Day Out'. St Patrick's Day is celebrated and there is an annual retreat for students. An Arts Festival includes fashion, music, dance and film reviews, while items of art work can be seen in and around the school. Opportunities to appreciate the diversity and richness of other cultures are also present. Some students have contacts in Botswana and there are several displays about writers from non-European backgrounds. Individual departments also acknowledge the contributions other cultures have made to learning, such as in mathematics. The religious education department has some multi-cultural study as part of its course. The students in the music department study aspects of African and Japanese music and students in history study topics like 'Black People of the Americas'. The 'Prayers and Reflections' book has a number of prayers from other religions and there are some visits abroad, for example to Turkey and the Somme.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

39. The school has maintained and, in many respects improved upon, the provision for care and support of its students reported by the last inspection. For example, the health and safety and sex education policies needed then, are in place now and the school makes very good use of assessment to focus support for the students' learning.
40. The school values its students and has a good understanding of their needs. This has a positive effect on students' learning. The pastoral system is very well organised and provides continuity of support throughout the school. Monitoring of students' performance is very effective. Students' organisers are well used to record work and are checked regularly by form tutors. The end of year reports and regular assessment of students' effort and achievements are very helpful in monitoring their academic performance. Social inclusion strategies and the individual support plans are effective in monitoring students' personal development, including behaviour and attendance. Provision to cater for students' individual needs is equally very good and effective. The support structure includes behaviour support through an on-site therapy service, internal and external mentors for low attainers, compensatory classes on Saturdays, GEMA (Group for Ethnic Minority Achievement) and counselling. Students with special educational needs are well supported, and provision for high attaining students is developing. Visiting specialists support students well.
41. For a significant number of students in the school English is an additional language, but, for a vast majority, it is not a barrier to their learning. The very few students who are at an early stage of acquiring the English language get effective support through EMAG (Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant) provision and they have good access to the curriculum.
42. Procedures for child protection and for health and safety are satisfactory overall. Adults know the child protection procedures, but there is no school written policy at present. There is some lapse of health and safety procedures in the science department. The medical room arrangements are effective and students requiring first aid treatment are warmly attended to. Curriculum activities, including personal and social education, effectively raise students' awareness of issues related to their well-being, such as the misuse of drugs and bullying. Students are very well guided about their futures, particularly through a well-structured programme of careers education.
43. The measures to ensure high standards of behaviour by students are very good. Students respect the code of conduct that was developed with their support. They know and understand the system of sanctions and rewards. Good behaviour and success are well celebrated and parents and students appreciate this. The pastoral staff firmly monitor and deal with any incidents of negative behaviour, including bullying, which are not common. No oppressive behaviour was seen and none was reported to inspectors during the inspection.
44. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are satisfactory. Registration

requirements are met. The electronic register system is helpful in detecting problems at an early stage. The school routinely follows up absences and, where needed, the education welfare service is wisely used. The school obtains average attendance.

The use of assessment

45. Procedures for assessing students' learning are very good. Practice is guided by clear, coherent policies and the systems in place to secure quality and consistency in practice are very good. Arrangements for grouping students in Year 7 are well developed. Although students come from a very large number of feeder primary schools, all Key Stage 2 performance data is available and enables students to be grouped by ability on entry. A range of tests, carried out in the first term, enables this grouping to be refined further. Students' attainment and effort in all subjects is assessed every half term and there are very effective procedures in place to deal with unsatisfactory performance. Senior staff, heads of year and subject co-ordinators are all involved a rigorous monitoring of students' progress. The setting and completion of homework receives equally close scrutiny.
46. Assessment practices are never less than good within subject departments and, in social studies, information technology and design and technology at Key Stage 3, they are very good. In all subjects, data on learning is gathered systematically and a clear profile of progress over time is produced. The performance data gathered in science and all social studies is particularly detailed. The use of assessment data to inform curriculum planning is good overall and is a strength in music, information technology and social studies. Predictions of grades for GCSE, A level and GNVQ are shared with students and targets are set for all students in all subjects. The systems for target setting and their review are particularly refined in science, social studies and for all GNVQ courses. Student self-assessment is well developed and practice is particularly good in modern foreign languages and design and technology. However, this practice is not linked explicitly to the levels at which students are working and students are largely insecure in their understanding of what needs to be achieved for a particular level of attainment. Marking is good overall and particularly good in law, psychology and music. It is satisfactory in science.
47. Reports to parents provide good contextual information, but there is only limited space for teachers to comment specifically on what students can and cannot do and, in some subjects, only limited information is provided. Their Records of Achievement are valued by students. They include a good range of well-presented information and students are aided in their compilation by a very good handbook. These records are further developed by students following GNVQs, but not by those taking A-levels.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48. As at the time of the last inspection, the school works successfully with parents. Parents are valued and their opinions are sought on a variety of issues. Parents are well satisfied with the work of the school and have good confidence in its leadership. They are very pleased with the improvements that the school has made in the last few years. Parents strongly believe that the school has high expectations of work. They are pleased with the quality of teaching and value the standards achieved by students. Inspection findings confirm these positive views. Some parents are critical of homework, the information they are given about how their children are getting on and the range of extra-curricular activities offered. Inspectors found that the homework is effective and provision for extra activities is good. Information provided for parents by the school is generally good; there is some inconsistency in alerting them to problems early, mostly in the sixth form. The school brochure and the annual governors' report are a good introduction to the life of the school and include the required information. The end of year progress reports are simple and inform parents about what their children can do, but do not really tell them about what their children should do to improve. Parents of students with special educational needs are kept well informed about their children's progress and are appropriately involved in the reviews.
49. The school has a welcoming approach and the headteacher and staff are readily accessible if

parents need to speak to them. This benefits students greatly. Many parents are linked directly with the school through the parishes it serves. Parental involvement in the education of their children at the school is good. The parents' and friends' association is well supported and organises fund-raising events for improving school resources. Parents support the extra and social activities organised by the school well. Their attendance at consultation meetings is good, despite the fact that many live outside the borough. They use the student organisers well to communicate with the school. Many parents support their children with their homework. The school successfully relies upon the co-operation of parents to reinforce high expectations of both behaviour and work. Parents are keen for their children to do well.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

50. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school. He has a very clear vision for the development of the school that is reflected in all the work of the school. In a very short time he has succeeded in winning the wholehearted support of all school staff, governors, parents and students. The determination he has brought to raising standards, quickly and effectively in all aspects of the school's work, has transformed attitudes among staff and students. The school's commitment to very high standards is exemplified in all aspects of his work. The headteacher has not only succeeded in providing success for all who work in the school, he has also created a community in which every student and member of staff has a sense of their own worth through a belief in their ability to succeed and a knowledge that there is support to ensure this. Together with colleagues at all levels, he has created a vibrant, happy community committed to success and continuous improvement. Under his inspirational leadership, the school has made outstanding progress since the last inspection in raising academic standards and in transforming the aspirations of its community.
51. The delegation of management responsibilities within the senior management team and to subject and pastoral managers reflects the headteacher's clarity of vision for the school and his considerable ability to manage and develop the expertise of colleagues. The deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers have well-defined roles, which draw on their personal skills and interests and give them the opportunity to lead on significant areas within the school. Each one is expert and efficient in their particular area of responsibility, providing high quality, informed leadership to take the school forward. Subject managers are similarly expert; they are also very enthusiastic and determined to raise standards within their subjects and are quick to share ideas and follow the lead of successful practice. Heads of year too, have a well-defined role in raising standards. They work in close consultation with both senior and subject managers in ensuring that the school's very good systems for monitoring students' progress are effectively used. Together, these well-planned, well-described and very well discharged roles provide outstanding management for the school.
52. The headteacher and senior staff have devised very good systems for monitoring all aspects of the school's performance. There is a rigorous programme for monitoring teaching which is shared by the headteacher, senior staff and heads of department. The results of this monitoring have been well used to highlight good practice and to provide appropriate professional development. The very good improvement found in the quality of teaching points to the success of this strategy. The monitoring of students' progress is central to the school's drive to raise standards and as such involves teachers and managers at all levels in the school. As a result, parents receive half-termly reports on their children's progress and heads of department and heads of year are kept well informed of standards in their areas of responsibility and are quickly alerted to the need to take remedial action.
53. The special needs department is very well led. There is a clear focus on high achievement for all students and this is communicated to all who work in the department. The special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has established an effective network of link teachers to liaise with other departments and monitor the progress of students with special educational needs. Individual education plans are well written and provide good guidance for the classroom teacher. There are very good links with the local authority support teams. The involvement of parents in reviewing the progress of their children and in setting targets is well developed and the SENCO has succeeded in winning their support in establishing a partnership focused on their children's needs. Very good monitoring of students' progress, combined with very good

teaching, ensures that students move off the register when their learning needs have been met. That this happens regularly is a reflection of the high quality of work in the department.

54. The governing body has approved a very good two-year growth plan for the school and have a clear picture of the school's strengths and priorities for development. There is a well-organised committee structure through which the governors make decisions about the future of the school. Each of these committees is well supported by the headteacher and senior staff, who keep them well informed of developments in the school. Governors have ensured that the school has in place policies and procedures that provide a good framework for the management and organisation of the school. The governing body have taken care to ensure that all statutory requirements are met. They monitor standards in the school through discussions with the headteacher and senior staff, holding them accountable for examination results and standards in the school. The governors monitor the work of the principal and the senior management team through a process of target setting and evaluation.
55. The school's simple and all embracing mission of "Education for all = Achievement for all" pervades all aspects of its work. The school's fulfilment of this mission is outstanding. The headteacher and staff have created a school environment that ensures students have a secure and welcoming place to work and grow. Through their hard work and commitment to students' success, they have devised systems which monitor and support students at every stage of their learning. The headteacher has generated very good relationships at all levels in the school, through his own example and through a programme of open and honest consultation. As a result, high levels of trust have been established with all members of the school's community.
56. The school has made outstanding progress since it was last inspected in February 1996. All areas for action identified in the previous report have been successfully tackled. Standards of achievement have been raised in all subjects. The school has improved performance in GCSE examinations so that now is well above the national average. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and is now very good at all key stages. The range and quality of resources for teaching has been significantly improved, especially in information technology. The school has improved procedures for monitoring students' academic progress and personal development; these are now very good. There is now a comprehensive system of support for all students which ensures they have good access to the curriculum and are able to succeed with their learning. School development planning is excellent and all resources are directed to raising standards. Given the outstanding quality of leadership in the school and the quality of the school's growth plan, the school is in an excellent position to continue to improve in the same manner.
57. Overall, the school has good accommodation. The restricted nature of the site, however, means that further development outwards is not now possible and, consequently, some accommodation is becoming cramped. As a result, a number of departments suffer some limitation on their space, such as in the English and art departments. Drama, too, needs additional specialist areas and the teaching of law lacks an area of its own. Otherwise, the accommodation is good and, in science and modern foreign languages, it is very good. Progress since the last inspection has been positive where it is possible for changes to have been made. During wet weather, the conditions continue to be difficult and access and parking also continue to be problematic. The school library is small, but the available space is very effectively used. More tables are needed where students can work, but this would cause a problem of crowding. The site is well maintained and is clean and tidy.
58. The staffing is good and meets the needs of the curriculum well. The teachers are suitably qualified and have appropriate expertise and subject knowledge. There is a very good programme in place for staff development and training. This ensures that the varied experience and expertise of the staff is put to its best advantage within the school and that staff are given the opportunity to gain new experiences. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers is also very extensive. In addition to the initial induction, the programme includes a support system and ongoing monitoring and advice. Newly qualified teachers are also encouraged to attend in-service training and they also have the opportunity to observe experienced teachers at work. Progress since the last inspection has been purposeful and very successful in raising the standard of teaching throughout the school.

59. Overall, the resources to support learning are good. Computers are now extensively used in the school. More texts and resources would be of benefit to the mathematics and English departments and the teaching of music would benefit from additional computers. In all other departments the resources are good. In history, science and modern foreign languages the resources are very good. The library, though small, has a good range of books, information sheets and computer hardware and software. An extensive range of magazines and journals adds to this provision. The library also has a good range of multi-cultural material. The library is well used from early in the morning to its close in the evening; the librarian ensuring that it is a welcoming and purposeful place to work. Progress on the issues raised in the last inspection has been very good and all spending decisions in the school are now focused on improving resources for learning in order to raise standards of achievement for students.
60. Another example of remarkable improvement since the last inspection is that the school makes very good strategic use of its resources. The last inspection found that teachers' use of time in lessons was not focused well, the amount spent on learning resources was below average and the school did not assess its cost effectiveness subject by subject. Not only have these issues been effectively addressed, but the school's financial decisions are now rigorously underpinned by its key aim, which is to raise students' achievement.
61. Extensive monitoring and evaluation of teaching ensure effective lessons in which time and resources are efficiently used. The school has also invested significantly in increasing support and administration staff; they are effective and, as a result, teachers have less administrative work to do and can focus more on teaching. Teaching is very good. The school has invested significantly in enhancing the curriculum resources. Spending on learning resources is now well above the national average. Departmental finance is effectively distributed by means of bids that are thoroughly evaluated and the cost effectiveness of subjects is well assessed by checking spending against achievement outcomes.
62. Most students opt for post-16 education at the school. The sixth form offers good opportunities and is effective.
63. The budget is curriculum-driven and the school community is well involved in identifying priorities. The budget and the school plan are in the same cycle which helps in integrating the school's aims, priorities and its financial decisions. The school's finances are very well managed. There is a tight grip on expenditure. The day-to-day management of the budget is effectively controlled by the bursar. The provision of information and communication technology is very good and is used effectively to add good value to students' achievement and to the quality of the school's work. The school makes very good use of available resources, including grants, to raise standards of attainment, to improve the quality of learning support and to capture the interest of students. The library is a good and well-used resource. The school thoughtfully evaluates the cost effectiveness of the services it buys and pays good attention to the need for competition for example, pay roll, cleaning, catering and so on to increase value for money.
64. At the time of the last inspection, the school was judged to be providing moderate value for money. This is not the case any more and because of the rich learning experiences offered, the high quality of provision and the high standards achieved by the students, the school now provides very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65. The school has identified and is working on the appropriate priorities for its continued improvement. There are no key issues. The school needs to ensure that the weaknesses in paragraphs 31, 35, 37, 47, 68, 71, 90, 92, 102, 108, 160, 193 are included in its current growth plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	231
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	72

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2.6	31.3	44.1	21.6	0.4	-	-

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1258	310
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	341	29

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	21	3
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	360	6

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	274

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	55

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.8
National comparative data	7.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	147	113	260

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	87	75
	Girls	80	51	49
	Total	165	138	124
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	64 (76)	55 (63)	48 (57)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (41)	29 (30)	24 (20)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (29)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85 (57)	89 (97)	87 (89)
	Girls	82 (82)	51 (49)	61 (50)
	Total	167 (139)	140 (146)	148 (139)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (73)	56 (61)	59 (66)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (61)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	27 (39)	29 (31)	26 (22)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	119	109	228

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	61	119	119
	Girls	80	108	108
	Total	141	227	227
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	62 (55)	100 (90)	100 (100)
	National	46.3 (44)	90.7 (89)	95.7 (89)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	45 (42)
	National	37.8 (36.8)

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	N/a	N/a
	National		N/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	31	56	87

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	11.1	12.9	12.3	3.6	0.0	3.6
National	17.7	18.1	17.9	2.7	2.8	2.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	48	95%
	National		

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those students who achieved all they studied	School	N/a	N/a
	National		N/a

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	193
Black – African heritage	80
Black – other	55
Indian	157
Pakistani	41
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	19
White	733
Any other minority ethnic group	289

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	6	2
Black – African heritage	6	1
Black – other	0	0
Indian	3	0
Pakistani	0	2
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	17	3
Other minority ethnic groups	8	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	95.2
Number of students per qualified teacher	16.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	10.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	287

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.8%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.4
Key Stage 4	23.4

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
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	£
Total income	3876662
Total expenditure	3966363
Expenditure per student	2511
Balance brought forward from previous year	185878
Balance carried forward to next year	96177

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1258
Number of questionnaires returned	914

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	46	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	48	46	4	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	45	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	37	45	15	2	1
The teaching is good.	46	48	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	44	14	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	36	4	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	27	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	35	47	13	1	4
The school is well led and managed.	63	33	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	46	3	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	32	40	13	4	12

OTHER ISSUES RAISED BY PARENTS

- A few parents of students in the sixth form raised concerns about the communication between school and home where a student was not making sufficient progress. Although parents are alerted to this in the six weekly interim reports to parents they felt that such a gap was not appropriate in the case of students who were falling behind in their studies. In most cases departments maintain good contact with parents over issues like this, but a few could improve their speed of response.
- Some parents felt that the library was underused and that their children did not have enough access. Inspectors found the library well used before school, at lunchtime and after school. Discussions with students indicated that they felt they had good access to the library.
- Some parents were concerned that liaison between the special educational needs staff and subject teachers was not strong. Inspectors found effective liaison which supported good progress for students with special educational needs.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

66. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 3 is slightly above the national average. Students' performance in the National Curriculum tests in 1999 was just above the average for schools nationally and was well above the average level achieved in similar schools. This represents good progress made by students in their first three years. The average test scores in English at age fourteen are higher than those achieved by the same students in mathematics and science. Girls achieve higher scores than boys in the tests, as they do nationally. Reading skills are particularly strong by the age of fourteen. This reflects the importance given to reading in the curriculum at Key Stage 3. Students' oral and written work is often based on the detailed reading of set class texts. In addition, regular reading lessons are arranged in the library to encourage all students' personal reading. Students in one of the higher attaining English groups in Year 9 were reading, for pleasure, books by Orwell, Tolkien and Salinger, selected from the strong fiction collection in the library. Writing is generally accurate and well-presented. In the notebooks seen, this was done particularly well in response to the books and plays read. Year 9 students, for example, have produced interesting writing in response to 'Romeo and Juliet' and students in Year 8 were seen writing, very competently, evidence for the prosecution and for the defence after reading 'The Winslow Boy'.
67. The attainment of students at the end of Key Stage 4 is significantly above the national average. In 1999, the number of students achieving higher grades (A* to C) in English Language at GCSE level was well above the national average for both boys and girls, although the girls' attainment was considerably higher than that of the boys. From the full entry of 223 students, 81 per cent of the girls achieved higher grades compared with 63.5 per cent nationally; 56 per cent of the boys achieved grades A* to C compared with 46.9 per cent nationally. Just over half of the students were entered for the GCSE English Literature examination in 1999. Almost all of these candidates were successful in gaining grades A* to C; almost nine out of ten entrants were awarded A or B grades. The strength of students' understanding and response to literature was apparent in most of the lessons observed at Key Stage 4. In different attainment sets, students discuss poems and short stories with considerable maturity and depth of understanding. Particularly perceptive reading and discussion of ideas was seen in a high attaining group in Year 11, which was studying the poem 'War Photographer' and discussing a practising journalist's response to the moral issues raised by the reporting, through the media, of horrific images of war. Students with lower general literacy skills in another Year 11 group were similarly confident in interpreting a central character's feelings in a short story by Thomas Hardy and in feeding back their summaries to the whole group. All students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress in English from their starting points to the end of Key Stage 4. The quality of work in lessons suggests that all students would benefit from completing the examination course in English Literature. The concern of the English department is well-founded, however, that the three lessons allocated to English in Year 10 provide very little time for all students to be prepared for both examinations. The time allocation to English teaching in Years 7 to 10 is below the amount allocated in most secondary schools, a point of criticism which was made at the previous inspection.
68. Recent examination results at GCSE A level indicate varied rates of success. All but one student of the twenty-four entered in 1998 gained a grade; fifteen out of nineteen entrants were successful in 1999. Very few students, however, reach the highest grades. Three students achieved grade B in 1998 and two in 1999. The work seen in two Year 13 lessons was of an appropriate standard for successful A level students. One group, studying Keats, was guided carefully into the background of the poet's interest in Greek mythology before reading 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. The other group showed a very detailed knowledge of the text of 'Othello' and was able to analyse intelligently a key scene, noting the changing roles of Iago and Othello. Interpretation skills by some students in this group are of a high order. The quality of the written work by sixth form students shows considerable variation. Some students already write analytically and perceptively, whereas others still write very generally and too personally. The students' folders show considerable differences between the marking styles and the grading systems of the different teachers. This is due, in part, to recent changes in staff and to the

sharing of teaching groups. It is an area which could be standardised and improved.

69. Teaching and students' learning in English is generally of a good standard. All of the lessons seen were taught satisfactorily. Over three-quarters of the teaching seen was of a good standard or better and one-third of the lessons observed reached a very high standard. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, although the overall quality of teaching seen was still better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than it was at Key Stage 3, as it was then. In the most successful lessons, teachers have very high expectations of what students of all attainment levels might achieve and they stretch them fully by planning carefully to use the available time to maximum effect. Particularly successful lessons involved lower attaining students in Year 7 reading and writing about T.S. Eliot's 'Skimbleshanks', helped by the teacher's careful choice of tasks to meet the needs of individual students. Similar students in Year 9 were stretched intellectually by reading the play and then contrasting different film versions of 'Romeo and Juliet'. Older students, at Key Stage 4, read and discuss love and war poetry, unselfconsciously, in paired and group situations and listen attentively to other students' ideas. There is evidence that the strong relationships between established teachers and older students create an atmosphere of confidence and trust, which helps students' learning. This is reinforced by the regular setting of homework and the prompt marking of written work, which aids progress for most groups. Teachers are fully briefed on the individual special needs of their students and most accommodate the students well in their lessons. There are interesting, attractively mounted displays of poems and writing relevant to the topics being studied in all of the English classrooms. Some reflect students' own best writing; some reflect the war poetry theme relevant to all students on the GCSE course and a wall in one room is devoted to teachers' reviews of books that have made a great impression on them. All help to create a very positive ethos for the enjoyment of literature and language within lessons.
70. Students' behaviour in English lessons is good. Most students are conscientious, hardworking and produce their homework on time. They respond particularly well when they have opportunities to read aloud, to present information to the class and to discuss important issues seriously.
71. English is a well-organised and well-led department with clear operating procedures. There is effective monitoring of teaching and the standards of students' work. These factors make a good contribution to the good rate of raising standards in the subject. The regular pattern of meetings provides opportunities for teachers to share information quickly and effectively. This has helped new and temporary teachers to settle quickly into the department and to teach effectively from the start. As yet, there are insufficient opportunities to develop the use of information and communication technology within English lessons, although many students word process longer pieces of writing in preparation for examinations. There is considerable scope to strengthen and improve the schemes of work at Key Stage 3 to match teaching more directly to the requirements of the National Curriculum. A good start has been made already in this direction.
72. Teaching throughout the school promotes good practice in speaking, reading and writing. The vast majority of students speak confidently and work collaboratively to good effect, using talk to review and develop their learning. In history, they form hypotheses, analyse and make deductions. Students listen attentively and their listening skills are sharpened by the good explanations and clear instructions given by teachers. Students follow, respond and contribute to discussion with interest and enthusiasm. In all subjects, students are given opportunities for reading in class, reading aloud and reading for research. They read accurately and with understanding. Students' writing is well promoted in all subjects through the range of opportunities they are given to write for different purposes and different audiences. As a result, students write competently, with good attention given to spelling and punctuation. They know the value of planning, drafting, revising and editing their written work and, at all key stages, are encouraged to work hard at this process to raise their standards.

MATHEMATICS

73. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 in the National Curriculum tests is below the national average for level 5 and above and is below for level 6 and above. There has been a steady increase in the National Curriculum tests results in the past three years, although they are still below the national average. The trend in the improved results is faster than the national trend at level 5 and above, but slower at level 6 and above. Students' attainment at GCSE has improved significantly in the past three years and is similar to the national average for students reaching grades A* to C and is higher than the national average for students obtaining a grade A* to G. There has been a significant increase in the percentage of grades A* to C and in the number of students obtaining a grade. Attainment at Advanced level is in line with the national average for students attaining grades A to E, but is below the national average for students attaining the higher grades A and B.
74. In each key stage and in the sixth form, students make good progress in most lessons and often make very good progress. Progress in Key Stage 4, for students achieving their GCSE in mathematics in 1999, was good between the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. Students' attainment on entry into Year 7 has been below the national average for the past four years. The progress of these students to the end of Key Stage 3 was good. The present Year 7 achieved broadly in line with national average before coming into school. Students in Year 7 understand probability and that the likely outcome of an event occurring is a fraction. Students in the top set can simplify algebraic expressions and can solve simple algebraic equations. Students in the middle sets understand data-handling and can tabulate information using a tally chart and can draw bar charts and pie charts to illustrate the information. Students in the lower sets can draw pictograms and bar charts and can find the area of irregular shapes by counting squares. By Year 9, students in the top sets understand and can solve simultaneous equations by elimination or by graphical means. Students in the middle set investigate and find the rule for the angle sum of a polygon and students in the lower set know about line symmetry and rotational symmetry. They can name a range of two-dimensional shapes and are able to substitute letters for an unknown quantity. In Key Stage 4, students complete a large amount of work and good progress is made in all the attainment targets. They carry out investigations as part of their coursework for GCSE. In the top set, students are tackling quadratic equations, are using a formula to solve them and can use the sine and cosine rule to find the sides and angles in a triangle. In the sixth form, students make good progress in their study of pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of other students because of the well-planned support they receive and the careful provision of appropriately challenging work. Students who have English as an additional language in Key Stage 4, are well supported in class by support staff or by additional support from the teacher and their peers. Their good integration through these methods means that they make good progress in the subject.
75. Students concentrate well in lessons and show a great deal of interest in their work. They work at a fast pace and complete a good amount of work in lessons. They also improve the quality of their learning by homework, which is regularly set and which most students complete. Students' attitude to mathematics is positive and this assists their learning well. Students with special educational needs are in smaller classes and make good progress. Gifted mathematicians are able to make very good progress and are set either extension work or separate work so that they are not held back in any class. Students can start an A level in mathematics before they are in the sixth form if their A-level mathematics class does not clash with their other subjects.
76. The quality of teaching is good overall. In the majority of lessons seen, the quality of teaching was good or better. There is a higher proportion of good or very good teaching in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Teaching is good or very good in all sixth form lessons.
77. Teachers plan their lessons well, have very good relationships with their students and manage them well. Lessons are made interesting, teaching methods are varied and teachers demand a fast pace to the lesson. Lessons usually start promptly with a fast introduction to the lesson, outlining the aims of the lesson. Teachers expect students to behave well, to work hard and, in turn, teachers provide interesting and varied material for the students. Some teachers start lessons with mental mathematics, which sometimes challenges students so well that it is hard for the teacher to move them onto the main part of the lesson. However, students move from one task to the next quickly and, in many classes, time is very well used. The strengths in

teaching far outweigh the few weaknesses seen. Occasionally, students' learning could be enhanced by the use of apparatus, such as models of cuboids made from cubes, to assist students' understanding of volume. Some teachers draw on the board without a ruler, which is a poor example to the students. Sometimes, the lesson is mis-timed and the bell goes before the teacher has summed up the lesson. This happens more often when there has been a wet break and, consequently, there is a change to the lesson times.

78. Since the last inspection, there has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching throughout the department. At the last inspection, the quality of teaching was less than sound in a substantial minority of lessons at both Key Stages 3 and 4. In a minority of cases, poor class control seriously curtailed learning. More often the work was pitched too low and there was a need for teachers to ensure a closer match with students' ability levels.
79. In this inspection, in 84 per cent of lessons, teaching is good or better and is very good in 40 per cent of the lessons. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only one lesson. Students have good opportunities to reinforce work or receive help from their teachers when they are stuck. Students find their teachers very approachable should they need help. There are now no problems with class control and teachers' planning ensures that the work set matches the needs of students and provides good levels of challenge.
80. The quality of leadership and management is a strength in the department. Teaching is regularly and thoroughly monitored and this supports the professional development of the teachers. There is also good monitoring of students' progress in every year of the school. Teachers are committed to the students and have very good relationships with them, based on mutual respect. There is a good suite of mathematics rooms, including an information technology room with fifteen new computers. The expected refurbishment of the rooms will help to bring the rooms up to a good standard; at present, they are in need of decoration and carpeting. There has been a great improvement in the book stock in the past few years and, since the last inspection, all students have their own textbooks to take home for homework. The department makes good use of the new computer suite, as well as using graphical calculators with students throughout the school.
81. Good support is given to numeracy in the special support option for Key Stage 4. Students carry out good mental mathematics, involving everyday situations with money and change given. In science, students are developing skills to find the line of best fit in their experiments. Students measure accurately for work carried out in experiments. In Key Stage 4, students carry out formula work well, mostly when they are studying physical science. Data-handling is used in business studies, involving consumer surveys and drawing pie, line and bar charts. In Year 11, students show good numerical skills to show how pricing can significantly affect profits and students use balance sheets. In information technology, students carry out investigations in projects using several information technology applications for projects such as organising a foreign trip for a school. Good use is made of spreadsheets, with students entering formulae and testing out hypotheses, as when they study cash flow in business studies. Students use 'Photoshop' to manipulate shapes and create patterns. By Year 9, students are confident in using a database or a spreadsheet. In art, students carry out good work on reflective and rotational symmetry using ICT (information communication technology), drawing and photography. Good work, based on tessellations, is completed in ICT. In geography, numeracy is less well developed than expected and is weaker than the development of literacy skills. In Year 7, map work is satisfactory and students understand scale, bearings and contours, although there is limited development in this area in Years 8 to 11. However, from Year 8 onwards, students do develop some numeracy skills through the use of data-handling, tally charts, graphs, bar charts and pie charts.

SCIENCE

82. At the end of Key Stage 3, the results that students achieve in National Curriculum tests has improved since the last inspection so that they are now close to the national average. All levels are well above those for similar schools. Assessments made by teachers have been higher than for several years. This is in line with the standards observed in current lessons, where students do achieve at higher levels than indicated in the previous year's test results.
83. The vast majority of students are entered for Double Award Science at GCSE and there has been a great improvement in results over the last few years. So much so, that, in 1999, the proportion of higher grades (A* to C), was well above the national average for all schools and all students entered achieved a grade. The few students who entered for Single Award or Certificate Science achieved well for their abilities. In the 1999 examinations, girls achieved a higher percentage of A* to C grades than boys and also achieved more grades A* and A.
84. Results in A-level examinations are variable, but comparable with all other schools. For the 1999 examinations, significant numbers of students were entered for biology and chemistry and biology students achieved higher grades on average. Only three were entered for physics so that comparisons are not valid. Over the past few years, the numbers of students entering A-level courses in science has been significantly higher than the number reaching the examination at the end of the course. Staff recognise this problem and are taking steps to reduce it by ensuring that students beginning the course have reached an appropriate standard in the subject at GCSE.
85. At all key stages and at all levels of ability students achieve good standards according to their abilities. This applies to higher ability students and equally to those who have difficulties with learning. Much of this is due to the attention that teachers pay to students and the good relationships which exist between staff and students. Some development is still needed in scientific investigation work at Key Stage 3.
86. Standards on entry to Year 7 are improving, but students now in Year 9 have started from a lower base and have made good progress in their learning. For example, in a Year 8 class, many students in a lower ability set had researched a particular area in adaptation in animals and their knowledge in that area was very good indeed. In another Year 8 class, higher ability students were very much at home using calculators to calculate speed of movement.
87. At Key Stage 4, the improvements in learning in recent years have been marked, as students' attainment on entry was lower than formerly. Higher ability students in a Year 11 class were given the freedom to do their own studies in the area of space science and radiation and some individuals achieved extremely high levels of thinking in specialised areas. Lower ability students in another Year 11 class were looking at the effects of drugs on the human body and automatically using proper scientific terms in their discussions.
88. Sixth form students cope well with the change to A-level study and concentrate hard on their lessons. In a Year 13 physics lesson, students were preparing for the synoptic questions in their imminent examination and making good presentations to the whole group. Importantly, they appreciated working together in order for all to improve their learning.
89. All students now behave well in lessons, are interested in what they do and are prepared to tackle any activity set by their teachers. This is a result of consistent, concentrated, hard work by teachers to gain the confidence and cooperation of their students. At present, there is some restriction on learning at both key stages and in the sixth form when copying of notes or worksheets is given too much prominence.
90. Teaching is good or satisfactory at all levels. Expectations of student achievement are generally high and organisation of lessons is good. Teachers know their students and manage their behaviour and learning well. The use of information technology in science has improved and is now at a very good level. Weaker aspects of teaching are scientific investigation at Key Stage 3 and the development of graph drawing and analysis at all key stages. There is also too little attention paid to providing different work and learning styles for different ability sets, along with some ignoring of National Curriculum content from previous key stages. Procedures for health and safety in some lessons could be improved.

91. The time allowed for science at Key Stage 3 is slightly under that provided in many schools, but this has not affected learning, owing to the teachers' good management of students and organisation of time. Double Award Science at Key Stage 4 has the appropriate amount of time and nearly all students study this. Those few students in Year 11 who take Single Award Science spend the extra curriculum time with support for other curriculum work. There is strong provision at A-level, but no provision for vocational courses for those students who wish to study science beyond GCSE but find A-level study difficult.
92. Monitoring of students' achievements and their targets is a major strength of the work in the science department. This, however, does result in a tendency to give undue emphasis to test results. Marking of students' work is satisfactory, although there is a lack of written comments at Key Stages 3 and 4 which would enable students to understand what they need to do to improve their work.
93. A mutually supportive staff have striven hard and succeeded in making dramatic improvements in many areas of the science department's work. Technician staff support lessons well by ensuring that equipment is maintained in good order and ready for use when needed. The laboratories and preparation rooms are in very good condition and contribute a great deal to the atmosphere for learning.
94. Since the last inspection, the science department has improved significantly. All sets now achieve well; teaching is now good where previously there were weaknesses, and information technology is a strength rather than a weakness. For students' science education to develop even further, schemes of work are needed for all courses to enable systematic support, analysis and development. Differentiation of work and styles of working between different ability sets is important and is already a part of the department's development plan. Students need to become more independent in their learning.

ART

95. In Art and Design at GCSE in 1999, students gained 89.1 per cent at grades A* to C and 100 per cent at grades A* to G. In the same year, the national average was 61 per cent at A*-C and 96 per cent at A*-G. Results at GCSE have shown a steady increase over the last three years, with A* to C passes rising from 78.6 per cent in 1997 and 80.3 per cent in 1998 to the present very high level. Both boys and girls are achieving at levels that are well above national averages. In the sixth form, in the A-level examinations in art and design, students achieved 21 per cent grades A and B, 57 per cent grades A to C and 100 per cent grades A to E. In photography, students achieved 46 per cent A and B, 69 per cent A to C and 100 per cent A to E. In Fashion and Textiles, students gained 33 per cent A and B, 69 per cent A to C and 100 per cent A to E. In the GNVQ Intermediate course in art and design in 1999, students achieved a pass rate of 100 per cent, with 33 per cent at merit level and 33 per cent achieving distinctions.
96. At Key Stage 3, attainment is satisfactory, an improvement since the last inspection, due to the provision of more effective schemes of work which now meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is evidence of a range of work in both two and three dimensions and all work seen is supported and integrated with the study of a wide range of artists and art movements, so that students in Year 9 can confidently use an appropriate specialist vocabulary. Artists studied include Leonardo da Vinci, Pablo Picasso and Andy Warhol. Some of the work seen, however, exceeds national expectations for this key stage and there is some good composition work in paint and in pastels. At Key Stage 4, attainment is very good, with confident drawings from the figure and from still life groups seen in Year 11, together with some exciting large scale photographs using composite techniques. High standards are also seen in fashion and textiles. Very good sketchbooks are seen, which include some imaginative fashion designs based on the paintings of Claude Monet. In the sixth form, attainment is again very good, with sensitive experimental resist printing and high quality silkscreen prints in evidence that are vibrant and colourful. High quality paintings from the life model in acrylics are also seen, demonstrating a mastery of the medium that is rarely seen in this age group.
97. Progress across Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and students gain knowledge of art in drawing and painting using both colour and black and white. There is a balance of work using starting points from observation, from memory and imagination and in three-dimensional work in modelling

and in low relief. In Year 9, students can research ideas and make effective use of materials, as seen in a graphic design project using Kew Gardens as a starting point. Students with special educational needs make good progress through this key stage and achieve creditable results in colour composition in chalk pastels. In Key Stage 4, progress is very good in all areas of study. In photography, students gain the necessary technical skills quickly and thoroughly and use this competence to explore photography as a creative process. In drawing and painting, work from the life model, coupled with high expectations by the teacher, has a direct impact on standards, which rise steeply. High quality life drawings are seen in pencil and in conte crayon. In fashion and textiles, students are encouraged to explore and experiment with materials, resulting in the production of some delicate pieces which students have made themselves, using paper. In the sixth form, progress is very good, more ambitious life work is seen and large-scale pieces in acrylic paint are produced, which explore figure composition. The expressive possibilities of both photography and textiles are also developed, with panoramic photographs and work exploiting the characteristics of transparent materials seen.

98. Students' attitudes to the work are good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. In the best lessons at Key Stage 3, enthusiasm is generated and sustained by effective teaching styles, with students showing a willingness to work and an eagerness to engage with the materials. As a result, students can briskly produce a variety of pieces using information technology, drawing, collage and by arranging real objects to explore ways of altering images. At Key Stage 4, students show an increased maturity in their work and sustain focus for extended periods. This is seen particularly when working from the life model. Sixth form students show a commitment to their work, which enables high quality outcomes in all areas. They can also examine moral issues in their work, as seen in a photographic exploration of the morality of eating meat. Following the improvements in curricular planning at all key stages, students show an interest in their work and can discuss it at length and with understanding, which is an improvement since the last inspection.
99. Teaching in art is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Of the lessons seen at Key Stage 3, 29 per cent were satisfactory and 71 per cent were good or very good. At Key Stage 3, this good teaching has not yet had time to have its full impact on standards and progress. In the best lessons in this key stage, however, lively lesson introductions are seen, which increase motivation and build enthusiasm. This has a direct impact on progress and students make good gains in knowledge and understanding as a result. At Key Stage 4, all lessons seen were good or very good. In the sixth form, 25 per cent were satisfactory and 75 per cent were good or very good. There were no unsatisfactory lessons seen. A strong feature of the teaching in the department is the use of good quality coaching of students on an individual basis. This is seen in all areas of study, but it makes a particular impact on progress and standards at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Here, high quality work, for example, in drawing and in photography is seen. In both of these areas, personal responses are developed and promoted through the use of this teaching approach. Three-dimensional work on the GNVQ intermediate course is also of a high quality, with some impressive large-scale sculptures based on natural forms, which demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of form and shape in space. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and are effective practitioners in their specialist areas. Their knowledge and understanding of art processes comes from an appreciation of professional art practice and their commitment to their work has a powerful effect on raising student expectations. This is particularly true at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Throughout the department, teachers value students' work and use praise extensively to celebrate achievement at all levels. This ensures that students respond well whatever their ability and helps promote progress.
100. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. This is an improvement since the last inspection. A range of activities and processes are now available and students can succeed in both two and three-dimensional work. Schemes of work are thorough, detailed and are organised to integrate students' own art work with the gaining of knowledge and understanding about art. For example, students working from observation of a range of stimulating objects were able to make connections with Surrealism and the paintings of Magritte and were able to discuss this connection with understanding. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum is very good, with four GCSE options on offer. In one of these courses, namely photography, the medium is used to explore themes and ideas and students are able to explain and demonstrate technical processes, such as selecting aperture settings and making test exposures. In the sixth form the curriculum is very good, with three subjects available at A-level. In each of these, drawing and painting, fashion and textiles,

and photography, students are encouraged to further develop the starting points suggested by the teachers. There is also a GNVQ intermediate level course available, which studies a range of artistic processes and provides a sound route to A-level.

101. Assessment in art follows the policy of the expressive arts department and includes the awarding of regular half-termly grades for both effort and achievement. In all areas there is effective on-going assessment of practical work, which is directly addressed and modified as it progresses under the guidance of the teacher. This has a very positive effect on learning and some very creditable pieces in all areas of study are seen as a result of the quality of the dialogue between teacher and student.
102. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and, as a result, very good progress has been made since the last inspection. Improvements have been made in the organisation and delivery of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 in particular, and in developing students' ability to investigate and understand art. Planning and record keeping are now good and teachers have a clearly defined structure within which they can, and do, teach to their strengths. All teachers in the department share a commitment to improvement and achievement. The department is efficiently managed, administration is good and effective action has been taken to address all of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report. Further improvements could be made by developing existing three-dimensional work at Key Stage 3, and this has already been recognised in the department's development plan. The provision of more space would help facilitate this. The study of the art of other cultures and non-western traditions could be further promoted and the excellent displays within the department could usefully be extended around the main school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

103. GCSE results for design and technology subjects, overall, are below the national average for both A* to C and A* to G grades. There has been a gradual increase in these figures over the last three years. Overall figures disguise a variation in performance amongst the subject components of the curriculum area. Food technology and graphics produce results which are above the national average and close to the national average respectively; resistant materials and electronics are well below. Inspection evidence indicates that changes to curriculum organisation will result in improvements. Girls achieve better than boys at GCSE. Results at A-level have shown a small, but encouraging, increase in the number of higher grades being achieved.
104. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above the national expectation for students aged 14. Students are guided through projects structured to develop designing skills alongside the practical skills needed for making. For example, students in a Year 7 resistant materials group, producing a quiz game involving work with wood, acrylic and basic electronics, were able to produce a selection of ideas and represent them effectively in their folders using a range of graphic techniques. Later projects require greater autonomy. In a Year 9 food technology group, for example, students were working with a high degree of self-organisation to prepare a dish of their own choosing and to their own action plan. Students of all abilities completed the task successfully. The longer time allowance for Year 9 modules gives students greater scope for detailed research and development of ideas. For example, students in a Year 9 textiles group had used research into other cultures to design a product which could be sold in a museum shop. Students had used several sources of information for their research, including the Internet, books and magazines. They could record their work using computer-generated images and text, as well as hand produced methods. They were then able to scan their designs confidently and competently into the computerised sewing machine and produce a finished item. Whilst the written and graphic responses of lower achieving students are often less accurate, many can give good verbal answers to teachers' questions and achieve good standards of practical work. Standards at Key Stage 4 have improved and are now above the national expectation for students aged 16. Many students are able to use their previous knowledge of technology processes to work with greater independence. For example, Year 10 students in a resistant materials group had sufficient graphic skills to allow them to represent their ideas for a storage unit in both two and three-dimensional forms, at a level appropriate to their ability. Lower achieving students understood the drawing conventions, but lacked refinement of detail. Some students in graphics products produce work of a high standard and demonstrate detailed research and analysis skills. The GNVQ intermediate engineering

course is well structured and organised to allow students of all abilities to achieve success. Students are achieving a good standard of work. A-level design and communication students are achieving high standards in Year 13 and satisfactory standards in Year 12.

105. Progress is good across all key stages. Students make gains in acquiring practical skills and knowledge, as well as the personal organisation necessary for independent design work. Progress is better where activities engage students' interest. For example, students in a Year 7 computer graphics lesson were absorbed in the task of drawing in isometric projection. The activity served as a good consolidation of previous hand-drawn work and extended the understanding of students of all abilities. Progress was less evident in a Year 11 textiles group, where students were not fully engaged with the examination revision task. This resulted in low levels of concentration. Students with special educational needs make good progress and often benefit from working alongside their more able classmates. For example, one student in a Year 9 food technology lesson, took great pride in successfully completing his dish and discussed it enthusiastically during the group evaluation. 'Project manager' booklets and detailed assessment procedures are valuable in maintaining and monitoring student progress.
106. Attitudes to work are predominantly good. Students enjoy technology lessons and this is reflected in their positive response to the subject. They are polite, attentive, respectful and generally display good levels of concentration. Students enter practical areas in a purposeful manner. Year 7 students at the beginning of a resistant materials lesson, for example, readily prepared themselves for work with books and pencils to take individual notes during the teacher's demonstration.
107. Teaching at all key stages is good. Three-quarters of lessons seen were good or very good, the remainder satisfactory. Teachers have established good working relationships with students and make effective use of praise and encouragement to maintain motivation. Teachers are knowledgeable, set clear targets for the lesson and ensure that students are aware of what is expected of them. A strength of the department is the ability and willingness of teachers to teach in more than one material area. This helps to unify the image of technology in the minds of students and provides good role models when students see male and female teachers in non-stereotypical situations. Because teachers know their students well and are especially aware of students with special educational needs, they are able to give good individual help and advice. Students are encouraged to develop and use a correct technical vocabulary and are given good opportunities to extend their writing skills in technology folders. Marking and assessment procedures are thorough.
108. The design and technology curriculum provides students with a broad technological experience and the use of computers and computer-controlled equipment is being woven into design projects across all key stages. GNVQ intermediate engineering has been successful in broadening opportunities for post-16 students. The department makes a sound contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of students through, for example, exploring food from other lands and using images, colours and patterns from different cultures. Some opportunities are missed for exploiting the context of a project for the promotion of students' spiritual development. Very good assessment procedures are in place and a great deal of effort has been put into devising a comprehensive database on which to record students' achievement and track progress. Students are involved in their own assessment. Care should be taken to ensure that standardisation procedures are thorough enough to enable Key Stage 3 teacher assessments to be made accurately.
109. The leadership and management of the subject area are very good. The recently appointed curriculum co-ordinator has a clear vision for the subject and has established a good team spirit and a positive outlook amongst the staff. Changes have been made to the curriculum which are already leading to improvements in student motivation and standards. The quality of teaching is regularly monitored and will be an important factor in further improvements. The departmental handbook and schemes of work are detailed, comprehensive and include strategies for the implementation of the departmental development plan. Accommodation is very good and resources are well managed.
110. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in the following areas: motivating students, improving achievement at Key Stage 3, providing more appropriate challenges, developing control technology, improving the quality of teaching, improving the curriculum structure for Year 9, developing assessment procedures and creating a clear plan for

development. In order to make further improvements the school should: review standardisation procedures for Key Stage 3 teacher assessments, discuss the adoption of a common format for the presentation of students' work and make students more aware of the National Curriculum level at which they are working.

DRAMA

111. Attainment in drama is above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. Students respond well to a range of imagined situations and dramatic activities. They develop good communication skills through work in mime, movement and the spoken word. They respond to specific situations, shaping ideas and creating roles, as seen in Year 7 lessons, where students began to develop character from a given script. By the end of the key stage, students are able to develop their own script through picking up on cue words to take the plot forward.
112. In the 1999 GCSE examinations, 92 per cent of students achieved A* to C grades, which is well above the national average. Over 25 per cent of students achieved an A grade, which is very high compared with the national average. All students who entered for the examination achieved a pass at grade D or above. Students currently nearing the end of Key Stage 4 have similar high levels of attainment. They have a very good understanding of theatre and an extensive repertoire of performance styles. All students develop high level performance skills. They manage their improvisation from the first stages of planning with confidence and control. They develop initial ideas in a variety of ways, selecting their preferences for presentation through critical and honest discussion. By the end of the key stage, students have very good skills of negotiation and work very well in collaboration with others.
113. In the 1999 A-level examinations, 14 per cent of students achieved grade A or B; 64 per cent achieved grades A to C and all those who entered passed the examination. Students in the sixth form show above average attainment, particularly those in Year 12, who are building on the very high standards achieved at GCSE. Students at the end of the key stage produce condensed scenes from their set text 'A Doll's House', showing both good understanding of the writer's intentions and mastery of a diverse range of theatrical styles through which to communicate his ideas. Students in Year 12 have a very secure command of performance skills, show good knowledge of dramatic structure and style. They are able to apply these skills both to their own interpretation of text and in supporting younger students, as when they are given the opportunity to direct Year 7 students in their performances of 'Toad of Toad Hall'.
114. At all key stages, students' learning is very good; students with special educational needs make similar progress to others in the class and those students in Key Stage 4 with English as an additional language were well supported to make good progress by both teacher intervention and peer support. In Year 7, students enter the school with limited experience of drama and, in a short time allocation, make very good progress to achieve high standards. During Key Stage 4, students are expected to work independently and to set themselves high targets. They rise very well to these challenges, because of the high expectations of their teacher and the example they are set by older drama students in the sixth form. Students in the sixth form and at Key Stage 4 derive enormous benefit from the many workshops that are held in the school, through involvement in community productions such as Ealing's presentation of, 'Our Town' at the Millennium Dome, involvement with the National Youth Theatre and the National Theatre. All of these experiences inform students of the high standards expected in the subject and of the ways to achieve them.
115. The subject is a very popular choice both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Students of all ages bring great enthusiasm to lessons and quickly develop a love of the subject. They work hard, rising to teachers' demanding expectations of them. They thrive under the pressure of time that is exerted and show high levels of concentration and commitment, making rapid progress in all aspects of their learning and feeling rewarded for their efforts by the quality of work they produce. They work independently or collaboratively as the task demands, always showing involvement and enjoyment in their work.
116. The quality of teaching is a real strength. Overall, it is very good and is never less than good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and, in the case of the head of department, it is very good and is put to excellent use especially in work with examination classes. All teachers have high expectations of their students and set them challenging, but achievable, tasks. They

make very good use of praise to maintain students' motivation and develop very good critical faculties in students, both from their own example and from the expectations they have of peer evaluation. As a consequence, students have a very good knowledge of their own learning and a good understanding of standards required in the subject. Teachers' management of students is very good. They have excellent relationships with their classes, which support the hard work and good behaviour they expect of their students. This was well illustrated in a Year 9 lesson which followed the cancellation of morning break, where the teacher's firm insistence and re-focusing on the work to be done ensured that a potentially boisterous group settled very well and made good progress in their learning, achieving all the goals set by the teacher. Teachers make very good use of assessment in lessons, providing good feedback to students on how to improve the quality of their work. This is a significant factor in the very good learning that occurs in the majority of lessons.

117. The curriculum is very well planned at all stages. There has been an improvement in the provision of a scheme of work for Key Stage 3 since the last inspection. This provides a good base of knowledge and skills in the subject and centres on the interests and experiences of students at this key stage. A very detailed set of guidelines and procedures for assessing students' work has been produced, which is of particular benefit to those teachers who do not teach drama as their first subject. They give clear directions for assigning levels to students' work and provide guidance on how to plan for the next stage of learning. The quality of the curriculum makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.
118. Leadership of the subject is very good. There is commitment to the highest standards, which is shared by all who work in the department. The head of department has made very good improvements since the last inspection, which are the more remarkable since she carries sole responsibility for the development of the subject. She has succeeded in giving the subject very high status throughout the school. Her very high expectations of colleagues and students are made clear in policy and practice and are very well supported by very good systems for improving teaching and learning. She has managed the difficult task of imposing common standards on a department comprised of herself as the only full-time teacher and three enthusiastic contributors.

GEOGRAPHY

119. In 1999, grades A* to C were gained by 55 per cent of students in the GCSE examinations and 97 per cent gained grades A* to G. These results were in line with the national average. At A level, two candidates gained grades A to C and eight of the twelve candidates gained grades A to E, which was well below the national average and below the average of other subjects in the school. Results in the GCSE examinations and at A level have fluctuated over time, with no overall trend, reflecting the prior attainment of students who opt for the subject. The attainment of girls is significantly better than that of boys in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. There are no significant differences in the relative attainment of students of different abilities.
120. At the end of Key Stage 3, students are working to a level slightly above the national average. The written work of students in Year 7 displays a good grounding in basic geographical skills and their understanding of human issues is well developed. For example, a middle set in Year 7 showed a good grasp of the factors that motivate poor rural Kenyans to migrate from their villages to Nairobi. Literacy skills are better developed than skills in handling and presenting data. A high proportion of students in Key Stage 3 can write with clarity and some fluency but graphics, in particular line graphs, are sometimes inaccurately produced. By Year 9, students' work displays effective use of information technology, which is well demonstrated in their topic work on migration. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average due to improved teaching and more effective assessment procedures being used to raise standards. This was reflected in the work of a lower Year 11 set, which displayed a very good grasp of the impact of tourism within national parks and of the strategies being adopted to manage this. The quality of individual studies produced by GCSE students is good and these are making a significant contribution to their grades. Attainment at A level is below average due to the prior attainment of students opting for the subject. For example, Year 13 students displayed just satisfactory understanding of the physical and biological processes that contribute to the nutrient cycle of a tropical rain forest. In all years, skills and understanding of human issues are better developed than those of physical processes and landforms.

121. Progress in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is good through Key Stages 3 and 4 and is satisfactory in the sixth form. Progress is often particularly good when teaching creates opportunities for students to plan and manage their learning. This was particularly well demonstrated by a top set Year 8 class, where all students contributed to group presentations on ways to protect different endangered species. Their work was thoroughly researched, arguments were well balanced and imaginatively presented. Students with special educational needs are well supported to make good progress at all key stages. For example, careful sequencing of ideas and powerful, contemporary video images enabled a low set Year 10 class to understand how poor nutrition leads to a vicious circle of poverty in the least developed countries of sub-Saharan Africa. A Year 12 A-level class, through careful analysis of appropriate sources, made good progress in understanding how both natural and human factors contribute to avalanches.
122. Students in both Key Stages 3 and 4 have very positive attitudes to their learning and in no lesson observed were they less than good. Their application and concentration, which are often excellent, contribute significantly to the good progress being made over time. By Year 9, more able students particularly have well developed study skills and the quality of collaborative work is often very good in all years.
123. In lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good overall. It was never less than satisfactory and in three out of fourteen it was very good or excellent. Lesson planning and the management of students are particular strengths. Lessons are well structured, with explicit learning objectives and teachers display at least a sound subject knowledge. In the most successful lessons, the interest of the students was captured quickly, expectations were very high and the pace and productivity of work sustained throughout. These qualities were demonstrated by a bottom set Year 7 lesson, where students gained a very good grasp of the differences between push and pull factors in rural urban migration. Where teaching was less effective, lessons have many positive features, but the pace of work and expectations could have been greater.
124. Though meeting statutory requirements, the curriculum lacks balance as insufficient study time is given to physical processes and landforms. Assessment procedures are very good and explicitly geared to raising achievement. A detailed profile of progress is built up from Year 7 and all data is carefully scrutinised. Targets are set for students following the GCSE and A-level courses and these are regularly reviewed. Practice is consistent and judgments on performance are systematically standardised. Administration is efficient, professional relationships are strong and the monitoring of teaching and learning is systematic and highly effective. A well-focused development plan is in place but could be further improved with more explicit targets for some issues.
125. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and marking is more consistent. The use of information technology to support learning is much more extensive and effective and fieldwork makes a better contribution to learning in Key Stage 3. The quality and range of resources have improved and now give good support to learning.

HISTORY

126. Since the last inspection, teaching and learning have greatly improved. There is formal monitoring and observation of lessons throughout social studies. There is regular and consistent marking of students' work throughout all three key stages. The development of information communication technology (ICT) in history is excellent. The most able students are coached as a target group. There has been a development of student self-evaluation in history. Workshops run throughout the year to raise standards for all levels of ability. Staff in the curriculum area of social studies have a shared vision of what constitutes quality enhancement. The area is well managed and academic leadership is strong.
127. The standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 3, measured against national expectation and students' capabilities, is good. Students can engage in discussion and most know not merely what things happened in history, but they understand why things are as they are. Those students with special educational needs participate in debates and have an equal

access to knowledge in general terms. While they cannot hold a sustained conversation, they can and do participate. In Years 7 and 8, some boys' writing reveals standards of English comprehension lower than might be expected. Girls are better at sentence construction than boys. By the end of Year 9, tasks are carefully targeted, the pace of work is quicker and students are challenged to draw upon their learning in previous years. By the end of the key stage, girls show a level of writing attainment commensurate with their oral work. The most able students (boys and girls) in Year 9 can confidently discuss complex historical situations, demonstrating their intellectual growth.

128. The standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above national expectations and students' abilities for the top grades of A* to C and for the whole grade range A* to G. There is no significant difference between boys and girls. However, ethnic-minority girls do better than boys in gaining a GCSE award. Over the last three years, there has been an upward trend in GCSE results. The more able students both write and speak well and display confidence in handling primary and secondary history sources. Girls are more willing to speak in class and voice an opinion. Students with special educational needs make sound progress and display a reasonable level of knowledge.
129. The standard of attainment at the end of the sixth form is very good. In A-level examinations most students gain an A to C grade or one of the A to E grades. Boys perform equally as well as girls. Students' grasp of historical knowledge is above average. Oracy skills are reinforced by lively class discussions. The quality of written notes is good. Investigations and the sifting of evidence are thorough. The curriculum area of social studies has committed itself to giving students at Key Stages 4 and 5 more responsibility for their own learning. History has met this goal and students now successfully manage much of their own learning.
130. Progress in Years 7 to 9 is good. At Key Stage 4, it is consistent for boys. For some girls it is very good. At the end of the sixth form, boys are making the same or greater progress than girls. This reflects high quality teaching, good study practice, increased workloads, cooperation between teachers and between teachers and students and objective standards to maintain quality. A majority of students, across all three key stages, make good progress in their understanding of history, because the focus of teaching and learning moves away from a teacher-centred to a student-centred approach to learning. The main device in this process is the development of students' independent research skills. These skills are seen not only as a basic competence for any student, but also for a practising historian. Teachers give good support for those developing these skills and to students who have special educational needs who make ensuring satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3 and good progress at Key Stage 4.
131. The standard of teaching at Key Stages 3 is good, at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form it is very good. Its main strength lies in its coverage of knowledge and skills, the balance between the descriptive against the analytical, the clear presentation and the ability of teachers to speak and write good English, which assists students to enjoy their history lessons. The best lessons excel in their comprehensiveness and accuracy, clarity of argument and expression, integration of a range of materials, evidence of wider reading by the teacher and insight into research issues. Students at Key Stages 3 and 4 are learning to develop skills which they can advance at Key Stage 5. These are their application of knowledge to complex history situations and their ability to provide supporting reasons for them. The most able and interested students at all three key stages use standard electronic sources to produce assignments and up-to-date information. The work using computers is of a high order.
132. The teaching of history has made exemplary progress since it was last inspected. Students with special educational needs are able to demonstrate their ability to locate, observe and collect data. All students show some personal and reasoned judgement based on an informed understanding of standard arguments in the area of history in question. Boys are showing some improvement in their use of the English language and apply history terminology with care and accuracy. Most students at Key Stage 4 and 5 can conduct efficient searches of websites to locate relevant information.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

133. Standards of attainment in information technology (IT) are above average in Key Stage 3 and average in both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Teacher assessment at the end of Key Stage 3, in 1999, was judged to be in line with the national average. However, evidence from lesson observation and the analysis of students' work indicates that attainment is better than this. By the end of the key stage, the majority of students are independent users of IT, with good levels of knowledge and skills, which they apply in their learning across the curriculum. Year 9 students not only enter data and make use of formulae, but they design a spreadsheet for a particular purpose, such as reporting on the performance of a shop. Students have a good knowledge of how databases work and they understand how to manipulate data so that they can match information; for example, about the interests of students or about information on holiday destinations. The use of IT across the curriculum is a strength of the school. Students apply what they learn in IT lessons to learning in geography, where they construct a database to investigate patterns of migration into West London and present their findings using graphs and charts.
134. There is no GCSE course in IT. The school has recognised that such a course would dominate access to computers and limit the very good developments which are happening in cross-curricular IT in Key Stage 4. Through such work students demonstrate skills and knowledge of IT, which are in line with the average for the year group. Business studies is a popular option and students choosing this subject develop good IT skills, which are accredited through the NDTEF (National Design Technology Education Foundation). Currently, students obtain up to three units and plans to extend certification of IT through other subjects will give a better means of obtaining a qualification in IT for all students.
135. In the sixth form, students' attainment in IT is adequate for course requirements. Those students following business studies GNVQ courses have better skills than the remainder of those in the sixth form, but all make use of IT for research purposes, to write reports and to present assignments in both GNVQ and A-level subjects. Some excellent examples of the use of IT were seen in art, where students used digitised images of their drawings to create new colours and textures in imaginative work. There is no specific IT course, but the school hopes to provide one in the future.
136. Students make good progress in IT across Key Stage 3. The knowledge and skills they learn in the well-focused IT lessons are reinforced by their work in many other subjects, such as history, when they research and present a project on the Civil War, or in English, when they find out about the work of Dickens. They learn how to use computers to control processes in design technology, to collect data from sensors in science and to investigate mathematical concepts. The progress of students with special educational needs is well supported by their use of computers. Learning support assistants have good IT skills, which enable them to use specialist programs to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of students in a way which motivates them to learn.
137. In Key Stage 4, students build upon their good basic skills, which they apply to support their progress in GCSE subjects across the curriculum. Year 10 students complete a project in English, when they choose a topic based on an author relevant to the English syllabus, such as Jane Austen or John Steinbeck. They present their research in the form of a newspaper and the end product is assessed jointly for attainment in English and IT. In art, students learn that a computer can be a medium to explore which allows them to create beautiful work. They use a computer for musical composition and for researching the history of music. Students make good use of desktop publishing to enhance their coursework in many subjects. They use the Internet as an excellent source of information for many topics. Progress in both key stages is due to the good quality of teaching, the fact that many staff have good IT skills and an appreciation of the growing importance of IT in education. It is also enhanced by the fact that students take advantage of the commitment of IT staff, teaching and technical, by using the IT rooms before and after school and at lunchtime. The rooms are always crowded with students completing their work for many different subjects.
138. The attitudes of students to IT are positive and enthusiastic. They concentrate on learning skills, teach each other what they know and are eager to learn more. Students are trusted to use the resources responsibly and they respond by treating the equipment and the staff who help them with respect.

139. Teaching of IT is never less than satisfactory. Seven out of ten lessons are good and, of these, many have very good or excellent features. A feature of excellent lessons in Key Stage 3 is the planning of a clear structure with learning objectives written on the board, explained to students and used by them to guide them through the lesson, then by teacher and students to check that they have achieved as much as possible. Expectations of work and behaviour are both very high. Students' work is constantly monitored, higher attainers are given more challenging tasks, whilst the attainment of lower attainers is noted and praised. Homework is set and marked and students are expected to take responsibility for booking a computer to make sure that it is completed on time. Within an overall good picture, there are some weaknesses, for example, in ensuring that the students coming into Year 7 with better skills than most are given sufficiently challenging work.
140. Since the last inspection, the school has made excellent progress in IT. This is due to the strong support of the school's senior management in providing funds to give a ratio of computers to students which is better than average and to the very good leadership of the subject by the IT co-ordinator. With the help of good technical support, she has led the subject from being an area of weakness at the last inspection to its current position of exemplary practice in a Technology College. The best practice in the school's cross-curricular IT includes joint planning and assessment, the very good levels of integration of the use of computers in enhancing so many facets of teaching and learning, as well as the ambition to go on improving.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

141. Students make good progress in both French and Spanish throughout the school. Writing, reading and listening skills are particularly well-developed. In every lesson, constant exposure to the language being used in teaching in the classroom ensures that students gain familiarity with a wide range of topic vocabulary, phrases and grammatical structures and develop their listening skills. Year 7 students make good progress, in spite of relatively short curriculum time allocated to each language. In some lessons, however, work is not sufficiently matched to the needs of lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, and this sometimes hampers their progress. Higher and average attaining students rapidly develop confidence with patterns in the languages and apply them successfully in their spoken and written work. Reading skills are well developed. Students skim and scan texts, including simple magazine articles and readers to identify the main points and specific detail. They write accurately and carefully to produce brochures in French and Spanish about their school, bar charts illustrating their findings from class surveys about household chores, simple letter writing and narrative. Lower attaining students and students with special educational needs write successfully, following a model, and label accurately to produce simple accounts and posters. By the end of the key stage students are attaining standards above the national expectation. In Key Stage 4, higher and average attaining students write accurately, in detail and at length, on a variety of topics and for a variety of purposes and make extended oral presentations on a variety of topics. Again, reading skills are well developed. Students skim and scan texts, including simple magazine articles and readers, to identify the main points and specific detail. Listening skills are very well developed; all students respond appropriately and with little hesitation to instructions and questions in the language being learned and average and higher attainers identify detail from short extracts of speech at normal speed with little need for repetition. Lower attainers do this with some repetition and guidance being necessary. Students take part in dialogues, following a model, and higher attainers are able to construct their own sentences fairly accurately, describing events in the present, past and future. They express simple opinions and average and higher attaining students justify their views. All students have a good understanding of the way the languages work by the end of the key stage and are beginning to adapt the languages to suit their own needs.
142. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards achieved by the majority of students are above the national average in both languages. Students develop skills learned in Key Stage 3 and broaden the range and variety of vocabulary and structures. The majority have a good grasp of patterns in the languages. Higher and average attaining students produce extended pieces of writing on a variety of topics. Work is carefully and accurately presented and shows a good knowledge of the languages, with students being able to express their ideas clearly and in a fair amount of detail. All students use dictionaries effectively to check and find meaning. By the end of the key stage, students give detailed presentations on a variety of topics, are able to

take part in role-play and respond with little hesitation to general questions about themselves and their interests. They identify both the main points and some detail from extracts of speech containing familiar language and higher attaining students can make inferences and cope with some unfamiliar language. The skill of listening and responding is less well developed in all stages because, in some lessons, students place undue dependence upon written prompts and models when completing speaking tasks, or because they are given too little opportunity to put the languages to the test in realistic situations. Progress in the sixth form is good. Students develop all four skills, analyse a variety of texts, write fairly accurately for a variety of audiences and take part in debate. Several students speak fluently using a very good range of vocabulary and structures. Students following vocational courses achieve standards in line with the requirements of the course in all four skills, taking part in dialogues and identifying the main points from short texts in work related situations.

143. GCSE results in French improved significantly in 1999, with the percentage of candidates achieving A* to C grades being above the national average. The percentage of girls achieving A* to C grades was well above the national average. The percentage of boys achieving A* to C grades was in line with the national average. In Spanish at GCSE, the percentage of candidates achieving A* to C grades in 1999 was below the national average and the percentage of boys achieving A* to C grades was well below the national average. However, the percentage of the cohort entered for Spanish was very high compared to national figures so that national comparisons are not appropriate. In lessons, no significant difference in standards achieved in the two languages, nor between the performance of boys and girls was observed. By the end of the sixth form, students achieve above the national average. Students studying A-level Spanish and French achieve grades appropriate to their ability and the points scores achieved by students have been consistently above the national average.
144. Teaching is good, overall, with over half of lessons seen being good or better and almost a quarter being very good. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons observed. Teachers have a very good command of the languages they teach and a good knowledge of the requirements of the National Curriculum. Examples of very good practice were seen in Spanish in Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. Lesson planning is good; teachers provide appropriate and well-sequenced activities to ensure that students build effectively on previous learning and give them the opportunity to practise informally in pairs or in groups. For example, Year 9 French students discussed their pocket money and Year 7 Spanish students talked about places in their home town. Teachers manage their students well, use questions skilfully and intervene sensitively to offer support. Resources, such as flashcards and the overhead projector, are used well to present new material clearly and to focus attention. Very good use was made of games in a Year 7 Spanish lesson to motivate students and encourage them to participate in oral work. Teachers make very good use of the foreign language assistants to enable students to practise their speaking skills, for example, Year 11 students practised their presentations and groups of Year 8 students took part in a discussion about their school. Teaching in the sixth form is good, due to the teachers' excellent linguistic competence in both languages. They give clear advice as to how to prepare effectively for examinations, both to students taking NVQ language units and to those studying for A-level examinations. They provide opportunities for students to develop advanced language skills in all aspects of the course, through high expectations, effective organisation, enabling students to work at an appropriate pace and the provision of appropriate activities and resources.
145. Students' attitudes to their language learning are good and often very good throughout the school. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary and students listen attentively both to the teacher and to others. They settle quickly and concentrate on tasks set. Students are keen to participate and, when activities are stimulating, are enthusiastic and display enjoyment in their learning. For example, in a Year 7 French class, students were excited and keen to take part in games using the language they had learned and keen to try it out in real situations. Students in a Year 9 Spanish lesson had excellent relationships with each other and their teacher and evaluated each other's performance fairly and constructively. When asked to work in pairs and small groups, they do so sensibly, concentrate on the task and persevere in the face of difficulty.
146. The management of the department is good. The head of department leads a hardworking and effective team of teachers, who all share the common goal of improving quality and standards. This is evident, not only in work done on a regular basis to develop schemes of work and assessment procedures, but also in the provision of weekly lunchtime clubs to help all students

prepare for GCSE examinations and by the efforts made by the department to raise the performance of boys. There are currently no students studying two languages in Key Stage 4, although this is being addressed by the school. Appropriate in-service training and links with Initial Teacher Training Institutions are effective in providing relevant professional development.

147. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress. Considerable effort has been put into the improvement of standards in reading, writing and listening and resources have improved significantly. The staff of the department work effectively as a team to share ideas and spread good practice and have a very good capacity for further improvement.

MUSIC

148. There are no end of key stage teacher assessment results available for the summer of 1999. Analysis of students' work in the current Year 10, however, shows that the standards reached were below the end of Key Stage 3 standards. There are no results for previous years. GCSE results for the summer of 1999 are well below the school average and even further below the national average. These results show a steady decline in the numbers achieving grades A* to C in the last three years. Results and numbers taking A-level in the summer of 1999 are in line with the previous two years and since there was only one candidate national comparisons are not appropriate.
149. Present standards at Key Stage 3 are in line with expectations. In Years 7 and 8 they are above expectations. The two music teachers have succeeded in revitalising the department from the situation described in the last report. Students in Year 7 learn a clapping round, rhythmic note values, including both European and British names, and pitch note names in the treble clef. They have also learned to play a "Waltz in C" on the keyboard, with the final two lines completed by the students, and discovered the structure of pieces of music in two, and three parts. Students in Year 8 have also covered some of the work normally assigned to Year 7, but care has been taken to give the students more challenging work than that normally associated with the earlier year group, in order to minimise the time spent on learning basic concepts. In addition, they have learned about chords and how they are constructed, listened to and played a pentatonic scale, and experienced singing an African folksong, "Obi Senya Na Senya". Students in Year 9 have found it necessary to cover work from Years 7 and 8 in a short period of time in order to begin the normal Year 9 work.
150. Present standards at Key Stage 4 are below expectations. Students in Year 10 have learned about major and minor scales, begun to compose 16 bar melodies, discovered the three important chords used in harmony and have begun to use them and other chords in their compositions in major and minor keys. They have also begun to explore the Internet, using it as a reference tool, not only to discover information about composers, but also to listen to pieces of his music. Computers are also being used for composing purposes. Students in Year 11 have nearly completed their GCSE course work and are practising answering listen examination questions.
151. Present standards at A-level are below expectations. Students in Year 12 are learning about major and minor scales. Students in Year 13 are following the "technology in music" module and have spent the first year of the course learning how to sequence on the computer.
152. Learning at Key Stage 3 is good, and sometimes very good. Students in Year 7 are learning about variation form and listen to a well-known TV theme and identify how the melody has been varied. They then learn to play "Twinkle, twinkle, little star", complete with harmony, either in pairs or individually and proceed to write their own variations on it, some students deciding to play the whole piece in a different key from memory. Students in Year 8 are working on a group composition/performance based on the melody of "Obi Senya", to which they have added an accompaniment based on several rhythmic and pitched repeated patterns. Some students have moved on to explore gamelan music and compose pieces based on the intricate rhythmic and pitch patterns contained in it. Students in Year 9 sing an unaccompanied African spiritual in four parts confidently. They develop their sense of pulse through rhythm games, and identify a melody based on a five-note scale. They then use the five-note scale to improvise over the chord structure found in twelve bar blues.

153. Learning at Key Stage 4 is below average, owing to the lack of work covered in previous years. Students are listening to music from different historical periods and developing appropriate listening skills to help them identify the various musical periods. In the lessons observed, a movement from Dvorak's "New World Symphony" and a section from Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" were played for them to experience the difference between the romantic and modern periods of music. They have a useful checklist of musical elements to focus their listening. Students in Year 11 are attempting to complete their course work before the end of the Easter term.
154. Learning at A-level is also below average. Students in Year 12 are using their work with major and minor scales to help them discover how to change key in music, using chords that are common to both scales. Students in Year 13 are tackling the set paper issued by the examination board late in January. This contains two compulsory questions that are to be completed and sent to the examiners before the Easter holidays. One question is on sequencing, the other on arranging a well-known popular melody, using recognised computer software and satisfying certain criteria.
155. Students with special educational needs are taught alongside the remainder of the class. In some cases, their musical ability is better than the more academically able, but where this is not the case, there is plenty of support from the teachers and other students. Every lesson plan lists a minimum of four realistic statements describing the teachers' targets for these students. Learning for students with special educational needs is in line with the remainder of the class.
156. Attitudes and behaviour in music at all key stages are good. They are sometimes very good. The good pace of the lessons and the liveliness of the teachers help this. Students acquire skills, knowledge and understanding, through focused listening to music. They then use the techniques involved in their own compositions. When discussing music, students use appropriate musical vocabulary with growing confidence. They persevere with set tasks, even when they find them difficult, and make a determined effort to communicate the content of their performances to the remainder of the class. When students are split into groups to prepare compositions or performances, they move quickly to the allocated locations and settle down to work without wasting any time. When working independently, students focus on the set task, eagerly working to meet the challenge and thus developing their individual study skills. Students are aware of how much they are learning, through the continued use of questioning by the teacher and also through the comments made to them by the teachers as they circulate during practical work. Most students have a good relationship, both with their teachers and with their peers. The students obviously enjoy their lessons. Students work well in groups, respecting the opinions of the other members and they treat the instruments with care. When necessary, in preparation for an assignment, or for personal pleasure, students often visit the music department to work on the keyboards or other percussion instruments.
157. Teaching at all key stages is very good with some excellent teaching seen. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and use this very effectively to broaden students' learning. They have a wide repertoire of musical activities that facilitate students' discovery of basic concepts. Students are asked to read out sections from worksheets on a regular basis, which not only helps the less able readers to understand what they are being asked to do, but also develops literacy skills. Lessons are well planned, so that there is always some composing and performing, with introductions to the task usually involving some listening and appraisal. Particular care is given to ensuring that activities are suitable for students of all abilities when planning lessons and each lesson plan contains details of what is expected from the different ranges of ability. Lessons move at a brisk pace, which encourages student concentration. Well-chosen and thoroughly prepared resources make a good contribution to students' learning. Teachers spare no effort in lessons to ensure the students receive worthwhile musical experiences and they expect and receive positive responses. Practical examples are demonstrated musically, giving the students excellent role models to emulate. Questioning plays an important part in lessons, whether it is used for recall or introducing new material and students are required to give developed answers.
158. Both teachers have established good relationships with their students and the students respond positively by concentrating on assignments, settling down to work quickly and generally contributing to an atmosphere conducive to good music making. Students often come to the department at break or lunchtime to complete work or further their keyboard skills and the

teachers give them time where possible. Assessment takes place during all lessons and at specific times during the academic year. Teachers circulate during practical and listening work advising, encouraging, and making suggestions for improvement. Formal assessment takes place at the end of each module, where performance is assessed according to criteria that have been distributed in advance, so that the students know what standard they have to reach to achieve a specific grade. Results are then collated and used to form the end of year statements. The outcomes of each assessment are also used to influence curriculum planning. Homework is regularly set and is usually a continuation of work started in class, to enable students prepare for the practical work due to be continued in the next lesson.

159. The two music teachers are joined by seven instrumental teachers who increase the provision for ninety-three of the more musically able students by giving instrumental lessons on a growing range of instruments. The range of instruments is largely western orientated at present, but there are plans to broaden this by including steel pan and other multi-cultural instruments according to demand. The department is fortunate to have the services of a technician who is well-versed in recording and computer techniques. He provides strong support to the GCSE and A-level work initiated by the two class teachers. There is a range of extra-curricular activities and some students have recently participated in a scheme organised by English National Opera. There are also plans to participate in Ealing's celebration of the millennium concerts.
160. Since the last report, a new head of department has joined the school. Together with the second music teacher, she has established a broad and balanced curriculum and brought the ethos of the school into the music department. The head of department has experience of managing music departments in previous schools and has a clear vision of how she intends to improve the facilities for providing worthwhile musical experiences for the students. There are plans for more formal monitoring of teaching and the development of information technology within the department, especially as the present number of computers prevents the full delivery of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. The music department comprises two classrooms, the second of which is small for the larger Key Stage 3 classes, a sound-proofed recording studio, and four practice rooms, which are used for instrumental teaching. Neither of the classrooms is carpeted, resulting in high noise levels from chair movement, especially in the lower of the two classrooms. There is also interference from the content of the lesson from the upper room. There are no blinds at the windows in either of the south facing rooms and sunlight causes discomfort to both teachers and students. Facilities for playing tapes or CD-ROM are inadequate in both classrooms. There are good displays of students' work and curriculum related posters.
161. To maintain the momentum of the last two terms, the department should aim to: acquire sufficient computers and keyboards to meet the needs of the National Curriculum, improve the facilities for playing tapes and CD-ROM, seek to broaden the range of instrumental lessons offered to students and improve the environment as mentioned above.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

162. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is in line with the nationally expected level for students aged 14, with a number exceeding the expected level. The work seen of Year 9 students would indicate that the standards of work are improving, with, this year, a higher number expected to be in line with or exceeding the national levels. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4, by students following the core course, is also in line with national expectations. The GCSE course in physical education started in September 1999 and so there are currently no examination results available for comparison. There are no national levels of attainment set for sixth form students. The school has also achieved success with teams and individuals at local, area and national levels.
163. By the end of Key Stage 3, students are able to organise and lead an effective warm-up session and are gaining an increasing knowledge of the names of the muscles involved. They take part in a variety of games and those seen included volleyball, basketball, football and rugby. The performance skills of the students are good, both in games and athletics and, when required, the students are able to evaluate the performance of others and make points for improvements, although they do not do this spontaneously. They have fewer opportunities

within lessons for planning and thus are weaker in this area. By the end of Key Stage 4, students are able to take part in a higher quality of game, playing very keen competitive games in a controlled manner. The GCSE course is in its first year, but indications are that the students are achieving at least the national averages in both theory and practical work. Students of all abilities are well catered for in all courses and progress at a similar rate. Progress can be seen, both in lessons and within the key stage, in the growing level of skill and in the confidence shown in game situations. Attitudes to physical education are very good, the students come prepared to take part in lessons whatever the weather and the output of physical effort is maintained throughout the lesson. This keenness was shown by a Year 11 group, who changed during break in order to get an early start to the lesson. Relationships between students and between staff and students are very good and these enhance the learning of the students in creating a relaxed productive environment in which to work.

164. The teaching of physical education is good. Teaching is better at Key Stage 3, where almost all lessons seen were good or better and a third were very good. Strengths in teaching within the department are the good use made of the warm-up, when students often lead the session, the lessons which are well planned, so that skill techniques have a good progression, the balance of new challenges and the time to practise the skills introduced. The knowledge and understanding of the staff adds a lively dimension, drawing on additional points of interest to maintain motivation in the lesson and the management of the students is very good. A very good example of catering for the needs of the students is seen in Year 7 where the high-level ability of the students was recognised and the class progressed at a faster rate, going on to develop skills normally undertaken by Year 8 students. Weaker areas within teaching were seen when peer evaluation is insufficiently used and when lessons become too dependent on the teacher, almost becoming coaching sessions, rather than involving the students in the planning and decision-making.
165. The curriculum provided at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory, with the areas of the subject giving a balanced experience to the students. Those on offer are restricted by the accommodation, but good use is made of all the facilities and the provision of a new gymnasium means that the gymnastics course has been greatly improved. Whilst the provision of the gymnasium provides the boys with more opportunities for creative work, they do not take part in dance. Extra-curricular provision is good, with a range of activities available for all students to extend their interest or skill in the activity. There are also a large number of school teams and this enables higher attaining students to improve further and participate in matches, using a higher level of skill. In the sixth form, students may take part in a recreational physical activity for part of the year, but the rotation gives an unbalanced number of students and so restricts the range of full games that can be played.
166. Leadership of the department is good, with some very good aspects. The documentation and schemes of work are very good, giving consistency within the department and good worksheets have been produced, which enable some topics to be taught more effectively. The head of department is ably assisted by the head of girls' physical education and the whole department works very well together as a team. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection; teaching is now good, the staff in the department are sharing their ideas of good practice and the students evaluate their work. This has enabled standards in gymnastics and small games to improve. A GCSE course has been introduced and good systems of assessment and recording are in place. Students are more aware of their levels of achievement, but this requires further development, so that specific targets are given to students to enable them to raise their level of attainment further.

BUSINESS STUDIES (GCSE)

167. Business studies is a popular option in Key Stage 4. By the end of the key stage, the majority of students attain A* to C grades that, in 1999, are slightly below the national average for girls and considerably below for boys. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment is particularly wide owing to the lower attainment of a significant number of boys on entry to the GCSE course and consequent excessive coursework demands on them. This will be reduced when a new syllabus is adopted in September 2000. In lessons, however, standards are satisfactory for boys and girls, reflecting attainment on entry and in line with national expectations. Although the trend in attainment since the last inspection has been variable, standards are likely to continue to improve with the stable staffing now in place.

168. In a good Year 10 lesson on economies of scale, students used business vocabulary fluently, had a sound understanding of why businesses buy in bulk and word-processed answers to questions in the assignment. In a Year 11 revision lesson, students showed a clear understanding of the differences between profit and loss and cash flow and their work demonstrated a clear understanding of 'break-even' as a forecasting technique for new businesses. Examination coursework folders seen are neat, exceptionally well-presented and generally include sufficient depth of analysis and evaluation of market research. Students use information and communications technology (ICT) with particular effect to word process reports and produce clear, well-labelled graphs from survey figures. A minority of boys in a Year 11 lesson seen did not redraft their written answers to correct errors pointed out by teachers. Students' examination results reflect and sometimes exceed their ability levels on entry, due to well-focused teaching closely geared to examination criteria. Students with special educational needs can clearly explain simple business concepts, such as the product life cycle.
169. Students achieve well in lessons and make good progress in their learning. They improve speaking and listening skills through group and class discussion and develop their information and communications technology (ICT) skills increasingly well, now access to computers has improved. Higher-attaining students have full, well-presented and detailed notes. Lower attainers have a number of gaps in their books, with less detailed content and unfinished sentences that do not communicate well. Overall, all students' progress is well supported by teachers' regular marking and constructive feedback.
170. Students' attitudes to learning are very good in lessons seen. Students enjoy their work and behave very well, supporting each other's learning. They co-operate fully with their teachers. The majority of boys and girls are well motivated to succeed and many progress on to A-level or GNVQ business courses in the sixth form. The majority of students develop good individual research skills on projects involving data from the Internet and local companies.
171. The quality of teaching is good and, in two-thirds of lessons seen, very good. Teachers make very good use of their subject knowledge and business experience to plan lessons carefully and they make good use of topical case studies. Coursework assignments, supplied by the examination board, are not always easily understood by lower-attaining students. This has affected results, but teachers are to adopt a new syllabus, which will improve attainment. Case studies used are relevant and designed to consolidate theory learned and to improve key skills of information technology, number and communications. Teachers support individual students very well, including those with special educational needs, and teachers always review individual and group tasks to check understanding. Homework is set and marked regularly, although additional activities for the more able are not always set.
172. GCSE business studies lessons are well structured, well managed and ably led. Teachers work as a committed team. Teaching rooms are large enough for the majority of classes. Development plans have successfully focused on improving attainment and increasing students' access to computers. Teachers make good use of local business links through visiting speakers. Staff have created an ethos that encourages students to enjoy their learning. Improvements in teaching and student attitudes since the last inspection have been considerable and the department has a good capacity for further improvement in standards of attainment.

SOCIOLOGY

173. Sociology was not commented upon at the time of the last inspection. At that time, the standards being attained were high at Key Stage 4. They have declined since 1997 and the subject is to be removed from the curriculum.
174. The standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is sound for the grade range A* to G and below national expectations for the grades A* to C. Girls do much better over both ranges than boys. Ethnic-minority girls do slightly better than ethnic-minority boys over A* to G and much better over the top grades. The standard at the end of Key Stage 5 is below that anticipated nationally across grades A to C and A to G. No boys, for example, gained an A-level in 1998. There was only one boy in a cohort of eleven students that year. The current level of knowledge and skill held by students at Key Stage 4 and 5 is appropriate, based on responses

in class, discussion with students and an examination of students' coursework. Predicted grades at Key Stage 5 are better than in previous years.

175. Progress is being made in students' communication skills. Girls present their assignments more effectively than boys and they can draw meaningful conclusions in their written work. Students work well together at both key stages. Students are learning a factual knowledge of sociology and they are being encouraged to use works of reference as sources of data for sociology. There are few students who have the habit of reading critically to gain information about the changing UK society in which they live. All students at Key Stages 4 and 5 need to undertake wider reading, to gain the ability to evaluate the reliability of material.
176. The standard of teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and good at Key Stage 5. The teachers have a knowledge of specific facts relating to society and understand sociological methods of enquiry. A particular strength of all lessons is the teacher's ability to explain familiar phenomena in terms of relevant principles. Lessons showed students how to make use of relevant authorities in support of an argument, to make use of concise and appropriate written language and to analyse and critically evaluate conflicting ideas on society. The teaching of sociology is bedevilled by poor resources. What resource materials are available are well used to aid teaching and learning styles. The academic leadership of the subject is good. Located in the curriculum area of social studies, teachers share the same degree of professional development, monitor and observe other lessons, and adhere to the formal marking and assessment policy.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

177. GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications) courses are currently run in the sixth form at Advanced level in business and leisure and tourism over two years, and at intermediate level in business, leisure and tourism, art and engineering over one year. GNVQ courses complement the extensive A-level programme in the school and provide a well-recognised pathway to university and employment.
178. In 1999, all students on GNVQ intermediate courses successfully complete within a year, results being above national expectations for girls and boys and a considerable improvement from the previous inspection. In work seen, the majority of students on intermediate GNVQ courses produce bulky coursework portfolios, with well-presented assignments, making good use of information and communications technology (ICT), particularly on business courses. Coursework portfolios incorporate evidence from class presentations about new product designs, consumer surveys and graphs of results. Engineering students make a 'maze' game having researched a variety of ideas on the Internet. Art students can design and make large sculptures based on natural forms, such as seashells and plants. Business and leisure and tourism students research working conditions in the European Union and produce graphs of peoples' use of leisure activities. Whilst description and presentation of data are generally good, a limited amount of extended analysis and critical evaluation was seen.
179. By the age of 19, all students on the two-year Advanced business and leisure and tourism courses successfully complete within two years, well above national expectations, maintaining the high standard of attainment from 1998. The proportion of students obtaining merit and distinction grades has improved considerably since the last inspection. Business students use information technology effectively to produce break-even charts and can explain basic pricing decisions clearly. Leisure and tourism students demonstrate a sound understanding of the wide range of local and foreign leisure facilities and integrate material from a large number of visits, including a week in Turkey. Information and communications technology (ICT) is used well to draw graphs of the numbers of overseas visitors, although there is little evidence of the use of spreadsheets to set up alternative viewpoints when analysing figures. A minority of students on Advanced courses find difficulty in writing at sufficient depth, leave work uncorrected and do not check the validity of information they obtain from the Internet and CD-ROMs.
180. In all subject areas, GNVQ work is neat and well presented, showing a good standard of reading and writing skills. Students make good use of ICT, although use is less consistent in leisure and tourism than in business. Students incorporate photographs and make their own videos. Higher-attaining students monitor action plans well, write evaluations in sufficient

depth and can describe alternative approaches that could have been taken in assignments. Students' work shows a clear desire to meet course requirements laid down by examination boards. About a third of all work seen is at merit or distinction level, reflecting final grades awarded.

181. Students' pace of learning on all GNVQ courses is good, as students are productive and work at a pace to meet set deadlines. Good progress in the key skills of communication, number and information and communications technology (ICT) is evident at both Intermediate and Advanced levels in lessons and course work seen. The majority of students find some difficulty in tracking their own key skills progress, particularly in number. Students are fully aware of what they need to do to obtain merit and distinction grades for their course work, as a result of teachers' regular assessment, feedback and target setting. Students can improve work already submitted.
182. Students generally approach GNVQ lessons with enthusiasm and interest and are well motivated to succeed. They enjoy working co-operatively in groups to discuss projects and work independently on computers. Students concentrate fully on their tasks as they feel they are relevant to the working world. Students use material from work experience in their coursework assignments. In the majority of GNVQ lessons seen, students demonstrate research skills from a variety of sources, including the Internet and are not over-dependent on teachers for ideas.
183. The quality of GNVQ teaching is good or very good in nearly three-quarters of the lessons seen on inspection. This represents considerable improvement from the last inspection. Teachers' relationships with students are very constructive and students are clear about the structure of their courses and where they will lead them. Teachers are knowledgeable, well-organised and have suitably high expectations of students. Lessons invariably have a practical, industrial focus, based on a good range of case studies, textbooks, worksheets, computer software and material from local industry contacts. Teachers' planning, delivery, assessment and feedback to students are thorough. Individual students feel well-supported and their progress is well monitored. Time in lessons is used efficiently in all subjects and homework deadlines are appropriate, with short and longer-term targets. This has helped lead to the overall improvement in student completion rates since the last inspection. The need for the regular assessment and logging of key skills, particularly in number, is being addressed.
184. GNVQ classes are very well staffed and most teachers have considerable GNVQ experience. Students of all abilities have equal access to courses and one student with dyslexia is making good progress. A very small number of students are on inappropriate courses. Course time allocation is greater than national expectations. Since the last inspection, the school has developed a greater range of vocational courses and is actively considering extending GNVQ into Key Stage 4 in the light of national 14-19 curriculum changes from September 2000.
185. GNVQ courses, including key skills lessons, are well managed and have an increasingly high profile within the school. They involve teachers from several subject areas. Course teams are committed, hard-working and meet regularly to evaluate student progress. Standards are well monitored internally, where teachers occasionally watch each other's lessons, and by the examination board. Accommodation is generally satisfactory, although leisure and tourism students lack a base room for their studies. Each vocational area has a stock of books and other resources, although central library provision helps meet student needs.
186. Staff expertise in GNVQ assessment, including key skills, has grown steadily through the careful use of external funds for training. Teachers use their links with local industry well to organise visits and speakers, although few currently go on short industrial placements themselves. The school's development plan targets for raising achievement are being well met and access to information and communications technology (ICT) has recently improved noticeably. The school is well placed to move forward to meet new challenges in the changing national post-16 curriculum.

ADDITIONAL SIXTH FORM PROVISION

BUSINESS STUDIES (A-level)

187. A-level business studies has been introduced recently as a course which is more effectively able to meet the needs of boys and girls than the previous courses in economics, where standards since the last inspection declined in relation to the national average. Achievement in A-level business studies, in lessons seen on the inspection, is satisfactory and in line with national expectations. Predicted attainment in examinations for current Year 13 is in line with national average and the students' standards of attainment on entry.
188. Students in lessons seen are able to explain difficult concepts, such as contribution and market segmentation and can use ICT (information and communications technology) effectively to draw and interpret graphs to show forecast break-even points for businesses. In a very good Year 12 lesson, students worked very effectively in small groups to produce and present posters showing how motivation theories could be applied to job and batch production processes in business. Class presentations consolidate concepts learned and develop key team working and communications key skills. Students obtain company financial data from the Internet and develop a good critical understanding of applying ratio analysis to compare companies' profitability.
189. Students attitudes to their learning are very good. They co-operate very well with each other and concentrate well on completing set tasks, answering the teachers' focused questions effectively, thus developing a fluent command of business terminology. Students generally make good progress in acquiring concepts and applying them through independent research out of school and work on well-chosen case studies selected by teachers to meet students' interests. Some students join a Young Enterprise company to make and sell jewellery in a local market.
190. In lessons seen, teaching is good with some examples of very good teaching. Teachers are very knowledgeable about business, treat students with humour and respect and support them well, so they understand key concepts, such as marginal costing and can apply them. Teachers expect students to use homework opportunities (including extended reading) to profitably extend their learning. Teachers' marking is regular and constructive. Teachers meet regularly to monitor students' progress and make good use of a variety of resources, although some students do not use information and communications technology (ICT) sufficiently to model possible financial strategies or to graphically present financial data. The possible use of short work placements and work shadowing by students to enrich course work is being developed.

LAW

191. Law was not visited in 1996. However, since that date, the teaching of law has followed a relatively rigid syllabus delivered in exciting and innovative ways.
192. The standard of attainment at the end of Key Stage 5 is above national expectations for the top grades A* to C and well above for the grades A* to E. Students are being taught to be able to seek, evaluate and explain legal judgements and not to recite the fine details of law. The goal of autonomous learning is well founded and the teacher facilitates the development of independent thinking.
193. Progress is being made in the development of skills such as cognition, analysis, judgement and the ability to learn from experience. The teaching of content is made technically simple and the teacher is able to pass on expertise and knowledge. Students are progressively learning to move away from dependency on their teacher and begin to take some responsibility for their own learning. There is a build up of confidence from Year 12 to 13, as well as in motivation and critical abilities. By the end of most lessons, there is a move beyond surface learning towards deep learning approaches. A significant illustration of progress is of students being able to evaluate their own work and learning by working with others through a process of giving and receiving feedback.
194. The standard of teaching is very good. There is a safe, supporting and challenging learning environment characterised by trust and confidentiality, where teacher and students work on legal issues and solve problems through a process of reflection and action. Students show that they are really interested in law and their teacher works hard to help them improve their academic performance. Practical help on research and assignment preparation is good.

Marking is an accurate reflection of overall strengths and weaknesses. The teacher is good at communicating knowledge and at engaging in a dialogue with students about what is expected, what is taught and what is learned. Lessons are authoritative, radical, refreshingly well prepared, clear and lucid. However, the school's law resources do not present students with a stimulating array of source material to help them develop their powers of analysis and evaluation. For example, law does not have a base and there is little opportunity for the display of legal knowledge on walls, or for there to be a collection of law reports on hand in a classroom. The assessment of student work is outstandingly good.

PSYCHOLOGY

195. Psychology at A-level has only been offered to post-16 students since 1996.
196. The standard of attainment at the end of the sixth form for the higher grades has been below average. Though based on small numbers, there were no A* to C grades in 1998 and not all students gained an A* to E award. However, students are gaining an understanding of the language, concepts and techniques of psychology and, in 1999, the A* to E pass rate reached the national standard. Predicted grades suggest a substantial improvement for the higher grades.
197. Progress is being made by most students in their developing skills of numeracy, literacy, communication, investigation and interpretation, using psychological techniques into human behaviour. Most can write well or speak clearly about what they understand to be the environmental and social factors which influence normal and abnormal behaviour.
198. The standard of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned to encourage an awareness of experiential and practical learning. Great care is taken to teach students to develop initiative, problem solving and decision making skills. The teacher conveys accurate factual information surrounding the study of human behaviour. Students are shown how to examine critically the research into human behaviour. Interesting lessons make students confident and they are motivated to listen to what is expected of them. For the more able students, extra work and reading is recommended. The teacher has a good facility for expression in a variety of methods - statistics, diagrams and prose. This provides students with appropriate transferable skills, which go beyond the boundaries of the subject syllabus.