

INSPECTION REPORT

CARDINAL POLE RC SCHOOL

Hackney

LEA area: Hackney

Unique reference number: 100285

Headteacher: Mr T. Mannion

Reporting inspector: John Godwood
18242

Dates of inspection: 24th – 28th September 2001

Inspection number: 189064

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Miss P. Toomey
Date of previous inspection:	September 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18242	John Godwood	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards; the school's results and pupils' achievements? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
13482	Douglas Binfield	Lay inspector		How high are standards; pupils' attitudes, values and personal development? How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education Sociology	
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30215	Helen Feasey	Team inspector	Geography	
18936	Carol Frankl	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
10561	Angela Fraser	Team inspector	Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
4773	Peter Gilliat	Team inspector	History	
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23031	Ian Knight	Team inspector	Mathematics	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Cardinal Pole Roman Catholic School is a voluntary-aided comprehensive school of average size with 1005 pupils aged 11-18. The school is over-subscribed and takes both Catholic and non-Catholic children, from Kings Park, Clapton and Bow, as well as Wick. Many pupils come from areas of significant deprivation. Two-thirds of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds; most of these are Black Caribbean or Black African, with a small number from Asian backgrounds. There are 24 refugees, predominantly from Vietnam. Thirty-eight per cent of pupils have English as an additional language, which is high, though only 36 pupils are beginners in English. Thirty-five per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. Two hundred and thirteen pupils have special educational needs. Twenty-two of these have statements, which is average. Of 53 pupils with more significant special needs, 18 have emotional and behavioural difficulties, two have communication difficulties and the rest have learning difficulties. The school has a Learning Support Unit for pupils with behavioural difficulties. The school is accommodated on two sites, with Years 9 to 13 based at the main site, and Years 7 and 8 based at the Annexe, almost a mile away. The school has significant difficulties recruiting teachers and in the year preceding the inspection had many vacancies. At the time of the inspection the school was fully staffed, with 13 newly-appointed teachers. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Cardinal Pole is a very effective school, with a clearly defined mission to promote positive attitudes within a Christian context and to enable all pupils to achieve their full potential. Standards in GCSE examinations are at the national average, and well above those of similar schools. Pupils achieve very well. They have very good attitudes to learning and pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds develop very good relationships. Teaching is good, with very good care and support given to individual pupils. The school has a very good ethos, and teachers establish a calm and safe learning environment, within a turbulent neighbourhood. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers are given very good support in maintaining the learning ethos and through good communication and careful monitoring all staff work together well as a team. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very well, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and relationships are very good.
- Teaching is good, with high expectations and very good management of pupils, and teachers go out of their way to give pupils extra help.
- The school establishes a good learning environment in which pupils from all backgrounds achieve very well.
- There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.
- Leadership is very good. Teachers are well supported and all teachers work to the same ends.
- Pupils reach high standards in the creative arts.

What could be improved

- The management of special educational needs, especially the curriculum and teaching in withdrawal lessons and the effective use of individual education plans in teaching and learning.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support

teaching and learning of other subjects.

- The matching of teaching tasks in some subjects to the abilities of all pupils in the class, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- The development of consistent methods to promote literacy and numeracy in all subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1996. Since then standards at the end of Year 9 have improved at a similar rate to the national trend, and GCSE results have improved considerably, matching or exceeding the national average in four years out the last five. Teaching has improved significantly. The school has focused its developments on the key issues raised in the last report and has made at least good progress on each. Good progress has been made in focusing planning and middle management even more on raising achievement. Very good progress has been made in improving teaching. Good progress has been made in assessment and setting pupils targets. Good progress has been made in evaluating school developments. Overall, the school has made good progress since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
GCSE examinations	C	D	C	A	Well above average A above average B average C Below average D Well below average E
A-levels/AS-levels	E*		D		

Standards in tests at the end of Year 9 are below average, but are well above similar schools. English results declined in 2001 because of a serious shortage of specialist English teachers. Though well below average they were still above similar schools and standards seen in the inspection had improved again to those of mathematics and science. Year 9 tests results have improved steadily at a similar rate to the national trend.

GCSE results in 2000 were average and well above similar schools. This standard was maintained in 2001. The school exceeded its GCSE target in 2001 and is on course to meet its 2002 target. There is an improving trend in GCSE results, which since 1998 has been faster than the national trend. A-level results are below average, but students' progress from GCSE to A-level is at least satisfactory.

In work seen, standards in most subjects are below average at the end of Year 9, except in mathematics, art, music and physical education where they are average, and in ICT where they are above average. At the end of Year 11, standards in all subjects are average, except French and ICT which are above average, and geography which is below average. Standards in the sixth form are above average in chemistry, ICT, history and sociology, and below average in French, art and business education. Pupils achieve very well in the progress they make from Years 7 to 11. Attainment on entry is well below average; by the end of Year 9 standards have improved but are still below average; by the end of Year 11 GCSE results are in line with the national average.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen to do well and work hard in classes and on the work undertaken at home.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good in most lessons and around the school. The incidence of bullying is low.

Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are very good and pupils show respect for the values and beliefs of others. They take on monitoring roles but opportunities for initiative are limited in some lessons.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is consistently in line with the national average and unauthorised absence is low. Lessons start on time.

Pupils' good attitudes to learning make an important contribution to their standards of achievement. There is a very high degree of ethnic harmony between pupils from many diverse backgrounds.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science throughout the school. Teaching is consistently good in all years and in almost all subjects. It is this consistency which helps to encourage pupils' very good attitudes and leads to their very good achievement. Typical features of the good teaching are teachers' very good subject knowledge, high expectations and very good management of pupils. Common weaknesses are a lack of use of ICT and a need in some subjects in Years 7 to 9 to plan lessons that address the full range of pupils' abilities. Marking is regular, but pupils are not fully informed in all subjects of how to improve their work. The teaching of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory, but the methods used to promote them in all subjects need to be more consistent.

The school is successful in meeting the needs of all pupils and pupils from all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their enthusiasm, concentration and willingness to work together.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Pupils can choose from a range of additional courses, but too many are permitted to drop modern foreign languages and design and technology from their GCSE course.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Pupils receive good support in most lessons, but the curriculum and teaching in withdrawal lessons and the use of individual education plans need to be improved.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are effectively supported in class. Beginners in English are given extra specialist help and make rapid progress. Pupils' needs are assessed carefully and support is well organised.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development and good provision for their social development. The strong Christian ethos provides a supportive context and staff set a very positive example.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There are clear expectations for pupils' conduct and very good procedures for monitoring behaviour and attendance. Tutors give good pastoral support. Assessment procedures are good and play an important part in raising achievement.

The school provides parents with good information about progress and encourages them to support their children's learning through attending parents' evenings and monitoring homework. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to learning. The school/home support worker and the learning mentors provide good support for individual pupils.

Provision in Years 7 to 9 is enriched by drama for everyone. Additional courses in Years 10 and 11 include drama, business studies, sociology and child development. The school needs to review its guidance to pupils in order to ensure all those who would benefit are given full opportunities to follow courses in modern foreign languages and design and technology. All pupils study ICT to GCSE and reach high standards, but ICT is not used enough in the learning of other subjects. Careers education is very good. There is a good range of extra-curricular opportunities.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and leadership team are successful in setting a very strong educational direction based on Christian values and the achievement of all pupils.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors are very supportive of the school and give good practical support. They need to develop more systematic procedures to support the school's strategic planning and monitoring.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Examination results are monitored regularly and there are good procedures to monitor and develop teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Financial planning is sound and expenditure appropriately monitored. A more strategic approach to financial planning is needed.

The match between staff qualifications and experience and the subjects they teach is good in Years 7 to 11 and satisfactory in the sixth form. This is a considerable achievement following a period of severe staffing difficulties. Accommodation is satisfactory. Learning resources are satisfactory.

The headteacher and leadership team provide very visible and practical support to teachers in establishing good conditions for learning. Through good communication and delegation, they achieve very good teamwork and all staff work to achieve the school's aims. The school monitors its performance and spending and thus applies the principles of best value well.

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 Christian values of the school. • Standards and progress achieved by most pupils. • High expectations of pupils' achievement. • The careful monitoring of attendance. • The quality of teaching and management. • Parents feel comfortable approaching the school about a problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff turnover in English and science in the year preceding the inspection. • The time taken to secure special support for some dyslexic pupils. • Consultation with parents before changing the school uniform. • Protection of pupils after school from gangs of pupils from other schools.

Inspectors fully support parents' positive views. Inspection evidence indicates that the severe teacher recruitment difficulties of recent years have for now been overcome. The inspection found some shortcomings in the provision for special educational needs though it is satisfactory overall. New parents were consulted over the proposed change in girls' uniform, but communication with existing parents was not as clear as it could be and the period for consultation rather short. Every effort is being made to protect pupils from the potential violence outside the school premises.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form of this average sized 11 – 18 comprehensive school has 131 students. Courses are offered in a range of AS and A-level courses, as well as vocational courses and GCSE retakes. From September 2001, the school has begun a consortium arrangement with two other Hackney voluntary aided schools in order to widen the choice available to students. Between a third and a half of Year 11 students continue into the sixth form and a small number join from other schools. There are slightly more girls than boys. A significant proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups, mainly Black African and Black Caribbean. Students' attainment on entry is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Cardinal Pole School has an effective sixth form, which is cost-effective. Recent examination results have been generally below average, though work seen in the inspection was average, and students achieve well. Teaching is good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to give clear explanations and develop students' learning through probing questioning. Teachers have high expectations of their students and give them good support. Students are keen to learn and the great majority show very good attitudes in all subjects. A common weakness in learning is that students do not have well-developed independent learning skills.

Leadership and management are good, though a more explicit approach to strategic planning for the sixth form is needed. A weakness in the provision of several subjects which affects the quality of teaching and learning is that Year 12 and Year 13 students are taught together in the same class. The sixth form is successful in meeting the needs of all students and no differences were seen in the achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds.

Strengths

- Students achieve well.
- Teaching is good.
- The Catholic ethos results in shared values which support students' personal development.
- It is an inclusive sixth form in which all students feel valued.
- Students receive a good level of care and personal guidance.

What could be improved

- The practice in some subjects of teaching students from Years 12 and 13 together, which reduces the available teaching time and affects students' progress.
- Students' skills as independent learners, and the access they have to resources for independent study, especially ICT.
- Activities for students outside their subjects, such as sport and work experience.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Satisfactory. Standards are generally below average but are improving and students' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is good. Students need to be more independent in their study.
Chemistry	Good. Standards are above average and students' knowledge is sound. Teaching is good and students are challenged. Students need better information on how to improve and to be more independent.
Business Studies	Satisfactory. Standards are below average overall but students' achievement is good. Teaching is good and students' attitudes positive. Students need more access to ICT and work experience.
ICT	Good. Standards are well above average, teaching is good and students keen to learn. Assessment of students' work needs to identify areas of weakness more clearly.
Art	Good. Standards are below average, but improving in Year 12 due to better preparation in GCSE. Teaching is good. An alternative course is needed for students who do not have the skills to pass A level.
History	Good. Standards are at least average, and above that in Year 13. Teaching is consistently good and students have good attitudes. Students' skills in working independently are not developed enough.
Sociology	Good. Standards are above average and achievement is good. Teaching is very good and students enthusiastic. Students need better teaching of key skills and more detailed assessment of their work.
English	Good. Standards are average and students' achievement is good. Teaching is good and students have positive attitudes. Some classes are too large for students to have close support.
French	Satisfactory. Standards are below average but students achieve well in writing and listening. Teaching is good and marking of high quality. Students need greater knowledge of France and more access to ICT.

In other subjects, work was sampled. Teaching was always at least satisfactory and good lessons were seen in physics, geography and psychology. A very good lesson was seen in drama.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students receive good support and guidance within a strong Catholic ethos, which emphasises students' responsibilities towards themselves and to the whole community. Induction is good and very few students leave before the completion of their course. They have good personal contact with their tutors and with their subject teachers who know them very well. Targets are set and reviewed. Careers education and guidance is well structured and advice on higher education is readily available. There are no formal opportunities for students following vocational courses to undertake work placements.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. The school has clear aims for the sixth form and has responded to the needs of the students by introducing new A level and vocational courses and by developing a consortium with two other local schools in order to widen choice. Students' performance is monitored but the school is only starting to analyse examination results in terms of progress from GCSE. Strategic planning for the sixth form needs to have a higher profile within whole school planning and be linked more closely to financial planning.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are pleased with the courses available. • They have confidence in most teachers. • Guidance and support for careers and personal development. • They are treated as responsible young adults. • Assessment lets them know how they are doing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some would like a wider range of courses. • The crowded sixth form facilities. • The opportunities for recreational activities. • The joint Year 12/13 lessons, which limit teaching time. • The availability of textbooks and ICT facilities.

Students' positive views far outweigh their negative ones. Inspectors agreed with students' positive views. Inspectors found that the range of courses available was reasonable and responsive to students' needs. Inspectors found that the availability of textbooks was satisfactory but agreed that the facilities are crowded, that students need more access to ICT and that the opportunities for recreational activities should be wider. Inspectors also agreed that joint Year 12/13 teaching does restrict the progress students make.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is well below average overall, though each year group contains some pupils who are average and above average. In judging pupils' achievements, therefore, it is necessary to compare the school's standards with those of similar schools.
2. Results in the 2000 national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average but well above similar schools. The results in 2001 showed an overall improvement, though there were variations between subjects. Mathematics and science results improved but English results declined because the school suffered from a serious shortage of specialist English teachers. Full staffing had been restored at the time of the inspection and standards of work seen in English were raised to their previous level. Girls achieve better results than boys in English, and boys a little better than girls in mathematics and science. In all three subjects boys do a little better relative to girls than is the case nationally.
3. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are average in music, art and physical education. They are also average in mathematics, indicating that recent improvements in Year 9 test results are continuing. Standards are above average in ICT. Standards are below average in English, science, design and technology, modern languages, history and geography.
4. GCSE results in 2000 were average and well above similar schools. In 2001, this standard was maintained. The proportion of pupils attaining 5 or more A* to C grades declined slightly from 2000 to 2001 but the average GCSE point score improved. There has been a marked improvement in GCSE results since the last inspection, with results being average or above in four years out of the last five. Girls' results are better than boys', the difference being similar to that found nationally. Both boys' and girls' results have been close to average in recent years. Subjects in which pupils did well, relative to their performance generally, were English, French, ICT and religious education. They did relatively less well in business education, drama and German.
5. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 11 are average in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history, music, art and physical education. They are above average in modern languages and ICT. They are below average in geography.
6. Pupils' achievements in relation to their attainment on entry to the school are very good. Their attainment on entry to the school is well below average. By the time they reach the end of Year 9 they are below average and by the end of Year 11, standards are average. The reasons for this very good achievement are that the school has a very good ethos for learning and pupils

develop very good attitudes to learning, they receive consistently good teaching in the great majority of subjects, and pupils' progress is closely monitored by the school's leadership team.

7. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is at least good in all subjects and is very good in art, mathematics and ICT. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is satisfactory in geography, music and physical education, good in English, mathematics and science, and very good in French, design and technology, history, ICT and art.
8. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress in subject lessons. This is because most subject teachers plan for them and share this planning with the learning support staff. Pupils' progress is unsatisfactory in a few lessons where tasks are not matched to their abilities and support staff are not used effectively. However, progress of pupils with special educational needs in their withdrawal lessons is unsatisfactory overall. It is satisfactory when planning is linked to pupils' prior achievements and relates to class work, but too often teaching does not take enough account of pupils' needs and inappropriate materials are used to teach basic literacy and numeracy.
9. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress overall. Those who are beginners in English make marked progress, often going from no or very little knowledge of English when they join the school to reading, writing, speaking and listening with a good measure of understanding within one or two years. For example, these pupils start by completing simple written activities such as matching words to pictures. They progress within a short time to writing extended pieces where they express their own ideas and effectively communicate meaning, even though there are errors in spelling and grammar. This is a remarkable achievement. More fluent speakers of English make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 to 11. They speak confidently and write with sound fluency, with a similar number of errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar as is found in the work of their English peers. Sometimes older pupils find literary language, such as Shakespeare, difficult but nonetheless make good progress in understanding it.
10. Analysis of GCSE results for 2000 indicates that pupils of Caribbean heritage, particularly boys, performed less well than other groups. The performance of white girls was also lower than most other groups. Conversely, African pupils did rather well with a much higher proportion than nationally achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. The differences between various ethnic groups were much less marked in the 2001 GCSE results. Though pupils of African origin did not do so well as in 2000, they still performed above the school average. A group of Caribbean pupils who had been involved in a mentoring project to help improve their results performed very well, with a high proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. Inspection evidence indicates that there are no significant differences between the attainments and achievements of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

11. The school exceeded its GCSE target for 2001 by a considerable margin. School targets are set carefully, by considering the current and prior performance of individual pupils. Much time is spent by the leadership team in monitoring and supporting the progress of individual pupils. The GCSE target for 2002 is realistic and should be met.
12. Pupils' literacy skills as seen in subjects are average or a little below. Some subjects actively promote different writing skills, such as the development of essay writing, note taking and creative writing. In a science lesson, Year 7 pupils wrote letters by the inventor of the microscope to a friend, explaining their invention, and in ICT lessons pupils write letters, questionnaires and reports. Whilst pupils discuss issues confidently informally, in more formal situations some lack assurance and in general tend to use colloquial expressions. Pupils' listening skills are a little better than those seen in most schools, and a number of subjects actively encourage good listening. In a Year 8 geography lesson, the teacher prepared the pupils very well to listen to poems that had been written by other pupils in their year. In physical education, teachers use questions and discussion in such a way that gives pupils the opportunity to develop their speaking and listening.
13. Standards in numeracy across the school are improving, but are still not good enough in Years 10 and 11, where pupils often reach for the calculator for the most trivial of calculations. An improvement can be seen in Years 7 to 9, where some pupils enjoy competing to find the most efficient mental method of doing a calculation. Pupils are able to apply their skills, sometimes with support, to other subject areas. In science especially, pupils are competent to meet the numeric demands of science, although staff offer support as necessary. Pupils also draw a range of graphs and charts in geography, as well as processing questionnaire results in GCSE coursework. Pupils studying GCSE physical education also use graphs effectively in their coursework.

Sixth form

14. Students have recently been entered for AS and A levels in a range of subjects and for GNVQs in business and leisure and tourism. The average point score for students taking two or more A-level examinations was below average in 2000. This score had improved steadily from 1998 to 2000, but in 2001 it went down again. In some subjects the number of students is too small for valid comparisons with national averages. In those which can be compared, results in economics and English were average in 2000, computer studies well above average and sociology well below. The average points score for girls was significantly lower than that of the boys in 2000.
15. In advanced GNVQs in business and leisure and tourism in 2001, pass rates were average. Nine out of twelve students passed the course, and two of these attained merits. The other three students are taking another term to complete the course.

16. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average and the progress they make from GCSE to A level is similar to, and sometimes better than, the progress that students make nationally.
17. Standards seen during the inspection in AS and A level courses were in many subjects better than that in recent examinations. This is largely due to differences in students' prior attainment at GCSE, but also in some cases because staff shortages in the year preceding the inspection have been resolved. Standards are average in English and are above average in chemistry, ICT, history and sociology. Standards are below average in French, art and business education. Students' achievements in relation to their attainment on joining the sixth form are good overall. They are satisfactory in English, French and art, and good in business education, chemistry, ICT, history and sociology.
18. Students from all ethnic backgrounds and students with English as an additional background all make similar progress. There are no significant differences between the progress made by boys or girls.
19. A high proportion of students complete their courses, with a completion rate of 94%, compared with 90% nationally. Of the students who left before completing, all but one joined a course that suited them better in a different centre and one left for employment.
20. All sixth form students take courses in the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT. Students reach average standards of communication skills. In one lesson, where students were developing debating skills, higher attaining students spoke confidently and fluently but lower attainers had a more limited vocabulary and greater use of colloquialisms. Some students not studying mathematics find difficulties with numeracy, when tackling problems such as rounding large sums of money to the nearest hundred thousand pounds or converting fractions to decimals. They make good progress in ICT lessons, but need more opportunities to apply these skills to their other subjects and more access ICT facilities for independent study.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

21. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. This is an important factor in contributing to their high standards of achievement. Pupils are keen to do well and work hard in classes and on the work undertaken at home. During lessons they listen attentively and contribute well to discussions. When working in pairs or small groups there is a high degree of co-operation. These positive features are seen consistently in all subjects and reflect the pride that pupils take in their work. Only a few examples of inattention were observed during the inspection, usually arising from a lack of challenge in the work set. Pupils show great interest during assemblies and school clubs, and are quick to recognise the contribution and skills of others. Nearly all parents responding to the questionnaire feel that their child is expected to work hard to achieve his or her best.

22. Behaviour is good overall. During the inspection it was good or better in three out of every four lessons, and mostly satisfactory in the remainder. It was very good or excellent in one in four. Pupils behave very well in the dining hall and in the outside areas during breaks. A minority of pupils cause problems, for example by disobeying instructions or not keeping to the code of conduct. The incidence of bullying is low. Last year there were no permanent and 73 fixed period exclusions. The number of exclusions has fallen by over a third since the last inspection. A slightly higher number of Caribbean pupils are excluded than pupils from other ethnic groups. The school is aware of this and is making efforts to continue to reduce the number of exclusions. The very high degree of racial harmony between pupils from many diverse ethnic backgrounds continues to be a significant strength of the school. Most parents feel that behaviour is good and are impressed with the school's high standards expected. There is a concern about danger to pupils after school from gangs of pupils from other schools. This is a real concern, but it is monitored very carefully and dealt with very effectively by the staff. Parents appreciate the vigilant approach that is taken.
23. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties make good progress in managing their own behaviour through the support they receive from the Learning Support Unit. Behaviour in the unit is good and pupils listen carefully to the teacher and each other.
24. Pupils with special educational needs behave well in lessons and around the school. Clear classroom routines encourage positive responses and pupils form constructive relationships with their peers and adults. They contribute fully to the life of the school.
25. New arrivals to the school from abroad are well integrated into the school. Pupils with English as an additional language are keen and very well motivated. They show enthusiasm in lessons and behave well.
26. The ethos and activities of the school encourage good relationships and personal development. Pupils from many different backgrounds show respect for the values and beliefs of others. Many pupils join school clubs and are involved in fund raising activities to support charities. They are able to pursue many special interests in music, drama and sport. Impressive examples include the gospel choir and a production of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. A high proportion of pupils enhance their musical attainment by additional lessons on a variety of instruments, and many take part in various groups and productions. There is a full programme of school visits, including residential stays in this country and overseas. Work experience opportunities are provided in Year 10 and all pupils attend lessons on personal and social education. All these activities widen pupils' experience and help to promote self-confidence.
27. Pupils undertake many monitoring roles that give them the opportunity to take on responsibilities and contribute to the smooth running of the school. There are not many formal positions of responsibility, however, and in some subjects pupils find it difficult to show initiative and develop independent learning skills. In ICT, they try to solve problems independently, but in mathematics

and art, for example, they remain very dependent on their teachers for guidance. In design and technology, pupils rise to the challenge of working independently in Years 10 and 11, but need more opportunities to do so in Years 7 to 9. Pupils' views about the school are usually sought through the tutor system, such as when they were recently consulted about a change in girls' uniform. The quality of relationships throughout the school is very good and this provides the foundation for the successful learning environment.

28. Attendance is good. The overall level compares favourably with other Hackney schools and has been consistently in line with average rate for schools in England. The incidence of truancy is low. The level of unauthorised absence has been halved since the last inspection. Nearly all pupils arrive punctually. Lessons and other activities start and finish on time. All these factors help to maximise learning opportunities.

Sixth form

29. Students adopt a good approach to their studies and are keen to do well. This is shown by a high level of commitment in lessons and in private study time. They are good role models to younger pupils and respond positively to opportunities to support them in their learning and personal development. Social and extra-curricular activities encourage a good rapport between students and the rest of the school. Some sixth form students play an active role in whole school music and drama activities.
30. Students' personal development is good, though many are not sufficiently independent in their learning. Their personal development is supported by participation in the personal, social and health education programme that is taught each week. There are good relationships between students and their tutors, and these contribute to the effective working environment. Students are actively encouraged to contribute their views on the running of the sixth form.
31. Students of A-level ICT have good opportunities in their lessons to undertake independent work, but in many other subjects students are too dependent on their teachers for information and guidance. This partly because of a lack of resources, especially computer facilities, for use in independent study. A second reason is that in some subjects teaching time is lost when Year 12 and 13 students are taught in the same class. This causes teachers to adopt a direct style of imparting information and limits their ability to encourage students to study independently.
32. Behaviour and attendance are good although problems occasionally arise about punctuality to lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

33. Teaching is good throughout the school. During the inspection more than 19 out of every 20 lessons were satisfactory or better, and almost seven out of ten were good or better. One lesson in every four was very good or better and

a small number were excellent. Teaching is a little better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 or the sixth form, but it is consistently good in all years and in most subjects. It is this consistency of good teaching, backed up by the very good support that teachers get from the leadership team, with good attention to their professional development, which helps to encourage pupils' very good attitudes and leads to their very good achievement.

34. Typical features of the good teaching are teachers' very good subject knowledge, which many teachers use to create well-structured and interesting lessons. Teachers manage pupils very well and have high expectations of what they can achieve. As a result pupils have a keen interest in learning and concentrate well. Common weaknesses in much teaching are a lack of use of ICT and the need in some subjects in Years 7 to 9 to plan lessons which meet the needs of the full range of ability in the class.
35. Teaching is good in all year groups in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, ICT, music and physical education. In history and modern languages it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In geography it is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is very good in art in all year groups.
36. Most teachers have secure subject knowledge. In English, for example, they use this to challenge pupils to think and make connections between language and the writers' intentions. The expertise that drama teachers have leads to a brisk pace in lessons. Mathematics teachers are confident in dealing with queries and in GCSE history, the teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject are used well to develop pupils' understanding. Occasionally, however, in history lessons for younger pupils, inadequate teacher knowledge leads to inappropriate planning and missed opportunities. Physical education teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan structured but varied tasks, which keep pupils interested and on task. Though language teaching is good overall, and sometimes excellent, in occasional weaker modern language lessons, teachers lack the confidence to conduct lessons in the foreign language.
37. Teachers often use successful methods that result in interesting lessons with good structure and pace. In art, for example, pupils learn to draw well because teachers make this fun. In the better modern language lessons there is a sense of fun and achievement and, in one lesson for example, pupils spoke French in response to teachers' miming. Mathematics lessons are generally brisk, with well-defined time limits and good focus, and in the better lessons pupils are excited by what they learn. However, mathematics teachers use a limited range of teaching methods and some lessons are uninspiring and the pace no more than steady. Science lessons are planned well, but in some large classes the amount of investigative work is restricted because of organisational difficulties.
38. The efforts that teachers put into making lessons interesting, together with pupils' very good attitudes, often lead to a high level of pupil interest, which enhances their learning. In ICT, for example, they are attentive and keen to learn; they collaborate well and try to solve problems independently before

asking the teacher. In design and technology, older pupils are trusted to work independently and gain a strong sense of personal responsibility. In modern languages, most pupils want to learn, sustain concentration well and work well in pairs. In physical education, pupils respond positively, work well together and have clear respect for each other's abilities. Pupils are equally enthusiastic in English, where they participate in group and whole-class work, and in drama the great majority enjoy the subject and are keen to learn. In the better mathematics lessons, pupils show real excitement in the topic. Pupils respond well in science when expectations are clear and the work related to their own experience, but interest wanes in some lessons that are not challenging enough. Pupils also show positive attitudes and enjoyment in art, geography and history. In art and mathematics, pupils need to become less dependent on teachers when tackling a problem.

39. Teachers generally have very high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and good skills in managing pupils. In English, teachers clearly set out their expectations and what pupils are to learn, reinforcing these as necessary, which leads to the full use of time and very good learning. Design and technology teachers' skills in motivating pupils and achieving good behaviour and attitudes are very good indeed and pupils of all abilities and backgrounds work productively in lessons. Drama teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and listening. Music lessons are well managed and pupils are well behaved and interested. There are also high expectations in mathematics. Objectives are made clear in science, so that pupils settle quickly and use time productively. Pupils are very well managed in history, ensuring good behaviour and positive attitudes. Good pupil management and high expectations are consistent strengths of modern language and physical education teaching.
40. Most subject teachers make a contribution to pupils' literacy by displaying subject-specific words, highlighting correct spelling and giving pupils opportunities to talk formally and informally in lessons. Practice is not consistent across the school, however, and pupils could make even greater progress if all teachers tackled the teaching of literacy skills systematically. Particularly effective work was seen in modern language lessons, where teachers reinforced correct spelling and grammatical structure, and in geography lessons, where pupils wrote letters, reports and articles, and teachers stressed key words. Art teaching could usefully place greater emphasis on developing use of written and oral language and physical education teaching could enhance pupils' literacy through more displays of key words.
41. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. The National Numeracy Strategy is not yet in place, but teaching in mathematics in Years 7 to 9 now has a stronger focus on numeracy, and pupils' skills are improving in these years. Pupils' numeracy skills are also supported by other subjects, most of which have numeracy policies that link with the mathematics curriculum. In science, for example, pupils are expected to express numerical relationships in the form of charts and graphs. In geography, pupils draw graphs to show, for example, the correlation between aspects of world development. Good

applications of numeracy skills were also observed in coursework for GCSE physical education as well as in art and business studies.

42. A weakness in the teaching of many subjects is that ICT is not used sufficiently to support learning. All pupils have lessons in ICT, where the teaching is good and pupils make very good progress. However, the school's computers are used almost entirely for these specialist lessons and pupils have very few opportunities to apply their knowledge to the learning of other subjects. In English the use of computers to research or draft and present work is a developing area. Subjects in which learning would benefit from further use of ICT are mathematics, science, art, geography, history and modern foreign languages. In design and technology, pupils use ICT well in Years 10 and 11, but need more opportunity to improve their capabilities in Years 7 to 9.
43. Other teaching resources are used well in art, and in history the use of videos and educational visits enhance pupils' learning. Science technicians make a good contribution to some lessons, for example showing pupils how to set up microscopes, but in ICT the role of the support staff is undefined and what they do in lessons unplanned.
44. Marking is generally regular, but in many subjects assessment could be used more effectively to inform pupils of the progress they have made and how to improve their work. This is true in mathematics, science, and ICT. It is also the case in modern languages, where self-evaluation needs to be encouraged in Years 9 to 11 in order to improve the quality of learning in the sixth form. In physical education, more evaluation by pupils of each other's work would help them deepen their understanding. In English and geography, however, marking is thorough and pupils are given helpful development points, though pupils do not know what National Curriculum level they have reached in Years 7 to 9. In drama, there are good assessment procedures and teachers give very helpful feedback and encourage self-evaluation. In design and technology, teachers monitor progress whilst pupils are working in groups and recording systems are detailed, but pupils need more knowledge of their current standards and how to improve.
45. Homework is set regularly. In art, pupils do homework effectively as an integral part of their courses. Some pupils in design and technology show great initiative in carrying out homework. Younger pupils take great pleasure in showing their homework to everyone and the best is rewarded as "homework of the week".
46. Pupils with special educational needs receive support teaching in lessons which is satisfactory with some weaknesses. Successful support is planned in advance with the subject teacher and is closely matched to what pupils already know. As a result, pupils learn well, building on their previous knowledge. They work hard and join in class discussion effectively. Support is unsatisfactory when, as sometimes happens, the support teacher does not know what is planned for the lesson. Special needs teaching in withdrawal lessons is unsatisfactory because of poor planning. The objectives of the lesson are not clear and tasks are not matched to what pupils know,

understand and can do. Pupils' learning is then unsatisfactory because they are not always clear about what they have to do to make progress.

47. Teaching in the Learning Support Unit is good, with appropriate emphasis on anger management strategies. The teaching is varied, and includes discussion, role-play and decision making.
48. The teaching provided by staff in the ethnic minority achievement service (EMAS) is good and often very good. Most are experienced teachers who are very skilled in providing expert advice and support to pupils for whom English is an additional language, as well as other pupils from ethnic minorities. As a result, pupils make good, often very good progress. EMAS staff ask probing questions to make pupils think and help them very effectively to correct misunderstandings about the use of written and spoken English. They form very good working relationships with pupils, and thus promote confidence and motivation. However, not all subject teachers make the best use of the support staff in their lessons. Sometimes support staff can do little in lessons because of a lack of direction from the class teacher. In the best lessons, support staff work in partnership with the class teacher and have the opportunity to teach with them. This enables them to share their expertise in teaching pupils learning English and results in a lesson where the needs of all pupils are very well met.
49. When support staff are not present, pupils with English as an additional language are well supported through individual help that subject teachers provide. However, subject teachers rarely provide different tasks or materials for these pupils. In addition, teachers have variable knowledge about the needs of pupils who are fluent in English but still need support to develop their English. As a result, some opportunities are missed for these pupils to make even more rapid progress.
50. The school meets the needs of all its pupils well and this is a significant factor in the overall success of the school. There was no evidence in the inspection that boys or girls were underachieving, and pupils from all ethnic backgrounds make equal progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons, due to the support given by class teachers, though in their withdrawal lessons their progress is unsatisfactory. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also achieve well, in line with other pupils. At the same time, more attention needs to be paid in mathematics, science, modern languages, geography and history to planning lessons which meet the needs of pupils of all ability levels in the mixed ability classes in Years 7 to 9. In other subjects, lessons are well planned to meet the needs of the full range of ability. In art, ICT and physical education, teachers give pupils good individual advice in lessons matched to their own needs.
51. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. At that time fourteen out of every twenty lessons were satisfactory or better; this has now increased to nineteen out of twenty.

Sixth form

52. Teaching is good in the sixth form. It is good in all the subjects inspected and very good in sociology. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better and seven out of every ten lessons were good or better. About one lesson in ten was very good.
53. Teachers typically have good subject knowledge, and use this to prepare well-structured lessons, to give clear explanations and to develop students' learning through questions and discussion. In history, for example, key themes are effectively highlighted and questioning particularly skilful and well judged. In English, very good subject knowledge enables teachers to explain the finer points of literary analysis. In sociology, the teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm successfully motivates students. French teachers have excellent command of the language.
54. Teachers have high expectations of their students and give them good support. Students in turn are confident to talk to their teachers and seek help when they need it. Students are well managed as, for example, in A-level business studies, where students with a very wide range of backgrounds are taught together. The sixth form is successful in meeting the needs of all students and no differences were seen in the achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds.
55. Students are keen to learn and most show very good attitudes in all subjects. They are attentive and interested and in sociology, for example, they are willing to express their ideas and have respect for the views of others.
56. A common weakness in learning is that students have not developed enough independent learning skills. In chemistry and business education, this partly due to a lack of resources, both books and ICT. In history, many students have difficulties making notes and using ICT independently. Students are not independent enough in French, partly because they have very little direct experience of France, either through visits or the media. In ICT lessons, however, many activities do allow students to do research and develop skills as independent learners.
57. A weakness in the provision of several subjects which affects the quality of teaching and learning is where Year 12 and Year 13 students are taught together in the same class. This is beneficial in art because of the stimulus created by the interaction of the students. In most subjects, however, the recent introduction of AS syllabuses for Year 12 and A2 for Year 13 means that students cannot be taught the same work and hence time is lost. The truncated teaching time also results in students having fewer opportunities to develop independence. These affects were noted particularly in chemistry, business education, history and French. A related problem exists in English where some classes are too large.
58. The key skill of communication is taught effectively as part of the key skills course taken by all students. Numeracy is also taught soundly overall, though students lack confidence in some basic operations. However, students apply themselves to the tasks they are given, so that their learning of numeracy skills is good. All students are also given lessons in the key skill of ICT and

this is taught well. However, there are too few opportunities for students to apply ICT to their learning of other subjects. This is true in history, business education, sociology and French.

59. Marking is at least sound and is good in some subjects. In history, English and French, for example, work is marked carefully and constructive feedback given. On the other hand, in chemistry and ICT, students are not informed sufficiently of the areas in which they need to improve their work.

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

60. The school promotes a culture of achievement in which learning is seen as a valued activity. The determination of the leadership team to raise achievement has led to significant improvements in curriculum planning since the last inspection. A successful focus on homework and coursework has improved achievement in aspects of learning that many pupils found difficult. Teachers have become more consistent in informing pupils of the objectives of lessons, enabling pupils to direct their attention more effectively. There is a good awareness of the needs of different groups of pupils in some subjects, but planning documents do not consistently show how these needs will be met.
61. The school meets statutory requirements for the National Curriculum. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is broad and balanced. Provision for English is enriched by drama for everyone. In science, however, there is too little focus on enquiry and investigation, and this diminishes pupils' learning. There is good support for research in geography and in design and technology, where a strong emphasis on the quality of commercial design and production raises pupils' standards. Geography also provides fieldwork opportunities: in the local area in Years 7 to 9 and further afield in Years 10 and 11.
62. The curriculum is broad in Years 10 and 11, but for some pupils it is not balanced. Too many pupils are permitted to drop design and technology and modern foreign languages in Year 10 to 11. Whilst the arrangements are carried out in line with legal requirements, considerably fewer pupils study these subjects than is normal in most schools. There are more pupils who would benefit from taking these subjects. These include some able pupils who might want to apply to university but are not studying a modern foreign language. The school needs to review its guidance to pupils in order to ensure that all who would benefit are given full opportunities to follow these courses. The curriculum is enriched by non-statutory and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, including drama, business studies, sociology and child development. These are popular subject choices, some of which provide good preparation for sixth form studies. A number of pupils take additional tests in literacy and numeracy to improve their chances in these basic skills.
63. The school has begun to develop the teaching of literacy within all subjects, and has recommended procedures for other subjects to follow, such as the display of specialist words in classrooms. However, practice is inconsistent,

and whilst there are subjects which are making a good contribution, in particular modern foreign languages and geography, standards would rise if all teachers promoted literacy skills in the same ways. The school has yet to implement the National Literacy Strategy, although staff training is planned. This initiative has been delayed because staffing difficulties in English meant that preparation of examination classes was appropriately taken to be the highest priority.

64. The teaching of numeracy is planned in many subjects, following an initiative in school to co-ordinate its learning. Numeracy opportunities are identified in science, geography, physical education, art and business education, and these provide a good basis for teaching numeracy throughout the school. The mathematics department has started to implement the National Numeracy Strategy but this is at an early stage and practice in lessons is as yet inconsistent. This is partly because the necessary resources are not yet available and partly because written guidance for teachers focuses on content to be covered rather than on knowledge and skills to be learned.
65. All pupils follow a course in ICT, which leads to a GCSE examination. As a result, they reach standards of knowledge and skill that are above average. However, ICT is not applied sufficiently in the learning of other subjects. The school has not yet decided how all other subjects will meet this National Curriculum requirement. The school has recently been equipped with sufficient up-to-date computers, but these are used largely for the teaching of the ICT course, and teachers of other subjects do not have enough access to them. In addition, further staff training is needed to ensure that all teachers are confident in using ICT in their teaching.
66. There is a good programme of personal and social education, providing personal guidance within the context of the school's Catholic ethos. There is a clear policy and detailed lesson plans that are continually updated. The programme includes health and sex education, drugs awareness and careers guidance. It includes regular visitors from agencies such as the police. Good preparation has been made for the new requirement to teach citizenship and much is already in place. Pupils are encouraged to raise concerns and bring in topics for discussion. A good variety of teaching methods makes the scheme enjoyable for pupils.
67. Careers teaching and guidance are very good. The course begins with an awareness of careers in Year 7 and personal skills are developed throughout Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 work experience is well established and enjoyed by most pupils. There is good liaison with the Hackney careers service, which provides interviews for all Year 11 pupils. A particular strength is that one pupil from each tutor group acts as a careers representative who receives information from the careers co-ordinator and communicates to the tutor group. A new careers room is planned, which will have good ICT facilities for pupils to research information.
68. Pupils' equality of opportunity is in general good. Other than in design and technology and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11, there is good access to all courses and activities for all pupils.

69. Provision for students who speak English as a second language is good. They are supported in class, and this helps to promote their progress well. New arrivals from abroad who have very little or no experience of English are withdrawn from some lessons for intensive language support. There is a team of staff specifically to support the achievement of pupils from ethnic minorities. The team is well balanced and well co-ordinated and its support is very carefully targeted to groups with the greatest level of need. There is a published register of pupils' needs and all staff are provided with appropriate information. The team has a good range of materials to support all subject areas. However, many subjects do not identify in their curriculum plans how the needs of pupils with English as an additional language will be met.
70. Provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory, though there are weaknesses in the lessons where pupils are withdrawn from class for additional support. Pupils follow the full National Curriculum and this is broad, balanced and relevant. The curriculum is unsatisfactory in the withdrawal lessons because it is insufficiently linked to the National Curriculum and the programmes for developing basic literacy and numeracy skills are too narrow to meet all pupils' needs.
71. The curriculum in the Learning Support Unit is appropriately centred around anger management for the pupils who are placed there for a short time. It prepares pupils well to succeed when they return to their normal classes. Pupils on long-term placements do not have full access to the National Curriculum and this needs to be rectified.
72. The school provides enrichment through a good programme of extra-curricular activities, which show much commitment on the part of many teachers. There are revision programmes in many subjects after school and during holidays, as well as Saturday clubs, and these focus pupils' attention on learning. For example, Year 11 pupils were always busy in design and technology after school during the inspection week. A lively sports programme is planned for pupils of all ages and makes a positive contribution to equality of opportunity. Participation in extra-curricular sport is very good. During the last year almost half of all pupils have taken part; one in three have played in inter-school competitive sport and one in five have represented the school in district activities. This is a commendable achievement. There is very good take up for instrumental music lessons from visiting specialists. A good range of other activities such as drama productions, music, art and ICT is available. The inspection team was treated to lively rehearsals of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and a performance of the gospel choir.
73. The school has used the Excellence in Cities project as an opportunity to provide enrichment opportunities for pupils in need of additional support. Successful mentoring by representatives from the local community is provided for forty pupils in Year 10. Ten Caribbean pupils attended a residential mentoring at Oxford University. Students from Greenwich University have supported the learning of specialised computer techniques in design and technology.

74. The school has yet to identify its gifted and talented pupils as part of the Excellence in Cities initiative. It has, however, prepared a statement of expectations for the gifted and talented and has used funding to appoint a member of staff to support staff training and development.
75. The school has good links with the community. There are close links with the local Catholic churches. Priests visit the school regularly, for example to take mass. Fund raising last year included help for a nearby hospice. Learning is enhanced by a wide range of visitors, such as the community police officer and specialists in drama, poetry, and art. A number of business organisations support the work experience programme and the learning mentoring scheme.
76. The school has good relationships with partner institutions. Pupils joining Year 7 come from over 40 primary schools. Good arrangements are in place to share information about pupils' attainment and personal characteristics. There is regular contact with the four local Catholic primary schools, some of whose children attend concerts performed by pupils in Years 7 and 8. Many school sports fixtures are promoted through inter-borough competitions. Younger pupils are offered opportunities to learn computer skills as part of the Hackney Highwire project.
77. The provision for pupils' personal development is very good. The school's strong Christian ethos, characterised by shared values and very good relationships, provides a supportive context for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The commitment and attitudes of staff set a very positive example for pupils. They often use opportunities that arise in the classroom and in the daily life of the school to promote pupils' personal development, although planning for this is not reflected in written guidance for teachers. The daily acts of collective worship and the religious education programme contribute significantly to pupils' personal development.
78. Overall provision for spiritual education is very good. The calm, positive ethos that exists in most classrooms enables teachers to promote pupils' spiritual development when opportunities arise. Spiritual awareness and insights are developed when reflecting, for example, on the size of numbers in Year 7 mathematics or on the power of the natural world in geography. English makes a particularly good contribution to pupils' spiritual education through discussion on questions of meaning and value when studying texts and through opportunities for pupils to write their own poems. Work in music, art and drama also enables pupils to reflect and respond to topics in a personal way.
79. Moral education is very good. The school is a very ordered community and staff work hard to achieve this. The daily life and routines of the school successfully promote very positive values and help pupils distinguish between right and wrong. Valuable discussion on ethical issues and moral dilemmas takes place in a number of subjects, including personal and social education. A Year 9 lesson on bullying, for example, was closely linked to the values of the school and a wider moral framework. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their beliefs and ideas, and think through some of the choices they will need to make in life, within the context of Christian values.

80. Social education is good, with opportunities for pupils to develop social and collaborative skills in many of their lessons. Pupils work well in pairs and in groups; they listen attentively to each other and show appreciation of each other's work. In several subjects, however, there are too few opportunities for pupils to show initiative. They are given good opportunities to develop a sense of social responsibility, especially through support for local and international charities. Pupils can exercise responsibility by undertaking various tasks around the school though there are not many formal positions of responsibility.
81. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good and has improved since the last inspection. Opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of different cultures are provided in English, drama, history, geography, art and music. The school successfully draws on the different cultural traditions represented in the school to extend pupils' understanding of cultural diversity in activities such as the gospel choir, Caribbean evenings and the international arts festival. Cultural interests and horizons are extended through pupils' participation in the school's extra-curricular programme of sport, music, drama and other activities. Pupils are also given a good range of opportunities to go on educational visits, such as visits to the Regents Park Theatre in connection with the annual Shakespeare Week. The school is successful in encouraging pupils to respect the values and beliefs of others and in preparing them for a multi-cultural, multi-faith society.

Sixth form

82. The school offers a broad range of AS and A-level subjects, as well vocational courses in leisure and tourism and business studies. Courses provide a good match with student aspirations because their views are sought during their GCSE courses in order to inform planning. Discussions with students indicated they were satisfied with the range of courses offered. Some voiced concerns about the quality of provision in physics in the year preceding the inspection, but they recognised that improvements that had taken place following staff changes. They continued to have reservations about the quality of provision in biology. In sociology, students were concerned about the large size of the class. The school has researched the changing needs of its local community, setting students' sights high by using sixth form provision to raise their aspirations for higher education.
83. In an effort to widen further the courses available to students, the school has joined with Skinners' Company and Our Lady's Convent voluntary aided schools to create a sixth form consortium, which became operational from September 2001. A small number of students are taking advantage of the extra flexibility this offers but it is too early to judge its future potential.
84. There are some weaknesses in curriculum planning. In many subjects there are joint lessons for Year 12 and Year 13 students. This is a response mainly to the extreme difficulties in recruiting teaching staff over several years preceding the inspection. However, the joint lessons are not planned as well as they might be. Teachers do not have sufficient strategies for making sure

students are building on earlier learning. The school is aware of the problem and is seeking additional staffing. Students' progress and their development of independent learning skills are suffering in a number of subjects.

85. There is a programme to teach all students the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT, with examinations offered at two levels. Year 13 students have mixed views about the course's value, resulting from their pressured experiences of the new AS levels in Year 12. The current Year 12 feel the key skills course is likely to help them.
86. The school offers satisfactory enrichment through personal and social education, maintaining a high profile of spiritual and moral development in preparing students to become young Catholic adults. A residential retreat provides students with very good opportunities for reflection and self-awareness. Students are involved in community service, visiting adults in care such as the local hospice. They are very aware of their importance as role models to younger members of the school community. They work with younger students in lessons for a four-week period, providing positive support for learning. They talk with Year 11 about life in the sixth form to help them make positive choices. Individuals continue to be involved in drama productions and the gospel choir. Those who study geography participate in residential fieldwork that makes a valuable contribution to learning. Important omissions from the enrichment programme are the lack of a formal sports programme and the lack of opportunity for students to take part in a work placement. Arrangements for after school activities are limited, in part because a large number of students have part-time employment.
87. Students have the opportunity to express their views and concerns about the sixth form in the weekly personal and social education sessions. They have also discussed with the head of sixth form the possibility of a sixth form council, agreeing that this would provide a more formalised forum.
88. There is as yet no system of support for pupils with English as an additional language in the sixth form. It is currently under development.
89. There are good links with external organisations. The sixth form consortium is one example. The close collaboration with Guildhall, Middlesex and Greenwich Universities has a beneficial impact on students' studies as well as providing information on higher education. A major employer from the City of London also provides support to learning in parts of the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

90. The school continues, as reported in the last inspection, to provide a very high level of care. Pupils of all ability levels and from varied personal backgrounds benefit from this. Catholic values and ideals are the foundation for much of the school's work. The care and high expectations of pupils' work and conduct are important factors in establishing the very good learning ethos and attitudes which contribute, along with good teaching, to the very good

levels of achievement. Parents are very pleased with the support and encouragement provided.

91. Very good provision is made for pupils' health, safety and welfare. Pastoral support for pupils is strong and is firmly based on the support provided by form tutors and heads of year. There are effective arrangements in place for health and safety, including regular inspections and risk assessment. Child protection issues are dealt with in a competent and sensitive manner and staff work closely with the specialist agencies involved.
92. The provision for educational and personal support to pupils is good. The school has appointed school/home support workers who undertake a valuable role to help ease the transition from primary schools. They also give individual help with attendance and other problems that arise for pupils faced with difficult home circumstances. There are also mentors who work on an individual basis to help pupils faced with acute personal difficulties so that they can alleviate problems that are affecting their performance. The school takes part in the Hackney schools' mentoring programme that is aimed at improving pupils' knowledge and self-confidence. Forty Year 10 pupils meet regularly with their mentors who work for employers located in the City of London.
93. Procedures for monitoring attendance and punctuality are very good. Registration and follow up action is undertaken efficiently. The merit and awards system for good attendance in Years 7 and 8 provides a special incentive for younger pupils. Punctuality is closely monitored each morning and between lessons during the day. A deputy headteacher and the head of each year group meet the education welfare officer weekly to discuss cases causing concern. There is no formal system to monitor the attendance levels of the different ethnic groups of pupils within the school.
94. The monitoring of behaviour is very good and contributes well to the calm learning atmosphere. The school's high expectations are made clear to pupils and are reinforced by a consistent approach taken by all staff. Serious incidents of misbehaviour are recorded in writing and where appropriate discussions are initiated with parents. As with attendance, behaviour incidents are not monitored in terms of the ethnicity of the pupils concerned. Detentions and exclusions are dealt with following clear policies and a strong emphasis is placed on anti-bullying measures.
95. Assessment procedures have improved significantly since the last inspection and are good. They play an important part in raising standards of achievement. Assessments are generally accurate, although in recent years the National Curriculum teacher assessments in Year 9 have been inaccurate in modern languages and geography. Examination results and pupils' progress towards them are monitored very closely. Pupils meet with their tutors twice a year to set and review individual targets. The leadership team provides very strong support to tutors in monitoring pupils' progress. Tutors, heads of year and the leadership team know pupils very well and this individual support is an important factor in the good progress they make.

96. Assessment is managed well, although departmental practice is not monitored systematically. There is a comprehensive assessment policy, and assessment records are stored on the school's computer system. These records form a good basis for the school's planned work on measuring the amount of progress each pupil makes while at the school. The school development plan includes further improvements to be made to the assessment procedures.
97. The school uses some assessment information beneficially in Years 7,10 and 11. For example, National Curriculum test results from primary school are used to place pupils in groups on entry to the school; further testing is used to predict performance in GCSE, and the leadership team analyse examination results by gender. However, there is a weakness in its use in Years 7 to 9. Teachers do not tell pupils often enough how well they are progressing in their subjects, and consequently pupils do not know how their own standards compare with the national average. In many cases pupils do not know what to do to improve because the targets agreed between them and their tutors are not related specifically to the improvement needed in their work. In addition, teachers do not use the results of assessment enough to amend the curriculum for the needs of individual pupils.
98. The teacher responsible for the ethnic minority achievement service (EMAS) is beginning to analyse examination data in terms of pupils' ethnic backgrounds. This kind of analysis is not yet used sufficiently by the leadership team or subject heads to help in the planning to raise the achievement of all groups of pupils. The EMAS team makes very good use of the assessment records of pupils on the EMAS register to target support and set useful short-term targets. This effectively supports these pupils' progress.
99. The assessment of pupils with statements of special educational need is good. Assessment makes an effective contribution to recording their progress and planning the next stage of their learning.
100. Assessment for pupils on stages 2 and 3 of the Code of Practice for special educational needs is unsatisfactory because the targets on pupils' individual education plans are not carefully evaluated to help teachers plan how pupils need to progress. In addition, pupils are not sufficiently involved in assessing their own progress.

Sixth form

Assessment

101. The school's arrangements for assessing students' attainment and progress are good, and help them continue to achieve well. Assessments are regular and thorough and, in most subjects, enable students to form an accurate picture of their attainment and progress. Procedures follow the requirements of the examination boards. Teachers have a good understanding of the courses they teach, and modify the curriculum where appropriate to take account of the needs of the class.

102. The school makes satisfactory use of assessment in monitoring and supporting individual students' progress, and recognises the need to make this even more effective. This year, for the first time, all assessment information is held on a central database, so that the school now has the facility of measuring how much progress each student has made whilst at the school. To date, targets set have been based on students' past performance and have not focused enough on their current needs and intentions.
103. The quality of information given to students about what they need to do to improve has strengths and weaknesses. Reporting, for example, is succinct and includes appropriate information, but targets sometimes lack subject-specific diagnosis and advice. Guidance given in marking is often very clear and detailed. For example, practice is good in English and French and in the vocational course. There are examples in drama of teacher's feedback helping students evaluate their own and others' work. Some marking and assessment, however, does not diagnose specific weaknesses sufficiently. In addition, more needs to be done to enable students to develop the ability to evaluate their own work systematically, starting where possible in Years 10 and 11.

Advice, support and guidance

104. Students receive good support and guidance, including help in their choice of careers, throughout the sixth form. This process begins in Year 11 with good preliminary advice and support, together with an informative prospectus about the sixth form, which helps them to identify the courses that are most appropriate for them. Students are aware of options other than continuing at school and those who stay make positive decisions to do so. Very few students leave before the completion of their course. At the beginning of Year 12, they take part in a three-day induction programme that introduces them to life in the sixth form and provides them with some early opportunities to explore career options. A clear handbook gives good advice on the school's expectations, together with practical advice on topics such as independent study and how to seek help in case of difficulties.
105. Although students are organised into very large tutorial groups, they have plenty of opportunities for personal contact with their tutors and with their subject teachers who know them very well. They all take part in twice-yearly individual meetings with their tutors when academic targets are set and reviewed. Effective liaison takes place between subject teachers and tutors when there are areas of concern. Very good relationships build up between teachers and students as a result of continuous, informal contact. Most students are particularly pleased with the high level of personal support that they receive and they enjoy being in the sixth form. Care and support takes place within a strong Catholic ethos which emphasises students' responsibilities towards themselves and to the whole community. A weekly religious education lesson provides a wide-ranging programme of topics for debate, together with a variety of outside speakers and opportunities for charitable work which broadens students' experience. Good systems are in place to promote attendance and high standards of behaviour.

106. The quality of the care and support provided by the school is constantly monitored and developed by the head of the sixth form. This year, a formal lesson in personal and social education has been introduced in both year groups, to provide a structured programme of careers education and guidance together with citizenship studies and opportunities to explore personal issues. Advice on higher education is readily available, and practical help on admission procedures is included in the personal and social education lessons. Valuable contacts with local universities provide students with realistic ideas about university life. A new careers co-ordinator and a local careers officer provide additional support and careers information within the sixth form centre and in the library. However, there are no formal opportunities for students following vocational courses to undertake work placements. A small proportion of students in their questionnaire returns expressed some concern about the careers advice that is available. Discussions during the inspection showed that although some students do have anxieties about coping with their studies and leaving school, they generally have confidence in the expertise provided by their teachers.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

107. Parents are very pleased with the school including the work of the sixth form. They value the Christian ethos of the school and the high expectations of pupils' achievement. Standards and progress achieved by most pupils are commended. Parents are particularly pleased with the school's approach to monitoring attendance and they feel comfortable in approaching the school about a problem. Parents feel that the quality of teaching and management are good. The school has the support of parents from all ethnic backgrounds. Inspectors fully support these positive views.
108. Some parents express concerns about the shortage of teachers in English and science in the year preceding the inspection; difficulties in gaining support for dyslexic pupils; consultation about a change in school uniform and dangers after school from gangs of pupils from other schools. Inspection evidence indicates that the severe teacher recruitment difficulties of recent years have for now been overcome. The inspection found some important shortcomings in the provision for pupils with special educational needs though it is satisfactory overall. New parents were consulted over the proposed change in girls' uniform, but the communication with existing parents was not as clear as it could be and the period for consultation rather short. Every effort is being made to protect pupils from potential violence outside the school premises.
109. Sixth form students enjoy the opportunities they are provided and feel that the sixth form is successful. They are particularly pleased with the opportunities to study independently and to act as responsible young adults. The ready advice and support from teachers is praised. Many students would like to see more activities and enrichment courses provided.
110. The school's good links with parents have a positive impact in supporting pupils' learning and well being. Helpful information about progress is provided in reports issued in January and July and at the well-attended consultation evenings with teachers. The annual written reports include perceptive comments on attainment and identify key areas for improvement. Parents are pleased with the reporting arrangements as are the majority of students. Good advice is given to parents about the induction of pupils into Year 7 and they are consulted about courses to be studied from Year 10 and in the sixth form.
111. The prospectus and the governors' annual report give a clear picture about the school's work and activities. There is, however, a need for the governors' report to include references to the arrangements for pupils with disabilities and about the school's progress on the action plan from the previous inspection. Regular newsletters keep parents up to date about school developments and events. A comprehensive brochure is published for prospective students and their parents about sixth form courses.
112. Parents make a satisfactory contribution to the life and work of the school. Most parents show a keen interest in their child's progress and help to monitor homework through the diary system. School drama and musical productions are very popular and well attended by parents. A small but

enthusiastic group of parents help the Friends of Cardinal Pole provide a programme of fund-raising activities and social events. The proceeds are used to fund school projects such as equipment and resources to promote pupils' learning and recreational opportunities.

113. Contact with parents of pupils with statements of special educational needs is satisfactory and parents are consulted appropriately. Contact with parents of other pupils on the special needs register is unsatisfactory, as there is little evidence they are informed on a regular basis of the progress their children make. Contact with parents of pupils in the Learning Support Unit is well managed through the heads of year. The head of the EMAS maintains a good level of contact with parents of pupils on the EMAS register, especially those at the early stages of learning English. However, there is scope to involve parents more actively in their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

114. The very good leadership and management provided by the headteacher and leadership team are major factors in the school's success. The leadership team, consisting of two deputy heads and three assistant heads, is itself well led and united in purpose. Supported by the governors and staff, the leadership team has created a very good ethos which encourages pupils' very good attitudes and supports their learning and personal development. The head and leadership team are very visible around the school and provide teachers with very good support in maintaining a good learning environment. There are well-organised links between the leadership team and the heads of department, which result in almost all staff working towards united aims. The leadership team has a very good knowledge of what is going on in classrooms and takes a keen interest in monitoring pupils' progress. All these factors result in a united staff which is very effective in promoting pupils' achievements.
115. The school has a well-defined mission, which is firmly based on the Christian faith, and aims to promote pupils' achievement, to encourage positive and responsible attitudes in pupils and to lead by example. The school aims include a commitment to equal opportunities, which is based on a recognition that all are equal in the sight of God.
116. The governing body is very supportive of the school's aims and several of the governors give a good deal of their time in visiting the school to give support to teachers and see for themselves what is going on. The governors fulfil almost all their statutory duties and benefit from the good advice in these matters from the recently appointed Clerk. Governors give the headteacher good support in staffing matters, in improving the buildings and in planning and monitoring the budget. They are regularly informed in meetings of the school's plans and progress. They have a sound knowledge of the school's

strengths and weaknesses. Meetings of the full governing body are well run, but, in order for the governors to be more effective in guiding school strategy and monitoring outcomes, committee meetings need to be more regular and organised more systematically. A small number of governors are linked with curriculum areas, such as literacy, numeracy, ICT and special educational needs. The governors' knowledge of the school would be enhanced through making these links more formal and extending them to other curriculum areas.

117. The school development plan is tightly focused on the issues that were identified in the last inspection. It is a five-year plan which is reviewed each year, and the subject department action plans, which are renewed annually, are closely tied to the whole school priorities. This has resulted in good concentration on the school's key issues and has led to good progress being made since the last inspection. The plan has been successful in achieving the school's priorities because of the good liaison between the leadership team and departments and good teamwork on the part of the whole staff. The development plan would be even more effective if it were more explicit in identifying when and how progress will be monitored and in linking the developments to financial planning.
118. The process for setting the school's performance targets is thorough. Previous performance is considered carefully and the expected performance of every individual pupil is taken into account. Progress towards the targets is monitored carefully and reported to governors. The school is beginning to make use of value-added calculations and to monitor the results of each ethnic group. These need to be developed further to give even better information on the school's performance and give attention where necessary to specific groups of pupils.
119. The systems for monitoring and supporting staff with management responsibilities are very strong and a significant factor in the success of the school. Job descriptions of staff at all levels are in published the staff handbook, thus making expectations clear. Each head of department is linked with a member of the leadership team and these links are guided by well-defined agendas and expectations. The result of these systems is that the leadership team knows well what is going on in all departments and all staff work on the same priorities. The school makes efficient use of the limited time available for staff meetings to deal with departmental and whole-school matters. The leadership and management of subjects are good in English, science, design and technology, history, geography, music, art and physical education, and satisfactory in all other subjects. Heads of year provide good leadership to the tutors as well as very effective support to pupils.
120. The management of special needs provision is unsatisfactory for pupils without statements of special educational need. There is insufficient monitoring of pupils' progress and of the quality of teaching in lessons where pupils are withdrawn from classes. Pupils' individual education plans are not well defined enough to make an effective contribution to their learning. Effective development planning for the department has only very recently been achieved. This should make a significant contribution to improving the quality of management for special needs within the school. The management

of the provision for pupils with statements of special educational need is satisfactory.

121. Leadership and management of the Learning Support Unit is good and continues to develop as the unit becomes better established. Procedures for tracking pupil progress are good. The manager of the unit knows what needs to be done to develop the provision further and has planned this in a systematic way.
122. The ethnic minority achievement service is very well led. The head of department is very clear about the areas that need further development, such as support for sixth form students and the monitoring of assessment data. In the short time he has been in post he has put in place good systems and procedures to manage the work of the department, including providing all staff with information on the pupils they teach. There is systematic management of the work of team members, though monitoring of the teaching of ethnic minority pupils has yet to take place.
123. At the time of the inspection the school is fully staffed and there is a good match between teachers' qualifications and experience and the subjects they teach. This situation is a considerable achievement on the part of the school, as staffing difficulties were severe in the year preceding the inspection. There were shortages and temporary staff in English, science, ICT, religious education and physical education. At the time of the inspection one fifth of all teachers are newly appointed. Staff worked hard to ameliorate the effect of classes being taken by temporary and non-specialist teachers, but results were affected in English, and were noted by students and parents in science.
124. The school has a clear and effective policy for managing the performance of teachers. It has developed well-defined arrangements for monitoring teaching. All teachers are observed teaching on a regular basis and given constructive feedback. The criteria used in observing lessons have been developed co-operatively in staff meetings and are designed to support the development of teaching skills. Through their communication links with the departments, the leadership team has a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The headteacher's targets, set by the governing body, are closely linked to the priorities of the school and the development plan.
125. Professional development is well supported. The school has Investors in People status. Professional development needs are identified through lesson observations and training needs are considered in leadership team meetings. Teachers know what the school's priorities are and feel well supported by the leadership team in their professional development. All training is formally evaluated for its effect in improving teaching. Further training is needed to give all teachers confidence in using ICT in their teaching.
126. The arrangements for the induction of newly-qualified staff are very good. There is a well-organised programme of meetings and lesson observations. Teachers agree targets following their observations and are supported in meeting these. The school is an effective provider of initial teacher training and is participating in training unqualified graduates with Goldsmith's College.

Experienced teachers who are new to the school are given good informal support but do not have a formal induction programme.

127. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in developing the expertise and accountability of the heads of department and very good progress in improving teaching, through monitoring lessons and providing professional development. These developments, together with the improvement in setting pupils targets and monitoring their progress, have been important in raising pupils' achievement.
128. Financial planning is satisfactory. The governors' finance committee meets regularly and plans the budget on the basis of the educational priorities identified by the headteacher. The budget is not extended beyond one year and the governors do not have access to a detailed analysis of the balance of expenditure between the main school and sixth form. Such developments would enable a more strategic approach to financial planning. There are good financial controls and staff and governors receive appropriate information in order to plan and monitor their spending. At the end of the year preceding the inspection the accounts showed a surplus of £287,000. Some of this was already committed and the school's actual surplus was £170,000, almost 5% of the total budget. This was partly the result of savings through difficulties in recruiting staff and partly planned savings for the improvement of the buildings. It is not an indication of poor financial management, though the school would benefit from increasing staffing in the sixth form. The school is careful that government grants are allocated for their correct purposes and the effectiveness of the expenditure is monitored by the headteacher and leadership team. The cost per pupil is above average for London schools, but in relation to pupils' very good achievement the school gives good value for money.
129. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology in its management and administration. Pupil records are held on a computer database and are used effectively to provide reports on progress. Financial records are now maintained within the school and following initial teething problems the school has improved information on which to plan and monitor its expenditure. At the time of the inspection, the introduction of e-mail into the school office was planned, which will bring benefits in communicating between the two sites, as well as aiding communication with governors and outside agencies.
130. The managers of the school are subject to a number of external bureaucratic demands on their time. Many of these are requests for information from the local education authority (LEA) and these have been exacerbated by several recent enquiries into the performance of the LEA. Other demands on time have arisen from government initiatives, such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, Excellence in Cities and the introduction of a new sixth form curriculum, though the school recognises that all these have educational benefit. Completion of government census forms are also reported to be time consuming.
131. The school's accommodation on its two sites includes extremes of aesthetic interest and practicality. While the school suffers from some significant

limitations, the accommodation is just satisfactory to teach the curriculum. The accommodation for Years 7 and 8 in the Annexe comprises a spacious and elegant nineteenth century building, a modern physical education suite and two pre-fabricated classrooms for drama and humanities. It is surrounded by mature trees, has a lawn and flower beds in the front and play areas to the rear. Inside the main building there is a beautiful chapel and a long gallery in which pupils' colourful artwork is attractively displayed. It is a pleasant place to come to school. A high surrounding wall provides security. At the time of the inspection access was free and open, but secure gates were about to be installed. Games take place on the adjacent public playing fields.

132. In stark contrast, accommodation for Years 9 to 13, almost a mile away, is in an area of dense housing and surrounded by high-wire fencing, made necessary by the violent and at times dangerous neighbourhood. Admission to the building is tightly controlled. Within, it is warm and welcoming, with striking art displays, but the building is packed to capacity, with some rooms too small for the numbers of pupils, for example in English and modern languages. Movement about the school, at lesson changeover times, can come to standstill, and pupils and staff must be congratulated for remaining calm at such times so that chaos does not ensue.
133. The shortage of laboratories noted in the previous report has been solved by re-organising classes, but although greatly improved in the Annexe, physical education facilities in the main school, including changing and showering facilities for boys, remain unsatisfactory. Games take place on adjacent public playing fields.
134. The school manages the use of the two sites well. Teacher travel is kept to a minimum and restricted to breaks or lunchtimes. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 travel by coach to the main building just one half-day a week to have their design and technology lessons.
135. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. They are good in music, physical education, art, design and technology and the Learning Support Unit. There are insufficient books in science, though the new head of department has plans to rectify this imminently.
136. The school has two libraries: one in the Annexe for Years 7 and 8 and the other in the main school for Years 9 to 13. There is a school librarian but the assistant librarian post is vacant and as result pupils in Years 7 and 8 are currently unable to borrow books. The ratio of books per pupil is broadly in line with the national average. However, more resources are needed in the library for modern languages, physical education, design and technology and geography. There are only two computers in the main library, neither of which has Internet facilities. There is a lack of computerised research facilities in the library to extend pupils' learning and encourage them to see the library as a learning resource centre. There is a homework club in the Annexe library but not in the main building.
137. The librarian has completed the National Literacy Strategy training and is able to give good advice to departments to support pupils' literacy development.

He also gives good support to teachers and pupils with books, resources and displays to support learning. Recently, for example, support was given for black history week, and shadowing the Carnegie Medal Award, where pupils read the books listed and voted for the best. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are taught research and retrieval skills. There is good collaboration with the ethnic minority achievement service and special needs staff to ensure that the library is inclusive in its range of books to meet all needs.

138. The ratio of computers is broadly in line with the national average. However, since these are used primarily for the ICT lessons that all pupils have, many subjects have insufficient access to computers to support pupils' learning.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

139. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The sixth form is managed by an assistant headteacher who reports to the leadership team, and strategic decisions are taken by the leadership team. There is a clear vision for the sixth form as an important part of an 11-19 Catholic school, primarily aiming at preparing students for higher education. The Catholic ethos is explicit and influences assemblies, religious education and personal and social education. Plans have been developed to respond to local conditions, with vocational courses introduced to widen the range available to students and a consortium very recently established with the two other voluntary aided schools in Hackney. This arrangement has made a promising start but it is too early to make a judgement on its effectiveness in widening the opportunities available to students. The school is also involved in the planning of a new local sixth form centre, which it is hoped will widen students' choices further.
140. The governing body supports the planning and monitoring of the sixth form in conjunction with their consideration of the whole school. As with the main school, governors have a sound knowledge of the sixth form's strengths and weaknesses but would be better able to support strategic planning and to pursue the outcomes of monitoring if the committee procedures were more systematic.
141. The courses available to students are kept under constant review and reasonable attempts are made to respond to students' aspirations. Students' performance in examinations and sixth form teaching are monitored within the school's thorough and effective arrangements. The quality of the care and support provided by the school is constantly monitored and developed by the head of the sixth form.
142. The main focus of school development since the last inspection has been the achievement of students at GCSE and the accountability of middle management. This was an appropriate response and the school has made good progress since the last inspection. An effect has been, however, that the sixth form has had a low profile in the school development plan. The school now needs to make the strategic planning for the sixth form more explicit.

Resources

143. The sixth form is cost-effective, with expenditure on sixth form teaching some £75,000 less than the income received for the number of students. Given that in several subjects learning is hampered by Year 12 and Year 13 students being taught together, more money should be spent on creating separate classes for each year group. The headteacher is aware of this but it has not been discussed by the governors' finance committee. Joint classes have been created, not primarily for financial reasons, but because of the severe difficulties in recruiting qualified staff. Steps are already being taken to seek additional staff for these classes. The governors' finance committee needs to take a longer term strategic view to the financing and staffing of the sixth form.
144. The match of staff qualifications and experience to the courses they teach is satisfactory. Students commented on staffing difficulties during the year prior to the inspection and these comments were justified. The main problems have been solved at the time of the inspection.
145. Learning resources for the sixth form are satisfactory within subjects but students need more access to ICT for research and to carry out their assignments.
146. Sixth form accommodation, though just about adequate, is uncomfortable and shabby, and is inadequate in the case of English and business studies. The school has plans to improve the decoration of the sixth form common room and this is much needed.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve standards further, the governors and leadership team should:

- (1) Improve the management of special educational needs, by:
 - planning the teaching in withdrawal lessons to take better account of what pupils already know and can do;
 - ensuring the content of withdrawal lessons systematically builds literacy and numeracy skills and is linked to the National Curriculum;
 - ensuring individual education plans make an effective contribution to teaching and learning. *(paragraphs 8, 46, 70, 100, 120)*
- (2) Make full use of ICT to support the teaching and learning of subjects, by:
 - improving the access that teachers have to computer facilities for their teaching;
 - providing all teachers with appropriate in-service training;
 - including opportunities for ICT in departmental planning. *(paragraphs 42, 65, 125, 217)*
- (3) Ensure that in all subjects, teaching and pupils' tasks are suitably matched to the abilities of all pupils in the class, especially in Years 7 to 9, by:
 - using assessment records to identify pupils' needs;
 - planning teaching for the full range of ability;
 - monitoring lessons for the quality of provision for all pupils. *(paragraphs 50, 97 and subject sections)*
- (4) Develop consistent methods to promote literacy and numeracy in all subjects.*
(paragraphs 40, 41, 63, 64)

Sixth form

- (1) Make sure that students' progress is not disadvantaged by the practice in some subjects of teaching students from Years 12 and 13 together, by:
 - planning lessons in which all students receive their full entitlement of teaching time;
 - increasing expenditure on the sixth form to match its income more closely;
 - deploying additional teaching staff where this is appropriate and possible. *(paragraphs 57, 84, 143)*
- (2) Improve students' skills as independent learners by:
 - increasing their opportunities in lessons to take initiative and responsibility;
 - improving their access to resources for independent study, especially ICT. *(paragraphs 56, 145 and subject sections)*
- (3) Extend the range of activities available to students beyond their examination subjects. *(paragraphs 86, 106, 109)*

In addition to the above issues for action, the school should give consideration to:

- improving the guidance to GCSE pupils over whether to take the National Curriculum subjects of a modern foreign language and design and technology; *(paragraphs 62, 199, 225)*
- extending the monitoring of examination results to include calculations of progress from GCSE to A level and analysis of pupils' progress in terms of ethnic background;* *(paragraphs 98, 102, 118)*
- including in the school development plan clearer guidance on when and how progress will be monitored, increased focus on the sixth form and more direct links with financial planning; *(paragraphs 117, 128, 142)*
- improving the quality of the sixth form accommodation.* *(paragraph 146)*

**These issues are already included in the school's planning.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	142
	Sixth form	45
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		74

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	5	37	54	37	9	0	0
Percentage	4	26	38	26	6	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	0	4	28	13	0	0	0
Percentage	0	9	62	29	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	874	131
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	334	22

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	210	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	380

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	27
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	47

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.1
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	85	89	174

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	41	49	35
	Girls	51	41	38
	Total	92	90	73
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	53 (56)	52 (53)	42 (27)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	18 (15)	28 (24)	10 (5)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	43	52	38
	Girls	56	46	45
	Total	99	98	83
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	58 (61)	58 (64)	48 (47)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (19)	36 (33)	9 (10)
	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 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	92	69	161

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	82	89
	Girls	40	66	68
	Total	78	148	157
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	48 (35)	92 (95)	98 (99)
	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	38 (34)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	7	18	25

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	17.2	12.3	14.3 (12.5)	1.0	3.4	3.0 (1.8)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	70.0
	National	73.2

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	321
Black – African heritage	239
Black – other	0
Indian	8
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	334
Any other minority ethnic group	97

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	39	0
Black – African heritage	14	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	4	0
White	12	0
Other minority ethnic groups	4	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	57.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	384

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78%
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	28.8
Key Stage 4	24.9
Sixth form	13.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000 – 2001
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	£
Total income	3447485
Total expenditure	3194263
Expenditure per pupil	3135
Balance brought forward from previous year	33900
Balance carried forward to next year	287122

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	19.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	15.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	3

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1005
Number of questionnaires returned	83

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	66	29	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	29	9	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	52	38	6	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	65	23	7	4	1
The teaching is good.	60	36	1	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	32	8	1	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	85	11	2	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	82	16	0	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	50	38	6	1	5
The school is well led and managed.	63	30	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	61	30	1	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	37	11	2	15

Other issues raised by parents

The great majority of parents are very supportive of the school. Some parents were concerned about staff turnover during the year before the inspection, which had

affected progress in English and science. A few parents expressed concern over difficulty in getting special educational needs (SEN) support from the LEA and school for dyslexic pupils, though other parents were pleased with SEN support. Many parents were concerned about the danger to pupils after school presented by gangs of pupils from other schools, though they recognised the school was doing everything possible to contain the situation. A small number of parents were concerned over a lack of consultation before changing school uniform.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Good standards of achievement have been maintained.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and strategies for managing behaviour.
- Pupils are introduced to the skills of literary analysis from Year 7, and they develop these skills well.
- Pupils have good opportunities to develop their own creative writing, especially poetry. The school values and encourages authorship.

Areas for improvement

- The National Curriculum levels are not used regularly enough to assess how well pupils are doing and to identify areas for improvement, in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy needs further development to ensure that all teachers are confident in employing the techniques.
- The accommodation does not provide sufficient space for group work and other 'active' learning methods.
- The skills of the English teaching team need be further developed, so that good practice is shared and that satisfactory teaching becomes good or better.

147. The English department had a very difficult year in the year preceding the inspection, with acute staffing problems. Whilst the school tried hard to fill vacancies, a lot of pupils had a number of temporary teachers during the year, many of whom were not specialists. This resulted in pupils not receiving targeted, specific preparation for national tests and examinations, and thus there was a drop in attainment. It also meant that major department initiatives, such as developing literacy in Years 7 to 9, did not take place as expected.
148. In the National Curriculum tests for 14-year olds in 2000, results were below average, but well above similar schools. Results were better than in mathematics and science. In 2001, results were lower. There has been a fluctuating trend in attainment over the last three years. When pupils come into the school, their attainment levels in English are well below average, so this means that they achieve well during their first three years. The attainment gap between boys and girls is similar to the national picture, with girls outperforming boys.
149. GCSE results in English in 2000 were above average. In 2001 they fell significantly but were still average. Results have fluctuated over the last three years. Girls achieve better results than boys, by a similar margin to that found nationally. English literature GCSE results in 2000 and 2001 were below average. When compared with pupils' prior attainment, these results in both English and English literature represent good achievement.

150. Standards of work seen in Year 9 confirm the National Curriculum tests results and are below average. Higher attaining pupils, however, are doing well, when compared with national standards. Their writing is accurate, imaginative and, usually, detailed. Lower attaining pupils develop their ability to write for different readers and purposes, although their writing is less extended and less accurate. All pupils are introduced to the skills of literary analysis and are able to make straightforward judgements about writers' intentions. The majority of pupils can express their ideas orally quite confidently in informal situations, although their language is often fairly restricted. Most pupils make good progress during their first three years in the school.
151. By the time pupils take their GCSEs, most have made good progress and achieve well. Although the analysis of work, most of which was completed in the previous academic year, found standards in general to be a little below average, work seen during lessons suggests that pupils are on target to attain average GCSE results. The highest attaining pupils learn how to employ skills of literary analysis quite skilfully, and they write extended pieces accurately, in a lively and imaginative way. They use textual quotations appositely and their enjoyment of the subject shines through their writing. Middle and lower attaining pupils also analyse texts, although in less depth, and their writing is less developed. Teachers use a variety of techniques to help pupils practise these skills. In a lesson on Romeo and Juliet, for example, a sequencing exercise was used which helped pupils to understand how the speech was structured. Lower attaining pupils tend to make basic errors, such as misplacing the apostrophe in 'shouldn't'. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all year groups. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well.
152. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good. During the inspection, four out of every five lessons seen were good or better, with nearly one in three lessons very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers have a secure command of their subject, and they use their knowledge to challenge pupils to think deeply and to make connections between the use of language and writers' intentions. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the teacher used her knowledge of 'Lord of the Flies' to lead the pupils to a very good level of understanding of themes and characterisation in the novel. Pupils developed their understanding of literary criticism, which the teacher reinforced by effectively highlighting key words.
153. The management of pupils' behaviour is a strength of the department. Teachers clearly set out their expectations of how pupils should behave and what their learning objectives are for the lesson. A Year 11 group was examining the language of persuasion, and the teacher introduced the question of differentiating between fact and opinion. He explained his expectations of what pupils were to do and how they were to behave, and reinforced these when necessary during the lesson, and as a consequence the time available was used to the full and learning was very good. All schemes of work include assignments in which pupils use computers, either for research purposes or to draft and present work. This is a developing area for the department.

154. On the whole, pupils like English. They show positive attitudes to the subject through their volunteering answers to questions and their enthusiastic participation in group and whole-class work. In a Year 10 lesson, the teacher drew out the moral implications of a short story that the group was studying: 'The Darkness Out There'. Pupils had good ideas about what they read and they expressed their points quite confidently. They were lively and engaged in what they were doing; they were interested in the work, and their positive approach helped to ensure that they made good progress in the lesson.
155. The department has started to use assessment data to monitor how both individuals and groups of pupils achieve. This is a developing area. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly, giving helpful development points and recognising good work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9, however, do not have a clear idea of what National Curriculum level they are currently working at, because the assessment system is over complicated. Year 10 and 11 pupils usually know which GCSE grades they are aiming for, their current performance level, and targets for improvement.
156. Accommodation for English lessons is unsatisfactory. There are a number of teachers in the department who do not have a classroom base, which results in a considerable number of lessons taking place in rooms that do not have English displays on walls or subject specific vocabulary in evidence. In addition, some classrooms are too small for the number of pupils, which means that teachers cannot organise group work or role play satisfactorily, and learning, therefore, is not as good as it could be. One Year 10 lesson took place in a geography room, which was too small for the 30 pupils present. Another Year 7 lesson was in a science laboratory in the Annexe; this was unsuitable for an English lesson.
157. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has had significant staffing difficulties to deal with, all through the previous academic year and at the start of the current term, and it has been her priority to manage this in such a way as to affect the least number of pupils. At the time of the inspection the department is fully staffed, although one teacher is on a temporary contract, and the head of department is trying to create a sense of teamwork and shared direction. She has a reflective, analytical approach in considering how well pupils are doing and in identifying areas for improvement. Systems are in place to monitor teaching, and the head of department gives appropriate feedback and is involved in setting teachers' targets. This process is having a positive effect on learning and achievement.
158. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen in line with the national trend, the quality of teaching has improved and teaching plans have been written to accommodate curriculum changes. Whilst teachers of English play the major role in teaching literacy, most subjects make a contribution by displaying subject specific words, highlighting correct spelling and giving pupils opportunities to talk both formally and informally in lessons. Practice is not consistent across the school, however, and pupils could make even greater progress if all teachers tackled the teaching of literacy skills systematically. Particularly effective work

was seen by modern languages teachers, who reinforced correct spelling and grammatical structure, and in geography lessons, where pupils wrote letters, reports and articles, and teachers stressed key words. Whilst pupils who are particularly gifted in English are not formally identified, there are good opportunities for those who have a talent for creative writing to be recognised, through competitions, assemblies and published anthologies. Now that staffing problems have been largely resolved, the department is well placed to develop further.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and standards are rising.
- Teaching is very good, with teachers having high expectations of what pupils can do and how they will behave.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The new team of drama teachers needs further consolidation.

159. The drama department was short of a specialist teacher during the year preceding the inspection. Despite the best efforts of the school to staff the classes, at least one GCSE group did not do as well as had been predicted in Year 10, because they did not have a specialist teacher in Year 11.
160. GCSE results in 2000 and 2001 were below average. They represent good achievement, however, as pupils come to the school with very limited experiences of drama.
161. Pupils achieve well in their first three years in the school, and acquire an understanding of drama terms and techniques. Work seen indicates that the current Year 10 pupils are on target to attain GCSE grades that are in line with the national average, which represents good achievement through the course. Pupils employ a variety of dramatic and theatrical techniques to portray character, show emotion and tell a story. Year 10 pupils use freeze frames, miming and choral speaking effectively. Higher attaining pupils use drama methods in quite sophisticated ways. Lower attaining pupils improvise in groups in a straightforward fashion. The great majority of pupils have positive attitudes to the subject. They enjoy it and are keen to learn.
162. Teaching is very good. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils will achieve and insist on high standards, including good behaviour and listening. They have very good specialist subject knowledge, and pace is brisk, which maximises time available in lessons. In a Year 8 lesson, where the class was working on a ghost story theme, the teacher very effectively went into role herself to deepen the pupils' understanding of the drama, and they were absorbed and very interested, and made excellent progress during the lesson. The department has good assessment procedures, using levels of attainment that they have designed. Teachers give very helpful, constructive feedback to pupils after practical work during lessons. They also encourage self-evaluation. Drama is taught in specialist rooms, but the studio in the main

school is not big enough for large groups to use the range of practical methods usually employed by drama teachers. The head of department provides very good leadership and management of the subject. The subject has a high profile among the pupils and makes a very good contribution to extra curricular activities.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths:

- Achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is good throughout the school; teachers are experienced and have high expectations.
- Pupils have good attitudes towards mathematics and enjoy the lessons.

Areas for improvement:

- The National Numeracy Strategy for Years 7 to 9 is not yet implemented.
- ICT is not used well enough to support learning.
- Marking is not informative enough, so that pupils do not know how well they are doing and what they should strive to improve.

163. National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 in 2000 were below average, but well above similar schools. Results improved further in 2001. Boys generally do rather better than girls in these tests, although girls did better in 2001. Recent results in GCSE examinations have been about average.
164. Work seen in the inspection confirms the improvement in the 2001 Year 9 test results, with standards now about average at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. This represents a significant improvement over the situation as reported at the time of the last inspection when standards were below average at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results were poor. In relation to pupils' low standards on entry, pupils' achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. There were no observable differences in learning and achievement between different groups of pupils during the inspection.
165. Standards of numeracy vary across the school. In Years 7 to 9, standards are entirely satisfactory, but in Years 10 and 11 it is still the case that pupils often reach for their calculator rather than attempt a mental calculation, even in trivial examples. Nevertheless, pupils' skills do support learning in other subjects. In science, for example, the development of numeracy is written into lesson plans. Pupils are expected to express numerical relationships in the form of charts and graphs. In geography, there is a detailed numeracy policy in place. Adequate skills were seen, such as graphing the correlation between aspects of world development. Good examples of the application of numeracy skills were also observed in coursework for physical education as well as in art and business studies.

166. Pupils' high achievement comes about through good teaching with high expectations. Half of the lessons taught by permanent staff were at least good; one in three were at least very good, and excellent teaching was observed in one lesson. Teaching was unsatisfactory in one lesson. Teaching is markedly improved since the last inspection, when one in three lessons were unsatisfactory, and pupils often made insufficient progress.
167. General strengths in teaching include teachers' good knowledge of the subject, allowing them to plan challenging work for classes and to be confident in dealing with queries. This solid understanding also shows in the high expectations teachers have of pupils' work rate and behaviour. These lead to brisk lessons in which pupils remain focused on the task in hand. Consequently, pupils make good gains in knowledge, work hard and produce good work. This brisk pace was seen in a very good Year 7 lesson on the scientific method of writing large numbers. Pupils were highly motivated by this method of writing numbers, and were particularly excited by the teacher's discussion of the very large number known as a googol. Afterwards, this enthusiasm was converted into productive work. The teacher used sharp time limits well to produce a working atmosphere in which pupils covered a lot of ground very effectively. Teachers use questioning well, and, when pupils are working independently, they give valuable individual assistance. This was seen in a very good lesson for Year 11. In this, pupils' relatively weak numeracy skills led them to use the calculator for simple calculations. Unfortunately, the order in which the calculator completed operations was not that expected by pupils, with the result that they began to get incorrect answers. Whilst moving around the class, the teacher noted this and was able to give a short explanation. As a result, pupils' work and accuracy markedly improved. All of the positive features of teaching came together harmoniously in an excellent lesson on Pythagoras' theorem for Year 10. The teacher had excellent relationships with the class, and pupils very cooperative. Pupils fell over themselves to contribute in a supportive atmosphere in which wrong answers were not ridiculed but used as the basis for further discussion. During the exercise which followed, there was a real buzz of industry, and pupils made significant gains. Indeed, the teacher's promise that in the next lesson they would meet with more challenging problems was met with excitement!
168. A relative weakness in the teaching is that teachers use a limited range of teaching methods, typically a short explanation followed by textbook or worksheet exercises. In some lessons, this is uninspiring, the lesson pace is steady rather than brisk and learning slows. Pupils are taught in classes formed on the basis of their attainment, but there still remains a wide range of ability within a class, and this is not always reflected in the planning. Consequently, tasks are not always as closely matched to individuals' needs as they might be and some pupils learn more slowly than they should. However, this is often remedied by the quality of the teacher's interventions. Pupils have few opportunities to work and learn independently, and they tend to ask for help immediately they come across a problem, rather than spend time trying to apply their existing knowledge. This is compounded by the lack of use of ICT. Pupils do not always know exactly where they stand in relation to the subject. Their books are marked regularly and their work graded, but

meaningful comments are rare, and pupils are not given short-term targets for improvement.

169. The department is soundly led, though some developments require more rigour and vigour to be fully effective. The most notable examples are the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and the use of ICT. Although the Numeracy Strategy is included in planning documents, the techniques are not yet being used effectively and further training is required. There is little planning for the use of ICT and little software available. The department has no computers or graphical calculators, and teachers have difficulty getting access to the school's computer rooms. Consequently the use of new technology is currently poor in the subject. The departmental action plan is similar in format to that for the school, and does not include targets that are sharp enough to have their effectiveness measured. On the positive side, improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards and teaching have both improved, and assessment is now better, although there is some way to go before all pupils have their progress tracked and are set meaningful targets for their performance.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The results of National Curriculum tests in Year 9 continue to improve.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress.
- Pupils behave well and are eager to learn.
- Teachers are beginning to work well as a team under the new head of department.

Areas for improvement

- More pupils should reach the highest levels and grades in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations.
- Pupils do not use their scientific knowledge in explaining their observations enough.
- Marking does not set sufficiently sharply focused learning targets.
- ICT is not used effectively enough to promote learning.

170. In 2001 the results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were below average but well above similar schools. This continues an improving trend since 1999. A much smaller proportion of pupils than average gain the higher levels.

171. There was a similar pattern in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades was below average but above similar schools. Although almost all pupils gained an A*-G grade, few gained A* or A grades. However, the results represent good progress for these pupils in relation to their National Curriculum test results two years earlier. Overall, GCSE results in 2001 were lower than in the previous year but this was

because a much higher proportion was entered for double award science rather than the single award.

172. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their attainment is well below average. By Year 9, attainment has risen and standards in work seen are below average, reflecting the results of recent National Curriculum tests. Overall, pupils achieve well through Years 7 to 9, particularly those in the higher sets. Most of those in other groups also achieve well but a significant minority could make more progress if work was more appropriately paced; for some the pace is too fast and they gain little understanding, while for others it is too slow and they could have learnt more. About half the pupils in the higher sets (making up about a third of the total) can explain the exchange of gases in the lungs during breathing, but the majority of others have more limited knowledge and struggle to identify the positions of the main organs in the human body.
173. Pupils continue to achieve well through Years 10 and 11. By this stage their overall attainment in lessons is in line with the average nationally. This is a little higher than suggested by recent GCSE examination results because frequent changes of staff in the past adversely affected pupils' progress. Almost all can set up and identify faults in a simple electrical circuit and know some of the factors that affect the rates of chemical reactions. However, few can explain why increasing the concentration of hydrochloric acid causes it to react more quickly with marble. Evidence from the inspection suggests that the main reason for test and examination results being below national averages, particularly for the higher levels and grades, is that too few pupils are able to use their scientific knowledge in explaining what they observe.
174. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those learning to speak English is similar to that of other pupils. No evidence was seen during the inspection of any variation in progress of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
175. Teachers encourage pupils to improve their writing skills, for example by giving them opportunities to write imaginatively, as in a letter from the inventor of the microscope explaining the invention to a friend; pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are usually corrected during marking. Their numerical skills are developed from an early stage in Year 7, for example when they use line graphs to express the relationship between temperature and time as water is heated. However, pupils' skills in using ICT in science and their handling of laboratory apparatus are areas that need further development.
176. Teaching and learning are good overall. Just over half the lessons seen during the inspection were good or better, and about a third were very good; all the rest were satisfactory. Teachers plan their lessons well. Objectives are clear so that pupils know what they are expected to learn and settle quickly, allowing time to be used for productive learning. Pupils respond well when teachers make clear their expectations of good behaviour and high work-rate, then engage their interest by relating work to their own experience or topical events. In Year 9, pupils learnt quickly about the effects of cigarette smoking

on the human body because the teacher used personal examples to hold their interest, challenged them about their own smoking habits, and then used praise very effectively to encourage them to participate in discussion. In some lessons technicians make a good contribution to pupils' learning, for example in Year 7 by helping them to set up microscopes. In less good lessons, particularly with lower groups in Years 7 to 9, pupils learn at a slower pace because the work does not challenge them to develop their scientific thinking. A 'true/false' quiz in Year 9 did not challenge pupils sufficiently because the answers were not further developed to consider underlying reasons, for example why a meat-free diet can be healthy. However, for some pupils the pace is too fast and they leave work unfinished, failing to draw the main learning points from it. The quality of teachers' day to day marking varies, but it often does not focus clearly enough on learning targets to help pupils improve their science.

177. Pupils usually behave well in science lessons, but they become restless and inattentive in a small number of lessons when the work does not challenge them sufficiently or is presented in a way that does not engage their interest.
178. Large class sizes and wide ranges of ability in some teaching groups, particularly in Year 9, adversely affect learning because the amount of investigation work that pupils undertake is restricted; too much time is taken up in organising large numbers of pupils to ensure safe working. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 study double award science; there are no alternative courses that would be more suitable for a significant minority.
179. A new head of department has a clear vision for the future and is beginning to develop good teamwork. Already, a number of suggestions made during the inspection are being implemented, for example giving pupils more encouragement to use their scientific understanding to explain their observations. The department has a good system for recording attainment and tracking pupils' progress but is not yet using it effectively to identify and support under-achieving pupils. Few of the science books in the library are attractive to pupils; as a result, the library is an under-used resource in developing pupils' learning skills.
180. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There has been no marked improvement in National Curriculum test results (though they now show an improving trend), and GCSE results have deteriorated (though all pupils are now entered for double award science). However, there has been a marked improvement in teaching; at the last inspection nearly one in four lessons were unsatisfactory, while at this inspection all the lessons seen were at least satisfactory. The improvement in teaching has not yet had time to feed through into improved examination performance.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good throughout the department.
- There are very high standards in pupils' drawing and use of dry two-dimensional media.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and behaviour, particularly as they get older, leading to increasing enjoyment in their work.
- Pupils achieve very well in art relative to their prior attainment.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils need to learn a wide range of painting techniques to the same high standard that they draw.
- Pupils need more help in their use of oral and written language to develop their critical skills.
- ICT is not used enough as a creative tool.

181. Pupils enter the school with a low level of skill in and understanding about art. The department now provides an extremely effective curriculum in the lower school to overcome these deficiencies, particularly in two-dimensional media.
182. By the end of Year 9, standards of work are average. Some aspects, especially drawing, are above average for the majority of pupils. Boys' drawing in particular is often well above that normally found. These developing skills provide pupils with great enjoyment in the subject, as they come to realise that they can draw what they see to their own and their teacher's increasing satisfaction. A large proportion of pupils go on to take art at GCSE, where A*-C results in the last two years have been close to average. Standards in the current Year 11 show an average range of competence, and, aside from some very good drawing, lacks both extremely high and extremely low attainment. Year 10 pupils' work shows higher potential and these pupils have made a very good start to their course. These standards in this year group reflect the improvements made by the department in recent years in developing pupils' skills early in the school.
183. These standards throughout the school represent very good achievement for pupils of all abilities. Pupils develop confidence that they can do what their teachers require, with no appreciable differences emerging in the work of pupils from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds. All pupils feel included in the success achieved within the department.
184. During the week of inspection many classes in Years 9 to 11 were working on still-life projects, using arrangements of plants as the stimulus for their work. Tonal aspects of drawing are often very good, with pupils using shading very competently to achieve three dimensional effects in both black and white and with dry colour media such as pencil crayons. Pupils cope with the mathematical aspects such as shape, proportion and scale. Composition is often good, and pupils are able to fill the paper confidently with bold drawing. With other two-dimensional media such as paint, pupils' attainment matches the range expected for their ages. Pupils use a satisfactory balance of two and three-dimensional media, and have good experience of painted ceramics. Here too, attainment is average for pupils' ages by Year 9 and by Year 11. Pupils' achievement in understanding the historical and critical aspects of the

curriculum is good given their underlying difficulties with literacy. The department could, though, usefully place greater focus on developing pupils' use of written and oral language, so that they become more confident, earlier in the school, in the areas of critique required, particularly in Years 10 and 11.

185. The major factor in pupils' very good learning and achievement in art is the very good teaching they experience throughout the department. From a very early stage pupils learn how to draw well, with teachers making this learning fun for them. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were trying out drawing of different kinds, with the 'wrong' hand, for example, or without looking at the object they were to draw. This project made the learning of the key facts about observational drawing enjoyable and memorable for pupils, and they could see the difference in the quality of their work when finally, they looked and drew simultaneously. Teachers also provide good, well structured learning resources, such as worksheets, to remind pupils about their learning of techniques such as shading. Learning is thus reinforced and extended, and pupils do homework effectively as an integral part of their courses.
186. Teachers are also gifted in giving pupils very good one-to-one help in lessons, tailoring their advice very effectively to the strengths and weaknesses of their pupils. Where appropriate, demonstrations to individuals provide further reinforcement of specific skills. With the core drawing skills now thoroughly learned throughout the school, teachers could usefully develop the same degree of rigour in teaching a wider repertoire of painting skills, where pupils are not yet so confident. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils do not use ICT to a sufficient degree in their creative work. The department has only two computers, insufficient for demands of the curriculum.
187. The department has improved very well since the last report. Attainment is much improved particularly in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is better organised, and there is no longer an over-reliance on the use of secondary images such as magazines to stimulate pupils' work. The quality of teaching is very much higher. The many criticisms about staffing and management have been addressed as the current teaching team is well qualified and has been stable for several years, with good management of the department. This successful team is strongly committed to improving pupils' achievement. Apart from ICT provision, one other issue still remains, that of many pupils remaining very dependent on teachers for too long into Years 10 and 11, under-responsive to teachers' urgings to become more independent.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve very well because they are supported very well in lessons.
- Design is given a high priority and pupils' aspirations are raised through assignments which are socially and commercially relevant.
- Pupils are highly motivated and learn by Year 11 to take commendable responsibility for planning, researching and presenting information to others.
- Effective leadership and management have resulted in an improvement in standards.

Areas for improvement

- Basic skills and ICT need further planning and consistent practice within Years 7 to 9 to ensure even better progress.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have enough opportunities to extend their creative abilities.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not give pupils a clear enough view of standards or set them clear targets for what they need to do next in order to improve.
- Assessment records need to be used to monitor pupils' progress and to identify any differences in levels of improvement between groups of pupils.

188. Standards are below average by Year 9. This represents good achievement because standards are well below average on entry to school. Standards in lessons are better than indicated by teachers' National Curriculum assessments. The reason for the discrepancy is that teachers make assessments at the end of each module during Year 9 without taking full account of the progress pupils make during the year.

189. Standards are average by Year 11. The standard of work seen confirms the examination results in 2000. The school has successfully improved standards since the last inspection. There has been some variation in the standard reached in different design and technology courses, but current work shows greater consistency. Project work shows good research into the history of artefacts and the impact of technology on social change. A significant number of projects are of good quality because students spend a lot of time after school and have regular, easy access to computers.

190. Achievement is very good overall because pupils make consistently good progress through the school. This progress accelerates in Years 10 and 11 because teachers motivate pupils to give of their best. Boys and girls are very interested in the subject and achieve equally well because teachers find projects that sustain their concentration and efforts. Regrettably far more boys participate in GCSE courses in resistant materials and graphic products than girls. Food technology GCSE is mostly taken by girls. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds work well together and achieve equally in lessons. They value each other's languages and differences. A notable illustration of this was seen when Year 11 pupils presented their projects to the class, which became a responsive, supportive and co-operative audience. The experience was an excellent opportunity for personal development. Pupils of all abilities make at least good progress in lessons, including those with special educational

needs and those whose first language is not English. Pupils who have low and below average skills on entry to the school make very good progress.

191. Teaching is good in all year groups. Teachers know pupils very well and work closely with them, generating very good relationships and pupil response. Pupils are trusted to work independently in Years 10 and 11 and gain a strong sense of personal responsibility. They are not always confident, seeking advice and support of their teachers as their research proceeds. However, when challenged to increase their independence they perform very well. Younger pupils need more opportunities to work independently on projects in class, particularly as some show great initiative in carrying out homework.
192. Teachers give good attention to the language needs of pupils and have good strategies to help them improve their work. For example, Year 7 used key words to construct sentences to explain which eggcups had good or poor designs. Year 8 pupils read lesson objectives aloud to gain good understanding of the expectations of the lesson. In Year 9, higher attaining pupils shared work with those who were finding greater difficulty in the written English language and Year 11 engaged in good group work, with competent readers as team leaders. Pupils take very good care in the presentation of their projects and are proud of them. This is a result of constant efforts by teachers.
193. Teachers speak frequently with individuals and small groups. They use technical language accurately, resulting in very good improvement of speaking and writing in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 take great pleasure in showing their homework to the class, the best being rewarded as "homework of the week" and displayed for everyone to enjoy. They need even more opportunities to speak formally about their work, arguing their case for choices they have made.
194. Pupils' numeracy skills are enhanced by some good applications of measurement and calculation. Year 8 improved measuring skills in textiles by enlarging a pattern from a template. Year 7 used a number grid well to summarise group results from class research.
195. Teachers make very good use of time and existing resources, though further computers are needed. The pace of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and results in pupils accelerating their efforts as lessons proceed. Pupils use ICT well in GCSE courses, particularly in graphics and resistant materials, but they need much more opportunity to improve their skills in Years 7 to 9. Computers are out of date in food technology and there are no computer-aided facilities for textiles.
196. Teachers plan more effectively than at the last inspection, including common design features in all modules. Work in Year 7 is designed to build on the pupils' varying experience in primary schools, but pupils would benefit from tasks that show more variation in difficulty, to extend the more able as they gain confidence and skills. They would particularly enjoy challenges to extend their creative and imaginative abilities further. Provision for teaching basic

skills and ICT need to be included in planning for Years 7 to 9 to ensure consistency in teaching.

197. Expectations have risen since the last inspection, both in motivating pupils to aspire to a good standard of subject knowledge and in demanding a high level of skill. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds work productively in lessons. Whenever individuals lapse in effort, they respond positively to challenges from staff to improve the pace. Teachers have very good skills indeed in motivating pupils and achieving very good behaviour and attitudes. A capable and supportive technician very willingly helps pupils and teachers, ensuring appropriate health and safety.
198. Teachers take great care to monitor progress whilst pupils are working in groups, taking time to explain terminology further and support pupils very well. Recording systems are detailed, but are not yet making a sufficient impression on learning. Pupils need to have much more knowledge of their current standards in order to have a very clear view of how to improve. The team needs to make assessment more effective in giving pupils regular identification of strengths and weaknesses in their achievements, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
199. Management and leadership are good and there has been a good improvement since the last inspection. The team's commitment to pupils' achievements reflects the aims and ethos of the school. The consistency of teaching has improved through good monitoring. The department has made good progress in monitoring the standards pupils achieve in their work and is very well placed to use such skills in making Year 9 assessments, ensuring they reflect pupils' achievements accurately. The department needs to make better use of assessment records in analysing more accurately the progress pupils make each year and predicting results at the end of Years 9 and 11. As standards continue to rise, the department needs to plan more strategically for uptake of students in the sixth form. At present, a significant number of pupils are 'disapplied' from the National Curriculum and do not study design and technology to GCSE but replace it with another subject considered to be more suitable for their needs. Some of these pupils would benefit from studying design and technology and, in the light of improving standards in Years 7 to 9, the advice given to pupils needs to be reviewed.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- There is some very good teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good in all years.
- There is a shared commitment within the department to improving standards.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment of pupils' work is not used to set rigorous targets for improvement.
- Strategic planning does not include details of how the department will meet its aims.
- Lesson planning does not include enough attention to meeting the needs of all pupils.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to enhance pupils' learning.

200. At the end of Year 9, standards are below average. Evidence from the inspection shows that pupils make good progress during their first three years in the school and achieve well. At the end of Year 11, standards in GCSE have fluctuated from year to year but are generally below average, though more pupils gain grades A*-G. In 2000, the pass rate at grades A*-C was well above the national average, with boys performing particularly well. Work seen indicates that standards of attainment in the current Year 11 are just below average. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory when compared with their prior attainment. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds make similar rates of progress.

201. While attainment in Years 7 to 9 is below average, standards of work are improving. Generally, pupils enter the school with very low levels of geographical understanding, with poor literacy skills and with difficulties in using numbers. They rapidly increase their knowledge in lessons, where tasks and resources are carefully introduced in order to build up their confidence. At the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils use and display statistics in graphs and diagrams, occasionally using ICT for research and to enhance their presentations. They understand how fragile environments such as the Amazon rainforest are under threat and can explain concepts of sustainable development. These pupils, particularly the boys, show very positive attitudes to their work and enjoy opportunities to show what they have learned in previous lessons. Lower attaining pupils show similar enjoyment but often have difficulty in producing accurate, extended writing and in presenting their work in a logical order. They are sometimes helped to do this through the use of worksheets that have been specially adapted for them. Teachers often give pupils with special educational needs supportive, individual help so that they can understand and complete the tasks that have been set. A very good example of this was seen in a Year 8 lesson where all pupils used descriptive words successfully to illustrate the impact of volcanic activity on the senses.

202. While achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall, it is good where lessons proceed at a good pace, where pupils are well managed and where they are extended in their thinking. For example, higher attaining pupils in a good Year 10 lesson understood specialist geographical vocabulary and could define words associated with population growth and change. They explored the possible results of an ageing population and articulated them clearly. Most pupils recall what they have learned reasonably well, but they often have difficulty in applying it to new situations. For example, in an exercise based on earthquake activity, many lower attaining pupils, and some pupils who are not fluent in English, were slow to see how to use their background knowledge in order to make decisions about the human

consequences of a disaster. They then found it difficult to record their evidence accurately. The department offers very good guidance to pupils in the collection, processing and presentation of information during local fieldwork activities. Many pupils take advantage of this, producing high quality course work that incorporates a range of mapping and statistical skills, extended descriptions and valid conclusions. Lower attaining pupils can display some of the information and attempt brief descriptions but they cannot evaluate their findings.

203. Pupils usually show enthusiasm for their work, behave with courtesy towards each other, and are keen to answer questions. The very good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils, together with teachers' insistence on good behaviour, mean that most pupils try hard and make the most of opportunities to extend their learning. Some pupils' concentration lapses in lessons where tasks are not explained clearly and too much time is allocated for the same activity. In a Year 8 lesson there was a rare example of unsatisfactory behaviour from a small group of boys who were unwilling to co-operate and who therefore made very little progress. At present, girls are in a minority in both Year 10 and 11 lessons, and generally they are reluctant to voice their opinions. They therefore do not develop their confidence by sharing ideas with other pupils. Few opportunities exist for structured debates in lessons where pupils might have the chance to explore topics at length.
204. Teaching is satisfactory overall and is good – sometimes very good – in Years 7, 8 and 9. In the best lessons, teachers are very well prepared with a variety of tasks and with resources adapted for the needs of all pupils. Pupils' rate of learning is then very rapid. In a very good Year 7 lesson, the teacher had identified the individual needs of all groups of pupils and had set appropriate activities for them. With constant encouragement and challenge, pupils were able to improve their knowledge of world locations and then to see how interdependent many countries are through the trading patterns that they have established. Where lessons are less successful, the needs of different groups of pupils, particularly higher attainers, are not specifically identified and so opportunities for extending their learning are lost. In the one unsatisfactory lesson, insufficient preparation and confusing instructions meant that time was wasted and pupils' written responses were at a low level. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and thoroughly, often with helpful comments and sometimes with individual targets for improvement. Although this helps pupils to understand what is required of them, assessments are not yet recorded across the whole department in ways that facilitate the tracking of pupils' individual progress towards identified targets. Marked work in Years 7, 8 and 9 contains no reference to National Curriculum levels and so pupils do not know how to improve their performance in relation to national standards. The planned use of ICT in lessons is infrequent. Pupils therefore have limited opportunities for extending their geographical knowledge and understanding with the help of computer technology.
205. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Staffing difficulties have been recently resolved. The head of department supports his colleagues very well, sharing his vision and enthusiasm for the subject and encouraging a spirit of collaboration. The aims of the department are clearly

related to the school development plan, but are not yet sharply focused on precise strategies for raising attainment. Plans are in hand to extend existing guidance for teachers so that it includes a much wider range of activities specifically adapted to the needs of different groups of pupils.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are now in line with national averages and this represents very good achievement on the part of pupils.
- Classes are very well managed and pupils enjoy the subject.
- The department is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' tasks and activities in Years 7 to 9 are not always sufficiently well planned to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have a clear enough understanding of how they can improve their work.

206. Standards of work of Year 9 pupils are below average. Pupils' knowledge of the content of a history topic is often satisfactory, but their understanding of key events and changes is less certain; for example, Year 9 pupils know some key events of the industrial revolution but their understanding of some of its underlying causes is more limited. They work quite well with historical sources, as in a lesson when Year 8 pupils successfully extracted information from a text about life in Tudor London. Pupils work hard at their written tasks, but they often work slowly and have difficulty in selecting and organising information to produce a piece of historical writing.
207. Standards of work of Year 11 pupils are at the national average. Pupils are mastering the content of the GCSE course successfully; for example, Year 11 pupils have a satisfactory understanding of events and issues in the Vietnam War. Most pupils are also able to use historical sources effectively to answer a variety of questions. In a lesson on race relations in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, Year 10 pupils researched different points of view using a range of sources, including photographs. Higher attaining pupils produce thorough, well-argued written work, as in an essay on Nazi attitudes to the Jews, but many pupils find analytical historical writing difficult.
208. The achievement of pupils is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils from different ethnic groups and those with special educational needs achieve equally well. They extend their knowledge of different periods of history and develop relevant skills. They build successfully on earlier work, which helps them make effective progress. In the GCSE course, pupils make particularly good progress in developing their use of historical sources; good teaching enables them to improve their skills in analysing and evaluating material. In all year groups pupils are very well managed and have very

positive attitudes to the subject. Pupils enjoy their history lessons, and this contributes to their high achievement.

209. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, work is carefully planned and new material is introduced enthusiastically and clearly. Pupils respond well, their interests and understanding are extended and they make good progress. Where lessons have shortcomings, inadequate teacher knowledge leads to some inappropriate planning and missed opportunities, which slows down the rate of pupils' learning. Sometimes tasks are not sufficiently structured or matched to the differing learning needs of pupils in the class, as in a Year 8 lesson on the Spanish Armada.
210. In Years 10 and 11 the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and this helps to explain why pupils achieve so well. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and knowledge of the topics taught are used well to develop pupils' understanding and skills. Well-planned lessons ensure that pupils are fully involved in their work, and varied teaching methods, such as the use of video material, help pupils tackle new topics and extend their understanding.
211. The department is well led and managed, and the level of improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have improved, especially in Years 10 and 11. Assessment procedures are now in place and pupils are fully aware of the standards they are achieving. However, in Years 7 to 9 pupils do not have a clear enough understanding of how they can improve their work, especially their written work. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the subject's effective use of educational visits, but the use of ICT in history is still at an early stage.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

Strengths

- GCSE results are above average and improving.

- Pupils' achievement is very good.
- Teachers know their subject well and give good individual support in lessons.
- Pupils are keen to learn and apply new skills showing an interest in their work.

Areas for Improvement

- Assessment does not identify areas of weakness clearly enough.
- Classroom activities do not include enough opportunities for pupils to work individually away from the computer.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support the learning of other subjects.

212. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average and have improved over the past few years. Given the low attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievement is very good. GCSE results are above the national average and above those obtained by pupils in their other subjects. All pupils were entered for ICT GCSE and all gained a pass grade. Work seen confirms that standards are above average and that pupils' achievement is very good. Boys and girls achieve equally well. There is no difference between the achievements of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.
213. Year 8 pupils learn to use all the special effects of a presentation package in readiness to apply these in a project. High attaining Year 10 pupils have developed database skills to almost the standard expected of Year 12 students. Most pupils can explain what it is they are doing and demonstrate how to do it. Lower attaining pupils do not produce the same quantity of work as the high attaining pupils but nevertheless take a full part in classroom activities.
214. Teaching is good in all year groups. Most lessons are well structured and sequenced, which ensures that pupils stay on task. There are clear class demonstrations followed up by practical activities. Relationships are good and teachers provide good support and intervention in order to help pupils. As a result pupils are keen to learn. Year 7 pupils are keen to demonstrate their keyboard skills; they discuss what they know with each other and those with home computers share their knowledge with others. Year 10 pupils collaborate well, discussing problems and sharing decision making, which in turn develops learning. They are attentive when teachers give demonstrations and respond well in class trying to solve problems independently before resorting to the teacher. Overall pupils show an interest in their work and collaborate well when sharing computer facilities. They recognise errors and redraft work in order to improve it. Pupils' positive attitudes contribute to their very good achievement.
215. A minority of lessons are less successful, though they are still mainly sound. These lessons are not so stimulating because deadlines for practical tasks are not set; as a result, the pace is slower and pupils' concentration less good. Pupils' work can be further improved by planning activities that allow pupils, when working individually and especially in the examination classes, to share the computers so that all can be fully productive. More activities are needed that do not have to take place on a computer. Assessment of pupils'

work does not always make explicit where their weaknesses are and what they have to do to improve.

216. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The ICT facilities have been greatly improved and the number of up-to-date computers is now in line with the national average. New planning documents meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and GCSE courses. There is a commitment to build on the previous good work of the department in order to improve standards further. Learning materials are continually developed to support pupils' learning. The department needs to analyse assessment data in order to measure pupils' achievement and provide targets to improve results even further.
217. While it is commendable that all pupils take ICT to GCSE and reach high standards, subject teachers in most other subjects use very little if any ICT to improve learning in their subject. This is an underdeveloped aspect of what is otherwise good ICT provision. The department acknowledges that this is an important area for improvement and is now in a position, with a full complement of ICT staff, to begin planning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- GCSE results in French have improved significantly over recent years and in 2001 were well above average.
- Pupils achieve well by Year 9, and very well by Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs, and with English as an additional language, make good progress.
- Pupils' written work is a consistent strength. Most pupils have a sound understanding of the grammar covered.
- Pupils are interested and behave well.
- Teaching is good overall and some French teaching is outstanding. Lessons are well structured with a range of activities which motivate pupils to work hard.

Areas for improvement

- Most pupils do not learn a foreign language in Years 10 and 11. Too many able pupils are allowed to drop the subject after Year 9.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not told often or precisely enough about how they are progressing and how they should improve.
- Teachers need to be more accurate in assessing attainment in Year 9.
- The amount of spoken French or German used routinely in the classroom varies too much between classes.
- Resources are used well on the whole, but more use of the overhead projector is needed to present meaning more clearly and support the use of the foreign language in the classroom. ICT is not used enough to enrich learning and raise standards.

218. Standards in Year 9 are slightly below average. In view of pupils' level of attainment on entry to the school this represents good achievement, and very good achievement by most pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. The teachers' National Curriculum assessments have been inaccurate and are too high by about one level, with two-thirds of the year group assessed at or above nationally-expected levels.
219. GCSE French results in 2001 were well above average, with boys doing particularly well in relation to the girls and in relation to boys' performance elsewhere. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. However, the school currently enters fewer than half the year group for a modern language at GCSE, well below the national figure. Results in German over recent years, from small option groups, have been slightly below the national average. In 2001 there were no entries. The current Year 11 is the first year group who have been able to study German as an alternative to French throughout their time in school. The standard of work seen in Year 11 is above average and pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
220. By Year 9, standards of writing are average, and are consistently good in relation to the pupils' attainment on entry to the school, because the skill is well taught. Accuracy of grammatical form, range of structure and phrase, and neat presentation are common features. Standards in the top classes are securely above average. In German they are already placing verbs correctly in sentences and can form and use the perfect tense. In French the very best use a wide range of expressions in extended paragraphs about their family and personal interests. Pupils in these classes have a wide vocabulary and can see links between what is new and what they already know. Some are already at end-of-Year 9 levels in oral work. Pupils' standards in the lower, mixed-ability classes vary with the quality of teaching. In some cases, pupils hear the language used routinely in class and recall vocabulary and phrases quite readily. Others, however, are below average in both listening and speaking because they rely too much on the book and guesswork. The less able pupils achieve well with support. They do not write or speak at length but can take part in dialogues with the support of text and specially prepared sheets.
221. Year 11 classes consist mainly, though not exclusively, of the more able pupils. They benefit significantly from the close support and guidance possible in mostly very small classes where there is a very positive ethos of learning and achievement. The lessons observed were conducted mainly or totally in the spoken language, and pupils, required to think in the language, were able to respond appropriately. Most pupils are predicted to attain a grade C or above; in one German class most have a realistic target of A*-B. These pupils can write at length, and are secure enough in structure and form to learn from mistakes when redrafting coursework. The very best can offer synonyms, explain with reasons, ask questions and initiate conversation. Boys are noticeably as positive and as competent as the girls. As in Years 7 to 9, there is no discernible difference in achievement between pupils from different backgrounds, or between the more gifted pupils and others.

222. The quality of teaching is good overall, though it is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. It was good or better in two out of every three lessons observed. Exceptionally, one lesson in Year 7 was unsatisfactory. There are consistent strengths: pupil management, pace, organisation, and the teaching of literacy skills are all good or very good, and expectations of behaviour and work rate and participation are high. As a result, most pupils want to learn and work well, especially in pairs. They sustain concentration well, listen to each other and understand how to learn and practise a language. It is this more consistently good teaching which is the main feature of the good improvement since the previous inspection, and is the main reason why pupils achieve so well. The department has focused successfully on improving methodology and activities. In most classes, the emphasis is now on skills rather than on mere knowledge of vocabulary, and thus on making appropriately higher demands on pupils of all attainment levels. In these classes pupils are now active and thus the sense of achievement, often through enjoyment, is the greater.
223. In one outstanding French lesson in a Year 7 class with a significant number of pupils with special needs, the learning was excellent because pupils spoke French the whole time. They showed, after only three weeks, secure knowledge of phrases to ask for a book or permission to sit down or to ask how something is said in French. The sense of fun and achievement at being able to speak when prompted by the teacher's mime or sky-writing techniques, or to follow each other in chains of question and answer around the class, was almost tangible. In a Year 9 French lesson on adjectives for personal description, the teacher used adhesive colour-coded cards of feminine and plural endings to clarify understanding. This enabled the class, of whom a third had special needs and half received additional support for their English-learning needs, to make very good progress towards average levels of attainment.
224. In the unsatisfactory lesson, and in others where teaching was no better than satisfactory, there were two main weaknesses which the department should seek to address. The teacher either lacked confidence to conduct the lesson in the language and reduced the level of challenge by translating unnecessarily, or presented new material via the printed word, thus encouraging mispronunciation. In these cases, the lessons were led by the textbook rather than by specifically planned activities which recognised the learning needs of the class. Where teaching can be improved, more needs to be done to raise the standard of oral work, and information from assessments needs to be used to plan more appropriately and regularly for the needs of the individual pupils, especially in the mixed-ability classes in Year 7 to 9. Marking too, whilst it is thorough, regular and up-to-date, needs to be more focused on informing pupils of the standards they have reached and how to progress through the National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9. More self-evaluation by pupils in Year 9, and subsequently in Years 10 and 11, is needed to improve the quality of learning in the sixth form.
225. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Staffing is stable, and the team works well together. Current plans include developing the use of ICT, which is still unsatisfactory. In order to maintain its progress,

the department needs to share its best practice, encouraging all colleagues to concentrate more on the successful development of skills, and to use the overhead projector more for the presentation and practice of new material. The school should ensure that all pupils likely to profit from a GCSE course in a modern foreign language do follow one. There are too many pupils in Years 10 and 11 with an unbalanced curriculum, who are being deprived access to very worthwhile experiences.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- There is a good range of learning opportunities.
- There are good resources for learning music.

Areas for improvement

- There is currently no GCSE class in Year 11.

226. By the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are average and pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment on entry is good. Most pupils attain satisfactory standards in playing keyboards and composing simple pieces of music. Most pupils are able to locate and play notes on a keyboard from standard notation, with due regard for correct time and expression, though by no means all can play with two hands. They make up satisfactory compositions using, for example, graphic scores and word patterns as a basis, and also acquire a sound knowledge and understanding of basic chords which they apply in their compositions. Pupils know about a range of composers and styles and understand many musical terms. They understand and manipulate sophisticated music technology including keyboards, recording devices, and music computer programmes for composing and performing.

227. GCSE results for grades A* - C in 2000 were above average and in 2001 below average, though in both years numbers were too small for these comparisons to carry much weight. At the time of this inspection the only GCSE pupils were a group from Year 10 just a few lessons into their course. They showed good potential with several boys showing quite outstanding ability to improvise at speed and with impressive inventive powers. Pupils make good use of the computer programme 'Magic Logic' to develop compositions. They show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of music theory and the elements of music. One pupil on being asked about the tempo of the music defined it as progressing at between 40 and 70 beats per minute, an unusual and precise answer showing a very good grasp of time measurement in music. Overall at this stage their attainment is about average and their achievement is satisfactory.

228. The quality of teaching and learning in lessons is good in Years 7 to 10. Classes are well managed and pupils are well behaved and interested. The

impact of teaching is such that by the end of Year 9 pupils' attainment has gone from below average on entry to average, representing good achievement. Lessons are well planned and delivered, but the need to state and restate the aims of lessons should not be overlooked, so that pupils are always aware of what it is they are trying to accomplish and why. A high proportion of pupils enhance their musical attainment with additional lessons on a variety of instruments, and many do so by participating in various groups and productions. Pupils of all abilities including those with special educational needs and those from ethnic minorities make good progress.

229. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. The last inspection report found standards in music to be low and provision inadequate after a long period of difficulties. The current head of department was only just in post and beginning to tackle the daunting agenda needed to begin to remedy matters. The subject is now very well equipped, with good quality keyboards, computers, and tuned and untuned percussion on both sites. There is now adequate time on the timetable for Years 7 to 9. There is a very good take up for instrumental music lessons from visiting specialists and flourishing extra curricular music. Music for GCSE is beginning to become established. Accommodation is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and results in effective learning for all groups of pupils.
- Pupils are enthusiastic in their learning and are making good progress.
- Extra-curricular provision is good and pupils have achieved success in a range of activities.
- The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' social and moral development.
- Leadership of the department is developing well.

Areas for development

- Standards reached in GCSE physical education are not consistent.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is not fully balanced.
- Formal responsibilities are not yet developed for teachers within the department.
- Pupils' literacy skills need to be supported by more displays of key words.

230. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average. It was not possible to observe any Year 11 lessons in the course that all pupils take, but, in Year 10, standards are average. Across Years 7 to 10 there are no significant differences between the standards of boys and girls.
231. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9. By Year 9 in volleyball, pupils are improving their all-round skills and techniques, for example, the use of the dig, set, block and spike. Some, though, are not moving their feet effectively, which means that the accuracy of their technique is not as good as it could be. In trampoline lessons, the more physically capable are developing the quality of their sequence work whilst the less physically capable are improving the quality of their individual moves. Many, though, still need to work on improving the quality of poise and body tension if they are to achieve higher standards. Pupils also achieve well in Year 10. In association football, they are consolidating well their tackling skills and delaying tactics against

individual opponents. In basketball, they are developing their outlet play from rebounds. The level of basic skills is secure but the quality of lay-up shooting and dodging skills is not as good as it could be because many are still not looking up sufficiently well. This then affects the all-round quality of their play.

232. Across Years 7 to 10 pupils have a secure grasp of the principles and procedures of warm-up. Under teachers' guidance, they suggest appropriate stretches and name the muscle groups being used. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and integrated and make good progress, as do pupils who speak English as an additional language. Physically talented pupils achieve well but, on occasion, could make even better progress by being challenged more in some lessons. In a Year 9 volleyball lesson, for example, progress would have been even better for them had they been grouped together for the games at the end of the lesson.
233. GCSE physical education is an optional subject taken by some pupils. The proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grade passes has been inconsistent from year to year. In 2000, the proportion was average but in 1999 and 2001, standards were lower. Only a small number of girls take the course. In their practical lessons, Year 10 pupils are successfully consolidating the quality of their shooting skills though much more work needs to be done on the lay-up technique. Year 11 pupils are developing their tactical and blocking play from rebounds but only about a quarter of the group are working at higher levels in relation to the syllabus requirements. However, with continuing hard work and application, more of the group have the capacity to improve over the coming months.
234. The quality of teaching overall is good in all year groups and results in effective learning. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' achievement in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills development in the games and activities taught. Teachers have very high expectations of discipline and behaviour and of the ability of pupils to work to their best. Pupils' response to this is positive. This helps promote a positive learning atmosphere in lessons; pupils work well in pairs and small groups and show clear respect for each other's capabilities.
235. Clear introductions to lessons ensure pupils are fully aware of what is expected of them. Overall lesson planning and structure benefit from teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. A variety of activities and effective use of good resources helps ensure pupils remain on task. Lessons are also generally well planned in relation to the full ability range of pupils. In a Year 8 gymnastics lesson, for example, all pupils were fully involved in planning, performing and evaluation throughout. This enabled them successfully to adapt and refine their work as the lesson progressed. In some games lessons, however, pupils are not always offered enough opportunities for peer evaluation, which would help deepen their understanding of what they are doing. In Year 10 association football and basketball lessons, for example, pupils could have been given more opportunities to observe one another's good practice, thus acting as a prompt to improve their own skills and techniques.

236. Very effective questioning allows teachers not only to establish what pupils know and understand but also enhances their speaking and listening skills. This was used to good effect in a Year 11 GCSE practical lesson throughout the warm-up and helped consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding of human anatomy and physiology. Clear instructions, followed by analysis and demonstration of skills, ensure pupils know what they have to do to make progress. This was effective, for example, in a Year 9 volleyball lesson when introducing the spike and block. Pupils are made aware of their capabilities because teachers circulate well and offer praise and constructive criticism throughout. Evaluative sessions at the end of lessons are generally successful and also inform pupils as to what they will be covering in the next lesson. Sometimes, though, there is a tendency for the teacher to provide all the evaluation rather than to also ask pupils to reflect on what they have achieved.
237. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum meets the requirements of National Curriculum and is extended by a GCSE course. However, in Years 7 to 9, the limited range of accommodation and facilities adversely affects the balance of activities being taught. Leadership and management of the new head of department are developing well and work is continuing to develop planning documents and improve assessment criteria in order to improve the balance in the curriculum. Staffing shortages in the previous school year have been solved, and responsibilities within the department can now be developed more effectively. Good quality displays enhance the learning environment for pupils and the quality of accommodation, particularly at the Annexe, has improved since the last inspection. However, shower arrangements for boys do not provide the privacy expected by pupils. More effective use could be made of displays of physical education terminology in order to improve pupils' literacy skills. A good range of extra-curricular activities continues to extend opportunities for pupils. Forty-two per cent of pupils participated in extra-curricular activities last year. As a result of the continuing enthusiasm of teachers, some from other departments, individuals and teams have been successful in matches against other schools. Twenty-eight per cent of pupils represented the school last year, with particular success in athletics at district level. Eighteen per cent of pupils represented the district in a variety of sports, for example, football, basketball, athletics, cross country and trampolining.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	11	100	80	0	18	1.6	2.1
Drama	1	100	93	0	19	2.0	2.6
Sociology	1	100	54	0	12	1.0	1.3
German	2	100	83	0	18	2.5	2.0

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	2	100	89	0	45	4.0	6.0
Economics	6	100	88	17	36	5.0	5.4
Business GNVQ	4	0	0	0	0	6.0	10.8
Computer Studies	7	100	85	57	23	6.9	4.6
Art and Design	4	100	96	25	45	6.0	6.4
Drama	2	100	99	50	36	7.0	6.5
Geography	3	67	92	33	37	3.3	5.7
Sociology	1	0	88	0	37	0.0	5.5
Other Social Studies	5	100	88	0	35	2.8	5.3
English Literature	7	86	96	29	36	5.4	5.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

238. The focus was on mathematics and chemistry, but biology and physics were also sampled.
239. In biology there were no candidates for GCE A-level examinations in 2000 or 2001. Students taking the AS-level examination in 2001 did less well than expected, in relation to their GCSE results a year earlier. This was because teaching was disrupted by staff changes. Three lessons were observed during the inspection. Teaching was satisfactory overall, but students learnt less than they should have done, as there was too little variety in their work. For example, in one double lesson the pace of learning was too slow, particularly towards the end; students spent the whole time answering written questions and extracting information from textbooks with too little direct input from the teacher.
240. In physics there were no candidates for the GCE A-level examination in 2000; one candidate was entered in 2001 and gained an average grade. Students taking the AS-level examination in 2001 did less well than expected, when compared with their GCSE results from the previous year. Students report that this was because they received too little support for their learning at that time. During the inspection, two lessons were observed and both were good. In one, students in Year 13 made good progress because the teacher explained the need for increased pace to make up lost ground from the previous year. They responded well, making good gains in understanding how the trajectory of a golf ball changes as it moves.

Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- A-level results in 2001 showed a good improvement over previous years.
- AS-level results of the current Year 13 students were good.
- Teaching and learning of A level are good, based on high expectations and securely based on the examination syllabuses

Areas for improvement:

- ICT is not used effectively to support learning.
- Students have few opportunities for independent study.
- Planning documents do not give teachers enough guidance on what students should learn.

241. Relatively few students have taken A-level mathematics in recent years, and results have been below average. However, the trend is an improving one overall. In relation to their performance at GCSE, students in 2001 did as well as might be expected. The take up by boys is rather better than that by girls, although those girls who have taken the course have generally done better.

242. Standards in the current Year 13 A-level group are about average. Students achieved creditable results in the AS-level examination and have covered the syllabus requirements. However, they are not yet fully confident in applying their learning. This was apparent in a lesson on using algorithms to find efficient routes through a network. Students were confident in the technique when it was demonstrated, but still needed guidance on its application to new problems.
243. Students in the Year 12 AS level have only just started their course and standards are currently broadly average. In a mechanics lesson on vector geometry, students were competent in basic operations of adding and subtracting vectors, but found more sophisticated concepts of relative displacement and velocity more difficult. They showed good understanding, with some perceptive questions concerning the difference between co-ordinates and vectors. Students' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is satisfactory.
244. In addition to AS and A-level courses, there are courses to support students' studies elsewhere – specifically, a GCSE course for those who wish to improve their grade, and a key skills course for all sixth form students in numeracy. Many of the students following the GCSE course were in Year 13, having been prevented by timetabling restrictions from taking the course in Year 12. Consequently, their skills were rusty and many lacked confidence at this early stage in the course. Students following the key skills course struggled with some basic number work, for example, many gave the answer £552,000 when asked to round £552,374 to the nearest £100,000.
245. The teaching of A level is good overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations, and lessons are well organised to meet the requirements of the examination. This was seen when Year 13 students were learning an algorithm for finding the shortest route between two points on a network. The teacher had prepared useful sheets for students to work on so that they did not waste time copying complex networks. These were used as the basis for her demonstration of the method, which was clear and well prepared. As a consequence, students learned well and were able to apply the algorithm by the end of the lesson. However, students had no opportunities to use ICT, which could have improved their learning of the algorithm. Students work very diligently. Their attitudes are very good and this is a positive factor in learning. Teachers give a good level of individual support to dispel misunderstandings. There are few opportunities for independent learning, however, and most of the written work completed by students comprises examples of techniques from exercises in textbooks.
246. The teaching in the GCSE and key skills lessons is satisfactory, but uninspiring, and consists mainly of students' completing rote exercises. However, students apply themselves to the tasks they are given, so that their learning of numeracy skills is good.
247. Students are assessed formally twice a year, and this is effective in monitoring students' performance. In addition to this, work is marked regularly

with helpful grades and comments, though few targets are given for future work. The planning documents for guiding teachers in the courses other than A level are less satisfactory, and rely heavily on individual teachers' expertise to bring them to life. The use of ICT is currently unsatisfactory as there are too few opportunities in school, and little appropriate software is available.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Attainment in lessons is above average.
- Students have sound basic knowledge.
- Teaching is good overall and students are appropriately challenged.
- Students are attentive and have good attitudes towards their work; they feel that they are getting on well.
- The subject is well led and the teacher is committed to helping students improve their work.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not given enough encouragement to find things out for themselves.
- Comments in marking are not sharply enough focused on what students need to do to improve their work.
- There is insufficient negotiation between students and their teacher about setting learning targets.
- Grouping together of students from both Years 12 and 13 is unsatisfactory.

248. There were no candidates entered for GCE A-level examinations in 2000 or 2001. In 1999, four candidates were entered and their results were well below average; even so, this was a little better than they did in their other subjects. The results of AS-level examinations in 2001 were as expected, bearing in mind students' GCSE grades a year earlier; all except one of the candidates gained a grade in the A-C range. There were too few entered to draw any conclusions about differences in performance between different groups.

249. Standards of work of current students in Year 13 are above average and a little higher than suggested by their AS-level examination results in 2001. Students report that this is because they are now supported more consistently in their learning; observations during the inspection confirm that they now achieve well in their lessons. All have sound knowledge of basic concepts, such as the polarity of water molecules, and this gives them the confidence to attempt explanations of the phenomena that they observe.

250. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but are achieving well. In one of the lessons observed, they made effective use of their prior knowledge about atomic structure to explain how the existence of isotopes was discovered. Students remain attentive throughout lessons although they must often wait for help from the teacher because his time is divided between students in Years 12 and 13. Students themselves feel that this restricts their progress.

251. Teaching and learning are good. In the lessons observed, the teacher presented the work in a way that challenged both groups of students. In Year 12, students were encouraged to research the discovery of the neutron for themselves, while Year 13 students were asked to use results from investigating the solubility of compounds to make predictions about some that were unknown to them. However, providing suitable work for two groups at the same time is not easy and students' folders suggest that rather too much work is copied or dictated. Another effect of combined Year 12 and 13 groups is that there are too few opportunities to vary the teaching approach, for example by encouraging students to research topics in small groups and then report back in a plenary session. Marking of students' work is up to date, but the teacher makes insufficient use of assessment to negotiate shorter term learning targets with students, such as 'be able to explain the effect of changes in temperature on the rate constant'.
252. Students learn well because of good teaching and because they are attentive and show interest in their work. In Year 13, the teacher encouraged them to use their previous learning to explain why ionic substances are usually soluble in water; they rose well to the challenge and began to see that they could apply their learning in unfamiliar situations. Students often help and support each other's learning.
253. The independent work undertaken by students is too limited, partly because the school library has an inadequate stock of up to date books and partly because students make insufficient use of ICT.
254. Good teaching and learning result from the teacher giving clear direction to the subject and demonstrating his commitment to helping students improve their work. They report that they have confidence in their teacher.
255. At the last inspection A-level results were described as having been poor for several years. The evidence from the recent AS-level examination and from the lessons seen during this inspection suggests that A-level results are likely to improve in the future.

BUSINESS

256. The focus was on business education. The school offers two courses in business education. One is a vocational course, previously GNVQ Business Studies and now the AVCE Business Studies course, and the other a more academically-oriented A-level course in Economics and Business Studies. Both these courses were inspected.

Business education

Overall, the quality of provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Students have positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Teaching is good and students much value the good relationships they have with their teachers.

Areas for improvement

- The joint teaching of Year 12 and 13 students in the A-level course is unsatisfactory.
- The ICT resources and the accommodation are inadequate.
- The vocational students do not have opportunities for work experience.

257. Results in the A-level course in 2001 were average. In work seen, Year 13 A-level students also reach average standards, and most students are able to cope with the mathematical aspects of economics. Their achievement is good in relation to their starting-points in the school. These students also achieved good results in their AS-level examination at the end of Year 12. The standards reached by Year 12 students are below average, mainly because of their complete lack of prior experience of the subject.
258. The Advanced GNVQ results in 2001 showed too many students not completing their submissions, although several of these have subsequently completed and passed. The majority of candidates passed, a minority gaining merits. An Intermediate GNVQ Business Studies group also submitted portfolios in 2001. Results of these candidates' grades are awaiting the results of appeals. The majority of students' work was at a pass standard, but coursework was omitted from their current grading by the examination board.
259. Standards of work seen in the Year 13 advanced vocational course are below average. Students do less well in examinations than in their coursework portfolios. Their coursework is of an average standard. However, students scored poorly in their Year 12 examinations, disappointing both staff and students, who are determined to resit these examinations. In relation to their prior attainment, however, students' achievement is good. Year 12 vocational students have started well, but their attainment on entry to the course is below average. In order to address students' needs, the school is contemplating a division of the class into advanced and intermediate level groups in order to give all students better opportunities to achieve well.
260. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. On the A-level course, teaching is very difficult as Year 12 AS-level and Year 13 A2-level students are taught together. The class is well managed to accommodate the very wide range of backgrounds as effectively as possible. However, the arrangements are unsatisfactory. The Year 12 students have no prior experience of the subject, yet they are taught together with students who have just achieved good results in their AS levels in Year 12, and many of these also have GCSE in the subject. This range is too wide to enable the

teacher to teach all students as effectively as they deserve. The progress made by Year 12 students is adversely affected, as Year 13 students naturally predominate in lessons. The school is wisely considering a split in this class.

261. The vocational classes are taught by a range of teachers from across the school, including those who teach the key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT. Teachers have responded to the disappointing Year 12 examination results by including more directed teaching, geared towards stronger input of information to boost these aspects of students' learning and enable them to do better in the examinations. Students' work is accurately assessed against the appropriate criteria. Business education is popular amongst students, many of whom come from cultural backgrounds which place high value on this area of life. Students work hard, doing coursework to the best of their abilities. The few students who dropped out of the vocational course did so to transfer to other vocational courses elsewhere. Students speak highly of the provision made for them, of the relationships with their teachers and of the quality of teaching they receive. It is this aspect they value most. Students feel confident to talk to staff about their problems, particularly as they get into Year 13.
262. Students' personal development is hindered by a lack of work experience in the sixth form, which would provide them with the insight essential to enable them to understand the links between what they learn in theory and the practical application of this in the world of work. Students are further hindered by a lack of resources. Students on the vocational course use computers but A-level students find difficulties in accessing ICT to do their coursework. In addition there is no sixth form library or study area to work in. Teaching occurs in a variety of rooms around the school and there is no business studies base to centralise resources or develop a subject ethos. These factors lead to less independent learning than is usually found in post-16 business education.
263. There was no report on business education in the 1996 report. Jointly, the two departments need to strive to acquire better resource levels for these courses so that the difficulties currently identified can be rectified.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

264. The school offers an A-level course in ICT. In addition all sixth form students follow a new course in the key skill of ICT. Both courses were inspected.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Examination results are well above average.
- Students' achievement is good and builds on prior learning.

- Teaching is good and staff have secure subject knowledge.
- Students are keen to learn and share their skills and knowledge with others.
- Activities encourage students to develop independent learning skills.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment needs to identify areas of weakness more clearly.
- The department's development plan needs to include data analysis and targets to measure success.
- The key skill of ICT is not used enough in students' other subjects.

265. A-level results in 2000 and 2001 were well above average, and included many higher grades A and B. The standard of work of the current students is above average and, except for two students who left the course after the first few lessons, all students are on target to pass. Students' achievement is good in relation to their prior attainment; this is because they are able to draw upon what they learned in their GCSE course. They have good support and their teaching is well focused on the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. In Year 13 when students work in groups, a few students, mainly girls, underachieve because they do not have enough opportunity to learn from others.
266. Teaching is good overall and students learn well as a result. Teachers have good subject knowledge and most teaching includes clear explanations that make knowledge and understanding accessible, with good questioning that deepens students' knowledge. Teachers have high expectations and lessons are well structured and sequenced. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on relational databases, good explanations built on what students had learned previously and then led on to practical work to consolidate their learning. Students were expected to think carefully about the problem and manually plan the system and the links before attempting to create it on the computer.
267. Students are keen to learn and improve their work. They concentrate well, are attentive to teachers' explanations and stay on task throughout lessons. Many activities allow students to research and develop skills as independent learners, which is helpful in preparing them for future education and training. One student in Year 13, for example, has approached a local company as a basis for his major project. This shows good initiative and is giving him a realistic experience. Students use their textbooks to research extra information and increase their knowledge, in addition to learning from each other. Classroom organisation, however, needs careful planning so that there are more opportunities for students to benefit from working with each other, including a mix of male and female. Whilst written assessment of students' work does not always make explicit where their weaknesses are and what they have to do to improve, students confirm that they have oral feedback so they know how to improve.
268. The ICT key skill course for all sixth form students is taught well but in isolation to students' other examination work so that students do not use ICT to improve learning in their other courses.

269. There is a new head of department and a full complement of staff with a commitment to build on the previous good work and continue to improve standards. Long-term planning needs to ensure that teachers' own ICT skills are continually up to date in order to extend the skills, knowledge and understanding of students and improve standards further. The number of computers and up-to-date software for the sixth form is a marked improvement since the last inspection. The department does not yet analyse assessment data to show added value and identify areas where further improvements can be made.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

270. The focus was on art, but drama was also sampled. In 2000, only two students were entered for the A-level examination in drama, so national comparisons are invalid. Both passed. In 2001, all students entered for AS-level drama passed. One lesson was observed, which was very well taught and in which students made very good progress in learning about Brechtian theatrical techniques. The teacher used his specialist subject knowledge to challenge students to think deeply, and they responded with a sensitive, serious and mature performance.

Art

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Students in the Year 12 AS-level course reach an appropriate range of standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in Year 13 are well below average.
- Some Year 12 students do not have enough teaching as their timetable does not allow them to attend all the AS lessons.
- The A-level course is not at a suitable level for all the students taking it.

271. Numbers of students taking A-level art have recently been low, so comparisons of results with national averages are unreliable. The school has entered students for the old-style AS level in Year 12, where they have recently done comparatively well, with results improving year on year against the national average. These grades represent good achievement for students.
272. In work seen, standards differ in the two year groups. Work in Year 13 is well below average but students' achievements are satisfactory in relation to their attainment on entry to the sixth form. Year 12 students have made a good start on their AS level, including a small group whose timetables do not allow them to attend all the lessons. Year 12 students have begun the course with a wide range of backgrounds, some starting afresh with no art experience beyond Year 9 and others with higher grades at GCSE. At this early stage of

the course, attainment naturally reflects this wide spread of prior experience and standards are average overall. Students who have had the benefit of very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 bring very good drawing standards with them into their AS-level work. Those who dropped art before GCSE do not have this level of attainment and are having to develop these skills anew. Their experience in the lower school was not as good as the younger pupils have now. Given their often low levels of prior attainment in key areas such as English and mathematics, students in Year 12 are achieving well.

273. Teaching is good. The arrangements for teaching Year 12 and 13 together for part of their course works well, with the small number of less exuberant Year 13 students benefiting from interaction with the larger number of more high-spirited, interactive Year 12 students. Development of sufficient depth and breadth in research are still amongst students' areas of relative weakness. Students need a greater focus on developing critical skills in order to develop personal responses to works of art. Both year groups need to develop a greater insight into the world of art by visiting galleries and exhibitions, independently of the school's provision.
274. At present, the Year 12 group is organised to occupy parts of the teaching rooms when other classes are being taught there, with the expectation that they will be able to complete sufficient work to an appropriate level without detriment to their potential or that of the classes alongside whom they are working. Although this is working at this early stage in the year, close monitoring of this arrangement will be required to ensure that Year 10 and 11 classes are not deprived of their teachers' time and concentration, and that the arrangement places no undue inconvenience on teachers. The arrangements enable access to the AS course for more students, thus widening their opportunities.
275. Though teaching is good, it does not generate such very good learning as in the main school, particularly amongst the Year 13 group. This is partly because, as was reported in the last inspection, the prior attainment of some students doing the A-level course suggests that the course is at a level which is too high for them. The department could usefully consider other available courses which are better matched to the attainment levels of some students at the post-16 stage.

HUMANITIES

276. The focus was on history and sociology, but geography, government and politics and psychology were also sampled.
277. In geography, a few students have studied the subject at A level but the course does not run every year. Standards are below average, but achievement is satisfactory when compared with students' prior attainment. Two lessons were observed. One was satisfactory and one good. In Year 12 standards are below average because only two of the students have had any GCSE experience in the subject. In the Year 13 lesson the teacher's supportive, calm and encouraging approach evoked a very good response from the students, thus they were able to make good progress.

278. In government and politics, five students took the AS-level course in 2001 and three achieved either grade D or grade E passes. One joint Year 12/13 lesson was observed. The quality of teaching was satisfactory and the learning was helped by the teacher's secure subject knowledge. Psychology was introduced as an AS-level course in 2000 and the first group of students took the exam in 2001. Fifty-eight per cent passed. Two Year 12 lessons were observed, both of which were good.

History

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is consistently good.
- Students have very positive attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Students' skills in working independently are insufficiently developed.
- A single history group consisting of both Year 12 and Year 13 students limits their learning opportunities.

279. Numbers of students taking A-level courses have been low in recent years and results have fluctuated. However, most students achieve a pass grade, which is an improvement since the last inspection when only just over half the candidates obtained pass grades. The first year of the new AS-level course saw more students choosing history than before; in the 2001 examination half the students obtained high grades but half were ungraded.

280. Standards of work seen in the small Year 13 A-level group are above average. Standards in the AS-level group are at least average at this very early stage of the course. Students have very good attitudes to their work and overall they achieve well in their sixth form courses. There is no difference in the standards and achievement of students from different ethnic groups.

281. Students have a satisfactory and, often, good grasp of the topics they are studying. They interrogate historical sources critically to develop their thinking and understanding. In a lesson on the beginning of the Cold War, for example, students analysed different sources and evaluated the evidence to

produce thoughtful explanations of American and Russian attitudes. The written work of the best students is clear, effective and well substantiated but others have more difficulty in bringing sufficient depth and detail to their work, as in an essay on the Berlin Crisis of 1948-49.

282. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers' confident subject expertise means that lessons are well structured and key themes are effectively highlighted and emphasised. Skilful and well-judged questioning is a particular strength, which successfully extends and consolidates students' learning. Teachers work very hard during lessons and have high expectations of what students can achieve. As a result students are keen to succeed and for the most part make good progress in developing both the range of their knowledge and depth of their understanding. For example, in one Year 12 lesson, carefully prepared teacher's notes, together with clear explanations and energetic questioning, enabled students to make rapid progress in understanding the division of Germany after the Second World War. Students' work is carefully marked and written comments provide helpful feedback on how weaknesses can be addressed, such as structuring essays or analysing sources.
283. The overall quality of students' learning is good. They work hard and respond well to the supportive teaching they experience. They are very attentive in class, listening carefully to explanations and noting significant points. Students respond well to questioning but are less confident in offering ideas in more open discussion. Many students have difficulties in developing their own independent style of working, for example in the making of notes and in their use of ICT.
284. The subject is well managed and organised, which helps to explain the students' good achievement. Students have access to a good range of relevant books to support their work. Year 12 and 13 students are taught together in one group but for much of the time the teaching has to be directed at one year group while the students in the other year work on their own. This limits the amount of time available for direct teaching and therefore reduces students' learning opportunities.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- In Year 13 standards of work are above average.
- Teaching is very good and results in very effective learning.
- Students are enthusiastic in their learning and are achieving well.
- There are very good, informative displays that include students' work.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching plans do not include the requirements of the new syllabus to teach key skills.
- Recording and monitoring systems for assessment of students and the analysis of assessment data are not sharp enough.
- Students don't have enough opportunities to develop ICT skills and use ICT for individual research.

285. In 2001, nine girls took the A-level examination and all passed – three achieving grades A and B. Thirteen girls and seven boys completed the AS-level course with a pass rate of 55 per cent – just over half of these students achieved grade A to C and all have continued to take the A-level course.
286. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are above average. Students' achievement since the start of Year 12 is good. They already have a secure grasp of functionalist perspective of power and are able to analyse and criticise empirical studies from this viewpoint. Students are also able to consider arguments from different theoretical perspectives and are beginning to make their own considered judgements.
287. Year 12 students, particularly the girls, have made a good start to the course and are coming to grips with the theoretical aspects of functionalism. Through their reading of the work of Emile Durkheim on suicide, they are beginning to get to grips with the scientific essence of sociology, its theoretical perspectives and the importance of empirical studies. Their achievement, thus far, is good.
288. The teaching of sociology is very good both to Year 13 groups and to mixed Year 12/13 groups. This results in very effective learning. (Mixed groups are being taught as a temporary arrangement for four out of six lessons because the expected part-time teacher did not arrive at the start of the school year.) Well-planned and structured lessons for mixed groups challenge the whole range of ability. The teacher's enthusiasm, experience, and good understanding of the subject successfully motivates pupils. His use of relevant, sometimes anecdotal, examples, including some related to students' own experiences, enlivens lessons and develops their understanding as well as maintaining their interest. Students' oral contributions based on their own experiences and perceptions are also valued – where necessary, misunderstandings are then clarified. This was the case, for example, when Year 12 students were discussing different types of suicide based on the work of Emile Durkheim and the recent terrorist attacks in New York. The teacher skillfully directed questions to individual students, thus ensuring all had input into the lesson. However, some students could be even more involved if there were more opportunities for small-group discussions.
289. As a result of the very good teaching the majority of students show interest and enthusiasm for learning. One or two Year 12 students though are reluctant to complete homework. The majority are keen to read around the subject and use books and other printed resources confidently. Students show insight in discussions in lessons. They are willing to express their ideas and listen to and respect the views of others.
290. The head of department provides sound leadership and management of the department. However, administration in terms of producing updated plans for teaching the new AS/A2 modular courses, particularly in relation the teaching of key skills, needs to be improved. Systems for monitoring the progress of individual students through their course and recording of assessment data are

not as well organised as they should be. The head of department has yet to attend the examination board training for the new modular course.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

291. The focus was on English and French. In addition to English AS and A-level courses, there is a new course in the key skill of communication, which all students take.

English

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, with teachers' specialist subject knowledge used to good effect to extend students' learning.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.

Areas for improvement

- The Year 13 A-level class is too big for students to receive enough individual support.
- The department does not analyse how much 'added value' they are giving students throughout the course.

292. The A-level examination results in 2000 were in line with the national average. Only seven students entered, and six passed, achieving A to E grades. In 2001, fifteen students took the examination, with 60 per cent achieving a grade A to E. Results over time indicate that standards are generally average, although with fewer A grades.

293. The standard of work seen was also average. Students can analyse literary texts successfully, and are able to compare and contrast treatments and themes. Higher attaining students in Year 13 are on target to achieve high grades. In an essay on Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein', for example, a student showed some perceptive insights into literary sources which influenced the writer, in particular 'Paradise Lost' and 'Dr Faustus'. Lower attaining students show straightforward insights into literary texts. Students in Year 12 are only three weeks into their course, but at this stage they reach average standards in terms of understanding techniques of literary analysis. In one lesson, students were studying poems by Blake and Wordsworth. They discussed aspects of the poems well in groups, making perceptive points about them. Students' achievement is satisfactory during the two years of the A-level course.

294. Teaching and learning on the AS and A-level courses are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that enables them to ask probing questions, as well as to explain the finer points of literary analysis. In a Year 13 group that was analysing a Derek Walcott poem, the teacher's specialist subject knowledge underpinned her explanations and enabled her to ask specific, targeted questions, which helped to deepen the students' understanding of the poem. Students generally have positive attitudes to the subject and want to do well. Procedures for marking and assessing work are

satisfactory. A-level work is marked helpfully using examination criteria, which are shared with students. Little analysis of achievement is carried out to enable teachers to see if students do as well as, or better than, expected, and this is a developing area for the department.

295. Leadership and management are good. The department has responded well to the demands of the new AS and A-level courses, and is teaching communication skills as part of the key skills course effectively. Accommodation for English is not as good as it should be. Lessons are timetabled in rooms that are far too small to allow for comfortable movement around the room or to allow for effective discussion. In one Year 13 lesson during the inspection a group of 28 students squeezed into a small, drab classroom, which was not a pleasant environment for learning and teaching. A key skills communication lesson in which a group of 22 students tried to conduct a debate was adversely affected by lack of space. The size of groups is also a problem. Staffing difficulties have resulted in over-large groups, particularly in Year 13, and this means that students do not get the individual, targeted help that they need.

French

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in writing and understanding speech.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have suitably high expectations and students are appreciative of their help. Lessons are well structured with a range of activities which are starting to develop students' skills to required levels.
- Marking and assessment of work is of high quality, students are well informed of their standards

Areas for improvement

- Students in Year 13 are hesitant in discussion, lacking ideas and insecure in structure. Oral work is well below the standard expected at this stage.
- Students' understanding of the study skills required and their willingness to undertake them are limited.
- Teachers have insufficient time to teach according to individual needs because, for some lessons, Years 12 and 13 are taught together.
- Students have very little first-hand knowledge of the country or the culture they are studying. The school does not have formal links with France.
- ICT is not used enough to enrich learning and raise standards.

296. French is currently being taught in the sixth form for the first time for five years. In 1996 results in the A-level examination obtained by a small group were very good, both students gaining grades in the A-B range. In the interim there have been A-level entries only twice, both times in German: in 1999, with similar very good results, and this summer, when results from a group of four students were average. In relation to their GCSE results they did as expected. Currently there are three students in Year 12 on the AS-level course, each with an A* or A grade in their GCSE. In Year 13 there are four A-

level students, who gained average results in their recent AS examination. In relation to their GCSE grades they achieved well. One student in each year is male.

297. Standards of work in the current Year 13 are below average. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall in relation to their prior attainment, but good in writing and understanding. Following the closely structured support of their teachers they have learnt over the year to argue a case or present a sympathetic study as, for example, in pieces on the decriminalisation of cannabis and cruelty to animals, and have successfully assimilated topic vocabulary and phrases into their work. However, in lessons they often fail to spot and eradicate basic errors of form, such as simple tense verb endings, and agreements of number. They have learnt to express ideas in their own terms, rather than rely on copied passages, but they need to learn to write more accurately and to proof read their essays.
298. Standards of oral work are well below average. Students do not communicate easily in the language and struggle to maintain a conversation at the expected level. They lack the confidence to initiate a contribution to discussion and to paraphrase. In a class discussion on the problems of pollution in towns, they showed little understanding of the ideas and only in one case an ability to deduce meaning. In the main they need to realise that an understanding of the world around them is essential if they are to have the necessary background to the study of a foreign language at this level.
299. Students in Year 12 are only three weeks into their AS-level course, but are achieving satisfactorily. They are finding the transition to advanced work very challenging, and need to consolidate their basic GCSE grammar before extending their range of tenses and structures. They are competent enough in giving accounts and can express personal views and give reasons, but they are not yet used to the vocabulary and complexity of ideas and language met at this level. They make more progress when, in their separate class, the teacher can focus on their specific grammar needs.
300. Teaching is good, and sometimes very good, and is better than the quality of learning. Teachers' command of the language is excellent and they use this to set high, but appropriate, expectations of students' listening and speaking. Lessons are prepared thoroughly with an appropriate range of activities designed to develop understanding and skills in sequence. Lessons are conducted entirely in the language at an appropriate level, and time in the double periods is used to the full. Teachers prepare suitably challenging and supportive materials to aid discussion as a preparation for writing. They involve all students and offer the necessary help with paraphrase and accuracy of expression. They mark thoroughly with full diagnostic comment. Despite the teachers' best efforts, however, often involving the use of closely structured support for discussion in the form of key phrases, true/false statements, and questions to guide the writing, as in the observed lesson on pollution, the students' learning does not match the teaching.
301. Students' learning is satisfactory at best because they have yet to develop enough commitment to the out-of-hours study they need. They lack both the

breadth of interest in the content of the course and the depth of subject knowledge which would help them at least to express others' ideas accurately. In effect, they do not fully understand how to make progress in the language at this level. A second major factor is the unsatisfactory provision of time made by the school. Two-thirds of lessons are taught in a combined class of both Years 12 and 13. This arrangement does not provide teachers with enough time to address the separate learning needs of each year, nor the respective students with enough opportunity to seek specific help. However, the school has been able to engage the services of a French assistant for the year. The inspection took place before the beginning of the assistant's appointment. This additional resource will have the important potential to help raise standards of speaking and thereby levels of confidence and commitment.

302. Students are not independent enough in French. One factor in their limited commitment is their minimal direct experience of the country or the culture, and the school has no formal links with the country. Students access some authentic texts from the press and media, and some purchase a newspaper occasionally. There is still insufficient use of ICT. Students do not access the Internet or French television text services. The school should find ways of improving this provision in order to help students gain more independence. In addition, and crucially, the department needs to identify potential post-16 students in Years 10 and 11 and fully prepare them with suitable extension work for the demands of an advanced course.