

INSPECTION REPORT

THE PRIORY SCHOOL

Tintagel Road, Orpington, Kent

LEA area: London Borough of Bromley

Unique reference number: 101659

Headteacher: Mr Nick Ware

Reporting inspector: Mr Richard Whitburn
32017

Dates of inspection: 5th – 8th February 2001

Inspection number: 188435

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:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Tintagel Road Orpington Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Janet Prior
Date of previous inspection:	29 th April – 3 rd May 1996

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18312	Andrew Clements	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well does the school care for its students?
4223	Garth Collard	Team inspector	Geography	Attitudes, behaviour and values
2351	Jacque Cook	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
30433	Chris Corp	Team inspector	Science	
18261	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art	
2971	Kathleen Hooper	Team inspector	Design and technology Equal opportunities	
3892	Eric Needham	Team inspector	Physical education	How well are students taught?
7719	Adrian Conley	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
14592	Anne Seeley	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	EAL Inclusion
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1340	David Wigley	Team inspector	Music	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Priory School is a mixed 11-18 comprehensive school serving an area of social disadvantage. About 8 per cent of students in the Borough attend one of the local selective grammar schools and others attend independent schools. Consequently, whilst The Priory School has a good number of academic and able students, there is also a considerable proportion of students who join the school with low academic standards. The number of students with special educational needs is high in comparison with similar schools. Eighty-four students have statements of special educational needs (SEN). This includes 30 students in a special department for students with specific learning difficulties (SpeLD). This is a local education authority provision, currently for students aged 11 to 15. The school is oversubscribed and has grown in size each year since its establishment in 1990. It now has 1,413 students, the majority of whom live close to the school. There are 200 students in the sixth form. There are relatively few children from ethnic minority backgrounds in the school and 65 of these have English as an additional language. There is a small but significant traveller population in the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Students in this school achieve well in comparison with students in similar schools. The quality of teaching across the school is good. Teachers are committed to the school and their students, relationships are good and support students' learning. The majority of students are proud of their school. The school is very well run from day to day. A new leadership and management structure is leading the school forward with increasing effect. However, a lack of consistency in a number of areas inhibits progress. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Enables students to improve their attainment and make good progress from Year 7 to Year 11.
- Provides good moral, social and cultural development.
- Provision in the SpeLD unit is very good.
- Achieves very good attitudes to learning and good behaviour amongst the vast majority of students and a very strong sense of pride and identity with the school.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities are good.
- There is a clear vision, educational direction and a capacity for further improvement.

What could be improved

- Literacy and numeracy skills in Years 7 – 9.
- Consistency in the application of school policies.
- The range and variety of teaching styles and the effective matching of lessons to students' needs.
- The use of student attainment data to set individual targets to improve student attainment and monitor the progress of pupils across the school.
- The quality of SEN Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and their use in supporting students in the classroom.
- Personal, social and health education in Year 10 and 11.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in April 1996, standards have improved steadily in line with the national trend. Teaching has also improved, with very much more that is good or better than is unsatisfactory. The school has worked hard in many areas, particularly recently, but not all the policies developed are fully in practice. There are also a number of issues from the previous inspection that remain issues for the school,

most notably strategies to improve literacy and numeracy and the use of assessment information to track the performance of students and enable them to improve. There have been improvements to the school accommodation over the last four years, a substantial improvement in the number of computers in the school and the access of students to these facilities. The school has made reasonable progress since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	C	C	D	B
A-levels/AS-levels	E	D	D	

Key

well above average A
 above average B
 average C
 below average D
 well below average E

The school does well for its students. GCSE results have continued to improve since the last inspection and the percentage of student obtaining grades A* - C was close to the national average. Ninety-five per cent of students gained at least one GCSE grade and the school exceeded its examination targets. The best results were in art and design, design and technology and physical education and the weakest in French, geography and history. At 14 the picture is encouraging; from a low start for many students in Year 7, their performance by the end of Year 9 in English was close to the national average and above average when compared with similar schools. In mathematics and science, results were below average but in comparison with similar schools the results were average. Overall students by the age of 16 are doing at least as well as students in similar schools and in many instances better. This standard was reflected in the work seen in lessons. Students' results in GCE A Level courses are below average but have improved steadily over the last three years. In the lessons observed, attainment in the sixth form is satisfactory and there is evidence of standards improving.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students' attitudes to work and school are good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of most students in the classrooms, in the corridors and around the school is good.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Students show respect for each other and for adults in the school. Students from different ethnic groups work well together, in and out of the classroom. The opportunities for students to develop independence, initiative and responsibility for others are limited.
Attendance	Attendance is generally satisfactory across all year groups but a significant minority of students fail to get into school on time in the morning and some are late into registration after lunch.

Students appreciate the good support they get from the school and their teachers. They respond well to the high expectations of behaviour set by the staff in the classroom and around the school and this has a positive effect on their learning. The majority of students enjoy coming to school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching across the school is good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. Ninety eight per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better, nearly 70 per cent of lessons were good or better and 24 per cent were good or very good; very few lessons were unsatisfactory. In the sixth form, all of the teaching observed was satisfactory, with 24 per cent being very good or excellent.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, with good provision in the sixth form, with the exception of the provision of religious education. Collective worship does not meet statutory requirements. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall, but Individual Education Plans need to be more specific. Very good provision in the SpELD unit.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	The support for those students withdrawn for additional help is satisfactory, but the management of support through the faculties is not consistent.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Students' moral, social and cultural development are good and there are many opportunities in lessons and in extra-curricular activities for students to extend their understanding. Provision of spiritual development is satisfactory and an improvement on the last inspection.
How well the school cares for its students	Care and support for students is good, particularly in how well staff know their students and the procedures in place for monitoring behaviour and attendance. However, the academic monitoring of students is weak and lacks consistency across the school. Child protection procedures need to be clarified and training undertaken to ensure everyone understands what is required.

The school's links with parents are satisfactory. Parents feel welcome in the school. Through a range of activities, the school seeks to involve parents in their child's learning and inform parents about their child's progress. The information the school provides parents about the progress of their child is good and the recently established Academic Review day is particularly valued. The Specific Learning Difficulties Unit (SpELD) has good links with parents who are kept well informed of important stages in their child's career in the school.

The school does not provide a regular daily act of collective worship or religious education in the sixth form. Extra-curricular activities are a good feature of the school and the school's field study centre at Ramfield provides a very valuable resource for personal and social development, as well as academic study.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The day to day running of the school is very effective. Leadership of the headteacher and school leadership team (SLT) is good. Governors and SLT have a shared view of the future development of the school. Changes in the structure of the Heads of Year and Faculty are taking effect and having a positive impact.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors support the work of the school well. Staff appreciate their visits. They fulfil their responsibilities well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher and senior leadership team have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but all subject leaders are not consistent in monitoring teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory, overall, but the link between development planning and financial planning needs to be more explicit.

The school has sufficient, well qualified teaching staff. Resources for learning throughout the school are good, although both libraries do not carry sufficient stocks of books for the number of students. The provision of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the school has improved considerably since the last inspection and is good. Accommodation is good overall, although some mathematics teaching rooms are small for large groups and a number of science laboratories need improvement. The corridors and dining facilities are very cramped and the toilet facilities require constant maintenance; they are unhygienic.

The school has a very strong ethos of care and a commitment to high standards of behaviour. Leadership at a senior level is very good and middle managers are effective. The governing body supports the school in its goals. The school has good procedures for ensuring and monitoring best value.

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 care and support the school provides their children. Students' behaviour. Attendance, children want to come to school. The information the school provides on entry to the school and on the curriculum. The good support for children with SEN. Parents are welcomed and can play an active part in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistency in the setting and marking of homework. Greater challenge for higher attaining students. Poor behaviour disrupting learning in some lower sets. Standards in English in Years 7-9.

Parents consider this a good school that has improved since the last inspection and continues to improve. They feel welcome and most consider that the school works closely with them, making it easy to raise questions or problems. Although the school attempts to engage with parents, and does so successfully with many parents of students with special education needs, not all parents respond. Planners and contact books are often left unsigned and some parents do not provide strong support for the school's efforts to tackle lateness. There are improvements that could be made to annual reports to assist parents in understanding the progress that their children are making and some additional data that should be included in the school brochure and the Governors' annual report to parents. The inspection team did consider that the setting and marking of homework was not consistent and that, in some subjects, challenge for higher attaining students could be improved. There were a few instances of poor behaviour disrupting learning. Standards in English in Years 7-9 were judged to be satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. The school does well for its students. They achieve well when their results at 16 are compared with the results of similar schools. GCSE results have continued to improve since the last inspection. The school also does well when the results the students achieve at 16 are compared with their results at 14 in the National Curriculum Tests.
2. In GCSE examinations, the percentage of students obtaining five or more passes at grades A* - C was close to the national average for all schools and above the national average for similar schools in the year 2000. The percentage of students achieving 5 or more grades at A* - G was below the national average but this is better than the results for similar schools. The overall average points score achieved by students in 2000 was below the average for all schools nationally but above the average for similar schools. Over the last three years, the school's performance based on the average points score per student has been improving in line with the national trend, but the 2000 results showed a slight dip in performance.
3. In most subjects, the school's results are below or just in line with the national average. The target of 37 per cent of students achieving 5 A*-C was exceeded and the point score target of 34 was met. In 2000 students achieved the best results in art and design, design and technology and physical education. Results in science, English and German were satisfactory or better. Students did less well in Business Studies, English literature, history, mathematics, French, geography and ICT, where results were disappointing.
4. In the National Curriculum tests in 2000, at the end of Year 9, students' performance in English was close to the national average. The results were above average when compared to similar schools nationally. In mathematics and science, standards were below average when compared with all schools but close to the average attained by similar schools.
5. Standards of students' attainment in lessons and in the work seen was mostly at or just below the standards expected nationally for their ages in Years 7 - 11 and above national expectation in a number of courses in the sixth form. In the sixth form, student results at A Level have been improving steadily in the last three years, but the number of students achieving the higher grades at A Level remains low.
6. The school does relatively less well with lower ability students by the time they reach 16 than the national average, but in comparison with similar schools the results are creditable. In 2000, fewer students than the national average achieved one A*-G grade in GCSE. Results for students achieving one A* - G have improved in the last three years. No students were disapplied from the National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11 with the exception of 17 who did not take a modern foreign language.
7. Students' results in GCE A Level courses are below average. Based on the average A/AS level points score of candidates entered for two or more GCE A Levels, the school did less well than the national average. Compared with the achievement in GCSE, many of these students had made good progress. Over the last three years there has been a steady, but perceptible, improvement in the average point score achieved by students taking two or more A levels. Students achieved the highest standards in A Level courses in Fine Art, geography, performing arts and physical education in 2000. During the inspection, good standards of work were seen in a number of subjects; geography, performing arts and art and design. Attainment towards the end of the sixth form is satisfactory and there is evidence of improving standards.

8. Many students enter the school with low standards of literacy. These standards make learning difficult for some students, in all years. Writing skills are weaker than reading skills. Written work is often copied inaccurately from the board and unfinished. Poor handwriting means that students cannot read back what they have written. Students are willing to attempt reading but do not always understand what they are reading or cannot explain what they have read. One of the reasons for this is that in Years 7 to 9 students do not receive effective and consistent teaching of literacy skills in subjects other than English. Consequently they are not learning from their mistakes and transferring these gains in learning from one subject to another.
9. Standards of numeracy are just below average when students enter the school. A significant number of students find difficulty with basic number skills. The opportunities for students to improve their use of number across the curriculum is not co-ordinated. There are examples of students in science calculating speed and forces and using formulae such as Boyle's Law. In geography, students are able to competently analyse data on population statistics, crop yields and weather. They can also determine scales for map making and interpret longitude and latitude. However, the weaknesses in students' skill in number adversely affect their graphical work in art and design in Year 7. In design and technology, while students can weigh and measure materials satisfactorily, they have few other opportunities to improve their competence and confidence in using number.
10. Students' ability to use information communication technology (ICT) effectively is good. Since the last inspection, attainment in ICT has improved considerably. When students enter the school, their standard and experience in ICT span a wide range. Throughout the curriculum there are examples of good practice where ICT is used to enhance and support learning and teaching. The areas more actively involved in integrating this provision include geography, business studies, design and technology, science and special education needs. As a result, students' confidence in the use of ICT is growing rapidly.
11. In a Year 7 geography research project on the topic of volcanoes, students demonstrated very confident and competent use of ICT to interrogate web site databases and produce their project. Many students are very proficient in using ICT to present their work, for example in history, geography, and Childcare. ICT is used to good effect by students with special educational needs.
12. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. They particularly improve their English through improving reading and writing when they are withdrawn from lessons to work in small groups. However, progress is slow in some design and technology and ICT lessons where low levels of literacy prevent them learning. Continuing support of students in the sixth form helps them to tackle their research tasks effectively. For example, students investigating specific aspects of a car brainstormed the structure of their work and then wrote their report using word processing skills to organise their work.
13. Students in the specific learning difficulties department (SpeLD) make good progress overall. They make very good progress in improving their literacy skills because the quality of the teaching by SpeLD teachers is very good.
14. There is a clear picture of steadily improving standards as students move up the school. They enter the school with a wide range of attainment, but many have weak or poor levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy skills. They make satisfactory progress from Year 7 to 9 to achieve standards at or just below the national average for students of their age. In Years 10 to 11, the progress they make accelerates and at the end of Year 11 student attainment is close to the national average. Those students who stay on in the sixth form continue to make satisfactory and, in some instances, good progress.
15. The progress students make in Years 7 to 9 is a result of their attitudes to learning and the good teaching they receive. However, for many students their progress is impeded by their weaknesses in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and a lack of the use of consistent strategies across the school to improve these basic skills. Nevertheless students achieve a reasonable level of competence

by the end of Year 9 to tackle the course requirements of GCSE. In Years 10 and 11, attainment improves through the positive attitudes of the students to their learning and the hard work the staff put in to prepare their students for the examinations. Teaching is good throughout Years 7 to 11, but, at times, too much teaching is given by the teacher, rather than learning expected of the students and, as a result, students are not strong in individual research and study skills. Judged overall, the school has reached the limits of raising standards, assuming the present attainment profile of students on entry is maintained, without a change in teaching styles and learning methods that recognise the individual learning needs of students.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The behaviour of students and their attitudes to learning are good. The strengths noted in the last inspection have been maintained. Students consistently display good behaviour and attitudes to work across the school. They respond well to the school's expectations and this makes a significant contribution to their academic and personal development. This is particularly the case when they are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning or undertake individual research.
17. Students and teachers treat each other with mutual respect and courtesy. This is a strong feature of the school. These good relationships are reflected in the classroom and have a positive impact on students' learning. Students are usually good humoured, polite and respectful towards the staff and to one another. Teachers take care to promote equal opportunities and ethnic minorities are well integrated. In the sixth form, students value the support of their tutors. They contribute effectively to the wider life of the school as prefects and mentors to younger students. These roles are willingly and enthusiastically undertaken.
18. Few lessons in Years 7 to 9 were affected by unsatisfactory attitudes or behaviour and less than one in ten lessons in Years 10 and 11. Behaviour is a problem in this minority of lessons, mainly in the lower sets, and this adversely affects students' learning in these groups. The more limited concentration span of some lower ability students leads to some poor behaviour, for example in music, modern foreign languages and religious education. Behaviour in the sixth form is very good and students display a commendable degree of maturity. When students are not challenged or given the opportunity to research, investigate, analyse and evaluate, they can get bored and inattentive. There were instances in English, design and technology, modern foreign languages and ICT when poor behaviour disrupted learning.
19. Overall students work very hard, maintain concentration and have good listening skills. This ability to listen and concentrate was very marked in Year 12 dance and in science practical lessons. Students appreciate the interest and care shown towards them and the real encouragement given to them by most staff. In the best lessons they learn from their mistakes and this is a major factor in promoting students' learning.
20. The school is an orderly, ordered and friendly community. Students' behaviour around the site is generally good and there were few instances of inappropriate behaviour. The students are very self-disciplined and considerate around the school. They queue patiently in the small canteen area, walk around the narrow corridors with consideration for others and their conduct in year assemblies is very good. The vast majority of students take pride in their school and their smart uniform reflects this pride. They respect the fabric of the buildings and there is very little graffiti, but a minority are careless with their litter and need to show greater appreciation for their own environment.
21. The new school behaviour policy deals with some of these problems but it is not applied consistently. There are rare instances of bullying in the school but, when such incidents occur, they are dealt with quickly and fairly. The students consider the anti-bullying policy works well and regard the school as a safe environment. Fixed-term exclusions are quite high but the correct procedures are followed and they are monitored with regard to gender, ethnicity and pattern. There are few permanent exclusions which reflects the school's determination to remain as inclusive as possible, subject only to considerations of student safety.

22. The school provides a secure and happy environment that encourages students to listen to each other and refrain from making insensitive remarks that could undermine confidence. Despite this positive atmosphere, the school does not, sufficiently, recognise the cultural diversity of the students and there are missed opportunities to celebrate the cultural diversity of its students. Nevertheless, there were also good examples of the faith and background of students being sensitively used to enable all students to learn, for example, about the routine of prayer in Islam or the daily life in Gujerat following the recent earthquake. Visitors are given a warm and courteous welcome and students show respect for the values, beliefs and feelings of others.
23. Students with special educational needs have good attitudes to work overall. They sustain a particularly high level of concentration when they are withdrawn from lessons because these sessions are planned effectively. Also, because staff give students a great deal of praise and encouragement, this builds a positive relationship and students want to do their best to please the staff with whom they work. Students with special educational needs integrate very well and there are few signs of any tension in lessons. This is a reflection on the caring attitude of both staff and students. They are very tolerant of each other and teachers skilfully foster constructive relationships with them. Relationships with support assistants and in withdrawal sessions are good.
24. Opportunities are provided for personal development, especially in Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) in Years 7 to 9. Both year and school councils give students outlets through which they can express their views and have some control over their community. The School Council is made up from representatives of each year group. It successfully helps students learn to listen to the views of others and keeps them informed about wider school developments.
25. Students respond positively to the wide range of extra-curricular activities the school offers and take on responsibilities willingly. Examples include lunchtime supervision, helping at assemblies, performing in concerts, escorting visitors and fund-raising for charities. The help provided for the office by Year 8 students and the support given to Year 7 students by Year 11 students are good examples of the opportunities for personal development that are provided by the school. There are a good variety of clubs and extra-curricular activities that allow students to widen their knowledge and experience.
26. Overall, attendance levels are satisfactory. Attendance has improved since the last inspection report and is now in line with national averages. The picture is similar across all year groups, with a marginally better figure in Year 7. Unauthorised absence is lower than the LEA and the national average. However, there are a minority of students who are late in the morning, drifting in during the form tutor period. They usually arrive in time for the start of the first lesson. Some students are late into registration after the lunch break which has an effect on the first lesson of the afternoon. There is no evidence of variation in the attendance or punctuality of identifiable groups of students, such as those with special educational needs. In the sixth form the "signing in" process is misused because students do not understand its legal and safety significance. There is a carefully managed and effective reporting system for ensuring that absence from lessons is followed up quickly.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

27. There have been marked improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection report when 17 per cent of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. Overall the teaching throughout the school is good. Ninety eight per cent of lessons were satisfactory or better, nearly 70 per cent of lessons were good or better and very few lessons were unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection, there have been improvements in the way teachers plan lessons, particularly in the way they plan and use time effectively in the lessons. This is now good throughout the school and students learn better as a result of lessons that are well planned, with clear objectives shared at the beginning of the lesson, a variety of activities planned during the lesson and a brief plenary session at the end to share the learning gained.

28. In Years 7 to 9, 70 per cent of lessons were good or above, with 22 being very good or excellent. In Years 10 and 11, 56 per cent of lessons were good or better with 22 per cent being very good or excellent. Much of the good teaching in Years 7 to 9 encouraged students to enquire investigate and build their confidence in their own competence as learners. In Years 10 and 11 there was more emphasis on students following the teaching closely and preparing for the requirements of the examination. Both styles supported and encouraged students' learning, but there are limitations on the extent that students felt confident in their own skills as learners. In general they are not confident learners and these skills need to be developed throughout the school. In the sixth form, all of the teaching observed was satisfactory, with 24 per cent being very good or excellent. The quality of students learning across the school is good and is a direct result of the good quality of teaching they receive.
29. There are overall strengths in the teaching of English in the sixth form; in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9 and the sixth form; in French, art, religious education, geography and physical education throughout the school; in ICT in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form; music throughout is very well taught. There are no subjects where average grades for the various parts of teaching and learning are less than satisfactory. All other subjects on the school curriculum achieve at least satisfactory standards of teaching and learning.
30. Most teachers know and understand their subjects well which gives confidence to learners. Teaching in art, modern foreign languages, music and physical education and dance provide good examples. Where basic skills are taught well, students acquire these skills effectively, as in music and physical education. Teachers' planning of time and pace for students' learning is strong in music and physical education. The behaviour of students is well managed. The management of students' time is sound and the use of accommodation and resources are good.
31. Students show good attitudes to their learning in almost all lessons. A strong factor in the standard of behaviour in lessons is the students' own motivation and concentration across the school. It is a positive factor in their learning. This is a very positive factor in enabling them to reach their present standards of skill and thinking in both lessons and examinations. The learning of younger students is often helped by those in the sixth form, or for example, when some Year 11 girls helped students in Year 9 produce higher floor exercise standards in a gymnastics practice. There are good examples of the use of ICT in geography but overall this is not a feature of teaching and learning in most subjects. Its absence gives individual students fewer chances to plan their own learning.
32. There are parts of the teaching which are less satisfactory and hinder the standards of learning from being at a higher level. Styles of teaching are varied, but the planning for individual learning is generally weaker and, consequently, students do not develop confidence in their own learning. Although teachers use a range of methods across the school, there is a limited range to help individual learners and not enough opportunities for students to be responsible for their own learning and to undertake individual and group tasks.
33. There is little target setting and few individual programmes of learning, with the exception of those for students with statements of special educational needs. The school has, over the last three years, gathered considerable data on all students, including lower attaining students, in order to track students' progress. At present Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs) and National Curriculum Tests are beginning to be used to track groups of students through Years 7-9. However, this is not being used systematically and consistently across the school to provide targets for individual students or to inform teachers' planning. This is an aspect of planning that is preventing students from attaining higher or the highest standards. The quality of planning and assessment is not sufficient to help students reach higher standards than those presently being achieved.
34. Teachers know which students have learning difficulties in their classes, but there are instances of lessons that are not planned to use appropriate methods to ensure that students learn effectively. This is particularly evident in some English, French and design and technology lessons. A notable exception is in music where a course has been chosen that does not require students to use literary

skills. Individual education plans do not, in many instances, provide pertinent information to help teachers. They appreciate the support staff that work with students in many lessons. There are very good examples of expertise being shared to ensure that support staff are effective. For example, they know the topic that is to be taught and have planned how they will help the student or students for whom they have responsibility. Many also have an agreed wider brief, supporting a range of students. On the whole, there is little time put aside for this work and, as a result, support staff are not used as well as they should be by many teachers. Additionally, in a significant number of lessons, because the teacher spends a substantial part of the lesson talking with the whole class, the support teachers' skills are not used.

35. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs, when they are withdrawn from lessons, is satisfactory. The high level of expertise of the special needs teachers and support staff ensures gains; for example, in reading and writing skills are good. Work is planned well using a good range of materials. Often there are different activities specially chosen for each student. Computer programs are used effectively to teach spelling rules. A good range of reading books ensures students read at a suitably difficult level. As a result, students are interested and continually busy. A friendly, but firm approach by staff leads to the establishing of good relationships with students. This is a key factor in increasing students' confidence and willingness to attempt harder work.
36. Highly skilled staff teach students in the specific learning difficulties provision (SpELD) very well. Lessons are planned to build on previous knowledge, be very focused on what the student needs to learn and to have a number of activities. As a result, students concentrate well and make gains in knowledge, for example, of what to look for when proof-reading their work.
37. The quality of relationships and behaviour in classes and the structure of lessons mean that there is usually a suitable learning environment for students learning English as an additional language. A limited amount of specialist teaching is provided through the local authority to support students in the early stages of English acquisition. However, there are limited opportunities for supported speaking and listening, insufficient models for developing writing and no evidence of students' first languages being used to support learning of English.
38. There has been some improvement in the provision of literacy strategies across the school since the last inspection but progress has been slow. There is some direct teaching of literacy in English lessons in Year 7 that builds on students' experiences in primary school in Year 6 and provides them with an appropriate level of challenge. There are also a number of initiatives that are having a positive impact on students' attitudes to reading. These include a shared reading project and library lessons which are building students' confidence and widening their reading experiences. Few classrooms contain useful prompts or key words and display is not a strength in the school. It provides insufficient support for lower achieving students and those with special educational needs. There is no co-ordinated approach to developing literacy and language across the curriculum. There is a useful but under-used spelling notebook and some sound practice in geography, science and art. However, this is not systematic across all departments and there are many missed opportunities.
39. Since the last inspection, there has been unsatisfactory progress in the introduction of strategies to develop numeracy across the curriculum. At present, the use of numeracy across the curriculum is not subject to co-ordinated action by all faculties and departments and, consequently, the development of numeracy skills in various departments is unplanned. The lack of a co-ordinated numeracy policy across the school does affect the confidence with which students approach the use of number in subjects other than mathematics.

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

40. The curriculum overall is balanced and broad across the school and promotes students' physical development. Teaching time meets national recommendations and the teaching time available for subjects is broadly satisfactory. However, more able students receive less time in some foundation

subjects than other students because they are taking a second modern foreign language. The range of themes and issues dealing with, for example, economic awareness and environmental issues in subjects is good.

41. The National Curriculum is fully in place in Years 7 to 9. Curricular opportunities are good. More able students can undertake German as a second modern foreign language and information and communication technology is taught to each year group and integrated into all other subjects. The absence of a coherent and systematically monitored whole school approach to literacy is, however, a barrier to curriculum access for the high proportion of students who have difficulty in this aspect of their learning. The school is aware of this deficiency and have begun to implement pilot literacy strategies in Year 7 and 8, but more work needs to be done to improve students' skills in literacy. There are also weaknesses in the cross-curriculum provision of numeracy skills and the students' confidence in their use of number in the curriculum that need to be improved. There are very good links developing with a number of the primary schools that are helping children in their learning as they move from Year 6 in their primary school into Year 7 at The Priory. These links are particularly good for students with special educational needs, enabling them to build on their prior learning.
42. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is satisfactory for students of average ability and above. There is a large compulsory curriculum with limited option choice. The curriculum is balanced but for lower attaining students it is not always satisfactory because there are not enough opportunities to follow practical and vocational subjects. The school is aware of the need to develop alternatives to GCSE for some students, particularly those courses that offer vocational areas of study. The school is currently undertaking a substantial review of the curriculum arrangements in Years 10 and 11 and the extent to which these arrangements meets the educational needs of students of all abilities, particularly those who find academic courses too demanding.
43. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The teaching of religious education follows the Bromley Agreed Syllabus and is now provided in Year 10 and 11, an improvement since the last inspection. However, the school does not maintain a daily act of collective worship and students in the sixth form do not receive a course in religious education, both of which are government requirements.
44. Post-16 curricular opportunities are good. The sixth form offers a wide range of choice, with 20 'A' and 'AS' level subjects presently available. GNVQ is offered at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced levels, in a broad range of areas, although science and technology are less well represented. This provision is in keeping with the new arrangements for Curriculum 2000. There are no joint arrangements with other post-16 education providers in the Borough. There are some links with further education colleges and where there are timetable clashes or the school does not offer a particular course, students are given the opportunity to follow the course at college. Some groups are very small, for example in music. These represent unsatisfactory value for money when considered in terms of the criteria of "Best Value". The school should consider partnership arrangements to avoid the problems associated with students learning in unduly small groups.
45. All students studying either A level subjects or Advanced GNVQ courses follow a general studies programme, with the possibility of taking the A level examination in the subject. Apart from the examination courses the students follow, the quality and range of the curriculum is satisfactory. Students take up leadership roles and responsibility, for example in lunchtime supervision and in the welfare of younger students. However, overall, the range of these opportunities is unsatisfactory.
46. The sixth form curriculum in Year 12 is enhanced by a new, experimental key skills programme but this only comprises the communications element at present and only for Year 12 students. One year sixth form students and those in Year 13 are not included in this course. The school is aware of the statutory requirement to ensure that all key skills components must be in place by September 2001. It is unfortunate that one year sixth form students are not involved in the key skills course, since this cohort includes those whose learning strategies are insecure. The school should amend this arrangement for future one year admissions. Private study time is appropriately used and its effectiveness is evaluated by group tutors regularly. Students comment favourably on this and on the

one-to-one form tutor support given in tutorial sessions.

47. The correct procedures have been followed to enable a small number of students with special educational needs not to study French. During these lessons, students work on improving other subjects including literacy and, where appropriate, numeracy. At present, a number of students in Years 10 and 11 experience difficulties in studying the large number of examination courses. There is no provision for them to opt for a course offering them support in other subjects. The school is reviewing the number of courses students study at examination level.
48. A recent initiative for students in Year 9, organised by the learning support department, is the provision of a reading club. Selected students attend twice weekly from 8.30am until first lesson. They read to each other and with adults. Although it is early to gauge the success of the club, students that attend feel their reading is improving. Both the learning support department and the specific learning difficulties department hold a homework club at lunchtimes. This gives a valuable opportunity for students to use resources, including the computers, for their work.
49. All students, including those with special educational needs, have equal access to the full curriculum enabling them to learn and make progress at each curriculum stage. They benefit from supportive relationships with staff and other students. There is satisfactory provision for traveller children. Talented and gifted students are identified using performance data but there is not sufficient focus on their development.
50. Students with special educational needs are integrated into the school's class grouping arrangements but those at stage 3 of the Code of Practice and beyond may also be taught on a withdrawal basis for individual lessons. Support staff, whether members of the LEA peripatetic team or from the school, are not generally involved in the planning of curricular arrangements within subjects. This represents a missed opportunity and limits, for some students, their access to the curriculum. Given the wide range of student attainment within many classes, support staff should be more involved in the curriculum planning of subjects. Individual Educational Plans are not used consistently to inform teachers' planning. They tend to be general with insufficient attention being given to subject targets, although those produced for 'SpeLD' students are more detailed and focused and provide a good model.
51. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) has not been developed sufficiently since the last inspection and this is unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 9, there is a comprehensive programme of study that includes moral education, social development, sex education and drugs awareness. This is effectively, and sometimes very imaginatively, taught in tutor time. The programme is regularly reviewed under the direction of the heads of year. In Years 10 and 11, the provision for PSHE is unsatisfactory; there is no formal provision in the curriculum for students to improve their understanding and knowledge of personal and social education. However, timetables are collapsed for three sessions in Year 10 and for two sessions in Year 11 so that careers education can be taught. The place of PSHE in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is forming part of the wider review that the school is currently undertaking of the curriculum in these years.
52. There is no formal structure in the sixth form for personal, social and health education and too great a reliance is placed on the general studies programme. The quality of the general studies course is satisfactory but it does not meet the students' needs in PSHE. Regular and good use is made of visiting speakers to support and enhance students' learning across the school in PSHE. The School Development Plan identifies the need to improve personal, social and health education in the sixth form. A whole-school policy for the long-term planning and co-ordination of personal, social and health education needs to be produced and implemented to ensure PSHE is in place across the school.
53. Careers education and guidance is very good. There are carefully considered, vocationally focused schemes of work from Year 8 to Year 11. Careers input to the transition plans of students with special educational needs contain careers work of good quality and assists in giving students and their

parents a clear sense of purpose and direction for their work in Years 10 and 11. Work experience, which occurs in Year 10, is well integrated into the main curriculum. There are a wide range of work placements including Boots, Marks and Spencer, Cinque Ports Leisure and local legal practices.

54. The school's arrangements for work experience are effective and there is good liaison with the local business-education partnership. The school makes its own arrangements for placements that are well administered. The monitoring of the stringent health and safety requirements is an issue. The present staffing arrangements cannot ensure that the workplaces used are safe and secure environments for students. The school's existing work experience statement does not have a sufficiently clear statement of the health and safety requirements and of the responsibilities associated with these requirements. At present, the arrangements for post-16 work placements are not subject to the same degree of co-ordination. The school needs to take into account the most recent Department for Education and Employment guidance on health and safety responsibilities for this age group.
55. The quality of links with the community is satisfactory. Local clubs make use of a range of the sports' facilities, including lacrosse, cricket, netball and hockey. The school has good links with other institutions at 16 and 18 that enable students to move on to further and higher education easily. There are productive links with initial teacher training institutions and a wide range of placement opportunities are offered for student teachers, some of whom were observed teaching, for example in humanities. The sixth form participated in a higher education mini conference which they valued.
56. Extra-curricular activities are good. The curriculum is enhanced by the range of clubs and societies run at lunchtimes and after school for example, games, information and communication technology and study clubs. There is a high level of student participation in such activities, including students with special educational needs. The school's field study centre in South Wales, Ramfield, is well used and the opportunities provided are very much appreciated by students. It makes a very strong contribution to students' learning, to their attitudes to each other, the school, their work and to their growth as responsible members of the school community. Students can participate in plays, arts festivals and concerts as well as a varied selection of visits and exchanges to Western Europe and beyond. Such activities are available to students both pre and post 16.
57. There is provision for spiritual development in some areas of the curriculum. In science, students consider the evolution of man, the formation of the universe and the creation of energy. In geography, world religions are studied in geographical terms, especially through case studies of Brazil, Italy and Japan. Young performers from the music department contribute to assemblies and present carol concerts. The display in the atrium, in the art and design faculty area of colour, celebration and excitement has a spiritual quality. Nevertheless there is no whole-school policy for the provision of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and there is no requirement for departments to address these aspects within the curriculum. School assemblies do not, systematically, contain acts of worship and spiritual provision in the school is just satisfactory. Assemblies do often contain strong spiritual elements, as exemplified by presentations given during the inspection by two senior students who talked about the impact of the recent earthquake in Gujerat on members of their family.
58. The development of moral education is good in the school. The school promotes principles which distinguish right from wrong and these are reinforced across the range of subjects at all stages of the curriculum. Students display a good sense of correct behaviour in the classroom and around the school. They respect the community code of conduct. Almost all have self-respect in the way they present themselves each day. They respect each other in the way they relate in group work in the classroom. There is a uniform regard and respect by students for the teaching staff. The personal health and social education programme in Years 7 to 9 include modules involving relationships and responsibilities. The School Development Plan includes the development of individual skills for managing conflict. Moral issues are dealt with particularly well through art and design, religious education, science, music, geography and modern foreign languages.
59. The overall provision for social education is good. Social awareness is raised through a number of focused modules for personal, social and health education through Years 7 to 9. There is a good

range of extra-curricular visits and residential courses, notably through music, modern foreign languages, geography and art and design. These promote good social interaction. An effective system operates through which sixth form students take a pastoral responsibility for Year 7 students. The School Development Plan targets strategies to create a more dynamic sixth form ethos, to develop the school council and to enable students to take more individual social responsibility. Behaviour in classes and around the school is good and students work co-operatively in groups. Members of the teaching staff and sixth form students are good role models for students in the school.

60. The provision for students' cultural development is good and has improved since the last inspection. The school enhances students' awareness of different cultures by suspending its usual curriculum for a cultural awareness week. This has happened successfully in Year 7 and it is planned to extend the scheme across the school. The history, geography and religious education departments have considered Chinese society, travel in the age of Marco Polo, the physical landscape and population as well as Buddhism and Taoism. The cultural roots of Japan have been studied in art and design; cultural exchanges have been undertaken with Cologne and St Omer in France. In addition, the characteristics of world music are analysed in listening exercises within music lessons.
61. Since the last inspection report, there have been a number of appropriate alterations to the curriculum. Closer examination of the curriculum undertaken in Years 10 and 11 is in hand. Training in PSHE in Years 7 to 9 has been strengthened. There is now adequate time allocated to the teaching of RE in Years 10 and 11. The previous inspection issue of design and technology being inappropriately planned for progression into Years 10 and 11 remains and should be urgently addressed. In the sixth form, vocational provision has been developed through certified GNVQ courses and the growing range of AS courses is improving curriculum match for the range of student ability post-16. Vocational provision pre 16 remains under-developed and the school is aware of the heavy academic demands the current offering makes on students in Years 10 and 11. A review of this issue has been undertaken, including consideration of current student performance data, with the intention of amending subject and course options from September 2001.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

62. The school has maintained its strengths in the care and support it demonstrates for students but some of the weaknesses identified in the last report still exist. Overall the school has satisfactory procedures for child-protection and student welfare. The attention the school pays to students' health and safety is satisfactory. The support and guidance students receive from their tutors is inconsistent and good use is not yet being made of attainment information to support students' learning and this is satisfactory. Consequently, students are not well placed to know how best to improve their attainment and this affects their learning.
63. Although there is a brief policy statement and an understanding by key staff of child protection issues and the needs of children at risk, there are not consistent school procedures that show a clear link to those of the Area Child Protection Committee and there are gaps in training, related to recent changes in personnel, that need to be addressed. Specific health and welfare procedures are largely good, including appropriate steps taken to ensure the safety of students on school visits, such as to Ramfield. However, there is a need to ensure that the monitoring of health and safety criteria is consistent across all work placements.
64. Some health and safety issues have been reported directly to the school. The lunchtime experience is unsatisfactory for many students. Long queues in the dining room mean little time to eat lunch before afternoon registration and some students seem unable to get their coats or gain access to the toilets. The toilets are in constant need of cleaning and maintenance and are unhygienic.
65. The role of the form tutor is developing but there is a lack of consistency. Most tutors check contact books and planners and comment on good and bad notes where appropriate. Good use is made in some classes of this time; for example, in a Year 9 class the teacher discussed the questionnaire the

students had to complete as part of the 'Take a Child to Work Scheme'. However, the role of the tutor and the school's procedures for keeping track of students' progress and ensuring they receive timely and appropriate support if necessary are unsatisfactory.

66. There is a substantial amount of information collected about students' achievements but it is only just beginning to be used in a systematic way. A good start has been made, for example in Year 9, but overall the school has not made sufficient progress on this aspect of its work since the last inspection. Last term information was collected and analysed comparing students' performance at the end of their primary education, their current levels of attainment and their predicted examination prospects. This information was discussed with parents on an 'Academic Review Day'. One consequence has been the establishment of an early morning reading club, this term, for selected students who need to improve their reading skills. Year 11 students have also been linked with older students to support them as learning mentors.
67. Those students who are learning English as an additional language make appropriate progress but the school does not keep records of this progress. Students' performance data is not used to identify any underachievement in this group or among ethnic minority students. Their progress is only known by individual teachers. No use is made of assessments of these students' attainment to adapt curriculum planning or styles of teaching. The school is not well placed, at present, to analyse curriculum in order to check the progress of particular groups of students including those with English as an additional language or students from traveller backgrounds. This is a weakness.
68. An effective award system for good work and positive attitudes to work is valued by students who strive to gain sufficient 'good notes' to receive certificates. 'Bad notes' are awarded for unsatisfactory work, behaviour, attitude or punctuality. A strength of the system is that parents are asked to sign the books where notes are recorded to know of successes and any infringements. In practice, however, parents do not always sign books.
69. Deputies have recently been appointed to assist heads of year and these posts are successfully strengthening the care systems in the school. A set of procedures, 'the pastoral ladder', has been established to help students who have difficulties with their behaviour. In a number of instances this is proving successful as students consistently meet the targets set for them. However, the exchange of information between the learning support department and heads of year is unsatisfactory and links between unacceptable behaviour and learning difficulties are not explored early enough.
70. Increasingly good use is being made of external support services. The behaviour support service assists in setting up support plans for those students at risk of being excluded and is currently working directly with one student. The involvement of a counselling service proved effective last year and this provision has been increased. Staff from the traveller education service began working with students in the school last year. They have worked closely with the learning support department, which is recognised as a starting point for further involvement to alert staff to the needs of this group of students.
71. Very effective support is provided by the service for the visually impaired students. Staff provide specialist equipment, work regularly with the students and give staff very good information on how to enable these students to achieve well. Regular visits are made by the educational psychologist who has discussions with and advises the special educational needs co-ordinator and the head of the SpeLD department, as well as assessing students.
72. The special needs register is used well by staff. They know the level of difficulty of students in their classes. In line with the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of Special Educational Needs, many students have individual education plans to help them make progress. This is an improvement on the last inspection, when these plans were not used. However, the quality of many of these plans is unsatisfactory. In a number of cases, targets set do not address the most pressing problems for the student. Actions suggested are not helpful for the class teacher and some targets have to be repeated because they are not sufficiently specific. Notably, plans written for

students in the SpeLD department, which use a different format, are more effective, although, at times, targets are continued from one plan to the next. There is an effective system for withdrawing students from lessons to work on programmes designed to meet their individual need.

73. Students with statements of special educational need are supported appropriately by personal tutors and support assistants according to the requirements of their statements. This causes a complex timetabling exercise as personal tutors work for the local education authority and may only be allocated a number of hours in the school. Despite this constraint, support is allocated effectively.
74. Annual reviews of statements are carried out very well. Staff are sensitive and take into account the views of parents and students. Members of services working with the student send reports and, where possible, attend. Annual reviews are well prepared and this ensures parents have information about the progress their children are making in school. The careers service makes a very positive contribution to transition reviews, helping students to compile personal statements about their aspirations and direction for the future. During the inspection, a student proudly read out his analysis of how he had improved during the year.
75. There is a strong pastoral structure in place in the school through the tutors and heads and deputies of year, to the key stage leaders. Staff know the students well and many of the staff know families and their circumstances. This firm base, together with the very good relationships observed amongst staff and students, contributes to the high standard of care and wellbeing of students recognised by parents. Students are largely confident of someone to turn to if they need help, whether it be tutor, counsellor or upper school mentor.
76. There are good procedures in place to promote and monitor good behaviour, attendance and improve punctuality. In particular, the recently developed pastoral ladder is already providing a means of tracking the pattern and frequency of different kinds of incident, as well as the name and year of the offender. At present, the system is still in early stages of use. Although some instances of bullying, most typically name calling, were mentioned by parents and some students, there is a general view that these are successfully tackled by the range of measures in place. School-based initiatives are significantly helped by the good relationships which have been established with external agencies, such as the Educational Welfare Officer and Counselling Service.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

77. In general, parents consider this a good school that has improved since the last inspection and continues to improve. They hold their good views based on their experiences of the school but recognise that there is prejudice by some in the local community who still base their opinion on the poor reputation of the previous girls' school.
78. Parents feel welcome in the school and most consider it works closely with them, making it easy to raise questions or problems. Typically they consider that their children are well taught by teachers who have high expectations and that, as parents, they are well informed of their children's progress through, for example the useful, if brief, Academic Review Day. However, some felt that academic information, such as CAT scores, was not explained very well. Annual reports on students' progress viewed during the inspection do not provide sufficient description of what has been covered in a subject, individuals' strengths and weaknesses in that subject and how to put these right.
79. Many favourable comments were made at the parents' meeting and in questionnaires and, although a number of issues of concern were raised, there were no significant problems on which all agreed. The most frequent areas of concern were some dissent that the school was well managed and led, on whether behaviour was good and with the range of activities outside lessons. Some considered that homework was patchy, in particular the quality of marking, and there was general agreement that they would like to see streaming earlier in subjects.
80. The school encourage parents to get involved, there is a successful shared reading scheme operating

in Year 7 which benefits students' learning throughout the school. Students have contact books or planners that parents are encouraged to sign on a regular basis to use as a means of communication. Staff also attend school association meetings and make use of the small band of members of the school association committee to help with events. A crèche has been trialled on open evenings.

81. Newsletters and details of activities in school are now sent out only on Fridays to make it easier for parents to keep track of information coming out and good information has been provided through a meeting and leaflets on, for example, the proposed increase in the school's admission number. Both the school brochure and annual report to parents contain much relevant information. They are, however, missing some data that they are required to contain: the absence figures and National Curriculum Test results from the brochure, and details of any resolutions from the last meeting, school security and the next election of a parent governor from the Annual Report to parents.
82. The specific learning difficulties department has very good links with parents, who all attend annual reviews. A series of meetings are arranged to ensure parents are kept informed about important stages in their child's schooling. For example, parents of Year 9 students meet staff to discuss option choices. There are also good links with parents of students with special educational needs. Steps are taken to ensure they are aware of any changes in what is being provided for their child.
83. Although the school is making good attempts to involve parents, not all parents respond. There is success, for example, in the 100 per cent attendance at SpeLD meetings and the high level of attendance at SEN annual reviews but many planners and contact books are left unsigned by parents. Some parents do not provide strong support for the school's efforts to tackle lateness. The fund-raising efforts of the school association have a direct and positive impact on the learning environment, in particular to the costs of maintaining Ramfield Activities Centre.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

84. The day to day running of the school is very effective. The headteacher, associate headteacher and all staff, including the administrative staff, work hard to ensure that the school runs smoothly and efficiently and that students feel safe, secure and able to learn. Despite the size of the campus and the restricted corridor and canteen facilities, incidents of misbehaviour and vandalism are rare.
85. The governing body shares the vision and leadership of the headteacher and the senior leadership team (SLT) of the school. They have confidence and respect for the professional work of the SLT. They support the work of the school and participate fully through sub-committees and the main governing body in setting priorities, establishing budgets and critically evaluating the school development plan. The governing body seeks to ensure that the school meets statutory requirements and, during the inspection, with the exception of a daily act of collective worship and some elements of the prospectus and annual report to parents, the school conformed to the requirements.
86. The Chair of Governors and many of the Governors give generously of their time to the school and have a good idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have responded well to the previous inspection report and ensured that the majority of issues were addressed swiftly, but some issues remained outstanding and needed to be followed up more rigorously. The involvement of the Governors in the school is appreciated by the staff who value the association of a member of the governing body with identified departments, but there is some variation in the degree to which Governors are able to sustain this commitment.
87. The headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school. In his first year in post, he very effectively monitored and evaluated the work of the school and its constituent elements. On the basis of this and other evidence, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with the headteacher and the governing body have a sound school development plan (SDP) with a clear set of priorities designed to improve the educational provision for students in the school. The SDP is very clear, succinct and has some strengths as a working document, but, at present, not all elements are costed or the outcomes clearly measurable. Nevertheless, it is providing the governing body and the school with an effective

strategy for planning the future development of the school. There are clear priorities set, with a strong emphasis on the impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

88. Senior managers share their vision for development which guides the direction of the work of the school. Staff recognise the aspiration and direction of the senior leadership; many of the staff share this sense of purpose and direction and all are committed to improving the school. There have been fundamental changes in the management structure and leadership of the school in the last academic year. These changes have yet to be embedded in the fabric of the school and their impact is yet to be realised but within the SLT there is a strong sense of purpose and direction in the development of the school and this is shared, in varying degrees, across faculties and departments. This clear educational direction in the work of the school is affecting the practice of heads of department and faculty and middle managers across the school, but it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the strategies on the impact on students' attainment or on teaching and learning.
89. The leadership and management of the specific learning difficulties department is very good. The teacher in charge has clearly established what needs to be done to improve the department and is taking steps to achieve this. The special educational needs co-ordinator has an enormous managerial role of a large number of staff that work with students. Whilst the support staff are directly employed by the school, support teachers are allocated by the local education authority. The special educational needs co-ordinator does well to pull this team together and to involve staff from different services, such as traveller education staff and those helping students with English as an additional language.
90. In all subjects, with the exception of some areas of design and technology and religious education, there is a very good match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the subject they teach. In some circumstances where non-specialised or inappropriately qualified teachers were used, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory. The training of new and experienced teachers is effective and linked directly to the departmental and school development plans.
91. The school's accommodation is very good and supports students' learning well. The separate purpose-built accommodation for art and design and for design and technology are a particular strength. Both have spacious and lofty display areas, well and effectively used, with design and craft rooms built around them. There is very good accommodation for modern foreign languages and for students with special educational needs, including specialist rooms for students with specific learning difficulties and a separate library. The music department has three soundproof practice rooms and a small technology studio, as well as general teaching rooms. The accommodation for physical education, both indoors and out, is very good and includes an excellent flood-lit astro turf area.
92. There are separate computer suites for the upper and lower schools that are used well. The libraries for the upper and lower school are spacious, comfortably furnished and have attractive displays of students' work. They are inviting areas that have a positive impact on student learning. Some of the ten science laboratories are in need of improvement and a few of the mathematics rooms are too small for the larger classes.
93. The pressure on space, as the school expands, is particularly noticeable in some areas, for instance the dining areas, which are congested and over-flow into the dance and drama hall. There are barely sufficient toilets for the expanding numbers of students and their condition is a cause for concern. Outdoor and indoor accommodation is well cared for by the site management team, which also provides attractive plant and flower displays around the school.
94. The quality and quantity of resources available to teach the school's planned curriculum, and the range of students, is good overall. Effective use is made of the resources to support learning and raise attainment. Increasingly effective use is being made of new technology, including ICT, which is improving students' learning. The use of good quality resources is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning in nearly all subjects. In particular, special education needs and ICT have benefited from increased provision. However, the library stocks in the school, in both the main and the sixth form library, are below the numbers normally expected for a school of this size. There

has also been a software problem in the main school library that has rendered the computers in the library unusable for nearly a term.

95. There has been a significant improvement in resources for learning since the last inspection. Students and staff value the provision made but systems for identifying the impact on learning and standards, where significant investment has been made, are not yet well established.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to further improve the quality of education the school offers its students, the headteacher and staff together with the governing body should:

- Implement strategies for literacy and numeracy across the school, but particularly in Years 7 to 9 (paragraphs 8, 9, 12, 15, 38, 39 and 41).
- Ensure that school policies are applied consistently and their application monitored regularly (paragraphs 21, 38, 62, 63).
- Extend the range of teaching styles and the effective matching of lessons to students' needs (paragraphs 15, 18, 32).
- Use assessment data to set individual student learning targets to improve attainment and monitor progress (paragraphs 33, 65, 66 and subject paragraphs).
- Improve the quality of SEN IEPs and their use in supporting students in the classroom (paragraphs 50, 72).
- Improve the provision for personal, social and health education in Years 10 and 11 (paragraph 51).

Governors should also consider

- improving the quality, hygiene and adequacy of the toilets throughout the school (paragraph 93).
- improve the levels of book resources in both school libraries (paragraph 94).
- ensure statutory requirements are met in relation to a daily act of collective worship, RE provision in the sixth form and the prospectus and Annual Report to Parents (paragraphs 43, 58, 81, 85, 239)
- Ensure health and safety procedures are consistent across all work placements (paragraph 54 and 64).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	233
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	66

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2.5	21.4	42.5	31.3	1.7	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7- Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1213	200
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	217	

Special educational needs	Y7 - Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	77	7
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	421	28

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	65

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	54

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	8.0
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.7
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	128	110	238

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	57	69	61
	Girls	77	60	61
	Total	134	129	122
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	57 (61)	55 (62)	51 (53)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	23 (18)	32 (32)	23 (14)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	52	51	42
	Girls	71	58	48
	Total	123	109	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (58)	46 (54)	38 (38)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	30 (24)	33 (20)	17 (30)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	107	87	194

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	38	96	103
	Girls	40	77	81
	Total	78	173	184
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	40 (41)	89 (95)	95 (98)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	35
	National	38.4

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	0
	National	N/A

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	20	23	43

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	15.2	14.6	14.9	3.0	3.7	3.4
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	7
Black – African heritage	11
Black – other	7
Indian	8
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	11
White	1344
Any other minority ethnic group	21

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	1	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	140	4
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 – Y12

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	81.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7– Y12

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	456

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y12

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y12

Key Stage 3	23.3
Key Stage 4	23.5

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	3409229
Total expenditure	3462583
Expenditure per pupil	2612
Balance brought forward from previous year	155357
Balance carried forward to next year	102003

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1400
Number of questionnaires returned	312

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	54	10	5	1
My child is making good progress in school.	32	53	10	4	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	44	17	6	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	48	18	7	2
The teaching is good.	25	58	9	2	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	46	15	6	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	39	47	10	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	48	42	6	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	50	17	6	4
The school is well led and managed.	26	52	9	3	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	30	50	12	4	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	44	8	4	17

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

ENGLISH

96. Standards in English have been maintained since the last inspection report. Over the last two years, standards have been stable. Although national test results for both boys and girls at 14 are slightly below national averages at level 5, they are close to the national average for students achieving level 6. Over the last three years, both boys and girls at 16 have achieved results close to the national average and in line with those in similar schools. The number of students achieving higher grades at Advanced Level are below national levels but have improved since the last inspection.
97. Students' attainment in lessons is close to that expected for students aged 14. Attainment in speaking and listening and in reading is higher than in writing. Students listen attentively. They are confident in expressing their ideas about literature, although not always at length, and will involve themselves in class discussions. From Year 7 they show sound interest in books, most read fluently and, by Year 9, many students read widely. By 14, most students have made good gains in reading skills and can select relevant sections from texts to illustrate themes and characters. This includes their work on Shakespeare. Their creative writing is often lively and final drafts are presented well.
98. Students in Year 7, with weak literacy skills, are making reasonable progress. Lower ability students and those with special educational needs use a sound range of vocabulary in their writing but they often lack confidence in recording ideas independently. In some cases, their poor handwriting inhibits good note taking. In Years 7 and 8, more able students do not make the good progress that they do in Year 9 top sets. Their poetry writing shows the depth of their response to literature and the structure of their written work is well controlled.
99. All students in Years 10 and 11 make good gains in language skills and understanding. They are able to express insights into their reading of plays, poetry and novels and can give their own opinions about characters' motivation and relationships. Lower ability students persevere with reading. In one lesson, for example, they made good gains in understanding a difficult dialect poem. Students' writing is increasingly controlled, but the gap between the standards of high and low ability students widens by Year 11. This means that the strongest are able to make sound use of paragraphs and other conventions but that the weakest students are over-dependent on teachers' support and direction.
100. Able students use their writing effectively to persuade, discuss and convey personal responses. This is true of both boys and girls. Throughout the school there are good examples of word processing being used to enhance the quality of final drafts of written work.
101. Those students that study English in the sixth form show sound gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Their responses to literature increase in sensitivity and insight. They are able to discuss and argue from different points of view and show a growing ability to explore complex themes. Students respond well to each other. They listen closely and are able to question each other's ideas. Throughout the school, there are no differences in attainment between students from different minority ethnic groups.
102. Low standards of literacy mean that some students find it difficult to understand and achieve well in all subjects. Some direct teaching of literacy in Year 7 is designed to build on their experiences in primary school in Year 6 and provides an appropriate level of challenge for students. There are also a number of initiatives that are having a positive effect on students' attitudes to reading. These include a shared reading project and library lessons that are building students' confidence and widening their reading experiences.
103. Students have a positive attitude to their English lessons. Students from the full ability range respond actively and are motivated in their work and this results in good learning. Relationships between

students and teachers are good and this supports a friendly yet serious working atmosphere. They use drama techniques willingly and this deepens their level of involvement with texts. There were good examples where for instance the teacher questioned students in role as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. There is good behaviour and a sense of purpose in lessons that encourages learning.

104. Teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject is strength of the faculty. As a result, students are involved and interested in lessons and there is a shared and good sense of purpose. There were no unsatisfactory lessons and almost half of the lessons seen were good. Lessons are well planned and there are a good variety of activities. The organisation of students' folders of completed work has improved since the last inspection. This helps students and teachers to identify progress.
105. There has also been improvement in the use teachers make of learning objectives. These are clear and well linked to schemes of work, although they are not well used to help students evaluate their progress at the end of lessons.
106. Students do not have sufficient opportunities to make their own decisions about learning, for example in choosing a style for writing or in organising group presentations. Although the structure of lessons and the use of some differentiated material help lower achieving students and those with special educational needs, these students are often over dependent on teachers and support staff.
107. There are some examples of good quality marking that give students clear indications about how to improve their work but this is not consistent throughout the faculty. There is no systematic approach to the use of students' attainment data to track the progress of particular groups in English, such as boys and girls, those with special educational needs, from minority ethnic backgrounds or learning English as an additional language.
108. The head and deputy Head of Faculty have a good balance of skill and experience and give the faculty a clear sense of direction. There is a collaborative approach within the team and teachers share good practice informally. There has been reasonable progress since the last inspection. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in English is unsatisfactory because it is not systematic. Consequently, there is a lack of consistency across the faculty.

DRAMA

109. Students' achievements in drama are in line with national expectations at 14 and examination results at 16 are very close to the national average. At Advanced Level there has been 100 per cent pass rate in Performing Arts over the past three years and a small number of higher grades.
110. By age 14, students are able to use improvisation effectively to communicate their ideas and speak confidently in a range of roles. They respond quickly to a stimulus given as a starting point and are able to combine ideas and story lines to explore a theme. Students aged 16 create and rehearse presentations which convey more sophisticated interpretations. In one case, a difficult theme based around the diary of Anne Frank was handled sensitively to build tension, create a mood and affect an audience. Students studying Performing Arts are able to react quickly to explore different theatrical approaches such as the use of realism to make an impact and surprise an audience.
111. Students approach their drama lessons enthusiastically. They change quickly, respond positively to activities and boys and girls co-operate well together. Behaviour is usually good, including students who have less self-discipline elsewhere. From Year 10 onwards, students make sound use of examination criteria to improve the standard of their work.
112. The last inspection report praised the quality of teaching and relationships with students in drama. This quality of teaching and relationships with students in drama is still apparent and is particularly impressive. The drama teacher has a thorough subject knowledge and wide experience of working in the arts. Humour, a light touch and good expectations mean that students make sound progress.

There is scope for more intervention to improve the precision with which students apply skills and, therefore, improve the quality of their work.

113. The teaching space for drama is adequate but shared use as a dining hall means that there is no display space or white board. This restricts both contributions that the subject could make to language development and literacy and also the opportunities to celebrate students' work and the subject's profile.

MATHEMATICS

114. Students' attainment in mathematics at the end of Year 9 is just below average. Results in National Curriculum tests have improved since 1996 to a peak in 1999 with a slight dip in 2000. Their performance in tests is in line with that of students in similar schools. There is little difference in the results achieved by boys and girls. At 16, students' attainment is below average and in 2000 there was a dip in performance.
115. Inspection evidence from observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work shows that attainment is close to the national average overall. Students in the top set in Year 9 reach a standard well above the national average, while those in other sets are at a lower level. More able students have very secure algebraic skills, understand and apply Pythagoras' theorem and are able to determine a line of best fit from a scatter-graph.
116. Students of average ability make use of the unitary method to answer practical problems involving ratios, interpret simple formulae in algebra and find the area of a circle. Their mental arithmetic skills are below average. Lower ability students know about even numbers and prime numbers but find it difficult to retain or apply their knowledge. For example, several students do not readily recognise whether a given number called out by the teacher is divisible by two. They construct a simple bar chart accurately but cannot interpret one, already drawn, showing the number of televisions per household, correctly. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, helped by support staff, for instance to investigate the pattern of even numbers.
117. The percentage of students attaining GCSE grades A*-C is below the national average. It reached a peak in 1999 and fell a little in 2000. There is no difference in the results achieved by boys and girls. In 1998, girls gained better results than boys and in 2000 the reverse applied. In 1999, there was very little difference. Students are slightly less successful in mathematics than they are in their other GCSE subjects.
118. Students' attainment in lessons and in the evidence available in the work they produce indicates that attainment is around the national average. Students in the highest class in Year 11 reach a well above average standard while those in the other classes range down to well below average. The most able students add, subtract and simplify algebraic fractions successfully, understand and use rational and irrational numbers and employ tree diagrams to determine the probability of compound events. On occasion, a few make careless errors, such as writing $x(x+1)$ as x squared + 1.
119. Students of average ability multiply and divide fractions correctly, draw an accurate straight-line graph to convert pounds to dollars (or vice-versa) and detect whether there is positive, negative or no correlation between two variables, such as ambient temperature and ice cream sales. Most lower ability students are accurate in their use of a written method to add two four-digit numbers and can plot co-ordinates in the first quadrant. Many, however, make errors in calculations involving decimals and think of the range as a type of average. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, helped by support staff, for example to draw accurate acute angles.
120. GCE A Level results in mathematics are near the national average. In both 1999 and 2000, the school entered a small number of students for GCE A Level with a spread of results. A larger number were entered in 1998 with better overall results. Students' attainment by the end of the sixth form in the current GCE A Level course is in line with the national average both in pure mathematics and in

statistics. They solve cubic equations, find the n th term and sum of arithmetic and geometric series and understand and use trigonometric identities. In the statistics course, students use tree diagrams, and other methods, to determine probabilities of events, including conditional probability.

121. Students' attitude to work and their behaviour are good in Year 7 to 9 and in the sixth form and satisfactory in most cases in Years 10 and 11. Nearly all students in Years 7 to 9, most in Years 10 and 11 and all in the sixth form listen attentively to the teacher and to other students when they are responding to a question. These students are interested in mathematics and are keen to make progress. They are persistent in tackling the tasks that are set. There is, however, a significant minority of students in Year 11 that lack interest in the subject and are easily distracted by others. They talk to each other on inconsequential matters and work too slowly, particularly towards the end of lessons, and this adversely affects their learning and that of others in the class.
122. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form and satisfactory, or better, in nearly all lessons in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics enabling students to make steady progress in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, Year 13 students were helped significantly to improve their examination prospects through good teaching by establishing alternative ways of finding the sum of a series and, in another question, by explaining the relationship between domain and range clearly.
123. In some lessons, teachers incorporate work on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy effectively to help deepen students' understanding. For instance, in Year 9, the teacher took the opportunity to discuss the meaning of the word correlation. In Year 7, the teacher ended the lesson on a high note by distributing 'follow me' cards each with an answer and the next question on the card. Students enjoyed the activity, enthusiastically calling out an answer and then the next question, in turn, around the class. On other occasions, teachers miss useful opportunities for work on basic skills. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly so that they are prepared for most issues that arise in a lesson. In most cases, teachers have a realistic expectation of what students know, understand and can do.
124. In the best lessons, teachers provide extension work for more able students and appropriate help for students with special educational needs. Support staff give useful help to students with special educational needs but there is insufficient co-ordination and student individual education plan targets are not specific enough. Teaching methods are satisfactory but there is too little variety. Some of the most effective lessons start with a crisp mental activity and end with a clearly defined plenary session to summarise what has taken place. The plenary works best when the teacher takes full account of students' common difficulties and the misapprehensions that have arisen in the course of the lesson. For instance, Year 7 students improved their understanding of decimal subtractions considerably when the teacher ended the lesson by working through $0.13 - 0.012$ with the whole class. Teaching is less effective when such opportunities are missed.
125. In some instances, teachers do not ask the kind of questions that broaden students' thinking. In most cases, teachers manage students effectively and insist on suitable standards of behaviour. For example, in a very good Year 10 lesson with a potentially difficult class, the teacher sensitively grouped compatible students together to minimise any disruption and made sure that students participated fully by requiring them to come to the front to draw acute angles on the whiteboard. The teacher maintained a very good relationship with the class by concentrating on giving positive feedback to students wherever possible. In a few instances, notably in Year 11, the teacher is unable to prevent the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small number of students disrupting the progress of the class as a whole. In most cases, the rate of learning in lessons is satisfactory but sometimes it drops towards the end as students lose their concentration.
126. The use of information and communication technology in mathematics is largely concentrated in work that is undertaken in the latter half of the Summer Term. This arrangement does provide students with the opportunity of applying ICT in their work in mathematics but lacks the advantages of immediacy and regularity. The best teachers routinely look for gains in learning, gaps in knowledge and areas of

misunderstanding by students to steer them towards greater understanding. Such evaluation, diagnosis and support are not consistent across the teaching in mathematics. Teachers set regular homework but marking is inconsistent in its quality and regularity.

127. The department is managed effectively and has a commitment to raising students' attainment. Staff and older students recently participated, with local primary schools, in the Orpington Mathsfest, organised by the local Education Business Partnership. This was a very productive, stimulating and interesting experience for both staff and students. The monitoring, evaluation and development of mathematics teaching is not yet well established in the department.
128. There has been satisfactory progress overall since the last inspection, although the attainment of students remains too low in the National Curriculum Tests and in GCSE examinations. Teachers' objectives in lessons are clearer and the rate of learning in most lessons is brisker. A greater amount of time is allocated to mental maths but opportunities are missed in some classes. The setting of individual targets for improvement for each student is at a very early stage and there is more that needs to be done to use assessment data to provide targets for students to improve their work.

SCIENCE

129. The attainment of students by the age of 14 in the National Curriculum Tests last year was below the national level. In the school, 51 per cent of students gained a level 5 or above and this is below the national figure of 59 per cent. This figure has not changed significantly to that reported at the time of the previous inspection in 1996. This year, 48 per cent of the boys gained a level 5 or above compared to the 56 per cent of girls who reached this level. The number of students who gained a level 6 or above was lower than the national figure. Of the three core subjects, students in science produce attainment levels lower than those found in English and mathematics. The number of students following science subjects at A or A/S level is low. The results obtained are well below the national figures.
130. In Years 7 to 9, the higher ability students were able to discuss exothermic and endothermic reactions on the basis of energy changes. These students were also able to discuss the composition of elements and compounds and were aware of the number of atoms present in each. Average ability students were able to determine the relationship between force and distance about a pivot and were aware of the need for balancing forces. Lower ability students were able to name the planets in our solar system and could analyse data to obtain information on diameter, number of moons and distance from the sun.
131. The number of students in science obtaining a GCSE grade of A*-C is below the national level. At GCSE, students took single certification, double certification or three separate sciences. Overall, the number of students who obtained a grade of A*-C in these examinations is just below the national figure of 46 per cent. The trend at this level is upwards and has increased by 12 per cent over the past two years. When the performance of boys is compared to girls, at GCSE, the pattern seen is similar to that at 14 except that there is an even greater difference in their performance.
132. The able students in Year 11 were able to design, perform and evaluate investigations as part of their GCSE science coursework in a very thorough manner. These students were also able to use their numeracy skills to calculate pressure from Boyle's Law as well as using formulae to determine speed and acceleration. Lower ability students could construct food chains and then link these to make food webs. They were able to predict the outcome of changes within food webs to the number of predators in different situations.
133. The students in Years 12 and 13 are confident in discussion and are able, for example, to explain rates of reactions on the basis of the collision theory in a homogenous catalytic system. Other students could describe the relationship between two types of bees and their pollination of specific types of clover.

134. There is a good relationship between the students and staff in science. Most students, especially the higher attaining students, behave well and work hard in science. Students in the lower school have the best attitude to the subject. Students are keen to enter into class discussions, have the confidence to answer questions and use their oracy skills constructively.
135. Students work in a safe and enthusiastic manner when performing practical work. A good example of this was in a Year 11 group undertaking an investigation on studying the factors that affect the rate of pendulum movement. The motivation and behaviour of a few lower attaining boys was, at times, poor, especially in Years 10 and 11, and this affected the learning they achieved. This poor attitude was seen only on a few instances when classroom control was not strong and there was insufficient pace or inappropriate tasks were set, such as answering questions from books. In some lessons, a few students did not have books with them and this had a detrimental effect on their learning. Girls, regardless of their level of attainment, produce work that is complete and well presented. Higher attaining boys have complete notes but their standards of presentation are lower. A number of lower attaining boys produce work that is often incomplete and remains uncompleted. The underachievement of boys in science and the standards that are accepted from them needs to be dealt with by the science department.
136. The teaching in science is well planned and taught by qualified and experienced staff. In over half of the lessons, the teaching was good or better, with no unsatisfactory teaching being observed. In most lessons registers were taken formally and helped start the lesson in an ordered manner that was then followed by the teacher describing the aims of that lesson. The most successful lessons were those where there was good lesson planning, including a structure that ensured the lesson had sufficient pace linked with effective class control. Not all the staff teaching science are using relevant and motivating teaching styles with an emphasis on the practical aspects of science investigations. There is an issue of consistency in the teaching of science across the school that needs to be examined.
137. The work covered in science is relevant to the students' experience and this motivates students by linking their interests to the subject matter. One very effective lesson on the planets in Year 9 included a demonstration involving students, models of the earth and planets, class discussions, a video section and ended with a 'fun quiz' as an effective reinforcement of the learning. Homework is structured and is an integral part of the lesson plans. It is marked according to the departmental policy with effort and attainment grades, often with additional narrative comments.
138. Students make good progress in their learning across the school especially in Years 7 to 9. They are aware of the progress they are making from the assessments made on end of topic tests and are informed of their potential level or grades on a regular basis. In Years 10 and 11, the progress of boys is less than that of girls. The setting of students according to their level of attainment in the subject in Years 8 to 11 allows teachers to plan work that is suitable and extending and this has a positive effect on students' attitudes to learning. In Year 7, teaching mixed ability groups poses a challenge to teachers who need to plan suitable activities and resources for the wide range of student attainments. In some lessons, there is effective planning for the range of students needs, but it is not universal and will need to be extended. An example of the need for this approach was seen in a Year 7 class where some students were able to describe chemical to kinetic energy changes in detail while others could only use terms such as movement and petrol.
139. Students that have special educational needs are well supported in science, with additional staffing, and learn well in Years 7 to 9. The learning support staff are often aware of the lesson content and are able to support a number of students in the lessons in an efficient manner. There is a wide range of opportunities throughout the school for students to use their literacy and numeracy skills both in written work and class discussions. The use of computers is not widespread in science except in Year 9 where it is part of the course. The department does not possess, at present, the necessary data logging equipment and needs to acquire this equipment in order to provide this aspect of science. There is some use of ICT for research and word processing by students and that motivates those students with poor handwriting to produce a higher standard of work. The use of ICT in the teaching of science in the school makes insufficient use of simulations and modelling.

140. The management of the department is good, with the exception of the use of ICT. The head of department was appointed after the last inspection and has been responsible for the introduction of new courses throughout Years 7 to 9. These courses are written to provide a relevant experience for the students and the department has sufficient resources to teach these courses. The courses have increased the range of teaching styles and activities of the students and have also helped raise the standard of teaching and learning in the department. The monitoring of teaching in the department is informal. Whilst there are some good features to this monitoring, it needs to be put on a more formal basis so that the use of teaching styles can be assessed and consistency in marking/assessment assured.
141. The department has also ensured that the majority of issues raised in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. This includes the introduction of a range of investigation opportunities for the students that are effectively linked with the records of students' attainment in the subject. The raising of attainment in Years 10 and 11 has started and is linked with an increase in the number of students being entered for double science in the higher tier papers. However, the assessment of students' progress and attainment is not being used to evaluate the effectiveness of these new courses.
142. The accommodation for the science department is good with eleven laboratories, most of these being in a very good condition, although two of the laboratories need improvement. The department has sufficient resources and a team of support staff, who are efficient and well organised, to ensure the equipment and resources ordered are present at the start of lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

143. Students arrive at the school with limited experience of art in their primary schools. By age 14, their attainment is close to standards expected at that age. The proportion of students gaining grades A*-C in the GCSE examination in 2000 was above national averages and amongst the highest in the school. The results for boys have declined from the exceptionally high point reached two years ago, but they remain well above national averages. The numbers taking 'A' and 'AS' level examinations over the past three years have been too small to make a fair comparison with national figures. However, there has been a 100 per cent pass rate over that time and results have been consistently very good, particularly in the 'A' level Fine Arts examination.
144. Through Years 7 to 9, students gain a sound working knowledge of a wide range of media and processes. A significant minority of students are producing very imaginative and technically sound work. Students know that Van Gogh was an Expressionist painter who often expressed his thoughts and feelings in bold impasto sweeps and curls of colour. They recognise the portraiture of Modigliani and are able to work effectively in his attenuated style. They are very imaginative in their slab clay structures, improving their modelling skills rapidly as they experiment with a range of cutting and forming tools. Higher ability students are able to work in fine detail on their structures, forming, incising and building up their relief landscape sections. Drawing skills are taught well in Years 7 to 9 and students make good progress in their observational studies.
145. By age 16, standards are above those expected. Those working towards the GCSE in photography produce work to a very high technical and creative level. Their background research is extensive and their approach to the subject is very imaginative. They make good use of computers to research the Internet and manipulate their photographic images. Work seen indicates good progress in painting and drawing, although their knowledge and understanding of art in different cultures and times are not so well developed as their practical skills. Year 10 students are able to handle water, oil and acrylic colours, working freely and boldly, often on a large scale. Learning is more effective in lessons where students are challenged by the high technical and creative expectations of teachers. The rate of learning in lessons is slowed where there is over-directive teaching that fails to effectively challenge the creative potential of students.
146. In the Sixth form, standards are above national expectations and build towards very good results in 'A'

and 'AS' level examinations. Students are independent learners whose work is guided by the excellent knowledge and understanding that their teachers demonstrate. They work confidently using card or palette knife to compose visually powerful images, drawn from a wide range of artistic influences, on the large canvases they prepare for themselves. Higher attaining students research and develop their chosen themes rigorously, taking notes, presenting and annotating their work neatly and effectively. Photographic studies are very well developed from dark room to computer. They are often combined with painting and drawing in creative multi-media compositions. They make very good learning in a subject they clearly enjoy and to which they are fully committed. Students on the Special Needs register achieve well and make good progress.

147. Students are enthusiastic and enjoy lessons of art and this has a good effect on their learning in the subject. The good and often very good teaching enables them to make good progress with their work in a generally calm and hard working atmosphere. They are very polite and courteous to visitors and are pleased to show and talk about their work. Younger students tend to be shy and lacking in confidence. As they grow through the school, they become more confident. By the sixth form, they are well on their way to becoming fully independent learners.
148. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 11 and is very good in the sixth form. Teachers have a very good command of their subject areas and use the department's good resources well. They have high expectations of students' work and their behaviour and are able to build a creative and hard working ethos in the department. This inspires the students to high levels of intellectual and creative effort and enables them to make good progress with their work. The majority of teachers do not plan effectively to support the students' literacy skills through the subject. There were a few 'gallery' session lessons that effectively developed the critical thinking of students and improved their personal and social skills. This good practice could be usefully shared and would serve to strengthen the contextual element of student's work.
149. The department benefits from very good, well-informed leadership. It has recently moved to well-designed accommodation, where teachers who have knowledge of both textile art and textile technology are effectively developing textile art. The taps are not entirely suitable for artwork and the kiln ventilation system is inadequate. Computer stations are not installed correctly and students complain of backache when working on them. At present, computers do not form part of the teaching in Years 7 to 11 but could usefully extend students' learning, although it would require in-service training for staff. The department has an excellent display area that is well used to display and celebrate students' achievements in the subject.
150. The department's response to the last inspection report has been very good. Standards have risen overall, although there has been a slight decline in GCSE results over the past three years. The curriculum has improved and the new accommodation has enabled many improvements to be made.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

151. Standards across the school are satisfactory. By the end of Year 9, students have a sound understanding of a range of materials, processes and techniques using wood, plastic, food and textiles. They have experience of computer-aided design and manufacturing techniques and are beginning to understand electrical circuits. They design and make good quality products such as a novelty mirror. They develop an understanding of the principles of design in textiles. Their ability to use small and large equipment, for example, saws, mixers and sewing machines, is effective and safe. Across all areas, there is a wide range of standards. Lower attaining students produce less work and this is often poorly presented. Overall most students are very well motivated and proud of their work. Their involvement is less intense when they are engaged in routine written work. Students do not always make good use of their design work to guide the making processes. The motivation of some students diminishes as they get older.
152. By the end of Year 11, students work on projects of their own choosing. For example, in food technology, they investigate the use of cheese and eggs in cookery and the impact of technology on

kitchen equipment. Others who work with resistant materials investigate the significant features of toys for under-five year-old children. In graphics, they use their knowledge of appropriate styles of printing to match the theme of films when making posters. Students evaluate their work and the work of higher attaining students shows great thought and insight. Students, especially girls, present their work attractively and carefully. Students' high standards are supported by the effective use of information and communication technology. The work of higher ability students contains evidence of well-focused research and development. That of a few lower ability students, particularly in food technology, is superficial and badly organised and reflects a lack of involvement and understanding.

153. In Years 10 and 11, many lower ability students, who take a short course in the subject, do not achieve full involvement with activities because they do not find the work sufficiently relevant or worthwhile. For example, some older students were carrying out an experiment to find out what happened to meat, fish, cheese and eggs when it was cooked. They did not understand why they were doing the experiment and were not observing the conventions of carrying out a fair test. Other more successful students, for example those who were examining manufactured toys for under-five year olds, contributed very well to the discussion and were readily able to identify key features in terms of design, safety and value for money.
154. By the end of Year 11, standards in external examinations overall are good when compared with those nationally. However, whilst results in the long courses in textiles, food technology and graphics are very good, those in the long course in resistant materials, business technology and in short courses in food, graphics and resistant materials are poor.
155. Post 16 students use a range of tools and materials with reasonable confidence to manufacture their designs. Some students achieve very high levels of graphical skills and have a good understanding of industry. They make very good use of information and communications technology, using programs that are of industrial standard. However, standards for some students are below expectations because of limitations in the teaching. Standards in A Level graphics for the last year were below average.
156. Examinations have not yet been taken in GNVQ Engineering or in AS Level Graphics as they are new courses. In Intermediate GNVQ Engineering standards overall are below expectations and are variable in quality across the course units. A significant number of students show limited skills in working with resistant materials. Skills in graphical presentation are very variable in quality.
157. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although the quality of teaching across the department ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. In the majority of lessons, teaching is satisfactory. Where the teaching is very good, the teacher is enthusiastic and has planned interesting and worthwhile activities using resources from everyday life. The planning is well focused on what students will learn rather than the tasks they will carry out. The objectives for the lesson are challenging, but achievable for all students.
158. Occasionally, in some good lessons, the teacher plans to achieve different outcomes for different levels of ability within the class. In the better lessons, there is an effective introduction during which previous learning is reinforced to focus students' attention. Questions are well framed and directed to particular students to establish their understanding. The purposes of the learning are made explicit, often written on the board. The specialist vocabulary to be used is displayed and reinforced. The main points of the lesson are re-visited at intervals to ensure that all students understand. The ends of the lessons are used effectively to establish what has been learned and to extend and apply students' learning.
159. In good lessons, students' interest is maintained by lots of encouraging comments that help students understand what they are doing well. Thus, students feel good about their learning and their confidence is promoted. In good lessons, students are encouraged to take initiative and responsibility. Time was best used in those lessons where the teacher gathered the class together at appropriate points to explain processes such as more skilful use of the saw or to consult the class about how to

solve a problem that had arisen. For example, when a particularly delicate part of a shape had broken on one student's mirror, the class was encouraged to think about possible solutions. New learning is introduced when students are ready to apply it to their own work. Generally, teachers have good subject knowledge.

160. In many lessons, however, teachers rely too heavily on giving students information rather than providing activities that would allow students to learn for themselves. It is unusual for the needs of the full range of abilities of students to be taken into account when teachers plan their lessons. Consequently, too much emphasis is placed on listening, reading and writing for those students with poor literacy skills. Demonstrations given the week before students practise the skills hampers students' progress in food lessons. Whilst some students are given feedback that helps them to improve their work, other comments are superficial and impressionistic and leave students to work out how well they have succeeded and how they might improve. Occasionally, teachers are unqualified to teach the subject and this results in standards in some lessons for the youngest students being too low.
161. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of direction; specifically there are few systems to ensure continuous improvement across the faculty. There has been some improvement since the last inspection. The faculty has been re-structured and the curriculum has been developed. Nevertheless, it is still insufficiently detailed to show learning outcomes, strategies and resources. The planning in resistant materials and graphics in Years 7 to 11 is better than that in other areas and phases.
162. Planning is inadequate to support the needs of staff, including the less experienced members. This leads to a wide range of practice between teachers. Thus students' level of attainment is dependent on which teacher they have. The use of information and communication technology has been extended and is well used. The food rooms have been upgraded. The Level results have improved. There is still no coherent assessment system in place, although a system is being piloted this term. Although the faculty meets and discusses its work, this is insufficiently rigorous and focused to ensure improvement or uniform provision across the whole faculty.
163. There is no agreement on common practice, for example, in teaching and learning. In Graphics and Information Communications Technology, progress has been made in encouraging higher standards. Assessment data is not sufficiently well used to provide information that would help teachers to improve their planning to better meet the needs of all students. The faculty's accommodation is very good, but it is not always arranged in the most effective way to provide an attractive, well-organised and interesting environment.

GEOGRAPHY

164. Students' attainment at the age of 14 is below the standard expected. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by girls and boys. Attainment of students at the age of 16 is well below expectation. GCSE examination results in 2000 were significantly below the national average in the subject. At 'A' Level in 2000, students' results were creditable, with a number of students attaining good 'A' Level grades.
165. In lessons, most students, including those of high ability, those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, are making good progress. Most students in Years 7 to 9 are competent in using geographical skills. They have a sound awareness of location and higher attaining students have a good knowledge of a range of places, a weakness highlighted in the last inspection. Students have the opportunity to handle and interpret a wide range of sources and they apply themselves well to these tasks. Individual research work is a real strength of the department, for example, the Year 7 Volcano project in which students used their ICT skills to produce good individual research assignments.

166. Students are good at using data in a variety of graphical and diagrammatic formats. In Year 9, students have a good understanding of physical processes such as those which cause tornadoes and this provides them with an awareness of the impact of natural hazards on society. Most students are able to discuss the different approaches to the management of the environment. They make good progress in their learning in geography and achievement amongst students with special educational needs and English as an additional language is good. By the end of Year 9, in lessons and in the work seen, girls are attaining just as well as boys.
167. Student attainment in lessons and in the work seen in Years 10 and 11 was at or slightly above that expected for pupils of their age. There has been a rise in standards as the head of department seeks to improve student attainment. The department now holds revision classes after school. Teachers use the information they have available on students' prior attainment to monitor their work and set appropriate targets and they are monitoring students' coursework very carefully. In addition students' learning, in GCSE examination groups, is improving through consistently good teaching.
168. Students on the GCSE course are able to work well on their own and effectively formulate their own ideas. They can express themselves and present a well founded argument in serious discussion. They have well developed fieldwork skills. Students use the opportunities offered at the Brecon Beacons centre in Wales very well and have produced some very good fieldwork studies whilst based there. The high quality of fieldwork activities provided by the department has a positive impact on the quality of students' learning and the standard of the work they produce. Higher attaining students are able to provide detailed and sophisticated explanations for processes seen in the natural and human environment. The students have a broad geographical knowledge. They are proficient in their use of correct geographical terminology.
169. Standards of student attainment by the age of 18 in the A level results in 2000 were satisfactory and a number of students gained good A level grades. In lessons and work seen, attainment was above and, in some cases, well above average. This improvement in the standards students are achieving is the result of very good specialist teaching the use of very comprehensive schemes of work and the very effective one to one tutor sessions that the department provides for revision. Students have an excellent dialogue with their teachers and have acquired confidence in their own ability to undertake independent research. They have well developed skills of interpretation and evaluation in a wide range of contexts, for example when studying periglacial environments in Russia.
170. Consistently good teaching is a real strength of the department and is improving students' learning in geography across the school. All the lessons observed were good or better and over a third were very good or better. Teachers have clear objectives, plan very carefully and are enthusiastic about their subject. They have high expectations and challenge pupils through the investigation of controversial geographical issues, for example, those involving clashes over environmental development. A strong feature of lessons is the use of a wide range of teaching strategies to provide different activities to involve all students in the work and make progress in their learning. The good teaching includes the skilful use of question and answer techniques, the good use of well-chosen resources and the introduction of stimulating learning activities such as drama. A Year 10 lesson on urban growth, with a group of low attaining students, used their drama skills to portray life in a Brazilian shanty town. This helped them to understand the consequences of rapid urban development. Very good relationships between teachers and students lead to high standards of work and behaviour.
171. This good teaching means that pupils are able to make good progress in their learning. They respond best to lessons that develop thinking skills, where they are stimulated and challenged. Students behave well when the lesson is delivered in a lively and interesting way and when they are encouraged to develop their personal study skills through classroom based research. Where teaching was only satisfactory there was too much teacher direction and the lesson proceeded at a slow pace.
172. Overall management of the department is very good. The schemes of work have been revised, there is an excellent handbook providing comprehensive information and guidance for the teaching staff

and departmental resources are well deployed. Effective teamwork, a noted feature of the department, has established firm foundations for future development through a well structured development plan. There is a good system in place for assessing, monitoring and evaluating the progress and attainment of students and there is regular feedback to them in the majority of lessons. However, the best practice of diagnostic feedback through written comments and target setting in exercise books is not universal in the department. Homework, designed to extend students' learning, is regularly set and monitored by the staff.

173. Assignments using ICT, a weakness in the last inspection, are now an integral part of the scheme of work and students display good skills in using a range of ICT, including the use of geography websites for research. In their study of geography, students have many opportunities to develop their numeracy and literacy skills.
174. The study of environmental issues and diverse societies ensures that geography makes a significant contribution to the development of students spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The Year 7 cross-curricular project on China is a good example of how the department plans for the students' cultural enrichment. Classroom areas have excellent wall displays that help students' learning by providing an attractive and stimulating learning environment. There is a wide range of fieldwork activities. The Year 10 visit to the Ramfield centre makes a significant contribution to their GCSE course and their enthusiasm for the subject.

HISTORY

175. Students' attainment in history is just below the national expectation for students at the age of 14 and below the standards expected at 16. In 1999, GCSE results in history were slightly below the national average with 48 per cent A* - C passes compared with a national benchmark of 54 per cent. In 2000, GCSE results were below the national average with a pass rate of 42 per cent against the national expectation of 56 per cent. Overall, students did marginally worse in history than they did in their other subjects within the school.
176. There are no significant gender differences when the performance of boys and girls is compared, although girls performed less well than boys compared with their performance in other subjects. The department is aware of weaker areas of examination performance and is developing strategies to make the content of some examined aspects more accessible to students.
177. At 'A' level in 1999, four students were entered and gained an average point score of 2.0 with no grade higher than C. Results improved markedly in 2000 with an average point score per student of 4.25 and pass grades ranging from B - E. History is a popular subject and increasingly so at A level, with 24 students currently taking the course.
178. Standards, particularly at 16, are not high enough. There is scope for a further improvement in standards, provided consideration is given to teaching and learning styles across the full age and ability range.
179. On entry to the school, students' attainment in literacy is significantly lower than the standard expected nationally. There are limited mechanisms in place to address this but the department has placed emphasis on consolidating appropriate historical terminology and also deploying writing frames at each key stage as a starting point. This has been effective in improving learning.
180. In lessons and in the work seen, standards in knowledge and understanding are satisfactory and close to what would be expected of pupils aged 14, indicating that teaching has had a positive impact on student learning. However the attainment of higher attaining students in the subject in Year 9 is adversely affected by the reduction in the time provided to teach the subject in this year for these students.

181. For many students, their learning in history is slowed by their limited command of literacy and language skills. In lessons students were reluctant to take the initiative in oral discussion work, for example in discussing nineteenth century anaesthetics. Their confidence to express their ideas and knowledge in the subject is poor. For those more able students within mixed ability settings, the lack of work appropriate to their needs leads, on occasion, to under-achievement, both in oral and written work. There was, for instance, some work on medieval life that failed to extend these students.
182. By the end of Year 9, students can handle chronology, understand cause and effect and use documentary evidence with increasing confidence. In Years 10 and 11, higher order interpretative skills are beginning to develop, for example in work on the American West. Nevertheless, work with documentary evidence is not something that most students tackle with confidence, for example in their work on the development of medicine.
183. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 11, although their individual education plans are not used well to improve subject skills and knowledge. More attention should be given to translating individual educational plan objectives into subject terms. There is not enough planning with and involvement of the special needs staff, from the School and LEA, in the teaching in the lessons. Where this did occur, as in a Key Stage 3 lesson dealing with the Holocaust, it was effective.
184. The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good throughout the school. Where teaching is good, there is a clear statement of aims and purposes as well as an explanation of the task students must undertake. Student learning also profits from the considered use of plenary sessions - especially those that give the opportunity for students to express the learning and understanding they have of the lesson.
185. Lessons are well planned and use a range of resources. There are few opportunities for students to learn together and from each other, particularly post -16. There is insufficient use of artefacts and information technology in the teaching of history in Years 7 to 11. The opportunities for students to express themselves, debate issues and be listened to need to be developed since this will encourage confidence and self-reliance, as well as individual and group initiative. There was limited evidence of this, although a group of students presented with the opportunity of choice in preparing for a debate on Victorian medicine produced an excellent range of practical responses.
186. The department organises very good opportunities to extend students' understanding of history through extra-curricular activities and curriculum enhancement. Each year group undertakes a fieldwork activity, for example a visit to Chatham Docks for Year 8 or to the Imperial War Museum in Year 11. Students in Years 7-9 have participated successfully in a national, sponsored Black History Month competition, a reflection of the broad context the teachers give in the subject.
187. The department makes a good contribution to the cross-curriculum development of social, moral, spiritual and cultural education in the school. This is evidenced in students' work on Nazism and religion in Year 12, work on the American Plains Indians in Years 10 and 11 and cultural images, 1500 - 1750, in activities in Years 7 to 9.
188. The overall leadership and management of the subject is good but there are weaknesses in the use that is made of assessment data and the monitoring of trends. There is a commitment to improve students' performance and strategies are being introduced to deal with the challenges of teaching students in mixed ability groups from Year 7 to Year 11. There is some evidence of self-evaluation, for example in terms of student performance in external examinations at the end of Year 11. This self-evaluation needs to focus on the impact of different teaching approaches and learning styles across the age and ability range. The department needs to produce and implement strategies for improving independent learning.
189. Marking and assessment are not consistent, especially in Years 7 to 9. Target setting does occur and is appreciated by students of all abilities but often marking is vague, with no clear direction given as to

how students may improve. The department has a lot of information about the performance of students that is used with varying degrees of effectiveness. There is no consistent strategy to link this information to specific teaching approaches. It is not used across the department to intervene with under-performing students, particularly those who currently proceed to a D in external examinations at 16. The department needs to use the data they have available to improve student learning and track their attainment in the subject.

190. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Considerable effort has been made in Years 7 to 11 to ensure that students are offered sufficient opportunities for a more analytical and critical understanding of history. Students of all abilities now routinely encounter and are challenged by a range of historical evidence, for example in work on medieval life in Year 7. There are examples of well-structured activities that promote effective extended writing. Student work, representing the achievements of all abilities, is plentifully and appropriately displayed.
191. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but some teaching occurs in non-specialist rooms, some of which are inappropriate. The greatest weakness remains that of encouraging independent learning, not only for those in the sixth form but across the school for all students. The provision of library books in history has improved but does not yet provide the range of texts or multi-media resources that students in Years 7 to 11 need to extend and enhance their study of and interest in the subject. In the Sixth Form library the depth of study and contextual material available for students to extend their learning is limited.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

192. By the end of Years 9 and 11, standards in information and communication technology are broadly in line with national expectations. There is more variation in students' attainment in the Sixth Form but students following timetabled courses are reaching standards in line with expectations during lessons. Since the last inspection, attainment in lessons and in the range of work in Years 7 to 9 has improved and students now make mainly satisfactory progress in all elements of the timetabled courses.
193. Students' attainment in public examination courses at age 16 has been below national expectations and below expectations in comparison with other curriculum subjects in the school. This is a result of the timetable arrangements for the subject. There was not sufficient teaching time for students who took the subject at GCSE in 2000. This year, all students in Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE Information Studies course. Although students now experience an improved curriculum and better access to the learning opportunities available, there is some limitation in the scope of the Information Studies course the school offers. The school is planning to make provision for the GCSE Information and Communication Studies course for the coming year that will provide students with a wider curriculum.
194. Standards across ICT courses in the sixth form are broadly satisfactory and students are mainly achieving in line with course expectations. The range of courses offered include basic IT, GNVQ and A Level that makes provision for the varying student needs.
195. In Year 7, students make good progress in gaining confidence in using the computer network to develop and apply basic skills to a range of tasks within their coursework programme. On entry to the school, students show a wide variation in standards and experience in ICT and, in the lessons observed, attainment varies considerably within each class. Students with special educational needs are usually well supported and make satisfactory progress in lessons. The published scheme of work used for timetabled ICT through Years 7 to 11 serves the majority of students well but not enough account is taken of the level of students' literacy skills and this does have an effect on students' learning.
196. Students in Year 9 have gained a basic understanding of computer applications and show sound competence in using the relevant hardware and working with the computer operating system. They

can apply word processing skills to simple exercises combined with desktop publishing and use basic graphics to communicate an image. Some students, in the more able groups, show sound skills in setting up simple databases. Many students show sound learning in their ability to solve problems but for higher attaining students their rate of learning is impeded by the lack of sufficient pace and challenge within the coursework.

197. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is mainly satisfactory and sometimes good. The published scheme of work is used by all staff teaching ICT and ensures a consistent curriculum provision and experience across each Year group. Where teaching was strongest, greater account was taken of the interests, range of ability and experience of students and a wider approach was taken to ensure a good match with students' development needs and the prescribed scheme of work. In most lessons, teachers' expectations are sound for the large majority of students. Effective and sensitive support is provided for students and a well-focused and purposeful environment is maintained.
198. Attainment in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is mainly satisfactory and broadly in line with standards expected nationally. Students are confident users of a range of ICT applications and most are developing a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject within the Information Studies course. They can use word processing and spreadsheets to compile letters, memoranda and balance sheets and create cash flow forecasts. Most show sound levels of skill and accuracy and can integrate text and graphics with reasonable competence. When dealing with database tasks, many students had satisfactory levels of skills in adding, deleting, sorting and searching.
199. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is mainly good. Information technology courses and those containing a significant ICT element are well organised and student progress is carefully monitored. Teachers respond readily to students' learning needs and maintain good working relationships. Students are generally enthusiastic, purposeful and keen to succeed.
200. The school is committed to the development of both ICT courses and the use of ICT across the curriculum. Considerable progress has been made since the last inspection in reaching the current stage of development. The co-ordination of ICT is effective, although the role of ICT coordination is limited in its scope. In order to improve standards beyond their present level, the school needs to use the information on student progress and achievement in ICT to better inform planning and teaching. For example, in Years 7 to 9, the use of target setting for students based on their previous attainment in the subject is not established.
201. Throughout the areas of the curriculum, there are examples of good practice where ICT is increasingly used to enhance and support learning and teaching. The areas more actively involved in integrating this provision include geography, business studies, design and technology, science and special education needs. To achieve and to sustain a more consistent and cohesive approach to cross-curricular ICT it is important that senior subject leaders establish clear plans to support the faculties.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

202. Standards in French in Years 7 to 9 are good and standards in German in Years 9 and 10 are at least satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11, standards are satisfactory and students' attainment in the GCSE examinations in 2000 were close to the national average in both languages. The attainment of girls is better than boys, with girls achieving higher grades at GCSE than boys. GCSE results have improved year on the year. The number of A-level candidates in both French and German has increased and the results for these subjects have been above average for the school but the grades achieved are low.
203. In lessons and in the work seen, students' attainment is good in both languages. Students' standards in listening are satisfactory and in speaking they have improved since the last inspection, with students confident in using the target language to communicate beyond mere answers to the teacher's questions. There has also been improvement in students' ability to read and write in French

and German. The attainment of SEN students in all classes is satisfactory.

204. Teaching in both languages was good or very good, with some examples of excellent teaching. This ensures a good standard of learning. The teachers in both languages provide very good models of spoken French and German. All lessons are conducted in the target language and this is a major reason for the improvement in students' standards in speaking. Lessons are carefully planned and structured to take account of the length of lessons.
205. Teaching in Year 7 is within mixed ability tutor groups, but from Year 8 onwards in a setted arrangement according to ability. Teachers work hard to involve and motivate classes and, consequently, most students achieve well. Attitudes and behaviour are mostly good. Where the lessons are conducted at a sharp pace and the teacher's expectations are high, students respond well and good learning takes place. In some classes where there is a wide range of attainment in the subject, not enough attention is given to providing different tasks that will extend the higher attaining students and provide suitable tasks, particularly for lower attaining students.
206. The marking and assessment of students' work in Years 7 to 9 is consistently carried out, following the guidelines in the School's Assessment Policy. However, the department does not link this marking to National Curriculum levels. At GCSE, assessment is based on the examination grading. Little use is made of assessment to inform planning and teaching throughout the school.
207. Classroom accommodation is very good and has a positive impact on students' learning. The Faculty is housed in a suite of six teaching rooms that include a group room, faculty office and store. There is an adequate supply of books and other resources, although the Language Laboratory tape players are in need of replacement. There is no provision for ICT in the faculty rooms, but the faculty does make some use of the central ICT suite.
208. German is introduced as the second language in Year 8 for more able students within a timetabling arrangement that allows for 2 hours of German in Year 8 and 1.5 hours in Year 9. The subject is popular and a good number of students continue their study of the subject to GCSE. All students take a compulsory language subject in Year 10 to GCSE, with the exception of 17 who are disapplied. There is the opportunity for lower attaining students to undertake a one-year short course in French leading to GCSE certification. There are presently three smaller groups following this option. In Year 11, these students undertake an extra Design Technology short course.
209. The Faculty of Modern Languages is well led and efficiently organised and is fortunate to have a strong team of enthusiastic, hardworking and committed teachers. It is operating very well and is well placed to improve still further.

MUSIC

210. Students' attainment in music by the age of 14 is good, although there is a range of difference between higher and lower attaining students. Students attain good standards at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Results in the most recent GCSE examinations were lower than the national average, but had been predicted. For some of the candidates, the results obtained in music were the highest they gained of all the subjects they took. There were no A Level entries.
211. Students are taught in mixed ability groups in Year 7 and they are in ability sets in Years 8 and 9. In classes containing more able students, composition and performance skills are very competent by the end of the key stage. Students can successfully write melodies using the treble clef, and appropriately add chords, including C, F and G major, and A minor, in the relevant places.
212. All students use the electronic keyboards proficiently and often creatively. Aural skills are well developed and students use these to effect when identifying the difference between major and minor harmonies. More challenging, independent tasks are provided for more able musicians. A Year 9 boy, for example, successfully wrote a melody and added some very ambitious chords as an

accompaniment.

213. In those classes where a significant number of students have special needs, attainment is mostly satisfactory. They are able to create and perform music successfully, often without using traditional notation. Many in these groups have good aural perception and their learning is improved through successful teaching strategies such as the use of graphic notation.
214. Most students in Years 10 and 11 are very proficient musicians. A significant number of boys are taking GCSE and A Level courses. Many students in Year 11 are on target to obtain good results at the end of their course. All have a thorough understanding of developments in musical history and undertake stylistic analysis with considerable accuracy and perception. They fully understand terms such as polyphony and homophony and how imitation and counter-melody are used: they have a thorough awareness of the differences between baroque, romantic and nationalist music. Some of the students in Year 10 have an exceptionally good ear for music and undertake aural tests with accuracy.
215. Students in Years 12 and 13 are taught together and demonstrate good standards of practical attainment. Students in Year 12 have a finely developed perception of how to use advanced electronics for their performance and composition work. Year 13 students have a thorough knowledge of music history and theory and this demonstrates the very good progress they have made through the course. In both years, students make accurate orchestral and harmonic analyses.
216. Students in Years 7 to 9 have very good attitudes to lessons, although in those classes containing large numbers of less able students, teachers have to work very hard to contain those students with limited concentration spans. Students in the more able classes concentrate well, enjoy the practical work and operate co-operatively in pairs. Year 10, 11 and sixth form students have very good attitudes and demonstrate a mature, focused approach to their studies.
217. The quality of teaching is very good. This quality helps less able students gain satisfactory levels of achievement and more able students gain at least good standards at the end of Year 9. Teaching is carefully planned and all lessons are prepared in considerable detail. A particular strength is the way in which lesson planning carefully targets students of all ability. Appropriate challenge extends all students and gives them a sense of achievement. A range of musical resources has been produced and these are used effectively to maintain students' interest. The time available for popular practical work is limited, particularly for the lower sets. Consideration should be given to a more regular presentation of composition and performance at the end of lessons, as this would enable even more focus on tasks during individual and paired work.
218. The strategies are in place for assessments at the end of Year 9 to be made with the new levels of attainment. The profiling of students indicates that most students are working towards, achieving up to, or at the national average.
219. Advanced music technology features prominently in the curriculum and notably within the examination courses. In Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, students use the departmental computers effectively to compose, store and print their composition work. There are some good quality extra-curricular activities and the department plays a full part in the cultural life of the school.
220. The department has made good progress in improving the curriculum since the last inspection. Strategies for teaching composition have been regularly reviewed and performances are given at the end of modules. World music is dealt with in detail and is systematically introduced in listening analysis.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

221. Standards of skill and attainment in Years 7 to 9 are above or well above average. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. In Years 7 to 9, in fitness exercises, students achieve above

average standards in measuring and recording and, in hockey and netball, they trap, pass and position themselves well. Extra-curricular floor exercises feature high standards of balance and thinking. Year 7 students achieve standards of skill in catching and throwing that are about average. End of Year 9 assessments show that three-quarters of students are meeting or exceeding expected levels they make good progress in their learning of skills. There is no difference in the standards of boys and girls. Those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, supported by careful observation and help from teachers. The most able students make good progress when supported by teaching and coaching in teams and extra-curricular activities.

222. Students produce very good standards in complex soccer skills in Year 10, both understanding and producing accurate weight of passes. Year 11 students in badminton show excellent skills and thinking of drop shots. GCSE results are in line with national average standards, with girls performing better than boys in grades A* to C last year. Present GCSE written work is satisfactory but there is little evidence of target setting to improve students' standards.
223. In Years 12 and 13, standards of work in lessons are satisfactory. There is very good thinking in the theories of sport enabling students to understand and make deductions. Students' very good observation of partners leads to very good progress in badminton tactics. A Level results are good, with boys having better results than girls last year. Although A and A/S level work is sufficient and satisfactory, it lacks clear marking against examination standards with targets for improvement.
224. Dance in Years 9 to 12, features very good standards of thinking, performing and planning for improvement. There are excellent sequences of group movements.
225. Students have very good attitudes to physical education. All lessons feature good or excellent concentration. This strongly supports learning, with listening skills being very good. In very windy conditions, Year 9 students' very good concentration ensured they took advantage of determined, very well planned teaching, to move to very good marking and positioning.
226. Since the last inspection, the quality and maintenance of accommodation and resources has remained very good. The new mirrored dance studio provides excellent support to learning.
227. Teaching is good overall, with many strong features. No lesson seen had less than satisfactory teaching and learning. Teachers with very good subject expertise manage their students very well. They expect the highest standards from themselves and their students. The majority of lessons have very clear plans for learning as well as the use of time. There is usually great challenge to students to work hard. Teachers demonstrate skills and support individuals within lessons very well. More variable aspects of teaching include the monitoring of standards within lessons and consequent setting of targets. In dance, where there is planning for this, know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do next.
228. Dance homework requires students to think through the standards required by the next piece of work. In activities where this is not so pronounced, students' standards are not as high, but still satisfactory. In physical education, students are given accurate end of unit scores but often little during the unit of study to help them improve. There is use of ICT in some record keeping by teachers, but its use in physical education is not well developed.
229. Regular review of the curriculum takes place and, since the last inspection, has ensured that the curriculum meets fully National Curriculum and examination board requirements. All Year 7 students take dance.
230. Extra-curricular activities for students in PE are a strength. The wide range of activities and school teams involves over 300 students. Boys and girls reach high standards, with many successes in local, regional and, occasionally, in national teams. Teachers put in much time and commitment to coaching.

231. The Head of PE gives good direction and leadership. Recently appointed, he is setting high standards of expectation and shares responsibilities with his team. All are very committed to success. Priorities are beginning to be carefully set. However, at present there is insufficient use of students' assessments to inform curriculum planning. Assessment scores are not sufficiently linked to individual targets for learning. Marking of examinations' course work is thorough and supportive. However, it does not always provide students with an analysis of the level of work set in relation to examination grades.
232. The department has made good improvement from the report of 1996. There has been much work to maintain high standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

233. Students' standards in religious education by the age of 14 are below the expectations of the Bromley Agreed syllabus. Students are able to talk about and understand the concepts and practices of various world religions but they are not able to express themselves well in writing and the standard of their written work is below average. However, by the age of 16, standards in the GCSE short course are very close to those standards found nationally in religious education. The attainment of boys at 16 does not match that of girls and this difference is a result of their failure to complete coursework adequately.
234. Most students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well in religious education, particularly in their ability to express religious concepts. The effectiveness of the teaching in Years 7 to 9 encourages students to express themselves orally so that most students can effectively articulate and discuss religious ideas and the religious practices of different faith communities. Teaching was good or very good in 70 per cent of the lessons seen and was always satisfactory. A particularly good feature of the teaching is the very strong subject knowledge that enables students to understand the range of religious practice in the world. Students respond well to the high expectations and challenge sets by teachers in religious education. Students enjoy the subject and their attitude in class to the subject it is generally good, especially when they understand the relevance of their learning. Students have a positive and sensitive approach to the spiritual insights that they encounter.
235. Teaching in religious education is well planned and uses a wide range of teaching and learning techniques. For example, in Year 9 lessons, students were helped to better understand prayer through discussion with two Muslim students from Year 10 and the sixth form who, very effectively, demonstrated the prayer ritual of their faith and answered questions about their prayer routine. This led students sensitively into a greater understanding of prayer.
236. All the students made good progress in their understanding of religious ideas and practices. In Years 7 to 9, limitations in the ability of many students to express these ideas in writing is very evident. A number of students receive specific support to help them improve written work and this is effective. The most able students work well and achieve good standards in their written work. By the time the students enter the GCSE short course at the end of Year 11, they have a good basic understanding of religious education and the results in the short course have steadily improved.
237. Students do not visit places of worship as part of the religious education course. More links need to be established with appropriate faith communities in the area. Students' use ICT to research some of the projects in religious education and to produce some of their work but this is not a strength of the department's planning at present.
238. The assessment of students' work is a weakness. The department does not have an effective assessment strategy. The assessment and marking of students' work is not consistent between the teachers teaching the subject and does not provide the students with subject-specific learning targets. Information about students' attainment in the subject is also not sufficiently taken into account when planning future work. The present assessment strategy does not effectively use the attainment targets in the Bromley Agreed syllabus to identify and improve students' weaknesses and build on their

strengths in the subject. Reports to parents to not provide enough detail about students' strengths and weaknesses in the subject and targets that will help them improve their performance in the subject.

239. Since the last inspection report, the religious education department has made significant progress. The school's religious education curriculum complies fully with the Bromley Agreed syllabus. Students in Years 7 to 9 gain a strong sense of the contemporary relevance of living faiths and, in the short course that students take in Years 10 and 11, they deal with the religious implications of present-day controversial and social issues to do with, for example, the environment or racism and the relevance of this to the everyday lives of ordinary people. The quality of the work in religious education and the very positive attitudes of the students to the subject are good. As a result, religious education does much to support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural work of the school and is a particular strength of the Department. The school does not provide religious education for the sixth form; this is a legal requirement that the school needs to address.
240. The head of department manages the subject well. There is a sense of purpose and direction in much of the work that goes on in religious education. However, the management of non-specialist staff teaching religious education needs to be examined carefully and monitored regularly.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

241. In 1999, the proportion of candidates attaining A* - C grades in Business Education were close to the national average. GCSE results in the subject declined in 2000 and are well below the national average. There are no significant gender differences when comparing boys' and girls' attainment. Both boys and girls perform more poorly when compared with their respective GCSE performance in other subjects within the school.
242. Literacy and numeracy skills on entry to the course in Year 10 are weaker than the national average. Although departmental planning in Business Education identifies the problem of students' underachievement, teaching and learning strategies have not yet raised standards. Apart from the development of information and communication technology skills, there is no preparation in Business Education in Years 7 to 9 which distinguishes the subject from other GCSE subjects students choose.
243. Student performance in Advanced GVNQ is improving. The average point score per student in 1999 was 8.6 and this rose sharply to 11.4 in 2000. Although the proportion of students taking Advanced GNVQ is small, overall performance is above national expectation even if the school's context is set aside. Student performance at Intermediate level is slightly below the national average for this and the previous year. The small numbers on the specific programmes, that cover a range of subjects, do not allow for accurate gender comparisons to be made.
244. Students' attainment is slightly below course expectations in Years 10 and 11 and the students' knowledge and understanding of concepts are variable. The recall of earlier work is insecure for students of average attainment and below. The oral skills of some students are weak and there are insufficient opportunities for group activities. Students are prepared to work together productively in solving problems, for example in replicating formula calculations using a database. Information and communication technology skills are, however, close to national expectation, for example, in spreadsheet work being undertaken on the application of the break even formula in Year 10.
245. Within the GNVQ programme, students' attitudes to learning are good. All groups observed accepted research and evaluation tasks willingly, for example in work undertaken on product marketing. Overall, students demonstrated growing confidence in using new technology, for example using a computer and digital projector for a marketing presentation related to the car industry. Independent learning skills, however, remain below national expectation.
246. The quality of teaching within work-related education is satisfactory and, occasionally, good. Where teaching is good, there are clear plenaries to consolidate learning, for example on key learning outcomes associated with a case study based on a cinema. Similarly, concepts are carefully built up,

drawing from students' own experience, for example in health education within the GNVQ programme. Teacher expectation of standards in the subject is often set out in written guidance. However, there is not enough wall display to reinforce what is good quality work for students, particularly in Years 10 and 12, in their respective programme of study. Teacher knowledge is secure overall and this has a good effect on students' learning, for example in work done on business constraints using information about the Advertising Standards Authority.

247. Some curriculum enhancement is offered for instance off-site visits to the Health Education Centre in Beckenham and work experience opportunities in travel and tourism within the Orpington area, for students following GNVQ programmes. GCSE students participate in a good quality, broadly-based two-week work placement programme in Year 10. The scheme, devised by the school, is appropriately linked to the programme of study. Both the GCSE and GNVQ curricula meet the guidance in relation to time allocations. Schemes of work are of good quality and are being reviewed to ensure continued compliance with external requirements. There is ready access to and use of information and communication technology.
248. The management of GNVQ is good. There are regular meetings for planning and verification purposes. There is a clear vision for GNVQ and consideration is being given to extending vocational programmes into Years 10 and 11, with effect from September 2001. There is a satisfactory consistency between internal and external verification outcomes of student attainment. There is informal lesson monitoring but these arrangements will require further development as student numbers and options increase. Group sizes are presently rather small and uneven from year to year. There is a good match of staff qualification to teaching options and rooms and equipment are of good quality. Library resources, particularly those of a multi-media nature are under-developed and the school should address the learning needs of this developing programme as a priority.