

INSPECTION REPORT

ST MARYLEBONE CE SCHOOL

Marylebone, London W1

LEA area: Westminster

Unique reference number: 101152

Headteacher: Mrs E Phillips

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Greenfield
7070

Dates of inspection: 26th – 29th November 2001

Inspection number: 187407

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 19
Gender of pupils:	11- 16 Girls, 16 - 19 Mixed
School address:	St Marylebone CE School 64 Marylebone High Street London W1U 5BA
Telephone number:	(0207) 935 4704
Fax number:	(0207) 935 4005
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Michael Bithell
Date of previous inspection:	29 th March 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7070	Mrs J Greenfield	Registered inspector		The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well is the school led and managed?
14756	Mr J Lovell	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20709	Mr D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English	
3643	Mr D Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10093	Mr D Bateman	Team inspector	Science	
19866	Mr P Austin	Team inspector	Art	
10209	Mr V Gormally	Team inspector	Design and technology	
31863	Mr A Cornelius	Team inspector	Geography	
30317	Mrs E Barthaud	Team inspector	History	
18032	Mrs I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4617	Mrs R Fox	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well are pupils taught?
23016	Mr T Morrison	Team inspector	Drama	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
31660	Mrs M Young	Team inspector	Music	
5658	Mr R Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education	
3353	Mrs A Fenton	Team inspector	Performing arts	
16930	Mr J Plumb	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
12179	Mr L Moscrop	Team inspector	English as an additional language Equal opportunities	
4684	Mr D Cullimore	Team inspector	Economics	
30563	Miss J Pentlow	Team inspector	Biology	
2740	Mrs B Barratt	Team inspector	Sociology	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
BRISTOL
BS1 5RW

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Marylebone CE School, which is Voluntary Aided, is a smaller than average 11-19 comprehensive school with 800 pupils on roll. The school has increased in size since the last inspection and is oversubscribed. It is a girls' school but admits an increasing number of boys into the sixth form. The school is fully comprehensive in intake and as a Church school receives pupils from a very large number of primary schools. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds, some of which are considerably disadvantaged. Around 36 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above the national average. The school population is culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse, with around 60 nationalities and 80 languages represented. Slightly under a half of the pupils are from white backgrounds. The main minority ethnic groups are of Indian, Bangladeshi, Black-Caribbean, Black-African, Chinese and Pakistani heritage. Around 16 per cent of pupils are refugees. Over half of the pupils have English as an additional language, of whom 11 per cent are at an early stage of learning English. These figures are very high for schools nationally but broadly average for inner London schools. Ninety pupils have special educational needs, which is below the national average and ten have a statement. The range of needs includes speech and language difficulties, hearing impairment, dyspraxia and some complex emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. The school is a specialist school for the Performing Arts, a Beacon school and is in an Excellence in Cities partnership.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Marylebone CE School is a very good school with many outstanding features. The quality of leadership of the headteacher, which is impressive, and the considerable contribution made by other staff, create an ethos in which all pupils are valued and encouraged to achieve the highest possible standards, both academically and personally. It is a very inclusive school. The very good standards of teaching throughout the school, and the careful attention given to their individual needs, enable pupils to make very good progress and achieve well above average standards that are very high in comparison with similar schools. Pupils work hard, are enthusiastic about their studies and keen to learn. The combination of all of these factors ensures that the school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in the school are well above average overall and are very high in comparison with those in similar schools.
- The impressive leadership of the headteacher, with the strong support of senior staff and the governing body, has created an ethos in which all pupils are valued and where the achievement of high standards in all areas of work is the norm.
- The excellent quality of the relationships and the very high standards of behaviour contribute significantly to pupils' learning and achievements.
- The excellent quality of the support and guidance, which meets the needs of individual pupils very well, underpins pupils' academic and personal development.
- The very good quality of the teaching overall enables all pupils to make good progress in their work and achieve high standards.
- The excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which makes a significant contribution to ensuring responsible and caring individuals who are well prepared for life beyond school in a multi-faith, multi-cultural society.

What could be improved

- No major areas for improvement have been identified. Some minor issues are included in individual sections of the report.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in March 1996, the school has improved its performance in the national tests and public examinations at a faster rate than that found nationally. In some years, the improvement in the GCSE examinations has been spectacular. Overall, there has been a considerable rise in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades and levels. The quality of teaching has also improved, with much more that is very good and no teaching that is less than satisfactory. The school has made very good progress overall in addressing the key issues identified in the last inspection report. Effective line management systems have been implemented to improve the accountability of staff. Curriculum planning is universally of a high order. Classroom practice is regularly monitored and evaluated. Significant progress has been made in developing a wider range of teaching approaches through using the expertise of staff within the school. This has ensured that pupils learning English as an additional language have full access to the curriculum in order to reach their full potential. Systems for monitoring departmental spending are more rigorous. The school has shown that it has an excellent capacity to improve what it does and under the leadership of the headteacher is well placed to bring about further improvements.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A*	A	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	D	C	n/a	

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

In English, mathematics and science, and for all three subjects together, the school's results in the national tests for 14 year olds in 2001 were well above the national averages. Standards have remained around this level since 1997 and have improved at a faster rate than the national trend, particularly in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels. When compared with similar schools, the results were very high, placing the school in the top five per cent of such schools nationally. Pupils' current work indicates that standards are very high in mathematics and art; well above the expected standards in English, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), German and performing arts; and are above the standard expected in all the remaining subjects. Overall, pupils are achieving well and often very well in relation to their earlier attainment.

The GCSE examination results in 2001 were well above the national average and have remained at this level and sometimes higher than this since 1998. Since the last inspection, the rate of improvement from year to year has been faster than the national trend, with spectacular gains in some years. When compared with similar schools, the school's performance is very high, placing it in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. The results in all subjects were better than the national averages and well above average in the majority. From the work seen during the inspection, the school is maintaining these high standards: pupils are achieving well and many very well. The school has far exceeded its targets for 2001 and for 2002.

The results of the A-level examinations have improved since the last inspection and in 2000 were in line with the national average. There was also a slight improvement in 2001. In the majority of subjects, many more students in 2001 gained the highest grades of A and B. The school's performance in the GNVQ Advanced awards was also better than the national figure. Male students achieved better results than the female students at A-level but there was little difference in their performance in the GNVQ

awards. From the work seen, standards are very high in art and design and well above average in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, ICT and economics. Students with English as an additional language achieve in line with their peers.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are proud of being a member of the school. They show great interest, commitment and enthusiasm for their work and for the very wide range of opportunities that the school provides for them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is very good. The vast majority of pupils behave responsibly in lessons and around the school. The school is a very orderly community. Pupils treat each other and adults with great courtesy, consideration and respect.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils listen to one another with very great care and sensitivity, valuing each other's contributions. They show considerable initiative in planning and organising their work, developing their skills of independent learning very effectively.
Attendance	Attendance is broadly in line with the national average for secondary schools and the rate of unauthorised absence was below the national average.

Pupils respond extremely well to the distinctive ethos and the very positive climate for learning that permeates the school. They display exceptional maturity and respond with confidence to the challenging opportunities they are given and to the considerable demands made on them.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	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.

Teaching throughout the school is consistently very good and is one of the main reasons why pupils make such good progress. The teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons, good in 22 per cent of lessons, very good in 50 per cent and excellent in 21 per cent. There is little difference in the quality of teaching and learning between Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. An unusual feature of the teaching in this school, and one of its greatest strengths, is the way in which performance arts are used to enhance the quality of learning and the manner in which this pervades all subjects of the curriculum. Lessons are very well planned and delivered in an extremely consistent manner across the school. Teachers mark work very well and give very good feedback to pupils. Teaching approaches are often excellent, which means that pupils of all levels of attainment and with a variety of needs are challenged appropriately and make very good and sometimes excellent progress. At both key stages, the teaching of English and mathematics is very good and in science is good. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy is very good and of numeracy is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced, and meets the needs of all pupils very well. The school provides a wealth of curricular and other opportunities for pupils. The quality and range of extra-curricular activities are excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs very well. The quality of teaching is very good and enables them to make very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils receive very good support, which enables them to make very good progress. Subject departments are using a range of effective strategies to ensure that pupils have full access to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school is extremely successful in achieving the highest standards of effort, behaviour and commitment to enable pupils to realise their full potential in an environment that fosters genuine respect for all members of a multi-cultural and multi-faith community. This ethos permeates all aspects of the school's work.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides excellent pastoral care and support for all of its pupils, which underpins their personal and academic development. This support is closely related to the raising of academic standards and the removal of barriers to learning for all pupils. Pupils' progress is systematically and carefully monitored.

A distinctive feature of the curriculum is the way that performance arts are used to enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum. The personal and social education programme is excellent and, together with the wide range of opportunities the school provides, makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. The school has not consistently followed the appropriate procedures for the disapplication of pupils from a modern foreign language at Key Stage 4. The school's links and partnership with parents are excellent. Parents, who are involved as full partners in their child's education, receive excellent information about the life and work of the school and the progress their child is making.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's outstanding leadership, with the support of senior staff and the governors, has successfully established an ethos in the school in which all are valued and where the attainment of high standards are of prime importance. This is reflected in the high achievements of pupils in their academic work and personal development.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and play a strong role in determining its direction. The governing body fulfils nearly all of its statutory responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are very good systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the work of the school, including its own performance and the quality of teaching and its impact on learning. The thorough analysis of data and the careful monitoring of progress enable staff to track the performance of individuals and groups of pupils effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Financial planning and administration are very good, and expenditure is closely linked to the priorities in the school's strategic plan. The school uses its resources well for the benefit of the pupils and to meet its

	identified priorities. The school is making very good use of new technologies.
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Staff are deployed effectively to make best use of their expertise. Accommodation is adequate for the teaching of most subjects although provision is restricted in some, for example design and technology, music and physical education. Resources to support learning and the curriculum are satisfactory and the number of computers available for pupils is very high. Suitable procedures are in place to ensure that the school obtains best value for money from its expenditure. The school provides very good value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's high expectations and the standards achieved by the pupils. • The high standards of leadership and management. • Their children like school. • The high standards of behaviour and the way in which the school promotes pupils' personal development and a sense of responsibility. • The very good quality of the teaching. • The good progress their children make at school and the arrangements for homework. 	<p>Parents did not identify significant concerns about any aspect of the school's work.</p>

A very high proportion of parents are pleased with the school and the education it provides. Inspectors fully support the positive views expressed by parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form in this smaller than average comprehensive school has 158 students and has increased in size over the past few years. An increasing number of pupils from other schools, mainly boys, join in Year 12. Just over a half of the school's own pupils stay on into the sixth form. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages broadly matches that of the main school. A very small number receive additional support with their English. Four students have special educational needs, three with physical difficulties and one with speech and communication difficulties. The sixth form provides a wide range of A-level and AS courses and a small number of vocational courses, and through partnership arrangements with other local secondary schools, students are able to follow courses elsewhere. The GCSE examination results at 16 are well above average in relation to schools nationally and very high when compared to similar schools. Students normally require at least grade C at GCSE in several subjects to embark on sixth form courses. The majority of students embark on a two-year programme leading to A-level, with a smaller proportion taking a combination of A-level and vocational courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is successful and cost effective. Students work very hard and the majority achieve well in their examination courses. The sixth form caters well for its students through the range of courses that are provided, the wealth and quality of other opportunities, including extra-curricular activities, and the support that is provided for their academic and personal development. It provides a stimulating and challenging environment in which students develop as mature and responsible young adults, very well prepared for their future lives. The school is successfully adapting its approaches to dealing with the increased numbers in the sixth form but recognises that more needs to be done. The teaching is very good in nearly every subject and is excellent in art and design. The main strengths and areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

Strengths

- Students are attaining above average standards overall, with high standards in English, mathematics and economics, and very high standards in art.
- The very good progress students make through the enthusiastic and challenging teaching.
- Students' excellent attitudes to school and to their work, and the high quality of the relationships.
- The very high level of personal responsibility which students take for their work and in contributing to school life.
- The excellent induction arrangements, which ensure that students joining the school in the sixth form are fully included in the community of the school and have a clear understanding of its expectations.
- The very high stands of pastoral and academic care provided for students to help them to achieve to their full potential.

What could be improved

- The provision for religious education, to ensure that statutory requirements are met.

Minor areas for improvement are included in curriculum area reports.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Standards have improved very significantly due to the very good teaching inspired by excellent leadership within the department.
Biology	Good. Standards are improving as a result of the introduction of better strategies to track students' progress. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' good subject knowledge is used well to develop good teacher-student relationships and build effective links between theoretical and practical work.
Economics	Very good. Results have been well above average. The subject is well taught so that all students make good progress. Relationships are good and students make use of a wide range of extra-curricular activities to enhance their learning.
Art and design	Excellent. Very high proportions of students attain the highest grades and awards at A-level and in the AVCE course. The teaching is outstanding; it challenges all students to think creatively and independently. Leadership and management are excellent: students appreciate the teamwork amongst staff and the support they are given.
Drama	Very good. Results are consistently above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Relationships are a strong feature. The range and opportunity offered by extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum.
Performing arts	Good. Examination results are in line with the national average. Students make good progress in all aspects of the course as a result of the very good teaching.
Sociology	Good. Examination results have been above average over the last two years. Teaching is good and students achieve well in comparison with their earlier levels of attainment.
English	Very good. English is a very popular subject that is very well taught, so that both male and female students make good progress and achieve well above average standards.
French	Good. Good teaching and good assessment procedures result in good progress in Year 12 and satisfactory progress in Year 13. Standards of oral work in the current Year 13 are not as good as they should be, mainly because of the reluctance of students to speak, limitations in the accommodation, and some of the activities give them insufficient opportunities to speak.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching is mostly very good and some teaching in drama, ICT, German and performing arts is excellent. Standards of work were mostly above average in the lessons sampled.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The pastoral and academic support provided for students helps them to develop their learning skills and supports them in achieving to the best of their potential. Their academic performance is monitored very well and they are set realistic targets which motivate them to work hard. The induction arrangements to the sixth form are excellent. Students are well informed about career options and opportunities beyond school.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The work of the sixth form is under constant scrutiny, particularly in the light of increasing numbers of students from other schools. There is a clear focus on achieving academic excellence and preparing students for their future life beyond school. The performance of individuals and groups of students is carefully analysed and evaluated and effective steps taken to overcome any underachievement. All students have equal access to all the opportunities provided.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school helped them to settle in well into the sixth form. • Teachers are readily accessible for help and support and provide helpful and constructive advice. • The choice of courses suits their talents and career aspirations. • They are well taught and challenged. • They enjoy the sixth form. • They are helped and encouraged to study and work independently. 	<p>Students did not identify any significant areas for improvement, but a very small minority commented that the range of enrichment activities could be improved, better advice could be provided about future options and better information could be provided about their progress.</p>

Students' views about the school are very positive and these are fully supported by inspectors. Inspectors were not able to support the views of the small minority of students: they judge that the range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities are excellent; the information provided to students about their progress is very good; and that the advice provided about careers and future education opportunities is very good.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards overall in the school are high. These high standards are reflected in pupils' current work, and in the school's results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and the GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4, which are well above average. Since the last inspection in 1996, the test and examination results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend, particularly in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels and grades. In this respect, the school has made considerable progress in addressing one of the key issues identified in the last inspection report.

2. On entry to the school, pupils' attainments vary widely, but their overall level, based on their performance in the national tests at the age of 11, is above average. As they move through the school, pupils make good and often very good progress as a result of challenging and enthusiastic teaching, and the highly developed systems for monitoring and supporting their academic and personal development. The school's high expectations and extremely positive and distinctive ethos, which motivates all pupils, irrespective of their background and attainment, ensures that they achieve to the very best of their ability. They achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school and by the age of 16 reach high standards in nearly all subjects and very high standards in a few.

3. In the national tests in 2001 at the age of 14, when all pupils are taken into account, the results were well above average in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science when compared with all maintained schools. When compared with similar schools, based on the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the results were very high, indicating that pupils are far ahead of those in comparable schools. Since 1997, the school's performance in the three core subjects has been almost consistently well above average and on occasions in the case of English very high. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 or above and Level 6 or above in all three subjects together has been well above average in relation to the national averages and very high when compared with similar schools. Assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001 indicate that standards in the foundation subjects of art, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), modern foreign languages, music and physical education are well above the national expectation and at the higher Level 6 or above in history, geography, art and music.

4. Work in lessons and in pupils' books across the range of subjects confirms that these high standards are being maintained overall at Key Stage 3 and that there are signs of further improvement in a few subjects. In mathematics, for example, pupils' attainment by the end of this key stage is very high and above the standards indicated by the test results in 2001. The results are well above the nationally expected standard in English, reflecting a similar picture to the test results in 2001. In science, pupils' attainment is above average but slightly below the standards indicated by the test results in 2001. In the remaining subjects, pupils' attainment is well above the national expectation in design and technology, geography, history, ICT, German and performing arts, and far above the expected standards in art. In French, music, drama and physical education, their attainment is above average, with a significant minority reaching higher standards than this. All pupils are achieving very well in relation to pupils in similar schools and in relation to their earlier attainment on entry to the school.

5. In the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations and General National Vocational Education (GNVQ) awards in 2001, the results were well above average when compared with maintained schools nationally and were very high when compared with those in similar schools. Since 1996, the trend in the school's average points score per pupil has risen at a faster rate than in schools nationally. The school has made remarkable progress since the last inspection, when its performance was below the national average at five or more grades A*-C, five or more grades A*-G and for the average points score. The gains in some years have been spectacular, moving from 39 per cent of pupils achieving five or more grades A*-C in 1997 to 74 per cent in 1998, and from 77 per cent in 1999 to 89 per cent in 2000. The school has improved its performance yet again in 2001 to 92 per cent and has far

exceeded its target of 72 per cent in 2001 and its target of 85 per cent set for 2002. An analysis of the school's data indicates that the pupils are achieving exceptionally well in relation to their earlier performance in the Key Stage 3 tests at the age of 14.

6. The GCSE results in 2001 were above the national averages in all subjects and well above average in the majority. All pupils entered for the examinations gained pass grades in biology, chemistry, physics, textiles, history, French, home languages and music, and a much higher proportion than average gained grades A*-C in English language and literature, mathematics, double science, art and design, design and technology (resistant materials), graphics, geography, humanities, German, dance, drama and business studies. Other than in German and in humanities where they were slightly lower, and in art and design and drama where they were broadly similar, the results in the remaining subjects were better in 2001 than in 2000. The religious education short course results were very high, with all pupils gaining grades A*-C and nearly all achieving the highest grades of A* or A.

7. In the GNVQ Part 1 courses in ICT in 2001, all pupils gained at least a pass grade and the majority with merit or distinction. In health and social care, nearly all gained a pass, one with a merit. This is the second year of both courses, and there has been a modest improvement in the results from 2000 to 2001. In the GCSE examinations in mathematics, French, German and physical education, taken by pupils in Year 10, every pupil gained a grade A*-C, with most gaining the highest grades of A* and A. In the variety of home language entries, including Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Portuguese, Turkish and Bengali, nearly every pupil gained grades A*-C, the majority achieving the highest grades.

8. Current and recent work indicate that pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is very high in mathematics and art and design; well above the standard expected nationally in English, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, French, German, music, physical education and drama; and above the national standard in science, with a significant minority achieving well above average standards. This picture broadly reflects the school's results in the GCSE examinations in 2001. Only a small number of lessons were seen in business studies and health and social care, all with the lower sets, and it is not possible to make firm judgements about standards overall. In these lessons, pupils made good and sometimes very good progress, achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment.

9. Throughout the school, pupils are very confident in speaking in all subjects, and they listen very well. The overall standard of written work is at least above average in all subjects and often better than this. The great majority of pupils read very well and use effectively a range of sources, including CD ROMs, for research. Pupils are given opportunities to speak and listen in all subjects, with drama and modern foreign languages making particularly good provision. In design and technology, good attention is given to their reading skills, and pupils engage readily in discussion. In physical education lessons, very good examples were seen of literacy being actively encouraged.

10. Pupils' numeracy skills are good overall and pupils use and apply them very effectively in most subjects. Standards are very good in design and technology, geography, mathematics and science; good in art and ICT; and satisfactory in history and music. Standards of measurement and calculations are very good in design and technology. Calculators are used appropriately and widely in school. Statistics work permeates the work in geography. Spreadsheets include appropriate formulae in algebra.

11. The school does very well for pupils who have special educational needs. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs make very good gains in reading, writing and numeracy. Because of demanding and challenging teaching, pupils who enter the school working below Level 4 in mathematics are able, with support, to tackle investigations requiring Level 7 knowledge and understanding by Year 8. This is excellent achievement. In English, pupils with specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, attain A* grades in GCSE English language whilst other pupils with dyslexia go on to attain grade A passes in mathematics at A-level because of the high quality support they receive. Pupils with a statement of special educational need make very good progress in respect of their primary need. Those with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties make very good progress in managing their behaviour because the school works very hard to make them believe in themselves and so become positive about learning. Because of excellent speech and therapy programmes, a pupil with

a stammer is beginning to improve in confidence and a pupil with a hearing impairment is making good progress in understanding complex concepts in humanities.

12. Pupils with English as an additional language are making very good progress and achieving very well in relation to their peers. Subject departments in the school have now developed a range of strategies which enables the pupils to have fuller access to the curriculum. The provision for structured talk and general speaking and listening has also improved. Pupils at stages 3 and 4 of their English learning have been specifically targeted and are achieving very well. The effectiveness of the provision is shown in the achievement of these pupils.

13. The school makes very good use of statistical and other information to analyse and track pupils' progress and undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils. In 2001, pupils from Indian, Pakistani, Chinese and Black-African heritage all gained five or more grades A*-C in their GCSE examinations, and achieved better results than other groups. The school is very conscious of the many different groups in the school and has put a lot of effort into ensuring that strong educational achievement is not restricted to any one group of pupils or that any one particular group is educationally disadvantaged. From their detailed analysis, the school is able to monitor the performance of different groups of pupils in the various subjects and take action to address examples of underperformance. Any group found to be achieving less strongly than others is targeted for additional support as well as analyses undertaken as to how the situation might have arisen. Pupils who have English as an additional language have very good support as a strong department ensures that they get the help they need. This applies also to pupils who have special educational needs. These two departments work in close co-operation with each other to provide a very effective support structure. The school also analyses data regarding pupils on the Register of pupils with special educational needs, on the stages of fluency in the English language, by month of birth and by attendance levels. This latter analysis indicates that pupils with 96 per cent attendance rates are exceeding their expected average grade by half a grade. Such information is used to inform pupils and their parents about the importance of regular attendance if pupils are to achieve the highest possible grades in public and other examinations.

14. Evidence from the inspection indicates that there are no significant differences between the achievements of different groups of students with similar levels of prior attainment. Overall, the higher attaining pupils are making very good progress through the challenging work that they receive and do very well, although this is not as evident in sixth form work as elsewhere in the school. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make very good progress in their learning, as a result of the targeted support that they receive. The caring nature of the school, together with its high expectations, ensures that all groups of pupils achieve very highly.

15. The evidence from the inspection indicates that the school is continuing to improve its standards. It has already exceeded its targets for 2001 and 2002. The school's commitment to attaining high standards in all of its work, the emphasis on meeting the needs of individual pupils, together with the overall very good quality of the teaching and the pupils' excellent attitudes to work, provide a strong platform upon which to improve further.

Sixth form

16. The school's performance overall in the A-level examinations in 2000 for those students entered for two or more subjects was close to the national average. In 2001, there was an improvement in the average points score but without national figures it is not possible to judge how significant this improvement is. The school's results have improved year-on-year since the last inspection, when the results were well below average, with a considerable rise in the proportion of students gaining the highest grades of A and B. The results indicate that students are making at least satisfactory progress and that the majority are achieving appropriately and often better than this in relation to their earlier performance in GCSE examinations and to the targets that have been set for them. The performance of the male students was better than that of the female students. In the GNVQ Advanced courses, all students gained merit or distinction awards in art and design and ICT, and all but one did so in business.

In the new AS examinations taken at the end of Year 12 in 2001, nearly all students gained grades A-E, with a high proportion attaining the higher grades of A and B.

17. In the A-level examinations in 2001, the results were well above average in the majority of subjects. All students gained grades A-E in art and design, chemistry, design and technology, drama, economics, English, French, German, Spanish, geography, mathematics, music, psychology, sociology and performing arts, although the numbers entered for the examinations in some of these subjects were too small to enable meaningful comparisons to be made with the national figures. In 2001, there was a considerable improvement in a number of subjects over the results of the previous year in the proportion of students gaining the highest grades of A and B, and a corresponding decrease in a few subjects. In physics, the school's performance in the past year has been affected by numerous staffing changes and the difficulty the school has experienced in appointing appropriately qualified staff.

18. From the work seen during the inspection, students are attaining above average standards overall and in a number of subjects are attaining higher standards than this. In art and design, standards are very high. They are well above average in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, ICT and economics, and are above average in music. Standards are broadly in line with course requirements in biology, French, sociology, drama and performing arts. Only a small number of lessons were sampled in physics, chemistry, psychology, business and general studies and it is not possible to make overall judgements about standards. In the lessons seen, students were attaining in line with course requirements in physics, chemistry and business and above this standard in psychology and general studies.

19. In most subjects, students have well developed research skills and a good capacity for critical analysis and problem solving. In nearly all subjects, through the challenge and the thoroughness of the teaching and their very positive attitudes to work, most students are making good progress during their sixth form courses. Through the good support that they receive from their teachers, some of the less capable students are making good progress in relation to their earlier attainment.

20. Communication skills are generally very well developed, enabling students to cope well with the demands of their courses. Students who have continued from the main school into the sixth form are much more confident and assured in their speaking skills than students who have come from other schools. This reflects the impact that the school's status as a Performing Arts College has had on enhancing the self-esteem and confidence of its pupils. Students digest and absorb information well and the majority have a good capacity to take notes and organise their work carefully. Skills in the use of mathematics to support learning in their chosen subjects are good, as are their skills in ICT.

21. Retention and completion rates are high. Few students withdraw from their courses during the sixth form and just under nine out of ten students continue into higher education at the end of Year 13.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

22. Pupils respond extremely well to the distinctive ethos and the very positive climate for learning that permeates all areas of the school. They display exceptional maturity and respond with confidence to the challenging opportunities they are given and the considerable demands made on them. These excellent qualities maintain and improve upon those found at the time of the last inspection and make a very significant contribution to the high standards that pupils attain and their achievements.

23. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They enjoy school and value highly the independence which they are allowed. In lessons, pupils are motivated, interested and responsive, showing very positive attitudes to their work and maintaining very high levels of concentration and perseverance when faced with challenging tasks. They show a very high degree of independence and work at a very good pace. All expect to work hard and to concentrate on learning more and improving. They undertake work with enjoyment and confidence, listening attentively and making effective use of their skills. Collaborative work is usually very good and often excellent, and pupils respond exceptionally well to opportunities to use role play in many subjects to develop their understanding. For example, pupils in Year 7 who had learned about Charles Darwin's theory of evolution were able to work in small groups to create a short presentation to assist in developing their

understanding of why the theory created such controversy when it was first presented. In this lesson, pupils demonstrated the mutual support and encouragement which typifies work and relationships throughout the school. In the same lesson, pupils took turns at reading a piece of text in the style of a newscaster and were extremely supportive of a pupil with special educational needs who persevered with a complex passage and benefited from the encouragement of her peers.

24. Pupils listen with very great care and sensitivity to one another and are able to develop ideas very well, valuing each other's contributions. They offer constructive criticism and enormous encouragement, working with a common sense of purpose. When oral contributions are called for, pupils respond very readily and with confidence. They are very actively engaged in discussion of issues and through working collaboratively develop structured arguments. Pupils show very great initiative in organising and planning their work and their ability to work independently increases as they move through the school.

25. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. Pupils and staff know each other well and act as a community. Pupils treat one another and adults with great courtesy, respect and consideration. They have enormous pride in being part of St Marylebone School. They work very well together in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities and, through the school council, identify and support a range of charities. The significant majority of pupils participate in one or more extra-curricular activities and visits with great enthusiasm and commitment. These provide excellent opportunities for their personal and social development and include activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and a very wide range of performances. Pupils work very effectively in teams and are able to support each other in work and extra-curricular activities, understanding the impact of their actions on others, showing initiative and taking responsibility.

26. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good and makes a very positive contribution to the way in which the school operates as an orderly community, in which every member is valued and in which pupils highly prize their own learning and the rights of all to learn. Misbehaviour is infrequent. On occasions, a minority of pupils, frequently with identified behavioural difficulties, behaves in an unacceptable manner but these instances are dealt with extremely effectively by staff and do not disrupt the learning of others. Pupils and students are trustworthy and property and equipment are treated with very great care. There is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti around the site. Pupils respond excellently to the school's very high expectations and ethos which makes them responsible for their own behaviour and actions. Whilst incidents of bullying or oppressive behaviour are very rare, they are usually identified very quickly and dealt with effectively. Pupils are confident that concerns will be addressed promptly and the school has an excellent policy for dealing with such incidents or those of thoughtless behaviour towards others. No pupils were excluded last year.

27. Students with special educational needs make very good gains in learning because they are very focused and work hard in a supportive environment. Their concentration is very good, as is their perseverance and so they make very good progress. Students with very challenging behaviour associated with their special educational needs behave very well most of the time because of the excellent support they receive from teachers and the close attention given to them by the social inclusion teachers. The therapeutic support that they receive for anger management outside of school enables them to gain strategies to manage their own behaviour very well. Their personal development is very good as the school encourages them, even those with severe physical disabilities, to become fully independent both in lessons and in their movement around the school site.

28. The rate of attendance at 91.7 per cent in the last reporting year (2000/01) was broadly in line with the national average, but lower than the previous year when it was well above average. The rate of unauthorised absence over the same period was below the national average. A particular strength of the attendance amongst pupils aged 11 to 16 years is the very high number of pupils (over 200) who have excellent attendance records. The majority of authorised absences occur as a result of illness and medical visits. Staff and pupils arrive in classrooms punctually and sessions begin on time throughout the day. These levels of attendance have a positive effect on pupils' learning and attainment.

Sixth form

29. Students have excellent attitudes to school and their learning, and value the support of teachers and their peers. Students strive hard to meet the very high expectations of the school and want to learn. For example, Year 12 students in a mathematics lesson, on developing their understanding of the equilibrium of coplanar forces, listened very carefully and applied the concepts to a series of problems, sharing ideas and strategies to enable everyone within the group to make very good progress. Students readily take responsibility for their own learning and use independent research very effectively as a means of extending their learning in the classroom and deepening their understanding.

30. The ethos of the school and the very supportive pastoral and academic monitoring system benefit the development of students' personal skills. They respond extremely positively to the very high expectations that they will contribute to the life of the school and set an example for the younger pupils.

31. Relationships within the sixth form and between the sixth form students and other members of the school community are very good. Staff, together with those pupils who stay on into the sixth form, work hard to welcome and support those students who join the school in the sixth form to settle in to the school and to embrace the very high standards and values which pupils expect of themselves. Students work very effectively together and the high quality of relationships benefits their learning. For example, in a Year 12 general studies lesson, students, who had learned about different ideologies in the abstract, were having discussions on how those ideologies influence specific policies of the various political parties. Through very good sharing of ideas and listening to each other, they were able to develop and deepen their understanding, building both on their own previous knowledge and their diversity of experiences.

32. Students have very positive views about most aspects of the sixth form. In particular, they like the quality of teaching and the challenge of lessons, the accessibility of teachers and the constructive and helpful advice and guidance that teachers provide. They also value the support they receive to help them study independently and to settle into the sixth form, and the clear and helpful printed information which is provided. Students strongly believe that their choice of sixth form studies suits their talents and aspirations and state clearly that they enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it. They do not identify any areas for improvement, although a small minority feel that improvements could be made in the range of enrichment activities provided, the advice provided about future options and the information provided about their progress. Inspectors fully support the positive views expressed by students but do not concur with the views of the small minority of students. They consider that the range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities is excellent; that the information provided to students about their progress is very good; and that the advice provided about careers and future education opportunities is also very good.

33. Overall attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory. It is slightly below that of the rest of the school and over the last two years has remained at a similar level. In 1999/2000, attendance was 91.1 per cent.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

34. Teaching throughout the school is consistently very good and results in very good learning. There is little difference in the quality of teaching and learning between Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. The teaching in over two-thirds of lessons is very good and is excellent in more than a fifth of lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and only rarely is it less than good. At Key Stage 3, excellent teaching occurs in English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, music and performing arts. There is also some excellent teaching in Key Stage 4 in drama, mathematics, art and design, geography, history, French, German and music, and of pupils with special educational needs. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught well.

35. A significant strength of the teaching is the structured way in which teachers approach their work and their very high expectations of pupils at all levels. This means that pupils are focused and ready for action from the start of the lesson. Teachers manage pupils extremely well. Where teaching is particularly good, all pupils, including the gifted and talented and those with English as an additional language, are persistently challenged to work intellectually, creatively and productively, and lessons progress at a brisk pace. The teachers' excellent interaction, relationships and enthusiasm lead to high

levels of motivation and response from their pupils.

36. Lessons are very well planned and taught in an extremely consistent manner across the school. They form part of a continuum of learning, building on previous learning and ending with concise summaries of work done. The aims for lessons are shared with pupils so that they know exactly what is expected of them and timed activities, included in lesson plans for the majority of lessons, ensure that pupils keep on task and make good use of every available minute. Very good use is made of planning in physical education, which enables pupils to develop their understanding and use of physical education terminology. In a Year 9 English lesson on *Macbeth*, very effective planning and appropriate teaching approaches, where the pupils echoed the character's thoughts during key speeches, enabled all students to make very good progress in their understanding of the situation in the play.

37. Teaching methods are often excellent, which means that pupils of all abilities make very good and frequently excellent progress. This was seen in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, where pupils were pushed to the boundaries of their learning as a result of the excellent planning and the impact of the questions posed by the two teachers presenting the lesson. Similarly in a Year 7 history lesson, sophisticated questioning and answering techniques constantly challenged pupils' thinking. This resulted in clear progress and high levels of achievement, with pupils developing a sound understanding of the concept of hierarchy and enabling them to come close to devising their own definition of it. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to review and revise work, as in a Year 11 music lesson, where pupils were encouraged to look back at key words and use them when describing the different characteristics of music from the African continent. High expectations lead to high achievements, as seen in a Year 7 English lesson where pupils, most of them with special educational needs or at an early stage of using English, made excellent progress in writing and publishing their original poetry on the computer. In developing ideas, questions are appropriately open-ended: at other times, questions are short and sharp, moving the lesson on with pace so that time is used well.

38. The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Subject specialists work in an effective partnership in lessons with learning support teachers so that these pupils make very good gains in their learning. Very good use is made of specific literacy, numeracy and personal development targets on individual education plans to inform short-term lesson plans to teach pupils with special educational needs. Staff know pupils' needs very well and so are in a good position to encourage them effectively and provide positive feedback on their achievements. Consequently, pupils feel valued and motivated to learn. Because of very good teaching, pupils with special educational needs in a Year 8 science lesson made very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the differences between plant and animal cells. In subjects such as design and technology, staff meet pupils' needs by modifying tasks, explanations and materials to meet individual needs. Full participation by all students is the expectation. In physical education, a student with a hearing impairment was encouraged to evaluate the performance of the small group in which she had been working and gained confidence in speaking to the whole class. Teachers are skilled at providing a suitable curriculum for pupils with special educational needs, which meets their individual learning requirements. There is a careful balance of planning for learning that is age and stage appropriate and this, along with excellent teamwork between staff, makes a considerable contribution to the very good progress that they make. In mathematics, they enjoy learning the same content as their higher attaining peers but at a pace appropriate for them. Consequently, they attain standards close to those of their peers. As a result of very good teaching, pupils with special educational needs are fully included in almost all lessons with their peers. Rarely are they withdrawn, and where withdrawal support occurs, it is a short-term strategy to manage anger or to give focused one-to-one support prior to examinations.

39. Overall, the teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is very good as is the support given in lessons. Support staff are well prepared and work effectively in partnership with the classroom teachers. The teachers are knowledgeable of the needs of the pupils and consequently their support makes a significant contribution to the achievement of the pupils across the school. The withdrawal of pupils from lessons is kept to a minimum and only happens in cases of pupils who are at stage 1 and 2 of English fluency for whom the curriculum would not be readily accessible. At the time of the inspection, only four pupils were being withdrawn in this way. Otherwise the pupils are supported within the normal time-tabled lessons, mainly in English and mathematics lessons, although some support is also given in subjects that depend heavily on language such as history and geography.

40. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and there are excellent classroom relationships at all key stages. In the best lessons, teachers bubble with energy and enthusiasm, as in a Year 7 art lesson, where the teacher transmitted her enthusiasm about Matisse successfully to the pupils, who entered the room with a sense of excitement and left it with a very good understanding of colour running, wash techniques and warm and cold colours. Similarly in a Year 8 art lesson, the teacher's good demonstration of how to make a clay container meant that the pupils, including those with special educational needs who were given specific support by the teacher to enable them to do so, were able to use the required modelling and construction techniques well. In ICT lessons, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to develop the department's excellent course planning, which allows them to reinforce and extend pupils' standards in all lessons.

41. Teachers mark work very well and give very good feedback. Their knowledge of individual pupils is very good. In a Year 7 ICT lesson, for example, when giving feedback on a graphics project and identifying targets for improvement, the teacher began the lesson with a clear explanation of what pupils could do and what they should be aiming towards. This was also seen in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, where a personal feedback session on pupils' standards and the level of the work resulted in mature attitudes and very focused response, and some very good progress and learning. Homework is set regularly and builds effectively on work covered in class.

42. An unusual feature of the teaching in this school, and one of its greatest strengths, is the way in which performance arts are used to enhance the quality of learning and the manner in which this pervades all subjects of the curriculum. In a Year 8 history lesson, pupils played the role of Cromwell's inspectors, visiting the monasteries before their dissolution, which led to spontaneous applause from the onlookers as members of this mixed ability group demonstrated their knowledge through drama. Similarly, in a lunchtime session in French, higher attaining pupils in Year 9 performed a rap about the structure of the present tense that was delivered with confidence and aplomb, and which greatly enhanced their understanding of language form and structure. In a Year 11 English lesson about the differences in the presentation of stories, pupils conducted interviews between a journalist from The Financial Times and an undercover writer for The Sunday Times, which led to a perceptive debate about the causes and effects of sensational journalism.

43. Since the last inspection, teaching, which was a strength of the school, is even better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and the proportion of good and better teaching has increased considerably. Weaknesses in planning identified in English, mathematics and modern foreign language have been remedied. Issues concerning the teaching of pupils with English as a foreign language have been addressed.

Sixth form

44. Teaching overall in the sixth form is very good and is having a significant impact on the quality of learning and on improving standards. Over two-thirds of the teaching is very good or better and just under a fifth is excellent. It is rarely less than good. Excellent teaching occurs in drama, art and design, ICT, German, music, performing arts and economics. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well. This was particularly effective in a Year 13 mathematics lesson where the teacher's excellent subject knowledge enabled the students to understand the inverse process well. Similarly in a Year 12 art and design lesson, the teacher's enthusiasm and excellent subject knowledge challenged the students effectively in their work on three-dimensional natural forms and encouraged them to take it further. In a Year 13 German lesson, the teacher's high level of expertise and fluency and constant requirement for better work, challenged and extended the students. They consequently made excellent progress and developed both their knowledge of German and their understanding of the issues surrounding drug abuse in society today.

45. Teachers use a wide range of methods to improve the learning of their students. They give very clear explanations of what is required. This was seen to good effect in ICT lessons in Year 12 and Year 13 where students knew exactly what it was that they were supposed to do because of the teacher's vivid explanations in everyday English, using many analogies that made issues very clear to them. Likewise in a Year 13 art lesson, students made very good progress in understanding the print-making

process as a result of the teacher's very clear demonstrations of what was required of them.

46. Lessons are very well planned, as, for example, in Year 12 English where a performance approach to learning, putting Willmore from *The Rover* on trial with half the group prosecuting and half the group defending, meant that students developed their ideas well through discussion and negotiation as they prepared their piece. Similarly in a Year 12 mathematics lesson, students developed greater understanding of contact and frictional forces, tension and thrust and increased their mathematical language well because the teacher gave very good explanations with pertinent examples. Teachers also make good use of students' prior knowledge.

47. Relationships between teachers and students throughout the sixth form are very good. The quality of these relationships was commented on favourably in several of the interviews conducted with sixth formers. Students new to the school are particularly aware of the enhanced ethos for learning, and value the progress they have made since their arrival. This ethos for learning pervades the school and students are not afraid to show that they enjoy learning their subjects.

48. Students are good at working independently and teachers use very effective strategies to encourage this. For example, in a Year 12 English lesson the teacher encouraged independent thought by giving each student a statement about *The Return of the Native* and asking for a brief presentation on it. A similar technique was used in a further mathematics lesson where good opportunities for deduction were introduced into the lesson, which the teacher began with a 'tell me why' session to encourage students to suggest solutions and to demonstrate their knowledge of McLaurin's Theorem.

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

49. The curriculum meets the school's stated aims of providing 'an exhilarating and inspiring learning environment which encourages its pupils to succeed' well. The curriculum provides a broad range of opportunities to pupils, which meet their interests, aptitudes and particular needs, including those who have special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language. It promotes pupils' intellectual, physical and personal development effectively. Since the last inspection, the acquisition of Performing Arts College status has extended the provision of performance arts, drama, music and dance. These now permeate all aspects of the curriculum, and considerably influence and strengthen teaching and learning. Additionally, provision for gifted and talented pupils has increased, following support from the Excellence in Cities scheme.

50. All the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are taught in both key stages. Teaching time is well above that recommended, and the curriculum is enhanced at Key Stage 3 by the broad arts provision and a higher proportion of time than average for English and science. At Key Stage 4, in addition to the core and foundation subjects, pupils make guided choices from the enhanced provision offered including drama, dance, performing arts, economics, business studies, office applications and GNVQ courses in health and social care, and information technology. Pupils can take up to 12 GCSE subjects, which include a short course in religious education and a Part 1 GNVQ course in information technology. Pupils at Key Stage 4, who are less academically inclined, also have the opportunity to substitute a GCSE course with a support studies programme. However, the number of pupils not studying a modern foreign language is high, and only a small number of pupils study two languages. The school has not consistently followed the appropriate procedures for the disapplication of pupils from the National Curriculum requirement to study a modern foreign language at Key Stage 4. Although there is adequate time for the teaching of core physical education, pupils who wish to study GCSE physical education are required to do so in extra-curricular time. The amount of time allocated to physical education at Key Stage 3 is lower than that usually found in most schools. Not all subject areas are making enough use of ICT to support pupils' learning, although where it is deliberately targeted, such as in the performing arts, it is very good.

51. There are well-written policies that provide staff with useful guidance on such matters as departmental policies, schemes of work and other department documentation. Clear guidance is provided on lesson planning, assessment, the learning environment and procedures for monitoring and

evaluating the curriculum. This ensures that units of work are coherently and logically put together, and there is sound planning for the steady advancement of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills, in each area of the curriculum. Setting is possible in most subjects, which enables some pupils to be entered for GCSE in mathematics and modern foreign languages a year early. Pupils may also study triple, double, or single science, and a second modern foreign language. There is an extensive programme for gifted and talented pupils. The curriculum is planned to accommodate all pupils attending the school and is reviewed regularly. The governing body is closely involved and knowledgeable through the curriculum and pupils' committee, to which heads of subject are often invited.

52. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and behavioural needs throughout the school is good. The language and learning department team provides teachers with specific targets in pupils' individual education plans and, where appropriate, individual behavioural plans. This successfully increases the consistency with which staff respond to pupils with special educational needs and ensures that they have full access to the National Curriculum and religious education. Special needs teachers and social inclusion teachers work in a very effective partnership with subject specialists to increase pupils' access to the full curriculum, with extra explanations and encouragement to remain on task. Pupils with special educational needs experience a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, which meets statutory requirements. One student in Year 9 is appropriately disapplied from a National Curriculum subject (French). In Key Stage 4, pupils who are struggling have the opportunity to drop a GCSE subject and be part of a 'tutorial programme'. This means that they attend a session once a week with a special needs or social inclusion teacher where they catch up on course work and develop important study skills to prepare them for their GCSE examinations. This is an effective programme that contributes very successfully to their learning but results in a large number of them dropping a modern foreign language. The provision meets the requirements of the Code of Practice. However, there is only a very limited vocational alternative in Key Stage 4. The school recognises the need to develop an alternative Key Stage 4 curriculum, which would be more appropriate to a very small minority of disaffected pupils.

53. The school is committed to high standards of achievement for all and is active in ensuring that all its pupils and students have equal access to all the opportunities that the school provides. The school is also very active in many ways in ensuring a practical implementation of its equal opportunities policy. A Women's Week is held every year and receives a very positive response from pupils. There has also been a Women's Prayer Week. As part of its cultural awareness programme, the school includes a Black History Week and there has also been a very successful World Culture Day. Other cultural events and activities include a world culture club and prayers in assemblies in different languages. As part of its anti-bullying strategy, the school also holds an anti-intimidation day. Several members of staff are actively engaged in promoting equal opportunities. A member of the extended senior management team is the chair of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Steering Group and another two members of staff have been on courses about Human Rights and have shared their knowledge with other members of staff and pupils.

54. Strategies for the teaching of literacy are very good. The whole-school literacy policy is currently being finalised by a staff working party. The provision for developing the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing is very good in most subjects: in no subject is it less than good. Key vocabulary is displayed and emphasised in most subjects. Literacy is addressed in line with school policy in subjects such as design and technology, where subject terms are displayed and analysed. In French and German, literacy skills are developed well through detailed analysis of language structure and form.

55. The overall strategy for the teaching of numeracy is good and likely to improve further as the whole school policy and practice come into effect in the near future. Some subjects have numeracy policies in place. This is the case in art, for example, allowing for the development of skills in spatial awareness through the use of perspective, construction and the forming of other three-dimensional processes. Drawings in Year 7 show very good understanding of concepts such as scale and relationships between objects. In design and technology, measuring and calculation, particularly in work with resistant materials, reinforce numeracy well. Other subjects, such as history, have no specific policy but nevertheless include conversion of fractions into percentages and the use of charts and graphs in the teaching.

56. Although departments are using ICT to improve learning in all subjects more than at the last inspection, the spread remains somewhat uneven. The school places appropriate emphasis on the use of ICT in the arts. This is very successful in music and art, where students make very good use of the excellent specialist equipment, but in subjects such as drama the equipment is more commonly used by adults to serve the pupils' practical learning rather than by the pupils themselves.

57. Overall, provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. The range of activities is extensive, and the curriculum suitably enriched. There are numerous trips and visits on a regular basis that support the curriculum and pupils' wider development. During the week of the inspection, Year 11 visited the Imperial War Museum, Year 9 toured the Planetarium and pupils took part in a swimming gala, a netball match and a dance project at the London Museum. Pupils are able to attend a breakfast club, and choose from a large number of lunchtime and after school clubs and other activities that are of interest to them, including information and technology clinics, design and technology 'drop-ins', the debating society, aerobics and fitness clubs, homework clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. In line with the school's Performing Arts College status, opportunities for pupils to participate in a range of performing arts have expanded considerably, and include clubs in dance, drama, and music, as well as visits to concerts and the theatre. Pupils perform regularly, both within the school, and at outside venues. Since the last inspection, the curriculum provision for pupils has increased significantly, and is now suitably rigorous and extended to enable all pupils to achieve their potential.

58. The quality of teaching and learning is a primary strength of the school, yet the role of the personal and social education programme in terms of its context and structure, pervades the whole curriculum, under-pinning its ethos and organisation and exercising a major influence on the life of the whole school. Personal and social development is a powerful and unique factor that underpins the school's work. Its structure and content make a considerable impact upon the supportive nature of the school's pastoral system, its guidance systems as well as all curricular areas that contribute to the programme.

59. The attitudes of all pupils are positively influenced by this programme, as displayed by the excellent patterns of behaviour exhibited in all sections of the school, as well as in the broader aspects of school life. The programme makes a major contribution to the inclusive nature of the school through its dissemination of values regarding relationships, the curriculum, communications, procedures and conduct. Contributions by outside speakers, often specialists in their fields, are relevant and informative: they contribute particularly well in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.

60. The programme is well planned, is pervasive by nature, and the content and methodology are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis by a team which includes senior management. During the tutorial periods, evidence of the impact of the teaching is apparent through the contributions of pupils and their views on issues under discussion. Most staff are comfortable in the teaching of this very coherent subject programme, with departmental contributions clearly listed in the personal and social education handbook.

61. Careers education and guidance are very good. Their significance are not as evident in the early years of Key Stage 3 but take on a greater priority from Year 9 onwards when all pupils are given good guidance and support regarding curriculum choices as they prepare to enter Key Stage 4. Pupils participate in a well structured work experience programme at the end of Year 10, which is built on and developed in Year 11. The school's very effective civics programme, which is undertaken by all pupils, adds a further dimension to the quality of the provision. Many staff are involved in teaching facets of the programme and the quality of the teaching is high. The careers programme is supplemented by a programme of visits and speakers throughout the year.

62. Links with local primary schools and with other educational institutions are excellent. The school has six partnership primary schools and has formed very good curricular links with them, particularly in subjects such as mathematics. Through the Excellence in Cities programme and the school's Beacon status, several staff teach in other schools, including local primary schools. Teachers also visit many of the wide range of other primary schools to speak at open evenings. The head of Year 7 plays a very active role in ensuring that pupils are welcomed into the school and a two-day induction

for Year 7 pupils is used to ensure that as much information as possible is collated on each individual child entering the school. The school is currently involved in the production of a liaison document to help other schools with large numbers of contributory schools to identify common transfer information.

63. Community links are very good and were strengthened with the school's application for performing arts status. Pupils have a very clear idea of what it means to live and work in a community. The school has well-developed links with local businesses and makes very good use of institutions such as local universities and colleges to enhance the learning opportunities of its pupils. It plays an active role in the life of the local community, both through its links with the church and with surrounding businesses, which have contributed to various projects. The school provides a Saturday school for the benefit of gifted and talented youngsters in the London area, who gain admission by audition. Students from the Institute of Education work on this programme as part of their initial teacher-training course. Similarly, a community arts project has been established to cater for the training of adults in art, music and drama therapy. All these activities contribute to making the school an active, dynamic, stimulating and exciting place for adults and pupils to work and develop.

64. The quality of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school, considered to be excellent at the time of the last inspection, is outstanding. The school aims to achieve the highest standards of effort, behaviour and commitment to enable both pupils and students to realise their full potential in an environment that fosters genuine respect for all members of the multi-cultural, multi-faith community. This ethos permeates all aspects of teaching and learning. There are clear and well thought out policies on worship, and on the spiritual and moral development of pupils, a stated school aim, that provide detailed guidance and a good framework for the teaching of these aspects of the curriculum.

65. Acts of collective worship, which take place in St. Marylebone Parish Church, or in tutor time, offer excellent opportunities to participate in prayers, to reflect upon readings or writings that bring out religious themes, as well as the performance of music. Pupils participate in the collective acts of worship both as contributors and as recipients. All members of the school community make impressive efforts when taking part either in 'Thought for the Day' or the weekly full school assembly.

66. The school is a Church of England school that admits pupils and students with a wide range of faiths. Assemblies are seen as an important part of school life, building on what faiths have in common, and increasing pupils' knowledge about their differences. The setting of St. Marylebone Church for the weekly assembly contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual development, as does the careful selection of themes for the daily act of worship. Pupils listen attentively to the daily act of collective worship. This is particularly successful when tutors and pupils actively engage in discussion afterwards. In both assembly, and the daily act of worship in tutor time, pupils are offered a moment of reflection to encourage them to consider the significance of the theme upon their lives.

67. Within the curriculum, teaching enables pupils to reflect upon their own values and beliefs. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on citizenship, there was a very strong contribution to spiritual awareness in a visiting speaker's personal reaction to HIV/AIDS. In Year 11 drama and theatre studies, thoughts and feelings are expressed in a variety of ways to create a devised piece imaginatively, and pupils learn to express feelings and to control them. Pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively, and to be supportive of each other. Achievement is recognised and applauded. The school remains committed to the development of pupils as confident, responsible and caring young people, and in particular to prepare girls to play a full part in contemporary society.

68. Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent, teaching the principles that distinguish right from wrong, with teachers acting as good role models. There is a very strong commitment to equal opportunities and to developing respect and concern for others. When discussing employment law, Year 12 business studies students considered a number of moral issues, such as those associated with the Race Relations Act, and Year 13 students, the implications of different styles of management.

69. There are numerous opportunities for pupils' social development, for which the school's provision is excellent. They are encouraged to take responsibility and to show initiative. The school buildings are accessible to them before, during and after the teaching day, and provide a pleasant environment that

contributes to their social development. They are encouraged to respect the school's facilities, and they respond positively. The number and range of activities available to pupils enrich the curriculum effectively. These extension and enrichment activities provide pupils with the opportunity to strive for excellence and quality and are appreciated and valued.

70. The school's multi-cultural and ethnically diverse community is recognised and valued, and referred to in school policies and departmental documentation. The relationships that exist between pupils of different ethnic groups are excellent. All pupils, irrespective of their ethnic origin, are quickly absorbed into, and take an active part in, the life of the school. The multi-cultural community is celebrated through the work of departments and school events, such as World Culture Week. Pupils' cultural experience is broadened by foreign travel and school visits, such as to the Planetarium, or the theatre. Displays around the school, which are rich and varied, show a clear commitment to this aspect of pupils' personal development.

Sixth form

71. The sixth form curriculum is broad and balanced and provides very well for a large mix of students from a variety of ethnic, social and religious groups as well as for students with special educational needs. The school offers a very wide range of AS and A-level courses. As well as the more traditional subjects studied at A-level, such as English, mathematics, French, German and history, the school also offers courses in subjects such as drama, psychology and sociology. General studies is also available as is Latin, although this is provided in classes outside of the school day. As part of a new collaborative arrangement linking the school's sixth form with that of a nearby secondary school, students can also attend the other school to take media studies and music technology, as well as those subjects that they may be unable to follow in their own school because of timetable clashes. Single award AVCE courses are offered in business studies, ICT and performing arts; double award AVCE courses are offered in art and design and business studies. As with the A-level courses, students are also able to choose from subjects offered at a nearby school.

72. Just over half of the school's own pupils enter the sixth form. Those who choose not to stay on, mostly because they prefer to attend schools or colleges closer to home, receive appropriate advice about the courses offered elsewhere. Students, including boys, from other schools from a wide area, also join the sixth form as well as those who attend from, but who remain on the register of their own school. These arrangements are co-ordinated well. At the time of the inspection, the majority of students were studying A-level courses, with a smaller proportion taking combinations of A-level and vocational courses. A much smaller proportion takes the AVCE courses alone. At the start of the school year, all Year 12 students attend a two-day induction programme which enables them to take part in team building courses and to learn the expectations that are required for sixth form study, including the management of private study time.

73. The school does not provide religious education for all students in the sixth form. In this aspect it does not meet statutory requirements. Students have a weekly assembly and there is a daily act of worship at morning registration. In the civics aspect of the tutor period programme, students discuss a wide range of ethical and moral issues.

74. Opportunities are presented for the assimilation of positive attitudes and key skills necessary for life long learning, as well as the capacity to work independently. The civics programme contains a range of opportunities to broaden their knowledge base, including work related courses preparing for work and/or higher education, together with at least one week of work experience. The school offers one taught period per week of one of the new key skills courses in addition to which students are expected to take a further two as a part of their examination course subjects. As a result of its experiences last year, the school has revised the organisation of the key skills programme to integrate it more fully into subject teaching. This approach is working well.

75. The school provides a very good range of activities to enrich the curriculum. The majority of these are, for example, visits to theatres, exhibitions and to one-day courses, and they are provided through subject departments. A small number of students felt some dissatisfaction with the opportunities available for extra-curricular activities, for example the limited provision for sport and

recreational activities, especially for the boys. All students, however, have the opportunity to participate in the Young Enterprise scheme and 75 per cent of students took part in an Outward Bound residential course in Wales. The Fulcrum Challenge scheme is also offered to students, four of whom went last year to India for two weeks. In the last summer holiday, 15 students took part in the World Challenge expedition to Malaysia. A significant feature of the curriculum provision is that all students participate in the work experience programme in Year 12. Students also participate in drama, orchestra and other musical activities and some 20 students attend a weekly Saturday school run by the London School of Economics.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

76. The excellent standards found at the time of the last inspection in the arrangements for the support, guidance and pastoral care of pupils have been maintained. The induction arrangements for pupils joining in Year 7, transferring to the sixth form or at times other than those for normal entry are excellent. They provide an extremely firm foundation for ensuring that every pupil is included in the school community and understands the school's very high expectations, within a very supportive atmosphere of mutual respect. Pupils are expected to take responsibility for their own actions, and every pupil is helped to develop academically and personally as an individual through the excellent integration of academic and pastoral monitoring and support systems, which makes a very positive contribution to raising their levels of attainment.

77. Detailed profile records are maintained and each month staff note any concerns about the performance or attitudes of pupils and details of any pupils who merit praise. Issues that have not been resolved at departmental level are then addressed in conjunction with form tutors and the head of the relevant key stage. All pupils have a tracking interview twice per year, which links their personal and academic development, to set specific targets for pupils which are recorded and reviewed. These targets support the raising of the achievement of individual pupils. Pupils are trained to provide further support: for example monitors in Year 10 help pupils in Year 7; Key Stage 4 pupils act as peer counsellors; and sixth form students provide peer support. In addition, business mentors provide very valuable support and the work they have undertaken with identified pupils has had a very positive impact on pupils' standards.

78. There has been a significant improvement in the early identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs since the last inspection. Good use is made of assessment data to inform targets in their individual education plans, which in turn informs teachers' planning and contributes to the very good gains these pupils make in their learning. Their progress is monitored rigorously and the school is in a strong position to demonstrate the good progress they make. Members of the special needs and social inclusion teams, who are most experienced with pupils of this age, are highly skilled at negotiating targets and strategies with them and encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning. This is an area of strength. Staff work hard to engage pupils' participation in and commitment to their learning and behaviour targets, and they usually do this, choosing opportune moments, in a considered and sensitive manner.

79. The school works hard to ensure that it meets the requirements of statements of special educational need. There are regular reviews of progress, to which parents and carers are invited, and the school makes excellent use of its relationships with agencies such as the school's psychology service, speech therapy and the sensory support team. Excellent work is carried out by the speech therapist to support one student and also to train staff in working more effectively with a student with hearing impairment. The special needs co-ordinator is working in an innovative and creative way with the school's educational psychologist to promote good body image amongst girls at risk of eating disorders. The teacher of the deaf makes a very significant contribution to gains in learning made by a student with a cochlea implant. Excellent use is made of clinics outside of school to support students who require counselling in anger management.

80. The school is very conscious of the many different groups within the school and has put much effort into ensuring that strong educational achievement is not restricted to any one group of pupils and that no particular group is educationally disadvantaged. The leadership of the school generally and head of educational inclusion specifically, work very hard to raise the achievement of all pupils and to remove any barriers to learning. The head of educational inclusion is alert to the social problems that might

underlie the problems that have arisen in the pupils' learning. Her contact with the primary schools is an important source of information as are the pastoral arrangements within the school. At times the pupils themselves might ask for help. The school is very effective in ensuring that opportunities to learn are available to all its pupils without fear of interference and disruption. All pupils receive respect and individual help from their teachers and they have equal access to the curriculum, although there are some restrictions in the learning of modern foreign languages.

81. The school draws pupils from a wide ethnic background. This includes about 60 nationalities and 80 languages. The school monitors the achievement and progress of these different groups, including those in the sixth form, and the results of examinations and other data are analysed on the basis of ethnicity. Any group found to be achieving less strongly than others is targeted for additional support as well as analyses being made as to how the situation might have arisen. The pupils who have English as an additional language have very good support, as a strong department ensures that they get the help they need. The same can be said for the pupils who have special educational needs. These two departments work in close co-operation with each other to provide a very effective support structure.

82. The provision for pupils who have English as an additional language is very good. There are about 425 pupils and students in the school who have English as additional language. Of these about 88 are at an early stage of English language acquisition. Around 119 pupils receive targeted support. The provision for these pupils is very well organised. The policy documents are clear and detailed and include, in addition to general aims and objectives, information on how pupils are to be identified and assessed. The characteristics of each stage of acquisition are set out in detail in order to be able to give the correct level of support. All Year 7 pupils and casual entrants are assessed within their first two weeks in school. This assessment includes the completion of a language history as well as an oral presentation. An appropriate plan is then arranged according to their level of need. The withdrawal of pupils from lessons is kept to a minimum and only happens in cases of pupils who are at stage 1 and 2 and where the curriculum would not be readily accessible. At the time of the inspection, only four pupils were being withdrawn in this way. Otherwise the pupils are supported within the normal time-tabled lessons, mainly in English and mathematics.

83. Overall, the support given to pupils who have English as an additional language is very good. Support teachers are well prepared and work effectively in partnership with the classroom teachers. The teachers are knowledgeable of the needs of the pupils and consequently their support makes a significant contribution to the achievement of the pupils across the school. In general, the effectiveness of the department also lies in the fact that all teachers in the school receive information indicating the level of English acquisition the pupils are at. Staff have also had in-service training. This enables them to plan their lessons with the needs of the pupils who have English as an additional language in mind and to be aware and supportive of them in the lessons. The progress of pupils is monitored on a regular and systematic basis so that support can be modified if and when necessary. Careful records are kept of their progress. Progress since the last inspection has been distinct and purposeful. Subject departments in the school have now developed a range of strategies which enables the pupils and students to have a fuller access to the curriculum. The provision for structured talk and general speaking and listening has also improved.

84. The school has a detailed formal policy for meeting the needs of its gifted and talented pupils. Pupils in this category are recognised in departments and year groups as well as from the checking of records. An evening for parents is arranged and an individual education plan is provided for each pupil. Subject departments are asked to highlight their own particular input to this. A deputy headteacher oversees the arrangements and records are kept and regularly examined. Pupils with physical disabilities are appropriately provided for and their achievements and progress are monitored. There are about 125 refugee pupils in the school. They are supported well in the pastoral system and by the English as an additional language department. In general, the teaching in the school has a very strong inclusive nature and teachers work very hard to make the work accessible to everyone and to give support when it is necessary. The school works hard on establishing and maintaining contact with the parents of all groups. The pupils and students consequently feel both secure and confident in their work and in asking for additional help if they need it. Overall, the caring nature of the school ensures that the achievement of all groups of pupils is very good.

85. Throughout the school, pupils are given the responsibility for their own actions, for their personal organisation and for acting as responsible citizens within the school community. These opportunities are extremely effective in providing pupils with a sense of confidence and responsibility and for developing their maturity and respect for others. They make a major contribution to the development of pupils' independent learning skills, their ability to use time appropriately and to collaborate effectively.

86. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are excellent. They are based upon high expectations and a very good knowledge of individual pupils. The effectiveness of the procedures and the response of pupils, combined with the excellent relationships within the school, have a very positive effect on both their attainment and progress. Whilst oppressive behaviour and bullying are not a significant problem, the school has excellent procedures to address any concerns and mediate in the case of any difficulties which may arise in friendships.

87. The management of health and safety matters is satisfactory. Pupils and students are taught safe practices in lessons. The school has an appropriate health and safety policy and staff have undertaken appropriate training to support the overall management of this area. However, although risk assessments are completed and documented for all visits and within some departments, such as science, this practice is not consistent throughout the school. For example, whole-school risk assessments are not completed. Health and safety issues are identified and recorded and equipment is visually checked when it is used and regularly tested. The headteacher monitors carefully to ensure that reported issues are addressed promptly.

88. Arrangements for the provision of first aid are satisfactory. Six staff are qualified to give first aid, although staff, including senior management, are unable to identify readily those responsible for providing first aid. There are no notices to inform staff and pupils of the names of designated first aiders in the event of an emergency. The school has an appropriate medical room and first aid supplies are satisfactory. Accidents are recorded but the level of detail is insufficient to allow any issues to be identified and resolved.

89. Arrangements for child protection are based on the local area protection committee guidelines and meet requirements. A senior member of staff has responsibility for child protection and, together with the headteacher, has received appropriate training to enable her to fulfil this role. There are good induction arrangements to ensure that all staff know the procedures to be followed in the case of any concerns. The school is vigilant and sensitive in exercising its responsibilities and is supported by external agencies from those local authorities in which pupils and students are resident.

90. Procedures for monitoring and improving pupils' attendance are excellent. Registers are properly completed and the data collated electronically. Current procedures fully address the minor concerns expressed about the totalling of registers in the last report. Careful analysis of attendance and punctuality and an analysis of achievement against attendance, to demonstrate its impact, readily identifies any areas for concern which are effectively addressed. Parents are expected to support the regular and punctual attendance of their children at school and not to remove them for holidays during term time. Form tutors contact home if there is an absence without notification or if there is a repeated failure to have absences authorised. The school is working towards achieving a target of 95 per cent attendance, with no unauthorised absence, across the school and is making good progress towards that target for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. It recognises that it has further work to do to improve levels of attendance in the sixth form, to meet its target.

91. Overall, procedures for assessing pupils' progress and attainment are excellent. The school has a clear and practical assessment policy outlining what is good assessment practice and defining the roles and responsibilities of teachers. The assessment coordinator plays a significant part in transferring this policy to practice. Statutory requirements for assessment are met.

92. A strength of the school is the attention paid to the analysis of examination and test results. There are careful procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress and pupils are left in no doubt about their levels of attainment and targets. This is particularly strong in the two years leading up to the GCSE examinations. The school is rigorous in its use of YELLIS, a national data gathering and analysis system, which provides reliable predictions about pupils' performance in GCSE examinations.

There are good arrangements for form tutors and subject teachers to check regularly with pupils how well they are doing and whether they are doing well enough. The value of this is that pastoral and curriculum teams work closely together to support pupils' progress.

93. All assessment information is collected, analysed and shared with subject departments. Departments use these analyses to evaluate individual pupils' performance, compare the outcomes of different teaching groups and set school performance against national figures. Excellent use is made of assessment information to guide lesson and curriculum planning in subjects. In mathematics, for example, assessment data is being used to inform setting. Assessment information is being used in English, where pupils are aware of their targets and a clear knowledge of their progress towards them. In music, a pro forma supports self-assessment by pupils, which is an integral part of their assessment portfolio. Marking is effective and regular and linked to GCSE requirements. Marking also provides pupils with guidance on what they need to do to improve the presentation of their work and on what pupils need to do to improve their subject specific skills.

Sixth form

Assessment

94. Procedures for assessing and monitoring students' progress in the sixth form are very good. Students' work is regularly assessed and they are left in no doubt about their levels of attainment. There are robust procedures for target setting and following up pupils who may be underachieving or likely to miss their targets. Teachers use the outcomes of assessment to inform both their teaching and planning. The assessment, verification and moderation procedures meet all requirements.

95. Performance data are carefully analysed by senior staff and departments, which enables both staff and students to monitor progress on a systematic basis. Individual departments assess students' work on a regular basis using a variety of procedures. The quality of the marking and the assessment of students' work are generally very good, giving students a clear indication of their progress. Most students know and are confident with the assessment procedures. This careful monitoring of their progress and effective use of target setting contribute to the better than expected progress that many students make in the sixth form.

96. Reports on students' attainments and progress are very good. They give parents and students alike a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve standards.

Advice, support and guidance

97. The support, guidance and pastoral care provided for students are very good. The pastoral care arrangements support and underpin academic learning. The excellent induction arrangements for students joining in the sixth form, as full time students or for elements of their sixth form studies, ensure that they have a very clear understanding of the school's expectations and are fully included in the school community. Students value this induction and speak very highly of the support and guidance that is provided through the very close linking of academic and pastoral monitoring and support.

98. A significant minority of the students in the sixth form joined the school after Year 11 and the ethos and expectations which underpin the life and work of St. Marylebone School have not necessarily been promoted throughout their secondary education. However, the staff have developed a very good knowledge of these students as individuals and ensured that the induction programme makes them aware of the standards of behaviour and respect for other students and pupils that are expected. The very close monitoring of students' personal, social and academic standards ensures that very good support is available for students within an atmosphere that seeks to give every student a sense of responsibility to and for the school community as a whole.

99. Students' academic and personal progress is very closely monitored and very good support is provided to help them address any concerns which are identified by staff or by students themselves. Students act as peer mentors in supporting each other's learning and in resolving problems. Very good

tracking records are maintained and all staff are very supportive. Students are provided with very good individual targets which are very closely linked to raising standards.

100. The small numbers of students at a relatively early stage of learning English as an additional language receive effective support in the classroom. The progress of these pupils is monitored regularly and systematically so that support can be modified as appropriate to the student's needs. Careful records are kept of their progress.

101. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own actions, and to set an example to other students and pupils. They are trusted to use facilities such as the fitness studio, after suitable training, without supervision. The high expectations of all staff have a very positive impact on students' personal, social and moral development and benefit their increasing independent learning skills, their ability to use time very effectively and their ability to collaborate very effectively. The expectations of the school make a significant contribution to students' self-confidence and awareness.

102. Guidance about careers and higher education opportunities is very good. Students receive impartial guidance which is effective in directing them towards the range of courses, study and career opportunities appropriate to them. They are actively encouraged to take responsibility for their own planning and making informed choices about their future lives.

103. Arrangements for monitoring and promoting health and safety are satisfactory overall, as are the arrangements for the provision of first aid and for child protection. Arrangements for monitoring and promoting good attendance in the sixth form are very good. Accurate records are maintained and through the very effective pastoral system, students with attendance problems are quickly identified and very good support is provided to help them improve their attendance or punctuality. The school places great emphasis on personal responsibility but is extremely supportive of its students.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

104. The school's partnership with parents is excellent. It is very successful in involving them in the work and life of the school for the benefit of pupils. The partnership is reinforced by the provision of excellent information, a home/school agreement and the systematic sharing of pupils' successes as well as by involving parents at an early stage in the event of any concerns. Parents are very positive about the school, as was the case at the time of the last inspection in 1996.

105. Parents express very positive views of the school. All parents responding to a questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection state that the quality of teaching is good, the school has high expectations and pupils enjoy school. Parents are also particularly positive about the progress which pupils make, the ease with which they can approach the school with any concerns or problems, the good standards of behaviour and personal development and the quality of leadership and management at the school. Inspectors' judgements support these very positive views of parents.

106. Parents are provided with excellent information about pupils' progress and attainment and about the life and work of the school. They are looked upon as full partners in their children's education and are kept very well informed about successes and any concerns throughout the year. Annual reports, which are supported by very well attended consultation evenings, provide an overview of the subject curriculum that has been covered together with an excellent evaluation of the progress and attainment of pupils. They also include very clear targets which relate specifically to the subject and to attitudes or key skills, such as planning or organisation, which assist in raising attainment.

107. Parents of pupils with special education needs are very supportive of the partnership group of parents and carers which meets half-termly together with the educational psychologist, the special needs co-ordinator and the head of social inclusion. This excellent group is a support for parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs and provides a formal structure to ensure excellent communication with the school. Parents and carers are involved in detailed discussions with the school on how best to help their children and they are also fully involved in the review of the progress of their children. They are actively involved in shaping the individual education plans and individual behavioural plans used to support children with special educational needs. The school magazine is extremely well produced and contains contributions from pupils and students, which provide an excellent insight into the work of the school and the stimulating range of activities such as the 'World Culture Day', outward bound trips and visits to support the curriculum. Other information about the life and work of the school is provided through specific letters.

108. Parents are very supportive of pupils' learning at school and at home and in their wider activities. Parents regularly sign homework diaries and attendance at consultation evenings is very good. Parents are very supportive of the school's ethos. There is an active parent teacher association which assists the school by organising refreshments at events and raising funds, through events such as a Christmas raffle and a summer fair, to provide additional resources and purchase items such as prizes and homework diaries. In addition, parents have supported specific fundraising through dinner parties and other events to help to establish a resource base for dyslexia. With encouragement from the school, this vision has resulted in a TTSP (computer software program) and a resource base used effectively before school, during lunchtime and after school to support students with dyslexia to become more confident with their spelling. The support of parents is greatly appreciated by pupils and staff and makes a positive contribution to the life of the school and to the resources and opportunities available to pupils.

Sixth form

109. Parents' views of the sixth form are very good and they express particularly positive views about the high quality of teaching, the high expectations of the school, the progress which students make both in their academic studies and their personal development and the quality of leadership and management. They do not express any significant concerns. Inspectors fully support the positive views of parents. Discussions with current sixth form students, many of whom have only recently joined the school and some who are pursuing only part of their sixth form studies in the school as part of the local sixth form consortia arrangements, indicate that they are very proud of 'their' school and value its ethos and the

support and encouragement of the school community. These responses were reflected in students' responses to the questionnaire which a majority of them completed prior to the inspection.

110. Parents and students are provided with excellent information about the life and work of the school and about students' progress. Reports, combined with academic monitoring and reviews, provide very clear targets which greatly assist students in understanding what they need to do to raise individual performance and improve their grades.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

111. One of the main reasons for the improvement in the school's provision and standards since the last inspection is the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher. She has a very clear vision of what sort of school it should be and has established an ethos in which everyone is valued and where the attainment of high standards in all areas of work is important. This ensures that pupils achieve their best and try to do better, and are very well prepared for life beyond school and equipped to contribute effectively to living in a multi-cultural, multi-faith society. The commitment to equality of opportunity and to social and educational inclusion is a key priority and is reflected across the school as a whole. The headteacher has managed change very effectively and, through building a strong management team, has gained the commitment of staff to its inclusive policies and approaches. The extremely positive ethos within the school, clearly reflected in the very high standards of pupils' behaviour, their excellent attitudes to work and excellent relationships between pupils themselves and with staff, permeates all aspects of school life. In every respect, the school is a very effective place for pupils to learn and develop.

112. The headteacher is ably supported in the day-to-day management of the school by the two deputy headteachers, who together with the two assistant headteachers and the co-ordinator of the Beacon Schools initiative, form the senior management team. They work very well as a team, effectively contributing their own particular skills and expertise, and convey a sense of corporate purpose and a clear commitment to improving educational standards and the quality of education within the school. The extended management team, consisting of staff with whole-school responsibilities, including the Advanced Skills teachers, also make an effective contribution to the day-to-day management of the school.

113. The governing body undertakes its role in the governance of the school particularly effectively and plays a full part in its strategic management. Governors are strongly committed to the school and are highly supportive of the headteacher, with whom they have an excellent relationship. Through the governing body's committee structures and procedures, governors are closely involved in determining the school's priorities and its longer-term direction. The governing body has approved a comprehensive range of policies, which are regularly reviewed. Other than ensuring the provision of religious education in the sixth form and that the procedures for disapplying pupils from the National Curriculum at Key Stage 4 fully comply with requirements, the governing body meets its legal responsibilities very well.

114. There is good delegation to staff with management responsibilities. Line management systems between members of the senior management team and middle managers are strong. The lack of such systems was identified as an area of weakness in the last inspection report, which has now been fully addressed. These arrangements are working extremely well: senior staff monitor the work of subject teams effectively and provide appropriate support and guidance as required. The leadership and management provided by middle managers are generally very good, never less than good and often excellent. These are reflected in the high quality of work seen during the inspection, the achievements of the pupils, the very good standards of teaching, the range of extra-curricular and other activities to support pupils' learning and the quality of documentation and guidance provided for staff and pupils throughout the school. This work is even more impressive when account is taken of the number of staffing changes that have occurred in the past two years and the need to induct and support new teachers in their subject areas. Performance management arrangements are very good.

115. The school has a very clear equal opportunities policy for all years, including the sixth form. There is a strong commitment to high standards of achievement for all and the school is active in ensuring that all its pupils and students have equal access to all the opportunities that are provided. All

departmental handbooks include an equal opportunities policy. There have been very positive developments since the last inspection in that the equal opportunities policy is now both reviewed and monitored on a regular basis by departmental heads, the senior management team, governors and parents' forum. Any racial incidents are monitored closely and there is also monitoring of pupils with physical disabilities.

116. The special needs co-ordinator and the head of social inclusion provide very good management for students with special educational needs and behavioural needs. The flexible models used to harness support are a significant strength. The focus is on meeting the needs of the individual pupil. The development plan has a considered and staged approach to meeting the requirements of the new Code of Practice. Pupils with special educational needs are rigorously monitored and their needs are well met.

117. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching by subject leaders are generally very good in the majority of subjects. This leads to considerable consistency in teaching approaches which benefits pupils' learning and the attainment of high standards. Although never less than satisfactory, the monitoring and development of teaching are less well developed in modern foreign languages, English and drama. Senior managers observe lessons on a regular basis, as do governors. The Advanced Skills teachers have made a significant contribution to raising standards in teaching through the sharing of best practice and leading staff development. Performing arts teachers have been instrumental in helping teachers in all subjects to have the confidence to use a greater variety of teaching approaches, particularly those that make pupils active participants in their own learning. The impact of these developments were very evident in the work seen during the inspection and is reflected in the consistently high standards of teaching and learning found in the school and in the high levels of confidence shown by the pupils.

118. The school monitors its own performance rigorously and systematically. The governing body plays a key role in this work. Examination results are analysed carefully and thoroughly against national and LEA figures. Other aspects of the school's work are also scrutinised very carefully to ensure that they continue to support the school's priorities of improving standards and ensuring that all pupils are well prepared to contribute effectively to life beyond school. Strategic planning and development planning are very good. The school management plan is comprehensive and detailed, and includes all the elements normally expected in such a plan. The whole-school priorities are extensive and carefully targeted, and provide a formidable programme of development for the school. There is an appropriately strong focus on improving standards and the quality of provision.

119. Staffing is a major strength of the school. The qualifications and experiences of all staff, both teaching and support, contribute directly to the high standards achieved by all pupils throughout the school and closely match the demands of the curriculum. All curriculum areas are fully staffed with permanent teachers in post with the exception of physics. In this area, two staff are currently appointed on temporary contracts. Staffing in all other areas is very good. Over the last two years there has been a high turnover of staff: 30 teachers have left and 32 have been recruited. This turnover of staff has had a positive effect on the curriculum provision across the school and has enabled the school to effectively meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum.

120. The training offered to all new staff is very good. At the time of the last inspection, there were no formal procedures for evaluating the quality of training and the training for newly qualified staff was inadequate. One of the deputy headteachers currently manages the training programme for all beginner teachers on behalf of the local education authority. The programme is very comprehensive and is flexible enough to respond to the needs of the individuals involved. The school has seven Advanced Skills teachers. This group of staff are involved in the induction programme for all staff appointed to the school. They are also actively involved in leading in-service training within the school and on behalf of the local education authority.

121. Overall, accommodation is satisfactory for meeting the needs of the curriculum. Although there is some good provision, some aspects of the accommodation are not ideal. The library provides a good focus for independent learning and research, and is particularly well used by members of the sixth form. Corridors are narrow and some classrooms are small. Storage is limited which affects, for example, the

production of large pieces of work in design and technology, particularly in the sixth form. Some of the accommodation for performing arts is cramped and some accommodation for music, particularly practice rooms, is unsatisfactory because of inadequate ventilation. The small amount of outdoor play area limits opportunities within physical education for developing the curriculum and for activities such as invasion games. However, these limitations are not affecting standards significantly. Displays are used effectively within the school to celebrate the work of pupils.

122. Because of the age and design of the school, it cannot provide for pupils with physical disabilities that affect their mobility. Accommodation for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The TTSP room is very good and is well equipped with computers to support students with dyslexia.

123. The provision of resources for learning is good in most subject areas and never less than adequate in any. There is outstanding provision for ICT, with a ratio of one computer to four pupils against a national expectation of one computer to seven pupils. As a consequence, provision for ICT features as a strength in almost all subject areas but particularly in design and technology and mathematics.

124. The school library provides satisfactory support for learning. The database is currently under reconstruction following a major hardware failure earlier in the year. This problem has been compounded by difficulties in recruiting a new full-time librarian. On the best available estimate, the stock of books is broadly in line with the average for most schools. Titles and subject areas are specifically targeted by the teacher in charge of the library, depending upon curriculum needs. This constitutes very effective management. In specific subject terms, resources for mathematics and physical education are very good, good in music and design and technology and satisfactory in all other areas. There are sufficient and adequate communication aids to support the student with a hearing impairment.

125. The school manages its resources very well. Financial planning is very good and expenditure is closely related to the priorities in the management plan. The system of allocating resources to departments and other budget holders is effective and monitored carefully, and the deployment of major resources is geared very closely to the attainment of the school's priorities. The school receives additional funding through national initiatives such as Excellence in Cities and also as a Performing Arts College and a Beacon School. This gives the school greater flexibility to deploy resources to best advantage to meet its priorities and the needs of its pupils. These additional resources are used very effectively, for example to retain high quality staff, to broaden the curriculum and enhance the opportunities that are available to pupils and to extend the links with other schools and the wider community. The funding for pupils with special educational needs and for supporting ethnic minority pupils is used effectively and appropriately, as is the specific grant provided through the Standards Fund.

126. The school works very efficiently on a day-to-day basis and administrative arrangements are effective in supporting the work of the school. Administrative staff are clear about their responsibilities and carry them out in a positive and helpful manner. The school makes very effective use of new technologies for administration purposes, record keeping, financial planning and management and to support the very good assessment procedures. Financial procedures and controls are clear and carried out efficiently, and expenditure is monitored carefully. The governing body, through its finance committee, receives regular financial reports, which it monitors carefully, and maintains a strategic overview of the deployment of resources. The school seeks and obtains best value in all of its expenditure. The most recent audit report, undertaken in March 2000, identified a few minor weaknesses in the school's procedures but all of its recommendations have now been implemented.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

127. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. There is a clear focus on achieving academic excellence and preparing students for life and work beyond the school, which reflects the overall aims and priorities of the school as a whole. The very good quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is testimony to the effectiveness of the continued development of the sixth form. Numbers in the sixth form have risen rapidly this year, particularly the number of students,

especially male students, coming from other schools. This is requiring a review of the strategies for inducting students into the sixth form and a reappraisal of teaching approaches for mixed groups. Senior staff and governors are well aware of the issues that need to be addressed and are taking appropriate steps to reappraise their approaches.

128. Governors fulfil their responsibilities well in helping to shape the direction of the sixth form but have not yet ensured that the provision for religious education meets statutory requirements. They are well aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the sixth form.

129. As in the main school, monitoring and evaluation procedures of the work of the sixth form are very good and the school is taking effective action to secure improvements. Performance data is carefully analysed and used effectively to evaluate the effectiveness of its provision and to set targets for further development.

130. The school uses its resources very well to support provision in the sixth form. Expenditure on the sixth form last year was broadly similar to the income it received. However, the additional funding the school receives through national programmes and initiatives and the deployment of Advanced Skills teachers and other staff to teach in other schools make it more difficult to disaggregate the figures to obtain a clear picture. The evidence indicates that the additional resources are used extremely well to support individuals and groups of pupils and enrich the school's provision. Joint working arrangements with other schools are efficient and cost effective, and students from the schools involved benefit from access to a wide range of courses. The principles of best value are applied appropriately to ensure that expenditure is cost effective.

Resources

131. Staff are well qualified for the subjects they teach and there is a very good match of subject expertise to the courses taught. This is shown to good effect in the majority of lessons, where teachers' very good subject knowledge is used effectively to provide a range of challenging and interesting activities to help students learn.

132. The overall availability of accommodation to support the teaching of the curriculum is satisfactory. Whilst much of the building is old and many classrooms are small, this is not adversely affecting standards. Students in the sixth form appreciate the accommodation that is available for their use. The library facility and sixth form study area, which has full Internet access, provide good areas for independent study and research, and are well used by students. Whilst the school does not have any outdoor grassed play space, and the use of the hard play area is restricted by on-site parking, sixth form students appreciate the opportunity, after training, to use the school's fitness suite without supervision. The suite is well equipped with a range of fitness equipment. Resources to support teaching and learning are generally good, and better than this in many subjects. Students have sufficient books for their use. Computers are readily available out of lesson time.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

133. No Key Issues were identified for the school as a whole to address.

Sixth form

- (1) ensure that statutory requirements are met in the provision of religious education in the sixth form (paragraphs 73 and 128).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	127
	Sixth form	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		180

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	28	64	27	8	0	0	0
Percentage	22	51	21	6	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	9	25	12	5	0	0	0
Percentage	18	49	24	9	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Judgements were made about teaching in 178 lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	642	158
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	287	0

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	10	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	90	10

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	425

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.8
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	0	129	129

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	123	123	123
	Total	123	123	123
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	95 (94)	95 (93)	95 (89)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	75 (75)	70 (68)	67 (54)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	127	121	118
	Total	127	121	118
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	98 (93)	94 (86)	91 (90)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	68 (54)	59 (62)	46 (46)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	0	107	107

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	98	107	107
	Total	98	107	107
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	92 (89)	100 (98)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	95 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	55.5 (56)
	National	39.0 (38)

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 pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	96
	National	n/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

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
	2000	4	52	56

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	21.0	15.1	15.3	7.0	4.4	5.1
National	17.8	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	39
Black – African heritage	38
Black – other	9
Indian	40
Pakistani	19
Bangladeshi	45
Chinese	23
White	390
Any other minority ethnic group	197

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	69.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	12.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	8.7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	239

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	19

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	2,971,916
Total expenditure	2,969,022
Expenditure per pupil	3,697
Balance brought forward from previous year	47,933
Balance carried forward to next year	50,827

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	30
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	32
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	800
Number of questionnaires returned	179

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	23	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	72	23	1	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	65	32	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	45	6	2	1
The teaching is good.	68	29	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	38	6	3	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	32	3	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	87	12	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	52	34	7	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	79	19	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	30	1	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	73	22	2	0	3

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **very good**.

Strengths

- Shared commitment to success for all pupils.
- Very good teaching which enables pupils to make very good progress and achieve very high standards.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Using lesson observation as a means of sharing the existing very good practice.

134. Standards achieved in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were very high compared to the national average and to those achieved by similar schools. In 2001, the results were well above the national average and very high compared to similar schools. Performance in English was similar to that in mathematics and science. Over time there has been steady improvement to current levels. Since pupils enter the school with above average attainment, their progress during Years 7 to 9 is very good. The standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average. The great majority of pupils are very articulate in spoken English and use it very well in a variety of situations. In a Year 9 lesson, they attained a very high standard of characterisation and improvised speech in their exploration of Macbeth's state of mind after the murder of Duncan. Most pupils are very fluent readers at sight, able to self-correct and make good sense of unfamiliar texts. Their responses to the books they read are very perceptive and they show exceptional understanding of plot and character in novels and plays. This was well shown by Year 7 pupils who wrote and performed scripted scenes from *The Silver Sword*. Over time they develop genuine appreciation of the power of language. In their written work on literature, they are able to support their viewpoint with appropriate quotations and references. They are also able to produce very skilful narrative and discursive writing. The quality of imaginative writing produced by Year 7 pupils of relatively low prior attainment, many of whom have special educational needs or English as an additional language, is outstanding.

135. The GCSE results in 2000 in English language and literature were very high when compared to both the national average and the performance of similar schools. There was a further improvement in the results for 2001, reflecting a steady gain over several years. Performance in English was better than that in mathematics and science. In literature, pupils' performance was broadly in line with other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, together with those from minority ethnic groups, make the same very good progress as their peers. The standard of dialogue in discussions about the literature and other texts being studied is very high. In a Year 10 class exploring the characters and their motivation in *An Inspector Calls*, pupils' understanding of both the play and the social context in which it was set was well above average. In their written work, most pupils produce mature and considered essays that trace the themes and the development of characters in a wide range of demanding literature that includes Shakespeare, poetry from several centuries and novels from the Nineteenth Century onwards. Pupils with special educational needs show sound understanding of the plot and character in as broad a range of literature as their fellow-pupils study. Most pupils also write very well for a variety of purposes, from narrative to persuasive pieces, and they make detailed and perceptive studies of stories presented by different newspapers. The overall standard of work in Years 10 and 11 is well above average.

136. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is very good. Very effective planning and teaching strategies enable all students to make very good progress, as seen in a Year 9 lesson on *Macbeth* where the pupils echoed the character's thoughts during key speeches and developed their understanding of the situation in the play. Teachers are purposeful and enthusiastic, which conveys to the pupils and makes them keen to do well. Pupils are encouraged to develop their own ideas and also

respect the viewpoint of others. Very careful questioning helps them to develop their ideas and express them clearly. Very good knowledge of the needs of pupils enables them to take charge of their own learning and meet their targets. High expectations lead to high achievements, as in a Year 7 lesson where the pupils, most of them with special educational needs or at an early stage of learning English, made excellent progress in writing and publishing their original poetry on the computer. Teamwork between teachers and support staff to support those pupils who need extra help and encouragement is very good. In every lesson seen, teachers created a challenging but secure environment in which the pupils felt able to take risks, share ideas and extend their thinking. Regular, detailed and helpful marking enables all pupils to make very good progress.

137. The response of pupils to their English lessons is very good in all year groups. From Year 7 onwards they listen intently and are keen to offer answers and ideas. Most pupils make a contribution to class discussions, and they are totally absorbed in the various tasks they are given. They are keen to ask questions to ensure their understanding. In all years, they are candid in their self-evaluations, and their efforts to improve show very good attitudes. Virtually every pupil completes homework on time. They are very quick to start the work given, and they are adaptable and co-operative when working in pairs or groups. They listen well to each other, particularly in Years 10 and 11 when class discussions can be extended, but they maintain their impetus. They respect each other's ideas and are very tolerant of cultural and other differences.

138. The programme of study is very broad and well balanced throughout Years 7 to 11. There is a very clear framework, soundly based on the National Curriculum, but enabling individual teachers to share their particular interests and expertise. There is a strong emphasis on speaking and listening for different purposes. A very broad range of literature and non-literary texts is studied, with a very good level of challenge, so pupils are enjoying the work of authors such as Wordsworth and Shakespeare in Year 7. In media studies, Year 10 pupils are expected to analyse in depth the ways in which facts can be manipulated by newspaper reporters for differing readerships. Pupils of all ages are given well structured frameworks for commenting on the texts that they study, and pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are given well-differentiated tasks to enable them to succeed.

139. The high quality of provision and achievement in English is largely due to the very good leadership and management of the subject. The team of teachers is very well qualified, having an exceptionally wide range of experience in other fields as well as in education, which enriches the quality of their teaching. The teachers of English share a very high commitment to the success of every pupil in their care, and they are keen to raise standards even further through regular review of their practice. There is some progress still to be made in sharing good practice through lesson observation, but this is recognised and is one of the well considered priorities for development. Accommodation and resources for learning are adequate, but the latter situation is dependent on pupils' willingness to buy their own texts for study at GCSE.

140. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have improved further at both national tests in Year 9 and in GCSE examinations in English language and literature, and this is reflected in the higher standards seen in lessons. There are now more opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills for different purposes. More group learning has been encouraged, with very good effect. Questioning techniques have been refined and pupils are given a broader range of non-fiction texts to study. More use is made of ICT, both by teachers in the preparation of materials and by pupils in the presentation of their work. As in the sixth form, the English team is making a very substantial contribution to the personal and academic development of all pupils in Years 7 to 11.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Strengths

- Excellent leadership and management of the department, which are responsible for the rapidly rising standards in the subject.
- Excellent procedures for monitoring the subject's performance, enabling teachers to extend pupils' knowledge at all levels of attainment.
- Very effective teaching and learning, due to teachers' very good subject knowledge, very good planning of lessons and their high expectations of the pupils' achievements.

Areas for improvement

- None were identified.

141. The proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected for their age in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001 was well above the national average and very high in relation to similar schools. The results at the higher levels were also well above the national average. The results overall were similar to those in English and science. Standards have been rising in the last few years above the national trend and rose again in 2001. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection when the school's results were similar to the national average.

142. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations was well above the national average. Standards have been rising in the last few years and rose considerably in 2001 when the results at grades A*-C were significantly above the national average. Eighteen pupils from Year 10 who sat the GCSE examination at the higher level of entry all gained the higher grades of A* to B. Since the last inspection when standards were below the national average, the improvement has been excellent.

143. Standards of work by the ages of 14 and 16 are very high, continuing the rise in standards of the last few years. The significant increases in the levels of pupils' attainment followed the appointment of the current head of department in September 1999. Since that time, and since the last inspection, the scheme of work has improved significantly and is innovative in its delivery. During the inspection, teachers paid particular attention to data handling in nearly all classes from Year 7 to Year 11. The outcome of this is that teaching and learning are concentrated very well on the varied attainment levels of the different classes, moving them forward and giving rise to the teachers' very high expectations of the pupils. The department then moves on as a whole to concentrate on a different aspect of the programme of study. The planning of lessons is very good, with teachers exchanging good practice in their preparation and varying their presentation according to the needs of all the pupils.

144. All pupils achieve well through to Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs, those who need extra support in learning in English and those from different ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. The higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are able to calculate the length of an arc of a circle, simplify brackets in algebra and use class intervals with understanding in statistics. The average attaining pupils use investigative skills well, for example in estimating the length of a piece of string. They know the difference between 'variable' and 'frequency' and use calculators accurately and appropriately. Lower attaining pupils accurately calculate areas of rectangles, triangles, trapeziums and circles. The higher attaining pupils in Year 11 are working on the AS course modules. They spend one half of a lesson studying pure mathematics and the other half on statistics. This change in focus does much to maintain their interest and concentration. The higher attaining pupils factorise cubic expressions and have a good understanding of correlation. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well throughout the school. In revision lessons, average attaining pupils work very well and consolidate earlier work on cumulative frequency through the quality of the teachers' questions. Lower attaining pupils are taught together in a small group and this enables their learning needs to be met effectively. High expectations in the teaching have resulted in an intermediate level of entry for them. Information on standards is shared appropriately between pupils and the teacher and so pupils have the confidence to engage in good

discussions, from which they learn. They plot points accurately on a graph and interpret scatter diagrams well.

145. The standard of teaching and learning is very good overall, an improvement since the last inspection. Approximately one quarter of the teaching is excellent and is very good in the majority of lessons. Foundations for this stem from the teachers' very good subject knowledge, and the very good quality of the planning. Their subject knowledge shows through in the nature of the questions posed in the teaching that promotes discussion and pupils' suggestions in order to make progress in learning. On ideas, questions are open-ended, for example 'How can we find out?' On processes, questions are short and sharp, moving the lesson on with pace so that time is used well. Recent developments from the National Numeracy Strategy are having a good influence on learning. The quality of the planning allows for this teaching and then provides structured practice requiring pupils to think for themselves and learn very well through understanding. Pupils are effectively challenged by the inverse questions posed at the end of many lessons: summaries are effective and seldom cut short. Lessons with lower attaining pupils, including some with special educational needs, move at a very good pace with time limited goals. An endless stream of questions requires pupils' contributions and explanations, with appropriate emphasis to encourage rote learning and consolidation. The management of pupils is excellent, maintaining a high work rate and enabling good communications from which the learning grows. Support in the classroom is very good, aimed very clearly at the boundary of learning, and promoting confidence and independence by not staying with any one pupil too long. The attitudes of pupils to their work are excellent and contribute significantly to their learning. Homework is used very well and many pupils do extra work on their own initiative or with teachers voluntarily after school. Behaviour is very good and relationships between pupils and between the teachers and the pupils are excellent.

146. Leadership and management are excellent and responsible for the tremendous improvement since the last inspection. Subject documentation is of a high order, setting out policies clearly and concisely. Teachers work hard and well as a team, shown through their coherent approach in their teaching following the innovative presentation of the scheme of work. Three teachers are new to the school this term. The monitoring of the subject is excellent. Extensive use is made of assessment data and targets set for the department have been exceeded. The department has an integrated approach to the use of ICT in the scheme of work. It also undertakes cross-curricular work with the performing arts, with the current initiative being numeracy. Resources are very good, and a computer-controlled television in each classroom is used effectively to enhance visual learning. The department satisfies the requirements of the National Curriculum and makes a very good contribution to pupils' education.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- Above average standards by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- Good quality teaching overall.
- Positive attitudes of pupils towards the learning of science.
- The preparation of pupils to carry out scientific investigations.
- The use of strategies to improve literacy.
- The use of ICT to improve learning in science.

Areas for improvement

- The use of all of the rich oral contributions made by pupils to further learning as far as possible.

147. Standards in the Key Stage 3 national tests in science in 2000 were well above average in relation to schools nationally and very high in relation to similar schools. The results in 2001 showed a further improvement, and were also well above the national average and very high in relation to similar schools. The school's results have improved at a faster rate than the national trend since the last inspection and standards in science have risen relative to mathematics and English within the school to broadly similar levels.

148. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C in combined science in the GCSE examinations in 2000 was above average. In 2001, there was a considerable improvement and the results were well above average. All pupils entered for the three separate sciences of biology, chemistry and physics in both 2000 and 2001 gained grades A*-C. Standards overall have risen since the last inspection when they were just above the national average. The results in 2001 indicate that the school's performance in science is now closer to that of other subjects in the school.

149. From pupils' current and recent work, pupils' attainment by the age of 14 is above average, with a significant minority achieving higher levels than this. They are making satisfactory and often good progress in lessons and are achieving well when account is taken of their earlier attainment. Pupils demonstrate good scientific understanding when giving answers orally, asking questions and in contributing relevant points to discussion. This was effectively done in a Year 9 lesson on materials, where pupils gave good explanations as they developed their scientific knowledge about particle theory. They carry out practical tasks with confidence and show good skills in scientific investigations, such as in making predictions. This was seen to good effect in a Year 8 lesson on sedimentary rocks and weathering, where pupils carried out practical work very effectively, with all able to explain very clearly what was happening. In a lesson on air pressure in Year 7, lower attaining pupils were able to express clear ideas about their observations and record them without hesitation.

150. Pupils' achievements at Key Stage 4 are similarly good overall. Higher attaining pupils handle conceptually difficult topics, such as volumetric analysis, well. These pupils can also clearly explain, using abstract theory, what they are doing in experiments. Other pupils demonstrate achievements beyond expectations. For example, one pupil in the early stages of English fluency made an effective verbal presentation as part of a group project.

151. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and in most cases is good and sometimes very good across the key stages. Very good lesson planning ensures a wide variety of learning activities for pupils, which proceed at a good pace to maintain their motivation at a high level. The activities include experimental work, discussion and debate, presentations by pupils, analysis of scientific investigation plans and presentations by the teacher using digital technology. These bring exciting scientific images to the attention of whole classes. Clear learning results from this teaching, as seen, for example, in the clear particle theory explanation of melting given by pupils in Year 9. This followed from pupils viewing the evidence for the particle theory directly as a whole class via digital video.

152. The science department is effectively led and managed. The department meets statutory requirements with respect to the National Curriculum and to health and safety. A variety of strategies have been introduced to bring about further improvements in standards. These include the collection and use of assessment data, the sharing of good practice strategies in departmental meetings, increasing the detail included in schemes of work and the use of objective lists to assist pupil self-assessment, target setting and organisation.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Excellent teaching leads to very high standards of achievement and outstanding results.
- Excellent leadership and management contribute to the very high standards overall.
- The curriculum provides a rich and varied experience which meets the needs of all groups of pupils.

Areas for improvement

- None were identified.

153. Standards in art and design are excellent. Teachers' assessments in 2001 placed most pupils at the end of Year 9 at well above average attainment when compared to national expectations and significantly above average at Levels 7 or above. The work of some of these pupils which was seen

during the inspection confirms the accuracy of the assessments by teachers. The GCSE results in 2000 were significantly above average when compared to the national figures. These high standards have been maintained in 2001, although there were no A* grades awarded to pupils. The school believes that the raising of the grade boundary by the examination board for an A* was the reason for this situation.

154. Pupils' achievement overall is excellent. When they enter the school in Year 7, pupils have widely differing experiences in art and design. Although sketchbooks and class work of pupils at this early stage of the course indicate that they have broadly average standards in their technical skills and in their understanding of how to use the formal elements of the subject such as line, tone, colour and pattern, their ability to select and use a range of two- and three-dimensional materials is more limited. Their knowledge and understanding of the art forms of different cultures and periods in history are also limited. During their course, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 make rapid progress so that, by the end of Year 9, standards have improved significantly. This is because of the high quality of teaching, one feature of which is the very effective planning of schemes of work and lessons. This ensures that teaching is directed towards meeting the needs of all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and those who are identified as gifted or talented. An example of how well Year 9 pupils who are gifted or talented achieve was the superb display of their work in the area outside the art studios. Their paintings, drawings and mixed media pieces showed a highly accomplished grasp of technical skills and were imaginative in ideas and the manipulation of imagery and media.

155. Another example of how the very effective planning contributes to pupils' achievement is the simple but very useful 'tree' questionnaire which all Year 7 pupils are asked to complete during their first lessons. This informs the teachers of what pupils know and can do and enables them to plan lessons which are relevant and appropriate to their needs. Teachers also place emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills and techniques. This means that, by the time they reach the end of Year 9, pupils have achieved very well indeed in their ability to investigate and develop ideas, to draw accurately from observation and to use paint, print and three-dimensional techniques with understanding. Pupils also achieve very well in their ability to write about, to discuss and to evaluate their own work and that of other artists and cultures. This is because the teachers require pupils to study historical sources such as Islamic, African and Asian art, as well as European art, and because of the support which teachers give to all pupils in their learning of how to use a critical vocabulary, including the use of writing frames. Early in Year 7, for example, pupils are required to investigate the work of the artist, Matisse, and to evaluate his use of colour and pattern. The knowledge they gain from this enables them to create their own patterns with understanding; their homework exercises which fill the first pages of their sketchbooks show an enthusiastic response to this task and provide evidence of how quickly Year 7 pupils learn appropriate methods of visual and historical research.

156. The achievement of pupils who take up the GCSE courses which are offered is also excellent. This is because those features of the teaching which have contributed to the very high standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are equally apparent in Years 10 and 11. They enable pupils to build quickly on their prior attainment and to extend their learning, so that by the age of 16 they produce outstanding work in a very wide range of media and processes. Pupils also develop an excellent understanding of how to use their work journals in order to fulfil the examination objectives. These books are packed with ideas and explorations into the use of different media which are annotated with thoughtful, critical commentaries. References to artists' works which have been chosen as sources of inspiration for the intended practical outcomes indicate that pupils are also able to build on their earlier learning in the historical and cultural aspects of the subject. The technically accomplished and imaginative paintings, framed to professional standards and displayed in the reception area of the school, confirm the outstanding achievement of GCSE pupils, as does the vibrant and inventive textile work which makes such an impact on those entering that part of the school building. The remarkable ability of these pupils to create inventive and elaborate costume pieces, to explore colour and materials with such confidence, is evidence of how well the teaching provides opportunities for all pupils to achieve and of the enthusiasm the pupils have for the subject.

157. The quality of teaching is a major strength. It has improved since the previous inspection and is now excellent throughout Years 7 to 11. The fast pace of lessons and the high expectations that

teachers have for both quality of work and of behaviour mean that pupils learn quickly. Teachers, however, are also careful to take account of the needs of all groups of pupils and they match their expectations appropriately, providing excellent individual support through further explanations and demonstrations as necessary. One feature of the high quality teaching is the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. This is energetically conveyed to pupils through fast and challenging presentation of lessons and the skilful demonstration of techniques and processes which enthuse and capture their interest and attention. An example of this was seen in Year 7 clay-work lesson in which pupils were learning techniques for modelling containers based on animal forms. Throughout his demonstration, the teacher explained processes of modelling and joining clay in a way that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, could understand. He used humour to very good effect and was fully aware of how well pupils were paying attention, directing quick-fire questions as appropriate in order to ensure that they were understanding the task.

158. Another example of the impact of the high quality and enthusiastic teaching on pupils' learning was seen in a Year 10 painting lesson: pupils who were planning their paintings based on drawings of natural forms showed that they were inspired by the enthusiasm and obvious love of the subject displayed by a newly qualified teacher. The teacher's encouragement and constructive individual support allowed pupils to feel confident about working on a large scale. Their work-journals to which they were referring in the lesson also revealed their enthusiasm for the subject by the amount and quality of work which they had completed since the start of their course. A number of these books were of a standard more commonly seen in A-level work and were evidence, too, of the high expectations which teachers set and of the commitment to study of the pupils. As well as developing their skills in using the more conventional materials and processes of art and design, such as paint, clay, fabrics and print media, pupils explore new possibilities with enthusiasm, for example in their use of ICT. In both key stages, pupils are learning more about the applications of computers in the subject for research and, importantly, for creative work. Sketchbooks and work-journals provide evidence of a growing use of experimentation with the effects that can be achieved by scanning and manipulating imagery on a computer. Although there is a need to extend its application in the work of pupils in Years 7 to 9, the use of ICT is another improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils speak highly of their teachers, of how much they enjoy the subject and look forward to their lessons. They respond very positively to the opportunities they are given to show independence in the way they determine the direction of their own work, selecting processes and media as appropriate and moving freely about the art studios as necessary. The attitudes of the pupils in these lessons are characteristic of the very positive attitudes generally towards the subject and provide another indication of the overall impact of the high quality teaching on pupils' learning and on their attitudes and behaviour.

159. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection because the head of department has identified priorities which are robustly linked to raising standards still further. Monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject has led to the sharing of good practice and to a collective understanding of standards - for example, those associated with assessment levels in Years 7 to 9 and with GCSE criteria in Years 10 and 11. These are used effectively in the day-to-day marking of work so that pupils are clear about targets for improvement and how to achieve them. Currently this is better developed in Years 10 and 11. Staff are deployed well according to their specialist expertise and strengths as teachers. The well-qualified technician provides important support to teachers and contributes very effectively to the organisation of lessons. Displays of pupils' work enrich the somewhat cramped accommodation. Winding and narrow corridors and staircases are hung with numerous examples of paintings, prints, textiles, photographs and sketchbooks. These provide pupils with an opportunity to admire and to celebrate each other's achievements and, along with the many opportunities to visit exhibitions and to participate in projects such as the Year 8 assembly work for Dhiwali, make a significant contribution to the rich and varied spiritual and cultural life of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Excellent management of the department.
- Well above average standards in GCSE examinations.
- The very good quality of the teaching.
- Assessment of pupils' work and progress.

Areas for improvement

- Arrangement of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 to improve balance of time allocation.
- Provision for graphics in the sixth form.

160. Pupils' attainment in design and technology by the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Pupils show skills in cutting and shaping resistant materials and display imagination in their ideas for the application of technology to individual products. For example, a 'juddering' mechanism, contrived by weighting a driven flywheel, was used to produce an animated robot. This project combined a number of elements, for example, skills in working plastic, vacuum forming skills, electronics and a knowledge of mechanics. An imaginative challenge was provided by the need to design a robot. This approach to projects as combinations of knowledge, skill and understanding fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum and exemplifies the methodology of the design and technology department.

161. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils attain well above average standards of knowledge, skills and understanding in their work and in public examinations. In the last two years, the GCSE examinations results have improved significantly to a level well in excess of the national average. In the two GCSE courses taken, graphics and resistant materials, pupils attain high levels of designing and making skills and display a good capacity for independent working. Ideas are imaginative, developed methodically and carried through to conclusion with a skilled careful finish. A good example of Year 10 work consisted of the application of work on mechanical linkage to the production of animated pictures. This work was very carefully designed and made, and taken to a very high standard of finish involving graphics and lettering. The use of ICT continues to be a strength.

162. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour throughout Key Stage 3 are very good and make a considerable contribution to the progress that they make. The design of projects enables pupils with special educational needs to make progress at their own rate and to achieve an appropriate level of success. Similarly, pupils who have English as an additional language are able to make individual progress in undertaking practical tasks, whilst gifted and talented pupils are unrestricted through the provision of tasks that are open-ended.

163. The provision for ICT at Key Stage 3 is comprehensive and its use is widespread. Pupils engage in word-processing, computer-aided design and computer controlled manufacture. Controlled production of engraved plastic, for example, involves original design and control in the production of good quality, well finished products. Literacy is addressed in line with school policy and subject terms are clearly displayed and analysed. Measuring and calculation, particularly in resistant materials work, reinforce pupils' numeracy skills. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well. The allocation of time is satisfactory but uneven across Years 7, 8 and 9. This adversely affects pupils' progress across the key stage.

164. At Key Stage 4, pupils' literacy skills are developed further by the analysis of subject terms, and numeracy by measuring and calculation. An additional factor affecting numeracy is the need to relate two-dimensional plans to subsequent three-dimensional constructions. Projects in graphics and resistant materials allow for successful achievement in a very wide area and thus provide continuing opportunity for pupils with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils to reach their full potential. There are no restrictions of entry to GCSE options and this, taken together with the nature of the courses, ensures that all pupils are fully included.

165. The teaching in the department is a strength and is very good overall. All the teachers are wholly committed to the development of the work of the department and have an obvious enthusiasm for the subject. A particular feature of the teaching is the thoroughness of preparation, including the marshalling of relevant resources. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. The planning of projects constitutes a further strength with imaginative schemes of work that are well related to the needs and interests of pupils. An outstanding example of this is a Year 7 project exploring design

and technology and performing arts. In this project, pupils experience computer control with simply constructed percussion mechanisms producing rhythmic patterns designed by pupils. Thus information technology, mechanisms, structures and music are combined in a composite learning experience.

166. The management of the department is excellent. The head of department plays a full and active role in the teaching and has introduced innovative and imaginative schemes of work. Relationships between the staff of the department, both teaching and support staff, show a strong unity and a shared concern for continuing improvement and progress. This sense of common purpose is reinforced by very effective communication and excellent documentation, which covers comprehensively all aspects of the work of the department. Assessment is very thorough, with detailed formative assessments of projects at the halfway stage and on completion. Results are analysed and used in planning for individual progress and for the development of schemes of work.

167. The accommodation, although restricted in area, is comfortably furnished with good access within a suite of adjoining rooms. Storage is limited and restricts the development of large-scale work, particularly by students in the sixth form. None of these limitations, however, has depressed attainment in any significant way. The provision of equipment and resources for learning is very good and that for information technology is excellent and used very effectively.

168. Since the last inspection very good progress has been made in the establishment of courses at Key Stage 4. These were not functioning when the school was last inspected as a result of staffing difficulties but are now flourishing and gaining excellent results.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards of teaching are very high exhibiting a considerable degree of positive leadership and team work.
- Standards of pupils' work are very good, especially course work at Key Stage 4.
- Exemplar work used as a reference point for staff and pupils in GCSE courses.

Areas for improvement

- Extend the use of ICT in both class work in Key Stage 3 and examination work in Key Stage 4.

169. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001 indicate that standards are well above national expectations. The evidence from lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' written work shows that pupils' attainment is well above average, confirming the accuracy of the teachers' assessments. The GCSE examination results in 2001 were significantly above the national averages, maintaining the school's performance in 2000, although there were fewer pupils achieving the highest grades of A*. Standards in geography have improved considerably since the last inspection.

170. Pupils make very good progress, both in lessons and over time. The quality of learning is good in both key stages. Pupils have a clear understanding of geographical concepts; they listen attentively, approaching their work with enthusiasm and commitment. Relationships are good, with supportive, collaborative work seen in most classes, especially in Key Stage 4. A major feature of all lessons is the high degree of inclusiveness; all pupils have a role to play, with some pupils contributing to the learning processes in a distinctive and profound manner. The positive use of ICT is clearly seen in the work of a majority of pupils and is enhanced by the computer facilities available in one of the teaching rooms, together with the prominent display of relevant web site addresses on classroom walls. Behaviour in all lessons is very good, and at times excellent.

171. The quality of teaching is very good at both key stages, and sometimes excellent. Preparation and planning are of the highest order, with learning objectives and outcomes clearly defined. The three specialist teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies and methods, have high expectations of their pupils and present precise and relevant challenges accordingly to all pupils. Pupils' work is well

marked, having heed of school policies, and comments are constructive and supportive. Schemes of work and departmental policies are evolving and are designed to assist the department's clear and definitive aims for improvement. Considerable priority is given to assessment procedures, as well as tracking and monitoring the performance of individuals and groups. In lower sets in Key Stage 3, where classes contain a substantial proportion of pupils with special educational needs and pupils learning English as an additional language, support assistants play a valuable and effective role working alongside pupils. Non-specialist teachers working in the department are given good support and provided with appropriate resources and teaching materials.

172. The last inspection identified good leadership and management as contributing to the high standards and the quality of teaching and learning. The current team under the guidance of the subject leader is still very strong, utilising a positive team approach to build upon the growing pattern of success. Additional resources have improved the classrooms, especially the provision of ICT hardware. In addition, supplementary funding from initiatives such as the Excellence in Cities programme are being put to good use in developing field and project work, as well as enabling the department to support gifted and talented children to engage in a re-cycling project. Field work forms an integral part of the teaching programme, with pupils gaining valuable practical experiences in Wales, the West Country and southern England, in addition to local studies in the London area. The curriculum taught by the department meets the guidelines laid down by national educational bodies and also meets statutory requirements.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good overall: lessons are carefully planned to include a wide range of activities to ensure that the needs of all pupils are fully met.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Pupils make very good progress, with the majority of pupils achieving very well in relation to their earlier attainment.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Provide pupils with more opportunities to use ICT in lessons.
- Review current monitoring systems to ensure that all pupils continue to achieve high standards in relation to their earlier attainment.

173. Standards in history by the end of Key Stage 3 are well above average. When pupils enter the school, their knowledge and skills in history are broadly in line with the national expectation. They make rapid progress during the key stage and achieve very well in relation to their earlier attainment. Teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001 indicated that pupils' attainment was well above the national average. Evidence from pupils' current work confirms the accuracy of these assessments. Pupils who then choose to study history in Key Stage 4 continue to improve and their attainment by the end of the key stage well exceeds the expected standards. The GCSE results at grades A*-C in 2000 were above the national average but were considerably below the school's results in other subjects. However, the 2001 results show a significant improvement with all pupils achieving grade A*-C, and a higher proportion than previously gaining the highest grades. The results have improved considerably since the last inspection when they were similar to the national average.

174. In lessons, all pupils are very keen to offer responses to questions posed by teachers: orally, they are very confident. Their understanding of some of the key historical concepts, such as cause and effect and empathy, is very comprehensive. The majority of pupils are skilled at using a wide range of source material and are able to make clear deductions from both written and pictorial pieces of evidence. In one Year 11 class, pupils were expected to use a wide range of historical sources to plan a military exercise, the task being to ensure that the people of Berlin received provisions to enable them to survive.

By the end of Year 9, pupils are able to produce extended pieces of written work, which include well-reasoned arguments based on historical fact.

175. The last inspection report commented upon the limited range of teaching and learning styles adopted by teachers across all key stages. Particular reference was made to the lack of opportunities for pupils to work with ICT, artefacts, or to be involved in role-play, simulations and oral history. In all lessons, teachers are using a wide range of teaching and learning styles and are successful in maintaining the interest and meeting the needs of all pupils in the groups. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to engage in role-play activities to enable them to explore topics in greater depth. In one Year 7 class, pupils explored the effect of the Feudal System on society through acting out the roles of the various groups involved. By the end of the lesson, all pupils had a firm understanding of how hierarchies operate. Written work indicates that opportunities to use various forms of ICT are encouraged. In one Year 10 class, groups of pupils presented their research to the whole class. The majority of the information gathered by the pupils to undertake this task had been retrieved from various historical websites. Overall, however, pupils have insufficient opportunities to use ICT to support their learning.

176. Teaching throughout the department is very good. Lesson planning is very thorough and pupils are set a wide range of different tasks to maintain their interest and extend their knowledge. In all lessons, many opportunities are provided for pupils to work independently, in pairs and in small groups. Teachers working within the department use the wide range of data available on pupils to set work to enable them all to make very good progress and achieve high standards. Pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language achieve high standards in history as a result of the very high quality and range of resources used by teachers. Very high standards of both work and behaviour are demanded and received. The high standards achieved by all pupils studying history can be directly attributed to the very good and imaginative teaching.

177. The management and leadership skills of the current head of history are very good. Since her appointment in September 1999, a wide range of strategies has been introduced and has had a direct impact on raising standards. All statutory requirements relating to this subject are in place. Rigorous monitoring systems have been introduced to ensure that each pupil makes good progress in relation to their earlier attainment. The current upward trend in the results attained by pupils at the end of each key stage can be attributed to these systems. All pupils studying history across all key stages are formally assessed each half term and from this individual targets for improvement are set. High levels of consistency are in evidence within lessons with regard to marking and implementing both departmental and whole school policies. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good** and provision for the use of ICT across the curriculum is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Very effective leadership and management bring about a collective vision that maintains consistently high standards of teaching and learning across the department.
- Teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject and of the requirements of the courses that they follow.
- Excellent assessment practice that shows pupils precisely what they can do and how they can improve, and also makes it possible for teachers to give individual pupils the help that they need.
- Excellent course planning that builds pupils' knowledge and understanding securely over all of their time in the school, supporting very well planned lessons to reinforce and build on pupils' capability.

Areas for improvement

- Increase the availability and teaching of appropriate use of ICT across the curriculum to allow pupils to develop further their judgement of how it can be used to improve their learning in all subjects.

178. By the age of 14, pupils' attainment in ICT is well above average. This is reflected in the assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001 and in the results of the GNVQ Intermediate Part 1 unit taken by Year 9 pupils in the same year. Teachers' assessments over the last three years show that pupils' attainment in ICT has improved greatly over the period. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above the national average in the completed GNVQ Intermediate course, with all students gaining an award and a high proportion gaining merit and distinction awards. This is an improvement over the previous year's performance, reflecting the pupils' rising attainment in ICT.

179. Pupils make very rapid progress during Key Stage 3 and their achievement is very high. Their attainment on entry to the school is below expectation, with many having had little experience of ICT before they came to the school. By Year 9, they have an excellent understanding of the principles and techniques involved in presenting documents for different purposes. Their greatest achievement is to be able to analyse and compare presentations and explain why their work is right for its stated purpose. All pupils create and use spreadsheets for modelling different situations, for example when they examine the possible impact of weather conditions on sales of different products in the school breakfast bar. In some other subjects, they are able to use ICT for the purposes specified in the National Curriculum programmes of study. They measure and, at a high level in relation to their age group, are able to explain the importance of scientific variables. In design and technology, they write instructions to control complex movement of a range of model tools.

180. From the assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Year 9, pupils by the end of Year 11 are achieving at high levels in relation to their previous standards. They understand and are able to discuss the impact of ICT on society. In all aspects of GNVQ, their work is well above average in comparison with the standards required for the course. Pupils seen during the inspection are able to design a relational database for their own purposes with correctly written relationships. Many investigate and solve problems that they come across, while the lower attainers understand why they are having problems, although needing help in finding the mistakes.

181. Throughout the school those with special educational needs, the gifted and talented and those who speak English as an additional language achieve at high levels in the same way as their peers. Teachers are very aware, through excellent assessment procedures, of the needs of all pupils. All of them are given the help, encouragement and challenge that they need.

182. Improvement since the last inspection in the ICT courses has been good, building on standards that were already high. The main area for development, that is the use of ICT across the curriculum, is not the responsibility of the ICT department. Improvement in this aspect has only been satisfactory, with more still to be achieved in some subjects.

183. High achievement in ICT is a direct result of consistently very good planning, leading to good, usually very good, teaching throughout all courses. This is an improvement on the teaching at the time of the last inspection. All staff in the department have excellent knowledge of ICT and of the examination courses. They use this to develop the department's excellent course planning that allows them to reinforce and extend pupils' skills in all lessons. Staff constantly review the success of their lessons across a year group, changing plans to improve the impact of lessons. They have clear objectives as a basis for their planning. Pupils, therefore, know exactly what is expected of them. The department sets its teaching of ICT in contexts that are very relevant to pupils. For example, they teach healthy living and examine prejudice in the Year 7 course, using pupils' personal experience as starting points for discussion. As a result, pupils are very interested in the ideas as well as the skills behind the course. Almost all work very hard. Teachers' attention to the needs of individuals at all levels of attainment, built on detailed assessment of their work, gives pupils confidence that they can do well. They are, therefore, willing to take part in the assessment of their work, and to recognise what they need to do next.

184. The department's excellent management, leading to very effective teamwork, is the main cause of such high quality work. The head of faculty's clear vision for the development of pupils' standards is common to all teachers of ICT. She has very high standards of classroom practice that are now common to the entire department through very good communication based on excellent relationships. Staff are very committed to the pupils' learning, providing supervised access to computer rooms

whenever the school is open so that pupils can continue with their work. In addition, staff organise useful activities such as an outward bound computer course for Year 7 pupils and visits to various commercial organisations to provide examples for GNVQ and AVCE courses. Such a standard of commitment is well supported by the school's senior management. Small class sizes make it possible for all certificate classes to work with one pupil to each computer. The level of resources has improved considerably since the last inspection, with very good technical support to keep the systems in order.

ICT across the curriculum

185. Although departments are using ICT to improve learning in all subjects more than at the time of the last inspection, its use remains uneven as it was then. The school places appropriate emphasis on the use of ICT in the arts. This is very successful in music and art, where students make very good use of the excellent specialist equipment, but in drama the equipment is more commonly used by experts to serve the pupils' practical learning. However, the drama department gives good service to the wider curriculum by using its facilities to support school productions.

186. Where there is a need to teach aspects of the ICT course, the school provides excellent facilities. For example, in science and design and technology, pupils learn measurement and control to a high level, to the benefit of standards in these subjects and in ICT. However, in some other areas, pupils do not use ICT enough to improve their standards through subject-specific ICT applications. The school has developed a useful intranet with contributions from all subjects, but some subjects still find it difficult to gain sufficient access to computer rooms. The use of ICT has not been included as part of the planning in the schemes of work of these subjects.

187. The school provides very good access to Internet facilities, but the filter they now use does not succeed in preventing pupils from gaining access to unsuitable materials. Although the technicians remove such links immediately, this is usually after pupils have reached them.

188. Planning for the growth of ICT across all subjects has been hindered by the disappointment that the school suffered when their staff training provider gave a poor service. Although all staff have good basic computer skills they are not all completely aware of the specific benefits of various uses of ICT in their subjects. They have now dealt with this by arranging alternative training. With continuing improvement in facilities for ICT, this places the school in a good position to allow pupils to use ICT whenever it will help their learning in all subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

French

The quality of provision in French is **good**.

Strengths

- Good teaching and learning and consistency in the presentation of lessons.
- The teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- The very good assessment procedures.
- Very high expectations.
- The very good relationships and the very positive attitudes of pupils.
- Very high standards in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Areas for improvement

- Greater consistency and challenge in the teaching of Year 7.

189. The attainment of pupils in Year 9 is above national expectations for this stage of the course. These standards are slightly lower than the assessments undertaken by teachers in 2001, partly because pupils have not had enough time as yet to attain the highest standards and partly because the

assessments represent both French and German. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils' writing skills are strongest although they are also very confident and competent in spoken French. Most are already beginning to use the immediate future in Year 9 when writing about weekend activities; pupils in the highest set write about Bayonne in the present tense, employing a range of vocabulary and structures and the immediate future, and in the lower sets, pupils practise role plays of several exchanges, about touring a museum, in the present tense. In a lunchtime session, a group of Year 9 pupils performed a rap about the structure of the present tense that was delivered with confidence and aplomb, and which greatly enhanced their understanding of language form and structure. A significant element of this performance was the support and encouragement of the whole team of teachers who came to watch and encourage them.

190. French and German are offered as the first foreign language in alternate years and, as a result, GCSE entries in each language, and results, vary. In 2000, when French was the first foreign language, pupils attained levels that were well above national averages, both for all maintained schools and for girls' schools, with two thirds of those entered gaining A* - C grades. Pupils did better in French than in several of their other subjects. In 2001, when higher attaining pupils took French as a second foreign language, the results were even higher with all but one pupil gaining the higher A*- B grades. Pupils outperformed both their YELLIS predictions and the targets set for them by the school. Over the past three years, standards have improved and are significantly higher than those reported on at the last inspection.

191. Current Year 11 pupils began French as their first foreign language. Their standards are also well above national expectations. Their writing skills are particularly good. They write in the past tense about their holidays and identify key points about lost property played on tape at near normal speed. Average attaining pupils write extended descriptions about their work experience in placements such as 'The Palace Theatre' using perfect, imperfect and past historic tenses. A particularly able group of gifted and talented pupils who took French a year early in Year 10 are now following the AS level course and are already working above national expectations for that course. They talk about aspects of leisure and tourism fluently and discuss issues such as the importance of healthy eating using a wide range of sophisticated French.

192. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, the gifted and talented and the large numbers of pupils with English as a foreign language, achieve well at both key stages. They build on their strong base of knowledge and make measurable progress in extending their understanding of the language. They develop their skills equally well in speaking, listening, reading and writing. They are extremely well motivated and present their work very well.

193. Teaching in French is good. At Key Stage 3, it varies from satisfactory to very good and is good overall. At Key Stage 4, it ranges from excellent to good and is very good overall. Strengths of the teaching include good subject knowledge, very good planning, very good classroom management and focused day-to-day assessment, which tells pupils clearly how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. There is good development of literacy skills and pupils have appropriate access to ICT. A major feature of the teaching is the consistent way in which teachers present lessons and their very high expectations. In the best lesson, which was in Year 11, pupils made excellent progress because teacher and pupils worked together to share expertise and knowledge, which encouraged the pupils to try out structures and take risks with language. There is, however, some lack of challenge and pace in Year 7, partly because teachers share groups and do not have full ownership of what they are teaching and partly because there is some immediate translation of the French, resulting in weaker speaking and listening skills. As a result of the good and very good teaching, learning is good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Pupils build up skills and knowledge quickly and soon cope with extended structures such as past and future tenses.

194. Curriculum provision is good and meets the needs of individual pupils effectively. Pupils begin French or German as the main foreign language on alternate years but can study the other language in Year 9. Both GCSE and AS level examinations are offered as early entries to gifted and talented pupils. Latin is provided as a before school and lunchtime course and a wide range of extra-curricular activities helps to develop pupils' confidence and skills. The department also has responsibility for ensuring that those pupils capable of sitting an examination in their home language do so. They discharge this duty

effectively and a significant number of pupils are entered for a GCSE examination in their home language every year and attain good results. Schemes of work are good and is a variety of useful subject specific policies and strategies to support the teaching and learning, including ICT and reading for pleasure. Within this good overall provision, however, statutory requirements are not fully met in terms of disapplication at Key Stage 4. Despite the very high standards at Key Stage 3, the school offers languages as an option at Key Stage 4, which resulted in almost 40 per cent of pupils choosing not to study a language this year. These pupils have not been properly disapplied.

195. Teachers assess pupils' work conscientiously and follow departmental procedures well. All teachers keep extremely detailed information on each individual pupil and use it often to inform the next stage of learning. As a result of this careful tracking, it has been possible to extract a pupil from the lower French set to follow German as a second foreign language because it was recognised that although she is not of the highest ability in French, she has potential in German. Resources are good although there is not enough access to technology such as video conferencing and satellite to promote communication with other countries.

196. The head of department, who has responsibility for French and German, manages both subjects well; teachers work together effectively. The main areas for development are to ensure that the whole department meets together to discuss subject specific issues and to monitor teaching more formally to ensure greater consistency. Since the last inspection there has been a significant rise in standards at Key Stages 3 and 4. There has been a major improvement in teaching and learning. The schemes of work are better and now contain explicit references to the National Curriculum programmes of study. Assessment is very good. Display is better and supports both the learning and celebrates pupils' achievements. There are more textbooks at Key Stage 4 and better use of ICT and reading for pleasure. Although the curriculum remains a strength, it is not quite as strong as it was then. There has been some reduction in numbers studying two languages in Key Stage 3 and also in numbers studying one language at Key Stage 4. Italian is not now offered.

German

The quality of provision in German is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very high quality teaching and learning overall.
- Very high achievement.
- Very good relationships and very positive attitudes to learning of pupils.
- Very high standards in listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Very good subject knowledge.
- Very good assessment procedures.
- Very high expectations.

Areas for improvement

- None were identified.

197. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 9, who have just begun German as a second language, is well above expectations for this stage of a second language course and similar to the assessments undertaken by teachers in 2001. Pupils have made a very good start and achieve very well. In three months, they have mastered topics such as school subjects, likes and dislikes, and are able to identify key points about them from a tape played slowly. Their listening skills are of a high order and their speaking, reading and writing skills are good. Higher attaining pupils have particularly good oral skills, as seen in a Year 8 group of higher attaining pupils who performed role-plays about visiting the doctor and enhanced them with good use of intonation and dramatic effect.

198. The GCSE results in 2000 were very high, with the small number entered all gaining grades A*-C. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest A*/A grades was significantly higher than the national average and those pupils entered for German did better than in any other subject. In 2001, when a much higher proportion of pupils was entered for German, the results were slightly lower; nevertheless, over half of those entered gained the higher grades of A*, A or B. As in French, pupils outperformed both

their YELLIS predictions and the targets set for them by the school.

199. Current Year 11 pupils began German in Year 9 as their second foreign language. Their standards are above national expectations for this stage of the course. Pupils read well and identify key points from a passage on daily routine. They respond to the teacher's effective questioning by giving several sentences on daily routine which include a variety of times and activities. A small number of pupils have been identified as fast track learners and are already working on AS level work. They are able to identify key points about lost property, spoken at near normal speed. In the fast track Year 10 group, pupils have very well developed listening skills, which enable them to follow the teacher's fast, colloquial German successfully.

200. The achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, the gifted and talented and the large numbers of pupils with English as an additional language, is very good at both key stages. Pupils build on their strong base of knowledge and make measurable progress in extending their knowledge of the language. They develop their skills equally well in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Attitudes are particularly positive and excellent in the Year 9 beginner classes, where pupils make a very good start to learning a new language and progress very well in a short period of time.

201. Teaching overall in German is very good. The teaching at Key Stage 3 varies from satisfactory to very good and is good overall. At Key Stage 4, it ranges from excellent to good and is very good overall. Strengths of the teaching include particularly good linguistic skills, very good planning, effective use of time and resources and extremely positive relationships between teachers and pupils. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, the teacher's pleasant, humorous manner and challenging pace meant that pupils made very good progress in understanding the topic of school and in their use of the vocabulary and structures, and thoroughly enjoyed themselves in doing so. In a Year 10 lesson, a higher attaining group made very good progress as a result of the teacher's established routines, excellent German and very effective questioning, which ensured that every pupil was fully on task and comfortable in the totally German environment. As a result of the good and very good teaching, learning is also good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Pupils develop very good speaking and listening skills quickly and are soon conversing with the teacher in German themselves.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **excellent**.

Strengths

- High standards achieved by pupils by the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
- The consistent standard of high quality teaching for all pupils.
- Excellent lesson planning linked to detailed tracking and monitoring of pupil progress.
- Wealth and range of high quality musical opportunities given to all pupils.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing the amount of research and listening material for pupils' individual use, especially for examination classes.
- The quality and variety of teaching and rehearsal spaces mean that practical work is restricted.

202. The assessments undertaken by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001 indicate that pupils' attainment was significantly above national expectations. These high standards are mirrored by the work seen during the inspection. These assessments have been well above national figures for the last three years, indicating that standards are improving. Pupils' performance is monitored regularly, which ensures that individual progress is tracked. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and those who are gifted and talented are similarly monitored and make similar progress to that of their peers, achieving very well in relation to their earlier attainment.

203. The standards achieved by pupils who study music for GCSE examination have consistently improved over the last three years. In 2000, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was

significantly above the national average. The results improved further in 2001, with all pupils achieving grades A*-C and achieving higher grades than predicted. The numbers of pupils choosing to study music in Year 10 and Year 11 has increased and this year a 'fast track' group of Year 10 pupils is covering the examination requirements in a year. These pupils have been identified from the careful tracking undertaken at the end of Year 9.

204. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are keen to do well. They support each other in ensemble work and improve their musical skills and knowledge. Pupils' musical strengths are well known to the staff, expectations are very high and they are given the opportunity to perform at different levels. This approach was successful in a Year 8 lesson where the gifted and talented pupils were given a more intricate melodic part to learn during the lesson. They then performed with the rest of the class, many of whom had also learnt interlocking rhythm patterns successfully. Pupils in Year 9 discovered how different music could change the emphasis of a film sequence. One pupil described the tension in the music where the beat was irregular, commenting 'it makes you curious to know what will happen next'. This clearly showed how the pupil's good knowledge and understanding were then applied to a new situation.

205. The consistency of high quality teaching is a strength of the department and is characterised by excellent planning and assessment to ensure that all pupils achieve well. The teaching overall is very good and ranges from good to excellent. In the very best lessons, pupils consolidate and improve their skills particularly well so that by the end of the lesson they are able to perform confidently. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to illustrate lessons and give pupils a clear understanding of music from other cultures. In a Year 8 lesson on Gamelan music, pupils exercised great care to remember the religious significance of the instruments and the music by not walking over the instruments. Pupils in Year 11 used language to describe music from different parts of Africa and then put this theoretical knowledge into practice as they worked and achieved a very good performance of Kpanlogo cross rhythms. Their understanding was increased by the opportunity to use authentic instruments and correct drumming techniques. These examples show the considerable contribution made by the department to the spiritual and cultural development of the pupils. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and they use mnemonics to help remember correct spellings. Pupils evaluate their work regularly, listening to class recordings before writing descriptive evaluations and setting themselves new targets. The quality of this writing varies: for those pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language, the writing lacks specific detail and the use of key words. Their understanding and use of numeracy are developed carefully within the department and links to musical composition made when appropriate. The department is extremely well-resourced with computers and music programs. These are used regularly by all pupils especially those in Years 10 and 11.

206. Leadership and management of the department are outstanding, with all members of the department contributing their individual strengths and professional expertise to specific areas. Departmental documentation is extremely thorough and includes a detailed programme for student teachers in the department. The taster instrumental lessons give musical opportunities to all pupils, which they and their parents value. The quality and variety of extra-curricular activities are excellent. However, despite the department's accommodation being used to its maximum potential, there is a restricted number of practice and teaching rooms available. One classroom, that is a thoroughfare from other parts of the school, is too small for group work. Other practice rooms lack ventilation and become rather stuffy. The teachers give freely of their time to organise and run high quality ensembles and workshops, which benefit the pupils. Opportunities are constantly sought to give pupils the highest quality musical experiences at all times.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good leadership and management of the department.
- Teachers' commitment to the social and moral development of pupils.
- Very good GCSE results in physical education and dance.

- Very good extra-curricular provision and take up.

Areas for improvement

- Further development of invasion games in Key Stages 3 and 4.

207. Overall standards in physical education are well above average. These standards reflect the very good teaching and the positive response of the pupils. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 is above the standard expected nationally and they are achieving well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. This confirms the assessments made by teachers at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2001, which showed that pupils' attainment was above average. By the end of Year 11, standards of the pupils following the examination courses are well above national expectations. Pupils make rapid progress during the key stage and achieve highly by the age of 16.

208. The proportion of pupils achieving grades A*-C in the GCSE examinations in dance in 2000 was well above national averages and showed a further improvement in 2001. In physical education, the results for the small number of pupils taking the examination in Year 10 were well above the national average, with all gaining grade A*-C. Comparison of pupils' attainment on entry to the course and the standards achieved in the GCSE examination shows that pupils make very good progress through Years 10 and 11. The attainment of pupils in core physical education lessons is in line with national expectations. This difference in levels of attainment in Years 10 and 11 is due to a lack of opportunities for pupils to develop appropriate understanding and performance of invasion games. The lack of access to adequate outdoor facilities is also a contributory factor. There is no timetabled provision for any physical education or recreation in the sixth form. The attainment of different groups of pupils is in line with the picture expected nationally.

209. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 3. They develop competence in basic gymnastic, dance and netball techniques. The development of their knowledge and understanding is enhanced by their ability to work co-operatively in pairs and small groups when developing basic techniques throughout the key stage. However, activities do not always allow pupils to develop their basic techniques sufficiently so that they are transferred into the game situation. During Key Stage 4, pupils make very good progress. Their continued good progress of the development of basic techniques, as in dance, enables them to use basic movement to compose sequences creatively. They show confidence when performing these sequences and also when observing each other's work in order to evaluate performance. There are no significant differences between the progress made by different groups of pupils although pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress. The progress of higher attaining pupils is enhanced by the use of activities that consistently challenge their understanding and performance.

210. The overall quality of teaching is very good. The strengths of the teaching include good planning based on a secure knowledge of the subject, well developed organisational skills, positive interaction with pupils and a commitment to pupils' moral and social development. This means that pupils are able to learn basic skills through appropriate activities and in an environment that encourages learning. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are in place and are used effectively so that teachers have a clear understanding of the progress pupils are making. Assessment is used appropriately to inform both curriculum and lesson planning. Teachers are aware of the needs of each individual pupil and make sure that tasks, resources and outcomes enable them to make progress at their own level. Very good use is made of planning, which enables pupils to develop their understanding and use of physical education terminology.

211. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They enjoy physical education and have a responsible attitude and approach to their work. Participation levels are very good. Pupils concentrate well and therefore remain focused on the task. They work effectively as individuals and also co-operate well when working in pairs and small groups. Behaviour is very good. They develop good relationships with one another and with their teachers. Pupils are able to take responsibility both during lesson time and during extra-curricular activities.

212. Leadership and management in physical education are very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the future. This means that annual improvement planning is focused on raising

standards. The head of department has secure knowledge of how the curriculum is taught across the department. The department has a strong philosophy of care for its pupils, which emphasises their social and moral development. Teachers are very well organised and the department handbook provides effective guidance on schemes of work, lesson planning and safety matters. Indoor facilities are adequate for the curriculum. There are very good resources, with good systems for maintenance and storage. The physical education curriculum meets statutory requirements. The department recognises the importance of extra-curricular activities, which enhance learning. Some non-specialist teachers also help with clubs and teams. The involvement of pupils in extra-curricular activities is very good, with some progressing to local and area teams and competitions. The school has had success with teams winning tournaments. Many pupils take part in dance productions, both within school and in London. The department has made good progress in raising standards since the last inspection. It has reviewed the provision for games, as part of the National Curriculum, at Key Stage 3 and 4. The head of department is aware of the need for further developments but recognises that there are external difficulties in achieving them.

DRAMA

Overall, the provision for drama is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good: it is well planned and reflects strong subject knowledge and a good understanding of the way pupils learn.
- Relationships are very good: there is a shared commitment to high standards, pupils are well supported and enjoy the subject.
- Examination results are consistently above average, with pupils achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment.
- The curriculum is enriched by extensive opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of activities.

Areas for improvement

- In some areas of management, more formal records need to be maintained.
- Assessment procedures should be developed further, using prior attainment to set targets that are known to pupils.

213. Pupils' performance in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were well above the national average, and were similarly so in 2001. Nearly all pupils achieved grade A*-C. Results in the previous three years have been consistently above average and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils achieve better results than predicted. Observation in lessons and a scrutiny of samples of pupils' work confirm that standards in both key stages are above average and that pupils achieve well.

214. By the age of 14, pupils' attainment is above average, as described at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are able to work more independently, and are using a variety of performance techniques to explore ideas, issues, texts and meanings. They are developing a range of vocal skills, such as pause, pace, inflection, and projection, and in their movement skills, gesture, pause and stillness. In a lesson using extracts from *Twelfth Night*, pupils were able to use their movement and voice skills to interpret the text and illustrate their understanding to an audience. Pupils are increasingly critical and evaluative of performance, and have some appreciation of the impact of their own performance upon an audience. They are able to sustain a role, and show an imaginative use of dramatic techniques. Higher attaining pupils are more perceptive in their critical analysis and evaluation of performance, and their interpretation of text, whilst lower attaining pupils are less at ease with physical movement. All pupils speak with clarity, and are familiar with and use technical language. However, voice projection is insufficiently developed.

215. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils are using vocal and movement skills more appropriately, with a greater degree of control and ease of movement. They exhibit an increased knowledge and understanding of theatrical convention, and have developed accordingly their analysis and evaluation of performance. Pupils, in their devising of a performance, are able to understand the nature of ensemble and image work, and how it contrasts with naturalism. They are becoming aware of the impact of sound

and visual images, and are using music and symbolism to enhance their work imaginatively. Higher attaining pupils have a more sophisticated understanding of the devising process, and perceive how focusing upon a 'high point' will illuminate the remainder of a devised piece. Pupils, in both written and oral work, use technical language appropriately. Standards in Key Stage 4 have risen since the last inspection, and are now well above average.

216. Overall, the teaching is very good. Teachers' classroom management and organisation are a strong feature in all lessons. Their knowledge and understanding of the subject are good. Planning is effective, not only to meet the needs of the curriculum, but also to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their needs, are fully engaged in the learning taking place. Consequently, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language progress very well in both key stages. The teachers' perceptive and sensitive questioning of pupils about their work ensures that all pupils are engaged in the learning process and encouraged to develop their knowledge and understanding. Lesson objectives are made clear at the start of each lesson and the learning outcomes evaluated at the end. The commitment to and encouragement of high standards is a feature in many lessons. Where teaching is particularly good, pupils are persistently challenged to work intellectually, creatively and productively, and the lesson progresses at a brisk pace. Although there was little written work to scrutinise, the marking of pupils' written work enables them to understand how well they are doing and how they might improve.

217. Overall, learning is very good. Pupils enjoy the subject and work with enthusiasm and commitment. Relationships are excellent. Pupils respond to the encouragement and challenge of the teacher, and appreciate the support and opportunities made available to them. They work well together. Often, pupils with English as an additional language take a lead in ensemble work. Pupils listen to each other's views sensibly and constructively, applaud instinctively performance and evaluate it critically and sensitively. A Year 10 class, focusing on a central theme in a piece of devised drama, and creating scenes through improvisation and mime, were perceptive in their critical analysis, recognising the changing emotions through the mime, and evaluative of each individual's contribution. A Year 11 class were able to build upon what they had experienced in National Theatre workshops to understand the nature of ensemble and image work, and how it contrasts with naturalism. Across both key stages, pupils make good progress in their acquisition of performance skills, their knowledge and understanding of theatrical forms and conventions and in their analysis and evaluation of theatrical performance. This results from the quality of teaching and from the excellent relationships between teachers and pupils, as well as between pupils themselves. Drama makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. For example, pupils in a Year 10 class, developing symbolism in devised performance, were using the issue of anorexia to explore moral and social attitudes in people's relationships. There are good procedures for the regular assessment of pupils' work, which inform pupils how they are doing and how they might improve. However, these need further development to establish targets that are shared with pupils.

218. The department is well led. There is clear direction for the work and development of the subject. The aims and values of drama and theatre studies are clearly identified. The schemes of work outline the content and progression of the work, and include explicit reference to the department's contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Relationships are good, staff work well together, meet regularly and have a shared commitment to high standards. The department reflects the ethos and policies of the school. The curriculum is both broad and balanced, although time is limited in Years 8 and 9. It is enriched by the extensive extra-curricular activities offered to pupils, which include theatre visits and workshops, drama clubs and extension work, as well as opportunities for performance. There is equality and access for all pupils, with guidance on support for lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The differences in pupils' cultural experiences are recognised and pupils are encouraged to reflect their own cultural identity in their devised performance, as well as understanding other cultural influences. The monitoring of teaching and learning is undertaken regularly, but is insufficiently recorded, as are departmental meetings. Accommodation and resources are suitable for the requirements of the curriculum, although the use of ICT is insufficiently developed. The department is within the faculty of Performing Arts and makes a significant contribution to teaching and learning across the curriculum. In accordance with the requirements of Specialist Arts College status, it also engages extensively in outreach work.

PERFORMING ARTS

Overall, the quality of provision in performing arts is **very good**.

Strengths

- High standards are achieved by pupils throughout Key Stage 3.
- Teaching is good and at times excellent.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular activities offered by the department are excellent.
- The faculty is well managed and the members of the faculty play a significant role in enhancing the quality of teaching across the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Practical work is restricted by the size of the teaching spaces.

219. The granting of Performing Arts College (PAC) status has brought considerable benefits to the pupils and staff of the school. The PAC funding is used to good effect. Pupils are able to work with many professional artists in music, drama and dance. Specialist rooms have been created including a recording studio and a sixth form teaching space. In Key Stage 3, in addition to drama, dance and music being taught as discrete subjects, pupils also study performing arts. Within this subject, drama and music are taught. Pupils make very good progress and it is a strong feature of the school, which is having a considerable impact on achievement in other curricular areas. Pupils extend their oral ability and their ability to work independently and in groups. The outcome is that they make significant gains in their self-confidence and self-awareness and use performing arts and performance as a tool for learning in all curricular areas and to develop emotional intelligence. Performing arts were not inspected as a faculty at the time of the last inspection.

220. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' attainment in performing arts is above the national expectation. All pupils by the age of 14 are assessed against the criteria for the London College of Music and Media (LCM) examinations in Music Theatre, Drama and Acting. Many enter the examination and a significant number achieve Honours. Internal assessments indicate that others achieve the criteria for passing these examinations. An increasing proportion of pupils are entering GCSE examinations in music, drama and dance.

221. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 in performing arts. Pupils in Year 7 performed effectively, for example, in presenting an extract from the witches in *Macbeth* which they have learned. Pupils project well, and their speech is clearly articulated as they work individually and chorically. They sing songs of increasing difficulty and their singing is joyful, accurate and tuneful. In Year 8, pupils prepare duologues and develop excellent understanding of opposing characters through physical and vocal skills, including an accurate use of accent. Within performing arts, all pupils describe, analyse and evaluate their own and others' work using subject specific vocabulary well. They work together co-operatively and are a very good audience. Pupils make progress in developing their creative performance skills in Year 9. For example, pupils perform duologues, including a scene from *Mother Said I Never Should* by Charlotte Keatley, developing their movement skills to improve their stage presence. In music, pupils develop their theoretical knowledge through performing songs about rhythm, note value, pitch, pace and structure. In all areas, skills are developed and consolidated effectively. In subjects across the curriculum, performing arts skills are used to raise the academic achievement of pupils: they successfully communicate ideas through dance and music and use drama to develop empathy and aid their conceptual understanding.

222. The teaching in performing arts is very good overall and occasionally excellent. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge is shown by the effective use of questioning to involve all pupils in learning. Very high expectations are matched to the abilities and talents of all pupils. The very high quality of interaction between teachers and pupils, the positive relationships and enthusiasm lead to high levels of motivation and responsibility. Planning is thorough and teachers' clear objectives are shared with pupils. The brisk pace of lessons and the adjustment of lessons to meet particular needs, combined with constructive criticism, praise and encouragement, increase pupils' self-esteem and motivation. Homework is used for consolidating learning and learning texts. Work is regularly assessed although there is no formal base-line identified on entry in Year 7. The very good teaching and the prevailing

ethos of the school ensures that all pupils make good progress in performing arts. Where this good practice has been shared with other teachers, it has influenced work in other subjects including mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages and business studies.

223. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have extremely positive attitudes to performing arts and they work with enthusiasm and concentration. Behaviour is very good and pupils work well in groups and as a whole class. Their relationships with one another and the teachers are good. Pupils listen supportively to each other's performances. In group work, some adopt leadership roles: for example, in a music lesson when the class were rehearsing movement, individual pupils directed the rehearsals. Pupils respond well to this responsibility. Extra-curricular and extension activities are central to the work of the school. Pupils throughout the school take part in performing arts activities throughout the year, with at least 33 performances taking place in the last year. Pupils also take part in a full programme of workshops with professional arts workers and visit professional performances throughout the year. These activities are a strong feature of the department and all teachers are involved in their organisation. Teachers assess pupils both formally and informally and have begun to work more closely across the art forms, basing this work on specific performing arts criteria and the requirements of the National Curriculum. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and individual pupils are supported to achieve to the best of their ability.

224. Accommodation for the performing arts is adequate although not spacious. Some practical sessions are cramped by the size of the rooms, although teachers manage this well. The department is well managed. Each member of the department has clear targets set, which are monitored regularly as part of the Arts College bid. The department plays a large and successful part in the development of teaching across the curriculum.

PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
<i>The AS results are not included in this report pending the final outcome of the examination courses.</i>		n/a		n/a		n/a	

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	19	100	87	47	43	6.8	5.8
Chemistry	11	100	90	64	43	7.0	5.9
Biology	10	90	88	60	34	7.3	5.3
Physics	16	88	88	38	40	6.0	5.7
Design and technology	7	100	91	57	30	7.7	5.4
Economics	11	100	89	64	36	7.5	5.5
Art and Design	6	100	96	67	46	8.3	6.6
Music	2	100	93	0	35	6.0	5.7
Drama	5	100	99	80	38	8.8	6.6
Performing arts	4	100	93	25	31	7.0	5.5
Geography	5	100	92	40	38	6.8	5.7
Sociology	6	100	86	67	35	7.3	5.3
Psychology	13	100	87	69	34	7.4	5.3
English	18	100	93	56	37	7.0	5.9
French	3	100	89	0	38	5.3	5.6
German	3	100	91	67	40	7.3	5.8
Other languages	4	75	93	25	56	4.7	6.8

Vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit or distinction		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
GNVQ (Advanced) Art and design	5	100	n/a	100	n/a	14.4	12.2

GNVQ (Advanced) Business	12	92	n/a	92	n/a	13.5	10.5
GNVQ (Advanced) ICT	5	100	n/a	100	n/a	13.2	10.0

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

225. The inspection covered modules in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics. Further mathematics was also inspected. The three students on this course in Year 13 are learning very well as the very good day-to-day assessment ensures they progress as well as they can. Standards for them are close to the higher GCE A-level grade C in this advanced course.

Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Strengths

- A-level standards have improved from broadly average at the last inspection to well above average in the lessons seen in this inspection.
- Teaching is very good with very good learning resulting from the very good challenges in the lessons.
- The excellent quality of leadership and management of the subject are reflected in the excellent improvement made since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

- None were identified.

226. The mathematics department is doing very well for its sixth form students. The A-level examination results in 2001 were well above the national average. All students entered achieved at least a pass grade and almost half gained the higher grades of A and B. Standards have risen sharply since 2000 when they were broadly average. The results in the AS examinations in 2001 were well above average with a majority of students attaining grades A or B.

227. Students are achieving well in the sixth form when account is taken of their GCSE performance. The overall quality of students' written and oral work is well above average. Male and female students do equally well, as do students with special educational needs, those who need extra support in learning in English and those from different ethnic backgrounds. They have a good understanding of differentiation in pure mathematics and are able to relate past learning to new processes very well through the challenges in the teaching. Students meeting new work on vectors need only a short period of time with basic definitions before they apply this new knowledge to solving problems. Firm foundations are laid for future development. Students in Year 12 have made a good start to their A-level course and standards are already above average relative to their average levels for entry to an A-level course. In mechanics, for example, they are able to resolve a force into two components at right angles with understanding. Work in statistics is neatly recorded, showing the excellent attitude students have to their work. They discuss their work very well in small groups and this is a significant factor in the effectiveness of their learning.

228. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The very good challenges to students' learning flow from the problems they have to solve, and also from the discussion emerging from the teachers' very good subject knowledge where students are challenged to think. For example, a typical question in statistics - *What does equilibrium mean?* - resulted in a set of correct equations which students then used to extend their own problem solving skills. The teaching is quietly enthusiastic and ensures that tasks are appropriately challenging while at the same time providing confidence-boosting methods for routine work such as integration by substitution seen in a Year 12 lesson. Day-to-day assessment is very good, and the marking at times sets out well written solutions to problems to help students in their learning.

229. The mathematics department is managed in an excellent manner. The teachers enjoy their work and work well as a team. Monitoring is excellent, following up the evaluation and development of teaching, for example, to check on improvement. The outcome is a consistency in the teaching, which has a considerable impact on standards.

SCIENCES

230. The focus of the inspection was on biology, with some sampling of physics and chemistry. In physics, considerable staffing difficulties affected the A-level results in 2001 but over the previous three years students did as well as or better than predicted. The numbers taking the examination have been too small for a meaningful analysis to be made. Two lessons were observed which were satisfactory. The school has put measures in place for current Year 13 students to compensate for some lack of teaching last year. In chemistry, one lesson was observed, which was good. Standards in 2001 were above average, showing an improvement over the results in 2000 when they were average.

Biology

Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **good**.

Strengths

- The significant improvement in results in the A-level examination in 2001.
- The new strategies to assist students in organising their work and monitoring their progress.
- The use of data for monitoring student progress and target setting for individual students.

Areas for improvement

- The use of more focused marking to give specific ways in which the work can be raised to the next level.
- Continue to develop the schemes of work to the same standard and format as the revised GCSE modules.

231. The results of the A-level examinations in 2001 were well above average. All students gained a pass grade and three-fifths achieved the highest grades of A or B. This is a significant improvement over the school's performance in the last three years, which has generally been below the national average. The results of the students taking the AS course were more variable but were in line with the students' predicted targets.

232. Standards of work of the current Year 13 students are above average. Students show a good understanding of the conflict of the demands on agricultural land by farmers and conservationists, and are confident in taking the roles of the various parties in discussions. Standards of work of the current Year 12 students are broadly average. They are coming to terms with the working of leaf stomata and applying their knowledge about enzymes to historical scientific research in order to plan their own experiments. Students are confident in handling apparatus. Students use ICT, especially in the coursework where full use is made of data analysis and graphical forms of presentation. Students are working at levels at least in line with the predictions based on their GCSE results and some are exceeding them, which represents good progress.

234. The courses provided at AS and A-level level show a suitable progression from GCSE work and recent modifications to the coursework element and the timing of the fieldwork have led to improved attainment in these elements. Additional mathematics lessons are included for students needing a greater level of understanding of statistics. The accommodation is satisfactory but at times the lack of laboratory space impedes progress in that the curriculum needs to be modified and so time is lost.

235. The quality of teaching is good. Strengths within teaching are the teachers' good subject knowledge that is used to develop comments and answer questions clearly, and the reference to work that has been covered previously. The good relationships between teachers and students set a positive environment for learning. There is a good link between the theoretical and practical aspects of the course. Homework is used well to consolidate learning. Students work steadily, show interest in the topics and appreciate the transition process from the demands of GCSE to AS level work. Care has been taken to integrate new students into school effectively through the rapid development of their scientific practical skills and learning strategies suitable for the subject. At times, a slight loss of pace in lessons results in a decrease in students' interest and a failure to complete the expected work in the allocated time. Occasionally, teachers have a tendency to provide the correct answers rather than

developing the students' responses.

236. Much of the work in students' folders consists of duplicated sheets with variable amounts of annotation and highlighting. Past examination questions are frequently used and these are marked carefully. Comments on the quality of the work are usually given along with comments to stimulate further thought. However, the comments rarely specify what is needed to lift the work to the next grade. Students do not always act upon comments made by staff and so opportunities to improve work are missed. Higher attaining students make more use of annotation and keep more accurate and detailed records of their own work and grades received. Students in Year 13 make greater use of adding information to answers and responding to staff comments, showing progress in their learning skills.

237. The leadership and management of the department are good. The new head of department has implemented strategies to raise standards and the impact of these is evident in the A-level results in 2001. These strategies include a student self-record form, outline syllabus sheets containing self-evaluation of students' understanding and coursework cover sheets of guidance. These enable the students' progress to be carefully monitored and tracked by both staff and students, and have contributed to the good departmental improvement since the last inspection. The department has a good base on which to improve further.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

238. Work in design and technology (resistant materials) was sampled. In the A-level examinations in 2001, the results were well above average, with more than a half gaining grades A or B and all attaining at least a grade C. This represents a very significant improvement over previous years, when the results were below average. Two lessons were observed. In both lessons, students showed a high degree of commitment and the capacity to work independently. They have well-developed skills in designing and making and in the analysis of products. The quality of teaching is good. Work is well organised and imaginative. Students respond well to the teachers' questioning and show a good capacity for critical thinking and purposeful research.

BUSINESS

239. The focus was on economics but two lessons in AVCE Business were also sampled. The results in 2001 were well above average, showing a considerable improvement over the previous year. Two lessons were observed, one of which was good and the other very good. In one, very good explanations and prompts to stimulate their thinking enabled students to make very good gains in their understanding of different management styles.

Economics

Overall, the quality of provision in economics is **very good**.

Strengths

- Standards are well above average and students are achieving well in relation to their earlier attainment.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students have good attitudes to their work and make better than expected progress.

Areas for improvement

- None were identified.

240. The school's results in the A-level examinations in 2001 were well above average, with all students gaining grades A-E and nearly two-thirds gaining the highest grades of A or B. The current performance of students in Year 13 indicates that the high pass rate is likely to continue in 2002, with a high proportion gaining very good grades. In the AS examinations in 2001, all students gained pass grades, with three-quarters of them attaining the highest grades.

241. Standards in Year 13 are well above average when compared to course expectations. Students demonstrate high levels of achievement in terms of their evaluation of national economic conditions and policy, and their understanding of the Common Agricultural Policy. Standards are not quite as high in Year 12, and are more in line with and sometimes above course expectations. Students are grappling with appreciating shifts in the supply and demand curve, and are developing an understanding of capacity growth in the national economy. The majority of students understood these concepts and are able to conceptualise different situations within the production possibility curve.

242. The teaching is at least good and in most cases is very good and occasionally excellent. All teachers have good subject knowledge and of the course requirements at sixth form level. The impact of this is that students have a good understanding of the subject and that lessons and learning are well structured. The defining characteristic of the one excellent lesson was the rich interaction between the teacher and students and the students themselves. The challenging and lively teaching incorporated an active approach to learning. Students were eager participants, simulating the arguments between stakeholders in the Common Agricultural Policy and evaluating policy. The teacher effectively helped their learning by identifying relevant concepts raised by the students and also introducing others as appropriate. The quality of comments on marked work has a positive impact on attainment. Some examples of marking are excellent: for instance, the work of one Year 12 student in the previous year contained almost more helpful comments than the student's written work. The teacher's comments on the script were not off-putting but clearly gave the student useful guidance on how to progress.

243. Students in Year 13 are confident, independent learners. Those in Year 12 are less confident but evidence from teachers and the scrutiny of work from last year suggest that their confidence will develop. In discussions, students demonstrate a high regard for teachers and an interest in their studies. Many students are involved in some sort of subject-related extra-curricular activity, for example the Bank of England competition 'Target Two Point Five' and Young Enterprise. Some also attend a Saturday school at the London School of Economics.

244. The learning opportunities within economics are very good. The curriculum is accessible to those students who are studying it and great efforts are made to ensure that learning opportunities are effective: for instance, the provision of past papers on the school intranet. The department has taken a positive step in offering economics at Key Stage 4 to enable a smoother progression into the sixth form course and improved attainment once on it.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

245. Work in AVCE ICT was sampled. Two lessons were seen. In one very good lesson, the task set showed a typical feature of the department, that is, very clear awareness of how to help students to improve aspects that they find difficult. Excellent teaching in the other lesson highlighted the teacher's awareness of the exact learning needs of individual students. These high standards are supported by excellent departmental course planning, including detailed and precise assessment of students' learning. The school's results in 2001 were above average, showing a considerable improvement over the results in the previous year.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

246. The school makes no provision for courses in this curriculum area.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

247. The school makes no provision for courses in this curriculum area.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

248. The focus of the inspection was on art and design, drama and performing arts, although music and music technology were sampled. Music and music technology are studied at AS and A level. The numbers studying these subjects have risen considerably in the past year. In 2001, only a small

number of students were entered for the AS examinations in the two subjects and all achieved in line with expectations, with the higher results achieved in music technology. These students have all continued to A-level. Three lessons were observed. In music, students demonstrate good subject knowledge of four-part chorale harmonisation and different styles of music. For example, two students in a Year 12 lesson showed very good understanding of jazz when presenting and performing information using ICT to fellow students. This lesson was videoed so that students could evaluate critically their work. Music technology students benefit from a very good range of equipment and are competent users when experimenting, inputting and organising different sounds.

Art and Design

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Excellent teaching leads to high standards of achievement and well above average examination results.
- Excellent leadership and management, and the deployment of staff according to their strengths, create a sense of teamwork and contribute to the very high standards overall.
- The use of assessment procedures, target setting and careers advice provide every student with effective support.
- The breadth of the curriculum and extensive extra-curricular activities, which enhance students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- None were identified.

249. Standards overall in the sixth form are very high. In 2001, the results in the GNVQ Advanced awards and A-level examinations were well above average, with two-thirds of students gaining the highest awards and grades. The small number of students entered for the AS examinations taken at the end of Year 12 all gained the highest grades of A or B. The work of these students, in folders, work journals and on display, is of a very high standard.

250. Students' achievement overall is outstanding. In both the new AVCE and AS courses in Year 12, students consolidate, and then build rapidly on, their prior learning. Students quickly achieve a very good understanding of course objectives and of the importance of exploring independent lines of enquiry. This means that by the time they reach Year 13, students are able to demonstrate self-confidence and maturity in their ability to shape the direction of their own work. They also learn to explain and evaluate their ideas and intentions with clarity. An excellent example of this was in a discussion held with a Year 13 AVCE student. She talked with enthusiasm about her own interpretation of the theme 'Fish' and how, following her investigations into the broader aspects of the theme, she had chosen to focus on ideas for incorporating newsprint and typography in her work in order to design and make a waistcoat based on 'fish and chips'. Her sketchbook, numerous large sheets of annotated drawings and exploratory designs in a range of media, and the nearly completed waistcoat, represented a very high level of achievement. Another example of how the opportunities for students to think and to act independently contribute well to their achievement was shown in a discussion with a Year 13 AVCE student who had chosen to use a computer to design his own typeface. He demonstrated, through conversation and sketches, how he had wanted to use serifs in a way that related more to the visual imagery in his designs than those on the already installed fonts. Not only was this an example of how students are able to make discerning use of the applications of ICT in art and design, his initiative and his ability to explain his reasons using a critical vocabulary were an indication of how the teaching allows students to achieve well in their work and to evolve as young adults with their own well thought out values.

251. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Teachers set very high levels of challenge in their planning of assignments and there is an emphasis on the reinforcement of skills and techniques. New and demanding experiences are provided through a broad range of curriculum experiences and a variety of teaching styles. In a Year 12 life drawing lesson, for example, students

were required to maintain a very fast pace in their work. The dynamic teaching and the constant emphasis on close observation in the teacher's rapidly delivered instructions caused students to concentrate intensely, giving them no time to think about any possible lack of confidence but only about the importance of looking, thinking and responding as one co-ordinated process of drawing. By the end of this lesson, the progress they made in their work, including that of lower attaining students, was first rate. The teachers' enthusiasm for their subject, their subject expertise and the rapport they have with students have a significant impact on the learning and achievement in the sixth form. In an excellent Year 12 lesson, where students were learning about clay modelling techniques, the teacher's skilful demonstration of the techniques and her enjoyment of what she was doing, were transmitted to the students in a way that captured their attention. Their answers to the teacher's questions showed that they were learning well about the processes of modelling and building with clay. The teacher also placed very good emphasis on relevant health and safety issues associated with the use of clay. There was a sense of industry and enjoyment in this lesson. Similar high quality teaching was also observed in a Year 13 A-level print lesson. The teacher had established respect from her students for her subject knowledge and for her enthusiasm for the subject. The confident way in which they followed up her demonstration of print technique in their own work was an indication of how well they had concentrated and understood her explanation and demonstration of the process. Knowledge of the students' prior attainment and their capacity for learning also enabled the teacher to plan effectively in order to take account of their different needs. Excellent teaching with high expectations of the students was also seen in a Year 13 AVCE lesson in which they were preparing their critical studies diaries. They were challenged to reflect on and to consider differences and overlaps between fine art and design. The teacher was particularly successful at involving all of the students in what became an animated discussion about some of the more controversial issues in contemporary art and design practice. One student with English as an additional language made thoughtful and well articulated contributions to the discussion about her visit to an exhibition of some of the work of Salvador Dali, explaining well, for instance, the difference between original prints and reproductions.

252. Leadership and management of the subject in the sixth form are excellent and have enabled the department to make very good progress since the last inspection. The head of department has taken the bold decision to delegate all responsibilities for the teaching of the AVCE and A-level courses to colleagues in the department. Students on the AVCE course, therefore, have contact with three different teachers. What might have been a potentially difficult arrangement for the students has been managed with great success. Teachers are clear about their roles and responsibilities and, even more importantly, so are the students. Each student is attached to a tutor. This provides a means of regular communication and advice about progress. Students are also aware of which teacher they should approach with questions about different aspects of their work. The deployment of teachers according to their various strengths and subject specialisms is a key feature in the success of the department and the decision to dedicate a studio to AVCE work provides an 'anchor' for students who, as a result, are able to work more efficiently because they have their own work stations.

253. Students behave maturely and responsibly and act as excellent role models for younger pupils. This is particularly noticeable as they move sensibly from their studio to the area set aside in the department for computers. What could be a disruptive influence on classes lower in the school, in practice becomes an asset to the department because younger pupils are able to see the ways in which sixth form students develop as individuals, take a greater responsibility for their own work and make their own decisions about how to use the range of facilities which are available; for example, the way sixth form students make use of ICT in their creative work.

254. Students recognise and appreciate the teamwork that exists between teachers and the support that is given to them as individuals. Assessment procedures in the department are linked to examination course objectives and are followed rigorously by teachers who in their day-to-day marking use a simple system of notes made in carbon-copy books. The top copies of these informative and constructive notes, each of which contain targets and advice on how to reach a higher standard, are attached to students' work and the teachers keep a copy. This simple but highly effective system of marking is much appreciated by the students, one of whom commented that 'They (the notes) are so useful. When I read them I know exactly what I have to do next and I always keep them'. The retention rate on the courses is very high and provision for careers advice and preparation for higher education is excellent.

255. Extensive use is made of visits to galleries and exhibitions in this country and abroad and of visits to the school by practising artists, craft workers, designers and guest speakers. These opportunities contribute a great deal to the high quality of art and design education which the students receive. They make an excellent contribution to the students' achievements in the subject and to their overall personal development.

Drama

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good: teachers make effective use of their professional experience and expertise to enhance students' learning.
- Relationships are very good: teachers are supportive, offering constant encouragement, and students are fully committed to their learning.
- There is a shared commitment to the achievement of high standards.
- The range and opportunity offered by extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- Making more effective use of data to set targets for students, which are known and understood.

256. Standards in drama and theatre studies are above average. The A-level examination results in 2001 were well above the national average. All students achieved at least a grade C, and of these nearly all achieved the higher grades of A and B. These achievements have been consistent in previous years. However, the number of students undertaking the course is comparatively small. There was no A-level provision at the time of the last inspection. The standard observed in lessons, and from a scrutiny of students' work, is in line with course expectations and students are achieving as expected. All students commit themselves to their work, and attainment is what might be expected at this early stage in the AS course, although progression is already evident. No students are currently pursuing an A-level course in Year 13; the small number of Year 13 students have combined with Year 12 students on the AS course. Current Year 12 students will progress to A-level next year.

257. Students act with imaginative, creative and sensitive voice and movement, evident in the presentation of extracts from plays and their own improvisations. Performance is beginning to be consonant with the dramatic intentions and the theatrical style being explored. In their analysis and evaluation of, for example, Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, students are aware of many of the ideas within the play and in performance show they have understood the director's intention, and the intentions of the playwright. Their portrayal of role is beginning to be more consistent and interpretative. All students use vocal skills appropriate to their characterisation, in terms of pause, clarity, pace, inflection and projection. Higher attaining students demonstrate a greater degree of control, and project their voice more consistently. Lower attaining students are more restricted in their movement skills, although all students use gesture, poise and stillness, in relation to developing characterisation. Higher attaining students are more physically at ease with the role they are developing. Students show awareness of the work of others and are able to communicate with an audience, with only occasional lapses in concentration. In their written work, students analyse and evaluate plays that they have seen, both in terms of awareness of the audience for whom they are writing, and the characterisation and direction observed. They are weaker in their analysis of plot and structure. In both oral and written work, students use technical language confidently and appropriately.

258. The quality of teaching overall is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, and they are effective in conveying their enjoyment of the subject to the students. Lessons are well planned, building on previous work, objectives are clear and the learning outcomes evaluated. Students are familiar with and confident about the nature of their work. There is a good balance of activities, allowing students freedom of expression, but offering them appropriate support. They are consistently challenged through sensitive and perceptive questioning to achieve high standards. The students are clear about the quality of their performance skills, their interpretation of text or their improvisations, and how they might improve.

259. Students make good progress in the drama and theatre studies course, both in performance skills and in their analysis and evaluation of theatre. This results from the quality of teaching, the excellent relationships and their own commitment to engage in theatre workshops and theatre visits. Students' practical work has pace and energy, with a consequent development of creation and performance. They are encouraged to reflect on and evaluate their own and others' work, which they do

with increasing confidence. In their improvisations of the nursery rhyme *Jack and Jill*, students clarified their understanding of the differences between epic and dramatic theatre, and the influences of Brecht and Stanislavski. The inclusiveness of the teaching ensures that all students progress well, including those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language, both in the subject and in their personal development. They are encouraged to reflect their own personal cultural identity, as well as recognising other cultural influences. In all the lessons observed, students remained focused and worked hard, with obvious enjoyment and enthusiasm. There are specific procedures for the assessment of students' work, and regular assessment is thorough, being responsive to students' needs and influencing curriculum planning. However, insufficient use is made of the data available to ensure that targets are set for and understood by students.

260. The department is well led. There are clear aims and well considered plans for future development. Relationships are very good, teaching staff work well together, and have a shared commitment to high standards, as well as the capacity to succeed. Schemes of work are suitably clear, and the curriculum meets examination requirements. It is broad and balanced, and is enriched by the considerable opportunities made available to students, through theatre visits and workshops, drama clubs and productions. Equality of opportunity and access is a strong feature. A link has been successfully arranged with a neighbouring secondary school to combine classes, facilities and staff, to encourage the expansion of student numbers, and to widen further the available opportunities. Although the use of ICT is occurring, it does not make a sufficient contribution to teaching and learning. Accommodation and resources are sufficient to fulfil the needs of the curriculum. The drama and theatre studies department has made a particular contribution to the development of the school as a specialist Arts College.

Performing Arts

Overall, the quality of provision in performing arts is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good: teachers have good specialist knowledge and use coaching and questioning strategies well to develop students' performance.
- Students' attitudes are very good: they work well independently and co-operate and collaborate effectively.
- The wide range of extra-curricular opportunities enrich the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- To continue to develop a more collaborative approach to teaching.
- Using assessment more systematically to inform planning and set clear individual targets for students.

261. Provision for performing arts in the sixth form is good. Students are able to study for an AVCE in performing arts in addition to A-levels in individual arts subjects. The A-level results in 2001 were broadly average although the numbers entered were too small to enable meaningful comparisons to be made with the national figures. The results in performing arts were on a par with the students' results in other subjects. There is no noticeable difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds, and less academic students make good progress in the subject. The work seen during the inspection is above the standard expected at this stage of the course. However, the take up levels for the performing arts course remain low and the small group numbers for practical work limit the choice of texts open to the group and they are often inhibited in independent group work.

262. Students make good progress in performing in groups: they take direction well and understand and demonstrate a range of performance skills effectively. They are continuing to develop their vocal and physical skills in dance and drama. They have an increasing knowledge of stage craft, particularly sound and lighting, and a developing understanding of the business of the performance arts, including preparing a curriculum vitae, rehearsing appropriate audition pieces and competently managing the marketing and publicity of their regular public performances. The students develop their own improvised work, performing competently in a devised *Shortened History of the Theatre* and extending their

understanding and ability in the physical elements of comedy as they rehearse for *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* by Dario Fo. In dance, students demonstrate good posture and stage presence as they devise a routine based on the work of the contemporary dance company DV8. When discussing and evaluating their work and in their written log books, students use appropriate technical and evaluative vocabulary to make honest appraisals of their own work and that of their peers.

263. The teaching is very good. Teachers have very good specialist subject knowledge and use appropriate coaching during exercises, together with perceptive and sensitive questioning to challenge individual students and increase their understanding. A dance session was excellently planned and taught to challenge and inspire. The teacher worked alongside and supported each student individually so that each student made noticeable physical progress and maintained her self-esteem and confidence. Written work reinforces the practical work and long-term research projects are part of the assessment of the course. Written work is usually marked and assessed regularly and comments assist progress. Teachers in the course team recognise the need to collaborate more effectively, to discuss students' progress, plan for individuals' improvement and make students' targets more explicit, all areas that are insufficiently developed at present.

264. Students' attitudes are very good. They are committed to their course as well as to the school. Students willingly take responsibility for their learning and show an interest in performing arts and extra-curricular activities. Through their AVCE course, students develop the capacity to work independently and as part of a group to rehearse independently of the teacher. At these times, they work as a performance company, readily taking responsibility as directors and performers and working towards the meeting of deadlines and the development of their performance. Key skills are integrated within the units of the course and students are aware of the coverage, particularly in communication and ICT.

265. The performing arts course is managed proficiently by the team of teachers involved in the course, which includes drama, dance, music technology and the technical aspects of theatre. As the new course is developing, teachers are adjusting the course co-ordination and are beginning to discuss the improvement targets for individuals. The keeping of assessment reports and course documentation is a responsibility of the students, which they manage well.

266. Performing arts extends beyond the school day and students take part in rehearsals, attend workshops and prepare for performances. Their work is often influenced by the professional performances they see. Performing arts students also take a central part in extra-curricular activities alongside students on other courses.

267. The work of performing arts in the sixth form has developed since the last inspection. The course is under constant review and the changes in syllabus support students well.

HUMANITIES

268. The focus of the inspection was on sociology, but geography, history and psychology were also sampled. In 2001, the results in geography were well above average, although the numbers entered were small. In psychology, the results were also well above average, with all students gaining pass grades and two-thirds gaining the highest grades of A and B. There were no A-level entries in history in 2001. Two lessons were sampled in geography. The teaching in both lessons was very good, enabling students to make good progress in one lesson and very good progress in the other. Two lessons were sampled in history, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. The teaching was very good in both lessons. Careful and challenging questioning by the teachers enable students to make very good progress. One Year 13 lesson was sampled in psychology. Very rigorous teaching resulted in very good acquisition of knowledge and high levels of response from the students.

Sociology

Overall, the quality of provision in sociology is **good**.

Strengths

- Examination results have improved over the past four years.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- The assessment of students' progress is thorough and systematic.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- Providing more opportunities for students to take greater initiative in their learning.
- Developing students' confidence as independent learners.
- Extending the use made of ICT to support students' learning and in the presentation of work.

269. The results of A-level examinations have improved over the last four years. The results in 2000 were well above the national average compared with the average results of the previous two years, and have improved further in 2001. The numbers of students entered, however, fell during this period. Comparison of individual students' A-level results in sociology with their overall GCSE results shows that they achieved as they should. There were no significant differences in the standards achieved by male and female students, and students achieve as well in sociology as in other subjects. Students entered for the AS examinations in 2001 achieved in line with their GCSE results.

270. Current standards of work are lower than those achieved in the most recent A-level examinations, reflecting the students' lower prior attainment at GCSE. Standards are in line with course expectations, both in the Year 13 group following the A-level course, and in the combined Year 12 and 13 group on the AS course. Given students' starting points in terms of their GCSE results, they are achieving well.

271. Students' knowledge and understanding are satisfactory. For example, they have sound knowledge and understanding of the sociological concepts, theories and different viewpoints within the range of the topics they have studied. Higher attaining students in Year 13 have a good grasp of the conflicting views and theories of key researchers such as Marx, Berger, Parsons, and of different views such as those of Functionalism and Marxism. The understanding of higher attaining students is significantly more secure than that of other students. All students have strengths in their understanding of different research methodology. This was shown well, for instance, by students in the combined Years 12 and 13 AS group who animatedly discussed the complexities and the influences of overt, covert and interpretationist observation on evidence from a well-informed basis. Students use appropriate terminology confidently, discuss conflicting data and evidence, and are developing a range of other key skills such as the posing and testing of hypotheses.

272. Students' files are well organised. Notes are clear and detailed, and reflect independent learning and revision. Essay writing is developing well, with essays becoming increasingly well structured and clearly focused, especially in the case of the higher attaining students. The writing of average and lower attaining students usually reflects sound understanding, but often has shortcomings in explanation, for example, of different sociological perspectives and clarity of focus on the question. Relatively little use is made of ICT for the presentation of work.

273. Students' learning benefits from their very positive attitudes towards the subject. They work hard and responsibly in lessons, often with enjoyment. Classroom relationships are very good. Students co-operate well and are keen to contribute. But many, especially in Year 13, lack confidence as learners and are reticent in expressing their ideas. Learning in lessons is good, reflecting the good teaching. Teaching is never less than good and is occasionally very good. Other evidence, including students' work and planning documents, reflects consistently good practice across the department.

274. The teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding of the subject enables them to give clear explanations of concepts, theories and principles. Imaginative strategies, such as the practice of requiring students to test each other's knowledge and understanding at the beginning of lessons, are used effectively to enable students to explore issues in depth and to build upon earlier learning. There are particular strengths in the provision of analogies, which help students' understanding of theories in the context of contemporary events and their own experiences, and in the demonstration of research methods. There is a strong emphasis on the development of sociological skills and on ensuring that students work accurately as sociologists in observing and recording findings and in judging the reliability of evidence.

275. Challenging teaching often results in students working at a very demanding level. For instance, Year 12 and 13 students worked at full stretch in considering moral and ethical issues in making decisions about the advantages and disadvantages of participant observation in research. Questioning is used well to check understanding and to probe and extend students' thinking. There is strong encouragement for students to learn through teacher-led discussion and the study and comparison of evidence. The pace of learning is sustained by well-timed activities.

276. Learning proceeds rapidly as a result of these strengths in the teaching, and is very well supported overall by clear structures. In some instances, however, structures leave too little opportunity for students to take a lead in their learning. Lessons are very strongly teacher-led and dependent, and include too few strategies to boost students' confidence in their ability to initiate and take greater responsibility in learning, and thus to improve their achievement further.

277. Students' progress is closely monitored through the regular marking and thorough assessment of their work. Most marking provides constructive guidance for improvement, but this is not always the case. Assessment is used effectively to identify individual strengths and weaknesses and to plan work accordingly. It is also used systematically to track students' achievement and to set target grades for their attainment.

278. The new head of department and teaching team are having a positive impact on standards and the provision for sociology. A clear direction is being provided and good support is available for teachers especially through detailed schemes of work, the subject handbook and clearly focused and shared professional development. The quality of provision is kept under review by systematic monitoring which includes lesson observation. Monitoring results in clear and appropriate targets for improvement set within clear deadlines. There is a strong and shared commitment to improvement. Sound foundations have been laid for the ways forward. There is now a need for a greater determination in raising the profile of sociology as a demanding academic subject within the school, and thus to attract greater numbers especially from the higher attaining students.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good relationships between teachers and students.
- Teachers' very good knowledge of individual students.
- Teachers' high expectations and challenge.
- Most teachers' very good range of teaching and learning strategies.
- Encouragement of independent learning.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in the AS Level examination in Year 12.
- The use of the full range of teaching and learning strategies by all teachers.

279. In the A-level examinations in 2000 and 2001, the results in English have been well above the national averages. In 2001, more than half the students gained one of the two highest grades of A or B. From a low point in 1998, when take-up and attainment were below average, the popularity of English and the standards achieved have steadily improved. In the first year of full entry to AS level during Year 12, the average standard was in line with recent achievements at A-level, but the proportion of the highest grades was lower. Students' performance in English compares well with that in other subjects.

280. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are above average in Year 12 and well above average in Year 13, indicating good progress during the course. Male students in particular are improving their management of evidence and the depth and extent of their commentaries on set texts. Female students, from the start of Year 12, write well structured and detailed essays, confidently using a wide critical vocabulary. All students achieve very high standards of spoken English for a variety of purposes. In a Year 12 lesson on Aphra Behn's *The Rover*, every student made a very well delivered contribution to a public hearing of the hero's misdeeds, showing above average understanding of the play and the contemporary attitudes to marriage and morality that it reflected. Students made very thoughtful presentations on Tennyson's poems to a Year 13 class, including a wide range of references to other writers and showing very good awareness of the social and political context in which they were written. In their written work and class discussion, students in Year 13 show above average perception in analysing language, tracing themes and supporting their ideas with well chosen quotations. Much of their work is enhanced by competent word-processing skills, but they also maintain high standards of handwriting in preparation for examinations. Information about their prior performance shows that the majority of students achieve results above their predicted grades. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress in both spoken and written responses to literature. In two different classes, students who are particularly gifted or talented in literary studies were clearly making good progress towards a very high level of critical awareness.

281. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers know individual students and their needs very well, enabling all of them to succeed at an appropriate level. The programme of study and the tasks given to the students build very well on the knowledge and skills they developed during earlier years. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which gives students confidence in them. A high level of challenge is maintained, so that nothing the students say is allowed to remain simplistic or incomplete. Consequently, most of them become independent thinkers, very well prepared for the higher education that many will go on to after Year 13. Very good relationships encourage the students to play a full part in discussions and group studies. Most lessons include a very effective range of teaching strategies that encourages active learning and ensures that all students are included in the lesson. Wider reading is strongly encouraged so that students can fully appreciate the broad and balanced selection of literature that they study in depth. Marking of work is thorough, detailed and helpful, contributing to the good progress made by all students.

282. The students' response to English is very good. They are very positive about the value of their studies and many show exceptional intellectual curiosity. High levels of interest and concentration are maintained throughout lessons. They listen to the teacher and to each other with respect and good humour, as they did during a series of individual presentations on different aspects of *The Return of the Native*. Having two different teachers for English is much appreciated, and they like the many opportunities for individual and group research and discussion. They are given detailed guidance about examination requirements and their work is accurately graded, so they have a very good understanding of how well they are doing in working towards their individual targets. Students who catch up after absence show high levels of motivation, and homework is always completed and handed in on time.

283. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with standards raised from above average to well above average. The whole department is committed to continued improvement, reviewing courses and teaching approaches regularly. They attend relevant courses in order to improve the resources for learning, particularly for the new demands of AS courses. Resources are generally adequate, with students providing their own texts and teachers supplementing these with well prepared materials giving historical and critical background. Overall, the English team is making a very substantial contribution to the personal and academic development of the many students who choose to study the subject to A-level and beyond.

LANGUAGES

284. The inspection focus was on French, but German was also sampled. The two German lessons ranged from excellent to good and provision is very good overall. As a result of the very good teaching, students are achieving very well. In 2000, over half of those entered for the A-level examination gained the highest grades of A and B, which was better than the national average. In 2001, two-thirds of those entered gained the two higher grades although the number of entries was very small. In the current sixth form groups, attainment is very high in Year 13, where students debate in German issues surrounding drug abuse and its effect on society perceptively, and above national expectations in Year 12, where students compare and contrast the British and German education systems eloquently.

French

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- Personal relationships are very good.
- Procedures for assessment are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of oral work in the current Year 13 are not as high as they should be.

285. The results of the A-level examinations over the past two years have varied from above national averages in 2000 to below average in 2001 for the very small numbers of students entered for the examination. Standards of students' current work are in line with expectations in Year 13 and above national expectations in Year 12. Students in Year 12 have made a good start to the AS course. All of the students studying French in this group have English as a second language and this is used to enhance the quality of the work through frequent reference to language structures and form in their home languages. Students have high level listening skills and good accents. They talk about aspects of healthy living perceptively, using a range of vocabulary and structure. They write on subjects such as marriage, polygamy and the current situation in Afghanistan and raise the level of their work by using a range of enhancing vocabulary such as 'en principe', 'de nos jours'. They achieve well, including those new to the school who have been well integrated into the group. Students in Year 13 have sound reading, listening and writing skills but their speaking skills are not as good and hold up their progress. They lack the oral confidence of students in Year 12 and are not always at ease in the totally French environment established by teachers. Higher attaining students write well about the equality of men and women: the discursive elements of their work are stronger than the grammatical elements. Average attainers are able to identify key points from a passage written on Simone de Beauvoir and lower attaining students discuss environmental issues well. All students, however, still make basic grammatical errors. As a result, they make satisfactory progress and achieve average standards.

286. Students generally have positive attitudes, with Year 12 being particularly enthused with their work. Students coming in to the school from other establishments find the ethos particularly inspiring and feel that they are making much better progress now than they were before. They have very good relationships with their teachers and are confident in their ability to achieve good grades in their AS and A-level examinations. Students are good at learning independently. Year 12 students have very well structured folders and take useful notes when listening to or reading course material: the work of Year 13 students is not as well organised.

287. Teaching in the sixth form ranges from very good to good but is good overall. As a result of this good teaching, learning is also good. Teachers are well prepared and use homework effectively to support the work covered in class. Their lessons are very well planned and prepared and presented in a way that makes best use of the time available. In a Year 12 lesson on the topic of healthy living, for example, the teacher reviewed a large amount of previously learnt material effectively before dividing the group into pairs and asking them to debate the pros and cons of smoking. As a result, students

developed their confidence and skills by brainstorming a wide variety of ideas and worked out how to say them in French. When necessary, they used French well to clarify their thinking with the teacher. Teaching is not quite as well matched to the needs of Year 13 students, however, who need much more structure to the work to ensure that they play a full and active part in the learning. They are not learning as well as Year 12 students, partly because they are quieter, not quite as motivated, as enthused, or as involved. They do not participate as actively in the language learning experience and as a result are not making the rapid progress of the younger students.

288. Assessment is very good and students participate in a wide range of enrichment activities. They use ICT effectively to enhance their work, particularly with regard to revision work, although they are not yet using programmes such as Powerpoint to illustrate their presentations, or using video conferencing links and satellite television.

289. Resources and staffing are good and accommodation is adequate. However, some sixth form lessons are held in the room that leads into the faculty office, which means that lessons are often disrupted. This does not provide the best environment for the sort of tutorial work required at this level, and is particularly significant, given the reticence of Year 13 students to speak. Management of the subject at this level is good. Teachers have clear priorities for development and work very well together.

290. Since the last inspection, standards have improved at A-level. They are about the same in work seen in Year 13 and higher in Year 12. There is now a structured programme to the work which supports the teaching well.