

INSPECTION REPORT

**ESHER CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH
SCHOOL**

Esher

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125274

Headteacher: Mr Simon Morris

Reporting inspector: Mr George Knights
3268

Dates of inspection: 22nd to 25th April 2002

Inspection number: 189958

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 Controlled |
| Age range of pupils: | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | More Lane Esher Surrey |
| Postcode: | KT10 8AP |
| Telephone number: | 01372 468068 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr Roger Whittaker |
| Date of previous inspection: | 7 th October 1996 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|---|---|
| 3268 | George Knights | Registered inspector | | What sort of school is it? Attainment and achievement How well are pupils and students taught? How good are curricular and other opportunities? How well is the school led and managed? |
| 10173 | Catherine Hinds | Lay inspector | | Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance How well does the school care for its pupils and students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 12721 | David Riddle | Team inspector | Information and communication technology Design and technology | |
| 11548 | David Lee | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| 4787 | Sanchia Pearse | Team inspector | English English as an additional language | |
| 31159 | Clive Simmonds | Team inspector | Science | |
| 12110 | Roger Bailless | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages | |
| 13805 | Lynn Lowery | Team inspector | Geography | |
| 18673 | Roger Wilkins | Team inspector | Religious education | |
| 10895 | David Wasp | Team inspector | History Equal opportunities | Assessment |
| 31981 | Eric Forster | Team inspector | Art and design | |
| 14446 | Barry Simmons | Team inspector | Physical education | |
| 22501 | Sue Jones | Team inspector | Music | |
| 15606 | Christine Hill | Team inspector | Special educational needs | |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Esher Church of England High School is a mixed comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 16 years of age. It is situated on the outskirts of Esher in Surrey. Students travel from quite a wide area, with over three fifths coming to school daily by bus. Around three quarters of students transfer from five main partner primary schools. The attainment of students on entry to the school has been below average in recent years, though the attainment of the current Year 7 students is just above average. There are 685 students on roll, making the school smaller than average. The school is now over-subscribed, having been under-subscribed in recent years. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Unemployment in the area is below the national average and the number of students eligible for free school meals is a little above the national average. Around one in 10 students come from a minority ethnic background, with just over half of these having English as an additional language. The school hosts a unit for 25 students with specific learning difficulties. The number on the school's register of special educational needs is broadly average and the number with statements of special educational needs is above average. Around three quarters of students transfer to further education or training at the end of Year 11, with most of the remainder entering employment.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Esher High School is a rapidly improving school. It has many emerging strengths, which outweigh those areas where further improvement is needed. Standards are improving at a faster rate than nationally and when students leave the school their results have now risen to be close to the national average. Leadership is strong and management is improving. Staff, governors and students have a high level of commitment and good capacity to bring about further improvement. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Strong, visionary leadership inspires the commitment and confidence of the whole school community.
- Staff create a secure, harmonious environment in which students flourish and make good progress.
- The school takes good care of its students and ensures that they and their parents are well informed about their academic progress and personal development.
- Consistently good teaching and learning result in rapidly improving standards.
- It provides well for the creative and performing arts.
- It provides well for those students who hold statements of special educational needs

What could be improved

- The skills of staff with management responsibilities, especially in the areas of rigorous evaluation of teachers' work.
- The arrangements for the management of mathematics throughout the school.
- The management, organisation and teaching of information and communication technology.
- The effectiveness of the programme for teaching personal, social and health education.
- The library as an effective learning resource area.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good overall progress since the previous inspection, which took place in October 1996. Standards have improved at a faster rate than nationally at the ends of both Years 9 and 11 in recent years. Teaching and learning are now of a significantly higher quality than at the time of the previous inspection. School leadership is now strong and is a major factor in helping bring

about school improvement. Good progress has been made in addressing the key issues identified in the previous inspection report. There is now greater consistency in attainment across subjects and between girls and boys. There is also greater consistency in expectation of students' behaviour. Initiatives to improve attendance have been reinstated and are becoming more effective. The health and safety issues identified in the previous report have been attended to. There has been slow progress in improving students' mathematical skills and unsatisfactory progress in improving provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 14 and 16 year olds based on average point scores in national tests and GCSE examinations.

| Performance in: | compared with | | | | Key |
|-------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|---|
| | all schools | | | similar schools | |
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2001 | |
| Key Stage 3 tests | C | D | D | D | well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E |
| GCSE examinations | C | C | C | B | |

Standards in the school at the end of Year 9 are below average, reflecting the fact that students who enter are below average. Students have made suitable gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding, so they have made satisfactory progress, although their attainment remains below average. Results at this stage are also below the average for similar schools. In 2001, results were below average in English, mathematics and science. English results showed a decline from the previous year, while results in mathematics and science showed an improvement on those in 2000. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 were broadly average and were above average for similar schools. This represents good improvement when considering the prior attainment of these students. Over 95 per cent of students left the school in 2001 with at least one GCSE grade G or better, an improvement of 5 per cent over the previous year. At both Year 9 and Year 11, results are much better than they were at the time of the previous inspection and this reflects well on dedicated and committed teachers who seek to help students achieve their best. In particular, boys' results are now much closer to those of girls than they were at the time of the previous inspection. The school did not meet its unrealistic targets in 2001, but has set challenging but achievable targets for the next two years.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Students like the school. They have positive attitudes to their work and to the wide range of additional activities which the school offers. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Students behave well, both in lessons and as they move around the school. They behave particularly well in large groups, such as when they attend assemblies. |
| Personal development and relationships | The school helps students to become mature, confident young people who are well prepared to take their place in adult society. Relationships are good, both among students and between students and their teachers. |
| Attendance | Attendance is below the national average, but is improving as a result of concerted efforts by the school. |

Relationships throughout the school are good and this helps to create a harmonious atmosphere in which students are confident. A small, but significant number of students who walk or are driven to the school arrive late in the mornings, thus disrupting their education.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | Years 7 – 9 | Years 10 – 11 |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Quality of teaching | 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 and has improved since the previous inspection. Very good or excellent teaching occurs in around a fifth of lessons. Only occasionally is teaching unsatisfactory. Because teaching is generally good, students learn well and this is reflected in the improving results they are achieving. The teaching of English and science is good throughout the school. Mathematics teaching is only satisfactory, reflecting the problems the school has had in recruiting suitably qualified mathematics teachers in the recent past. Teaching in information and communication technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory overall. This is because in Years 10 and 11 it is largely left to teachers of other subjects who have not been adequately prepared to teach ICT skills in their subjects. The teaching of literacy is good in English and a successful programme has led to teachers in all subjects making good contributions to the development of students' literacy skills. Although the teaching of numeracy skills is adequate in mathematics, there is, as yet, no whole school approach to the development of students' numeracy skills in other subjects. Work is generally well matched to the needs of students, with some good matching of tasks to the needs of students with special educational needs. Other than in Year 7, less attention is paid to the needs of the most able, whose needs may not always be adequately met.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Curriculum provision is good in Years 7 to 9 and is satisfactory at Years 10 and 11. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | This is satisfactory. Provision for those students who hold statements of special educational need is good. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | While there is good initial support for students who are at an early stage of language acquisition, the school does not ensure that the ongoing needs of these students are sufficiently well met. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | This is good overall. The school makes particularly strong contributions to students' moral and social development, but the contribution that subject teaching makes to students' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Students are insufficiently well prepared for life in a multi-cultural or multi-ethnic society. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | The school looks after all its students well. Tutors know their students well and carefully monitor and guide their personal development and progress, making good use of assessment data to help them. |

Currently, provision for personal, social and health education does not meet the requirements of careers education and guidance or citizenship. The school intends to double the time for this subject from September 2002. Good plans are currently being put in place for a curriculum for Years 10 and 11 which will better meet the needs of all students. Overall, provision for information and communication technology does not meet statutory requirements.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They recognise the significant improvements being made and they feel well informed about both the school's intentions and the progress that their children are making. The school works very closely with a wide range of other agencies in order to ensure that the needs of all students are fully met.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher provides strong leadership and his management style is incisive and effective. While he is supported in what he seeks to achieve, the management skills of senior and middle managers require further development. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They are now very well informed and are playing a strong role in helping shape the strategic direction of the school. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | This is an area in need of significant further development. While there has been good quality review of progress on priorities within the development plan, the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of teachers' work are limited. |
| The strategic use of resources | This is satisfactory overall. |

The leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by an increasingly effective governing body, has been crucial in giving the school self-respect and a higher standing in the local community. More work remains to be done to strengthen the skills of the management team in order to help the school move further forward. Overall, the school is adequately staffed, though it has found difficulty in appointing teachers who are qualified to teach mathematics. Generally, accommodation is adequate for current requirements. Learning resources are generally adequate, except for a lack of texts in religious education. The library is unsatisfactory as a learning resource and there are insufficient computers to meet the potential needs of all subjects. The school's application of the principles of best value is good overall, with very good procedures for consulting all interested individuals and groups.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Before the inspection, 29 parents attended a meeting with the Registered Inspector. Questionnaires were returned by 103 parents and additional comments were appended to 22 of these.

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school sets high expectations of students. • Students like coming to school and make good progress while they are there. • The school is well led and managed. • Parents are well informed about students' progress. • Staff seek to work closely with parents, who are able to approach the school comfortably with questions or problems. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards of students' behaviour. • The arrangements for setting homework. • The range of activities for students outside lessons. |

Inspectors agree with almost all of those things which please parents most. Students do like coming to school and make good progress because expectations of them are good. The school has worked hard to improve links with parents. They are now well informed about all aspects of school life and also about the progress made by their children. The school welcomes approaches from parents. Leadership of the school is strong and is a major factor in bringing about recent improvements. Management is becoming stronger, but there is scope for further development of the skills of those staff in management positions. Inspectors agree with parents that arrangements for the setting of homework need to be more rigorously applied. They do not consider that behaviour is unsatisfactory and have no evidence that the poor behaviour of a small number of students significantly disrupts the learning of others. Inspectors consider that the school provides a good range of activities for students to take part in outside lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 For several years the overall attainment of students entering the school has been below average. An increase in the popularity of the school in the past two years has led to a higher number of parents wishing to send their children to the school and to an improvement in attainment on entry. The attainment of students currently in Year 7 is broadly average. Teachers at the school work hard to ensure that work is stimulating for all students. As a result, the results gained by students in recent years have improved at a faster rate than nationally.
- 2 In 2001, results in national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 were all below average, but nevertheless represented satisfactory progress for the students involved. Despite the slight downturn in English results last year, overall standards have been improving in recent years at a faster rate than nationally. This is because students are now achieving their potential on the basis of their prior attainment, where previously they were not doing so. The school has worked hard to improve the attainment of boys because the previous inspection report highlighted that boys' results were significantly worse than those of girls. This is no longer the case. Indeed, in mathematics in 2001, boys performed better than girls. Standards in science have improved since 1998 with a significant improvement in 2001 on the previous year. In all three subjects, results were below the average for similar schools¹.
- 3 A good start to the implementation of the English strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy in Years 7 and 8 has boosted attainment in English for these year groups. Despite some staffing problems, soon to be resolved, the mathematics department has also made progress toward applying some of the ideas from the mathematics strand of the same strategy. In both subjects, express groups have been established for the most able students in Year 7, in recognition of the changed academic profile of this year group. In both these subjects, as in science, students currently approaching the end of Year 9 are making satisfactory progress and are likely to achieve the targets set by the school in forthcoming national tests. Good progress has been made in developing a programme to guide teachers of all subjects in how to promote literacy across the curriculum. This work is being successful in building up students' confidence in speaking and listening and is improving their skills in reading and writing. The school has yet to implement a programme to enhance students' numeracy skills across the curriculum and thus contributions to this aspect of students' development vary considerably from one subject to another.
- 4 Elsewhere in the curriculum, standards have generally been below average at the end of Year 9. Teacher assessments in 2001 indicated that attainment in art was above average and in history and modern foreign languages was average. In all other subjects, attainment was below average, but in line with expectations considering students' prior attainment. The work of students currently in Years 7 to 9 is average in most subjects. It is above average in drama and below average in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT). Inspection evidence indicates that students in Year 7, who entered the school with higher overall attainment than previous year groups, are attaining in line with expectations. As a result of good teaching, students are being helped to achieve well

¹ Similar school comparisons are made with schools having a similar proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

in science, geography, history, physical education and drama. Achievement levels are satisfactory in all other subjects in Years 7 to 9.

- 5 Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 were close to the national average and above the average for similar schools. This represents good progress, given the prior attainment of students in the year group. Full details are given in Table 1. Most impressive was the number of students gaining five or more A* to C grades. Over the past few years, results at the end of Year 11 have been improving at a faster rate than nationally and are now much higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Although girls performed better than boys in GCSE examinations, the difference is much less than previously reported. This is an outcome of some careful work by teachers to help improve the attainment of boys. The English department has been particularly successful in bringing about this improvement in boys' attainment.

Table 1: Year 2001 GCSE / GNVQ (Year 11) results overall

| | 2001 | | | Standards compared to all schools 2001 are | Standards compared to similar schools 2001 are | Recent school trends |
|--|------|-------|-------|--|--|----------------------|
| | Boys | Girls | Total | | | |
| Percentage 5+ A*-C grades or GNVQ equivalent | 40.7 | 46.7 | 45.0 | Average | Above average | Improving |
| Percentage 5+ A*-G grades or GNVQ equivalent | 87.2 | 93.3 | 89.7 | Below average | Average | Improving |
| Percentage 1+ A*-G grades or GNVQ equivalent | 94.2 | 95.0 | 94.5 | Below average | Below average | Improving |
| Average total GCSE points score per pupil | 34.9 | 41.2 | 37.5 | Average | Above average | Improving |

- 6 In the majority of subjects, the number of students gaining the highest grades is below the national average, reflecting the fact that this year group had fewer than average number of the most able students from the outset. In art and humanities the number gaining the highest grades was above average and in French and German the number was close to the average. Attainment has improved in most subjects since the previous inspection, though in design and technology overall results were lower than previously. Results in mathematics and science were below average, while those in English language and literature were close to the average. Elsewhere, overall results were above average in geography, history, humanities and drama and close to the average in French. Details for subjects are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Year 2001 GCSE / GNVQ (Year 11) results by subject (percent A* to C grades)

| Subject | School | | | National | | | Recent school trends |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|----------------------|
| | Boys | Girls | Total | Boys | Girls | Total | |
| English language | 50.0 | 70.7 | 58.6 | 52.4 | 68.6 | 60.8 | Improving |
| English literature | 51.4 | 67.3 | 58.3 | 47.9 | 64.3 | 56.1 | Improving |
| Mathematics | 39.0 | 36.8 | 38.1 | 47.5 | 48.6 | 48.1 | Improving |
| Science (combined) | 45.7 | 39.7 | 43.2 | 48.9 | 51.0 | 50.0 | Improving |
| Art and design | 48.1 | 69.6 | 54.7 | 52.1 | 73.3 | 63.9 | Steady |
| Design and technology | 27.0 | 49.1 | 36.2 | 42.1 | 59.4 | 50.6 | Declining |
| Geography | | | 61.5 | 53.1 | 59.9 | 56.1 | Improving |
| History | 64.7 | | 62.0 | 54.0 | 60.8 | 57.5 | Improving |
| Humanities | | | 56.0 | | | 42.5 | Improving |
| MFL French | 35.0 | 64.5 | 47.9 | 38.4 | 54.8 | 47.0 | Improving |
| MFL German | 42.1 | 45.7 | 43.8 | 45.7 | 59.9 | 53.1 | Improving |
| Music | No student was entered in 2001 | | | | | | |
| PE or sports studies | 40.0 | | 34.8 | 51.2 | | 52.3 | Improving |
| Drama | 66.7 | 96.2 | 81.1 | 59.5 | 75.0 | 69.1 | Improving |

N.B. Gaps in tables indicate that there were too few candidates to make reliable comparisons.

- 7 The attainment of students currently in Years 10 and 11 is broadly average overall. Standards in lessons are above average in drama and are broadly average in all other subjects except design and technology, where standards are below average. Standards in ICT are poor, largely because students are not able to develop and apply their ICT skills either in ICT lessons or in other subjects across the curriculum. This situation arises because there is no detailed plan to guide teachers' or students' work and no arrangements for checking whether students are receiving their entitlement from subject to subject. This restricts the learning of students in most subjects and hence lowers their levels of attainment. Students improve their literacy and numeracy skills by applying them in other subjects, but as yet there is no means of monitoring or promoting this aspect of students' development, especially for numeracy.
- 8 The school has set itself challenging but achievable targets for the next two years. It failed to meet its targets in 2001, but the targets were set at an unreasonably high level and did not take enough account of the prior attainment of students. The targets for the next two years are realistic and have been developed by considering what, reasonably, can be expected of these two groups of students. The achievements so far by students in Years 10 and 11 would indicate that targets can be achieved, particularly if prompt action is taken to improve achievement levels in ICT.
- 9 The majority of students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress throughout the school. They make better progress in science, English, physical education, religious education and drama, where teachers take careful note of their particular needs. Only in modern languages at Key Stage 3 do these students not make satisfactory progress. Teachers are able to help these students, who make up roughly one fifth of the school population², because they are given clear information about students' specific needs. Students who have statements of special educational needs, including those in the dyslexia cluster³, generally make good progress, mainly because they are given direct support, either by withdrawal or through the effective work of learning support assistants in classrooms.
- 10 The school has a large number of students with English as an additional language, a small number of whom are at an early stage of language acquisition. While this latter group receives some effective initial support, thus helping them to become well integrated into school life, there is insufficient attention paid to the needs of all these students. Thus, the school may not be able to ensure that all of these students are adequately provided for and, thus, make sufficient progress.
- 11 There is a recognition that strategies for supporting the most able⁴ students in the school need further development to ensure that they make good progress. As a first step the school has established 'express groups' in English, mathematics, science and modern foreign languages in Year 7, where there is a higher number of more able students than in other years. At the moment the school has no way of evaluating teachers' work to make sure that the needs of the most able are met.

² This is close to the national average for the number of students in a school with special educational needs.

³ This is the name given to students in a unit, located at the school, which provides for 22 students with specific learning difficulties who attend the school from a wide area of west Surrey.

⁴ Often referred to as gifted and talented students.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 12 Students have good attitudes to school life. This is a distinct feature of the school which has improved since the previous inspection. Parents report that their children are keen to come to school and this view was confirmed by the inspection team during their time in school. Students say they like their school and relish the wide range of activities open to them. Drama and music are particular favourites. Students involved in productions savour their performances and involvement. They enjoy working with primary schools and helping with the sound and lighting for their productions. Students were also eager to share with inspectors their experiences of the school *Samba Band* which plays to many audiences and includes past students, parents and members of the local community.
- 13 The attitudes of students to their learning, including those with special education needs, are equally good and make a significant contribution to the good progress students make. During lessons students are confident, joining in all the activities with enthusiasm and working hard. For instance, boys and girls enjoyed exchanging their ideas when discussing prejudice in a Year 11 humanities lesson. They then settled immediately to their writing task when required to list bullet points for revision notes. In a few lessons students do not demonstrate such positive attitudes. Restlessness and reluctance to commit to the planned work occur when the teacher struggles to convey clear expectations of behaviour or to provide work matched to the needs of the students.
- 14 Students with statements of special educational needs who receive additional support have very positive attitudes. They are keen to learn, especially when the work is appropriately challenging. They respond well to lively teaching and the good support they receive in lessons. They benefit from very good relationships and positive learning approaches. They enjoy doing well and this helps raise their self-esteem.
- 15 Another improvement since the previous inspection is the good behaviour of the majority of students. This reflects the care taken by staff to promote good behaviour throughout the school. Students are kind to one another and are careful to recognise and accommodate the needs of others as they move around. In lessons, students usually respond well to the clear expectations of teachers. Students socialise well. During the inspection week students took advantage of the good weather, sitting in groups on the grass enjoying the shade of willow trees or the warmth of the sun on the playing fields. Students are careful with property, treating their own and the school's equipment with respect.
- 16 A small minority of students experience difficulty responding to the school's clear code of conduct. The unsatisfactory behaviour of these students does not usually interfere with the learning of others. Exclusion rates are still above average, but are significantly less than at the time of the previous inspection. Students and parents report that if bullying does occur it is quickly and carefully handled by staff. Students, therefore, feel safe and secure in the school environment.
- 17 Relationships in the school are also good. All students, including boys and girls and younger and older students, enjoy being with one another, whether in the classrooms or around the school. They offer each other good support in lessons and readily and modestly help each other. Year 7 swimmers shared space in the swimming pool with care and sensitivity and the confident swimmers joined in the coaching of those less confident than themselves.

- 18 A significant feature of these good relationships is the natural ease with which all students are included in school life. Those students who have special education needs are equally involved with their friends in work and leisure activities. No-one is left out of the clubs and activities or the camaraderie in the playground.
- 19 The school is a harmonious community where students relate well with adults and have fun together. Shared humour is evident in the interactions between students and teachers. Students are already looking forward to challenging the staff at football later in the term. Students value the feelings and experiences of others. They listen attentively when teachers share stories about their own particular circumstances. They show good levels of interest in, and compassion for, the lives and needs of others. Year 9 students became very animated, for instance, as they described the many initiatives the students themselves pursued during their annual charities week.
- 20 The school acknowledges the importance of each student's personality and ensures that all make good gains in their personal development. This represents another improvement since the previous inspection. Students, including those who have additional challenges due to their special education needs, take good levels of responsibility for their busy lives in school. All students wear their uniform with pride and comment that they like being identified as students at Esher High School. They take real ownership of any jobs they are given or volunteer for. The school council has its own budget and students are very careful about how this is used and accounted for. Students take turns in managing the reception desk and all those observed during the inspection week greeted enquiries in a friendly and efficient manner. Year 7 students talked positively about the help the oldest students gave them when they first started at the school. The Year 11 students continue to support many of the younger students by helping them, for instance, with their reading. All the students seen enjoyed sharing these paired reading sessions.
- 21 Despite significant improvement in attendance since the previous inspection, figures are still below average. A minority of students, mainly in Year 11, are not committed to regular attendance. This absence by almost 10 per cent of the year group is adversely affecting the progress they are making. The school tries hard to persuade all students and parents that regular attendance is crucial. There is more unauthorised absence than in schools nationally, but a range of good procedures is now being implemented and is rapidly reducing this aspect of absence. During the inspection week too many of the students who walk or are driven to school were late. This lateness interrupts some registration periods, inhibiting the purposeful start to the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 22 Teaching throughout the school is good and has improved since the previous inspection. This good teaching enables students to learn well, building successfully on their prior knowledge and skills. Teaching is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than with younger students and this is reflected in the slightly faster progress made by older students in the school. During the inspection, teaching was very good or excellent in around a fifth of all lessons and good or better in over two thirds. Teaching is only rarely unsatisfactory.
- 23 Throughout the school the teaching of English is good. This is because teachers have realistic expectations of students. In turn, students concentrate and take a full part in lessons. Effective questioning which helps check students' understanding is a feature of many English lessons. Teachers provide a wide range of activities to

challenge students of different abilities and which promote different ways of learning. Good work is undertaken to promote the achievement of boys and this has been successful in raising boys' attainment and their enthusiasm for the subject. Open discussions lead to thoughtful responses from students. English teachers are careful to encourage students to use appropriate language to explain their thinking. Occasionally, teachers do not manage time well and this leads to some rushed ends to lessons. This means that review of progress against objectives, which have been shared with students earlier in lessons, is not as effective as it could be.

- 24 The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory overall, but with some weaknesses. The school has found it very difficult to recruit suitably qualified mathematics teachers and there has not been a full-time head of department⁵ for almost a year. This has meant that support for those teaching mathematics has been limited. Teachers work hard to plan interesting lessons that motivate and stimulate students to learn, but the lack of specialist knowledge restricts what students can achieve. This is because tasks are not always well matched to students' needs. Science teaching is good. Teachers use a wide range of strategies which help students to learn well. Strengths of science teaching include the effective use of summaries by teachers, based around clear objectives which have been shared with students earlier, and the presentation of stimulating and challenging work for students of all abilities.
- 25 The school has made an inconsistent start to the implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Good progress has been made in introducing the English strand, with all English teachers working hard to implement the teaching strategies advocated. This is having a positive impact on learning, especially with younger students. Teachers of other subjects are also working well to improve students' literacy skills. This complementary work with English teachers is helping students improve their skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Support from local education authority consultants for the introduction of the mathematics strand has been a key factor in helping the mathematics department achieve satisfactory standards during a time of staffing difficulties. Teachers have worked hard to implement Strategy methods in Years 7 and 8 and this has helped students make satisfactory progress. Teachers of other subjects have not yet been trained in how to develop students' numeracy skills in their subjects, however, and, as a result, progress has been slower than in developing literacy skills. Work in the science department has successfully anticipated the forthcoming introduction of the science strand of the Strategy.
- 26 In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good in all other subjects except design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT), where it is satisfactory. In Years 10 and 11 a similar pattern exists, though there is very good teaching in drama and music and unsatisfactory teaching in ICT. Where teaching is good, students make good gains in their knowledge, refine their skills and deepen their understanding of the material they are learning. The very good teaching in drama is reflected in the above average results in the subject. The very good subject knowledge of the drama teachers encourages these teachers to take risks and encourage students to extend their work. This leads to lively lessons in which students are creative and thus achieve well. In music, very good teacher knowledge of the course requirements also enables them to provide a wide range of activities which encourage students to make very good progress, especially in performing and composing.

⁵ The school has now made an appointment to this post and the person appointed will join the staff in May 2002

- 27 The teaching of design and technology is only satisfactory. This is because there is not enough emphasis on the development of product design in some lessons. Some planning is inadequate and does not ensure that all members of the class are fully engaged in activities. In other lessons, organisation is inadequate and this leads to a slowing of learning because students have nothing to do while they wait to use resources. The teaching of ICT is satisfactory for younger students in the school. Here, all students follow an ICT course in which they are able to develop skills in the use of computers and a range of software. Some of these lessons are good, but others are not effective because teachers are not sufficiently vigilant and thus do not ensure that students remain focused on the tasks in hand. Teaching of ICT in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory because there is no planned programme to ensure that all students receive their entitlement. Currently, the intention is that students will learn and apply their ICT skills in other subjects, but the lack of sufficient support for teachers and the almost non-existent monitoring of what is, or is not, being provided means that this aspect of students' learning is inadequate.
- 28 Although teaching is good overall, there remains a wide variation in quality, both within and between subjects. The majority of teachers have sufficient knowledge to present their subjects in interesting and challenging ways, but the lack of qualified mathematics teachers has slowed progress in mathematics. Generally, teachers are able, through their good subject knowledge, to maintain the interest and concentration of students, who are willing and enthusiastic learners. In most subjects, teachers provide a good range of activities, well matched to the learning intentions for lessons. Planning has been helped by the requirement for all teachers to identify the learning purposes of each lesson and to display these in each classroom. In the best lessons, these objectives are discussed with students and are used as a basis for reviewing what students have learned. The application of this methodology remains inconsistent, however, with evidence that some teachers are still confusing objectives for learning with what activities students will be involved in. Currently, heads of subject are not skilled enough in reviewing the work of their colleagues to bring about a reduction in this inconsistency.
- 29 Teachers generally make satisfactory provision for students with special educational needs. They are provided with clear information about the individual needs of these students and make the necessary modifications to materials and methods to ensure that students can play a full part in lessons. Students with statements of special educational need, including those within the dyslexia cluster, are able to make good progress in many lessons. This is because of the skilled work of learning support assistants who liaise effectively with class teachers. The teaching of students who are the responsibility of the special educational needs department and the dyslexia cluster is very effective, with a good blend of help and challenge.
- 30 Teachers are less skilled at making sure that the most able students are sufficiently well challenged and not all teachers currently provide extension work for these students. Similarly, teachers do not sufficiently take account of the needs of students with English as an additional language and so these students may not always make the progress of which they are capable. Currently, many staff are beginning to deal with these matters, but this aspect of their work is not yet adequately evaluated to ensure consistency.
- 31 Except in geography and ICT, teachers make good use of their day-to-day assessments to guide their planning. Some teachers share their assessments with students and these teachers are helping students to become more skilled at self-assessment. Good examples were seen of students correcting their work because they successfully identified where improvement was needed. The marking of work is

thorough in most subjects, with teachers providing good guidance to students in how to improve. Teachers generally apply a very effective grading system to indicate how well students are doing and the consistency of this is much appreciated by students, who understand it and value the guidance and encouragement it provides.

- 32 Teachers generally set homework and there is good practice in English, science, geography, religious education and drama. Elsewhere, homework is not consistently set in ways that conform to the guidelines set out by the school. The direct consequence of this inconsistency is that students are not sufficiently being helped to develop good habits of independent study. This inconsistency is a justified concern of parents. Students' independent study skills are also not well supported by library use. No subject has incorporated the use of the library as a learning resource into its schemes of work and so this resource is not used well. This partially undermines the otherwise good work being undertaken to improve literacy standards throughout the school.

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

- 33 The curriculum provision for students in their first three years in school is good. It provides courses in all National Curriculum subjects and religious education and provides for linguistically able students to follow courses in two languages. The first language is French and the second has, until recently, been German. As part of an annual review of curriculum provision it has now been decided to offer Spanish instead of German and this has been successfully implemented for students currently in Year 7 and 8. The school has made a start to implementing the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Good progress has been made in introducing the English strand and in developing a programme for teaching literacy skills in other subjects. Progress in implementing the mathematics strand has been slower, mainly as a result of staffing difficulties in the mathematics department. So far the school does not have a strategy in place for using and applying students' numerical skills in other subjects.
- 34 The curriculum provision for students in Years 10 and 11 is currently satisfactory. Students are able to choose from a reasonable range of courses, including a course in religious education and a GNVQ course in business education. Recognising that the current curriculum model does not provide well for students of all abilities, a new curriculum is being put into place from September 2002. This will provide three different pathways, reflecting the different abilities of the students in the school. This is in recognition of the need to provide courses which meet the needs and aspirations of all students. This recognition has led to the development of effective work-related learning courses for those students who might otherwise have become disillusioned with formal schooling. Links have also been established with a local college of further education to provide a wider range of options for students. Students in Years 10 and 11 are able to follow a curriculum that meets most statutory requirements.
- 35 The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school is inadequate. Students in the first three years in the school follow an ICT course, but arrangements for students to develop and apply their ICT skills in other subjects are poor. In Years 10 and 11, not all students are able to follow a course in ICT and, as in Years 7 to 9, the use of ICT in other subjects is very restricted. This is partly a consequence of relatively limited equipment, but more a consequence of weak organisation.

- 36 The school offers a course in personal, social and health education for all students in the school. Currently, the time available for this, at one hour per fortnight, is too short to enable the school to provide adequately for all elements of the course, including sex and drugs education, citizenship and careers education and guidance. As part of its regular review of the curriculum, the school has recognised this shortness of time and has also noted the need to add more elements of citizenship to this course. It therefore intends to double the time allocation for the course from the next academic year. Currently, the provision for careers education and guidance for all students from Year 9 onwards is inadequate to meet requirements. All students are, however, able to partake in an effective work experience programme at the end of Year 10.
- 37 The school has established good general links with its partner primary schools, but the links are not as strong at a subject level. This means that the school cannot guarantee good continuity from the end of students' primary education into Year 7. A successful summer school in literacy last summer for pupils about to enter the school has encouraged the school to plan to extend the range of what it offers this year to help smooth students' transfer into the school. Good links have been established with both the main providers of sixth form education in the locality. Thus, the school can give students good advice about courses of study to pursue when they leave Esher High School. Good use is made of the community to support students' learning. There is a wide range of trips and visits in several subjects, which enrich students' experiences.
- 38 The school ensures that the courses it offers are available to all students. It also ensures that good guidance is provided to each student so that choices are well matched to their individual needs, abilities and aspirations. The school offers a good curriculum experience for students with special educational needs. A small number of students are withdrawn from some lessons to provide them successfully with additional help in English. Students who have statements of special educational need are well supported so that they can successfully follow the courses on offer. This support comes partly from class teachers and is often enhanced by good quality support from learning support assistants. A small number of students are identified as being at an early stage in learning English. These students are given effective initial help, but subject teachers are not given sufficient guidance to enable them to give further support. Therefore, the school cannot be sure that these students continue to make good progress. The school has recently recognised that there is a need to ensure that the most able students are adequately catered for. An express group has recently been introduced in some subjects in Year 7, but other initiatives to support the most able students in other years require further development.
- 39 The school offers a wide range of activities for students to take part in outside lessons. Most of these activities take place after school. Recognising that many students come from a considerable distance, the school provides additional transport from its own resources to enable students who wish to do so to attend the range of clubs and societies on offer. The school plans to develop the range of activities available further and to encourage the participation of all students.
- 40 The good personal development of all the students is a direct result of the school's arrangements to ensure the development of the whole person. The arrangements are good and are particularly significant for the students' moral and social education. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. As soon as visitors enter the school they are aware, through the smart presentation of the school and the calm and dignified demeanour of the community, that this is a caring school. Parents regard Esher High School very highly because they recognise that it helps their children, including those with special educational needs, to become responsible

young citizens. For example, the students run a school council and, as well as issues personal to the school, the council is involved in such initiatives as helping organise the annual charities week. Year 9 students, for instance, reminisced about the car washing activities. The school council is given an allocation of money to spend each year and it decides how best to spend it with the interests of students in mind. Year 11 students are assigned to Year 7 students to help them settle into the school and there is also other evidence that students take significant levels of responsibility for aspects of school life.

- 41 The school helps students to experience feelings beyond their own particular knowledge and understanding through the assemblies and through activities in some of the tutor periods. To support this latter activity, the school has a *Thought For The Day* programme. This is designed to help tutors lead students in a time of thought and reflection, as a means of providing for all students to take part in a daily act of collective worship. There is a great deal of inconsistency in the way tutors approach this activity and thus students do not consistently receive their entitlement in this aspect of their development. The inconsistency is partly because tutors have received insufficient guidance on how to undertake this task. It also reflects the fact that hitherto the school has not had adequate procedures for evaluating this aspect of tutors' work. Assemblies make a good contribution to many aspects of students' personal development and especially to their spiritual development. However, the school does not systematically ensure that students have sufficient opportunities to explore aspects of spirituality in their lessons.
- 42 Esher High school is a distinctly moral community. Students are aware of the differences between right and wrong. The school carefully and deliberately nurtures the rights and responsibilities of every member of the community. The good relationships fostered within the community and the clear expectations of correct behaviour create a secure framework for moral development. Students are able to consider moral issues in many lessons. For example, Year 11 drama students very sensitively explored the issues surrounding the institutionalisation of a child with a mental illness.
- 43 The school has very good relationships with a wide range of other agencies. These agencies such as the Youth Service and a local church group are used very well to support students' personal development in general and their moral and social development in particular. The school is part of the *Surrey Youth Inclusion Project* and initiatives such as work related learning activities make a very positive impact on a significant number of students.
- 44 The school also has good arrangements for promoting the social development of all students. The most striking feature of these arrangements is the wide range of trips and visits and opportunities to take part in activities, either in or out of school. During the inspection week groups of older students took part in dry skiing and rock climbing, for instance. A group of Year 7 students left the school one morning during the inspection week to survey geographical aspects of the local community. The school successfully encourages students to take responsibility for themselves and others through, for example, developing the prefect system. Over half the current Year 11 students volunteered to be prefects. Students respond willingly when asked to take responsibility in lessons.
- 45 Students talk enthusiastically about the range of visits to theatres and museums. They enjoy the occasions when the school helps them understand and value aspects of British cultural heritage. Year 9 English students enjoyed and appreciated the performance and analysis of scenes from *Macbeth* by a group of visiting players.

The creative arts and English departments make significant contributions to students' understanding of western cultures. The school successfully draws students' attention to other cultures through, for instance, the activities of the *Samba Band* and the consideration of aboriginal art. Other occasions to do so are, however, too infrequent. The school does not yet deliberately map and plan for the occasions within the curriculum and other activities in the school when students can gain insights into other cultures, faiths and beliefs. The school is, therefore, still not fully preparing its citizens for life in a multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 46 Parents recognise that the school takes good care of all its students. Arrangements for the care, welfare and assessment of students have improved since the previous inspection.
- 47 Good relationships are fostered throughout the school community. This ensures that students feel safe and secure and always have someone to turn to for help and support. Parents and students say that staff know all students well and attend to individual needs as they emerge. Staff provide comfort to troubled or worried students and help to any who are sick or injured. Staff work particularly well with a wide network of other agencies to support the students. The *Youth Link* team of youth workers, school staff and outside agencies is very successful in its aim of supporting individual students experiencing difficulties. Heads of year and tutors offer good support to their students, responding well to specific concerns and requests.
- 48 The condition of the building is good and it is kept clean. This, coupled with routine checks and inspections, successfully reduces the risk to the health and safety of students and staff. The school has successfully addressed the health and safety issues identified in the previous report. The school ensures that child protection procedures are known to all staff, including recently appointed and support staff.
- 49 The school has successfully improved the attendance of students during the last two years. There are good procedures for promoting the importance of regular attendance. The school has deliberately introduced a number of strategies, including first day response and attendance ladders, for helping students note and record their own attendance. Most tutors are vigilant about recording absence and requesting absence notes on the students' return. The importance of regular attendance is promoted well by using certificates and displaying attendance data on notice boards. Despite these good procedures, there are still a few students whose attendance is poor. The school is, however, continuing to improve the attendance of these students by addressing their wider educational, social and emotional needs.
- 50 Staff have high expectations of students' behaviour. They expect students to take responsibility for themselves and encourage them to recognise when these standards are not maintained. The dignified manner in which students enter the hall for assembly is a good illustration of students' self-discipline. Almost all staff consistently and deliberately praise good behaviour and commend students who experience difficulty but who try to conform. The school pays careful attention to those students who sometimes behave badly and makes good use of behaviour support plans to help these students improve. The school uses exclusion as the ultimate consequence of poor behaviour. Records indicate that, although the number of exclusions is high, correct use is made of this sanction. The school has reduced the number of exclusions in recent years and this reflects the success of the initiative to promote good behaviour. Parents and students recognise that the school provides

a secure environment where the rare instances of bullying and harassment are dealt with promptly and effectively.

- 51 The school helps students learn well by providing good support for their academic and personal development. Staff, students and parents all use and understand the assessment system. The use of grades is particularly successful in the termly progress reports and the students' annual reports. These reports give students a clear picture of their achievement and progress. Annual reports give good descriptions of areas of strength and weakness and describe what each student needs to do next to improve.
- 52 The school has successfully re-introduced a termly academic tutoring system. Parents and students applaud this initiative, recognising its importance in supporting the students' understanding of their own development. The school is beginning to keep detailed records about each student's academic and personal development. This information is, however, not yet being rigorously and systematically used to track, compare, predict and to motivate at an individual subject level or at whole school level. It is also not yet securely used to compare aspects of the academic or personal development of different cohorts, genders or groups of students.
- 53 The school has secure procedures for identifying and assessing students with statements of special educational needs and is very effective in meeting these students' needs. The school liaises well with other agencies, parents, support staff and teachers. The school complies with the Code of Practice for special educational needs and is moving towards the New Code of Practice for implementation in September 2002. Statements and reviews are up to date and the provision in statements is being fully implemented. The school is successful in meeting the targets identified in individual education plans and annual reviews. The use of special arrangements for these students when taking GCSE examinations is very successful. Arrangements are in place to support very low achievers who make good progress in English and science lessons and on the withdrawal programme. There is good monitoring of students' achievements, especially by support staff, and results are used well to guide progress. The school is beginning to identify students who are gifted and talented and those for whom English is an additional language, but arrangements for supporting their individual needs in lessons are not as well developed as are those for supporting students at the lower end of the ability range.
- 54 The school has good arrangements for assessing how students are getting on with their studies and makes satisfactory use of assessment results to inform future activities. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Assessment procedures are very good in music and drama and good in most other subjects, except in information and communication technology where they are unsatisfactory. Comprehensive information on attainment when students enter the school is available and this data is analysed well and used to guide future planning of the curriculum. Assessment information is also used well to monitor the progress of individuals and of different groups of students as they move through the school. The three-tier system of foundation, intermediate and higher levels of attainment is applied consistently across departments and gives students a clear idea of their academic progress. This addresses successfully an issue arising from the previous inspection concerning lack of consistency in assessment procedures. Students are also given a clear indication of what is being assessed and teachers provide effective oral and written feedback to students. Some departments, such as English, drama and history, have also developed successful self-assessment techniques to ensure that students themselves are involved in the process.

- 55 Assessment is used well to guide curriculum planning in some subjects, such as English, science, music, drama and modern foreign languages, but in other subject areas this aspect of assessment needs further development. Individual targets are reported to parents and these are reviewed regularly to check on students' progress in each subject. Students are supported well and receive good guidance about their academic and personal development. Subject teachers and form tutors undertake a guidance role and the latter are closely involved in the academic mentoring procedures for all students which take place each term. This partnership ensures that both the academic and personal development of all students is monitored well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 56 Parents recognise that this is a rapidly improving school and are very supportive of its many strengths. They are confident that their children are making good progress because of good teaching that encourages students to work hard in a school which they like. They say that the school is helping their children's increasing maturity and that behaviour is good. As parents, they feel comfortable about approaching the school with problems or queries. The overwhelming majority who answered the questionnaire say the school is well managed and works closely with parents. There is similar agreement that parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. Most parents feel the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. The inspection team agrees with parents' views on these matters.
- 57 The school works closely with its parents and is quick to alert them to changes in a students' demeanour or performance. Members of staff commit significant time and energy to communicating with parents and readily make themselves available for individual consultations. Parents value and make good use of the headteacher's weekly surgery where they can come, without appointment, and discuss any matters of concern. The school provides a good range of general information for parents. The ring binder for all Year 7 parents is, for instance, an extremely useful and well-presented document. The school gives parents very clear information about the curriculum. The Year 9 curriculum booklet is a good example, setting out in a helpful and accessible way what students will be studying.
- 58 Esher High School ensures that parents have good information about the progress their children are making. The school has identified a clear and simple system for assessing students' work and development. Students, parents and staff all use and recognise this system. This ensures a shared understanding of descriptions used in reports and consultations. The school produces good termly reports that carefully grade both effort and achievement in all the subjects studied by individual students. Annual reports are good and are much more detailed. Many, but not all, departments describe what the students are good at and where students are experiencing difficulties. They give good suggestions for securing improvement. Reports also give a good overall general picture of each student and illustrate the clear understanding that the school has of them as individuals.
- 59 Parents are becoming more active in school life. The school has successfully implemented a monthly prayer group for parents and staff. Parents help invigilate mock exams and participate in the *Samba Band* practices and performances. The school is developing a school parents' association. The school seeks to use homework as a means of involving parents in their children's learning. Parents and students make increasingly good use of the personal organisers which are now specially produced to Esher High School's own specification. The school, through its endeavours, tries hard to involve all parents in the education of their children. It has

now secured parents' understanding of its emerging strengths and has thus gained their support.

- 60 The school has clear procedures for keeping in touch and communicating with parents of students who have statements of special education needs. They are encouraged to be involved in supporting their children's learning and in school life. Parents are properly involved in identifying needs, provided with appropriate support and information and encouraged to participate in regular reviews of their child's progress. The school makes use of interpreters to communicate and keep in touch with parents who speak little English.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 61 Strong, incisive leadership by the headteacher has been the key factor in bringing about a significant change in many aspects of the school in the past two years. He has given confidence to staff, governors, students and parents who all recognise the part he has played in helping the school regain the respect of the local community. As a result of his vision, coupled with a great deal of hard work, the school is now improving rapidly. He has been very well supported by a governing body who are now playing a full part in helping shape the future direction of the school.
- 62 The aims, values and beliefs of the school are clearly articulated and are made known to all members of the school community. They include many principles which are manifest in the school, including creating a love of learning, care and respect for self and others and the achievement and celebration of success. Many of the aims are already being achieved and the school community is making good progress on those where there is further work to do. A key feature of the success which has been achieved since the arrival of the current headteacher has been the involvement of all members of the community in helping shape the way the school moves forward. A good example of this is the way in which parents and students are consulted about the contents of the school development plan. A striking feature of the school is the high level of commitment and good capacity of staff, governors and students to bringing about further improvement.
- 63 The management of the school is continuing to improve. Strong management by the headteacher has ensured that all staff are fully aware of what is required to bring about improvements in standards and thus in the confidence with which the school is held within the community. A re-structuring of the senior management team has been effective in providing a framework for supporting the work of middle managers. There is a wide variation in the skills and experience of staff who currently make up this senior management team and this has resulted in faster progress in some aspects of the school's work than in others.
- 64 At the same time as changing the structure of senior management, there has been a significant change in the roles of middle managers. Heads of year and subject leaders are given much more responsibility and are also much more accountable for the work in their areas of responsibility. Again, there is a significant range of expertise and experience in these teams. All middle managers are supported by a member of the senior management team, to whom they are also accountable. The quality of these links between middle and senior managers is variable and this variability is slowing overall improvement. Key aspects of the work of the school such as the implementation of the personal, social and health education course and provision for mathematics and information and communication technology have all been slowed because of some inadequacy in management or leadership. Subject area leaders and heads of year are charged with reviewing the work of colleagues,

but have not yet been given sufficient skills in rigorous evaluation of all aspects of teachers' work to make a consistent impact on improving quality. Nor have senior managers consistently been successful in establishing good accountability links with middle managers.

- 65 For the past two years, plans for school development have, rightly, focused on the immediate and urgent problems and needs. These two plans were carefully constructed following consultation with staff and governors and have been successful in guiding the improvements made so far. Both the headteacher and governors now recognise that the time has come to produce a long-term strategy that will take the school to a position where it fully lives out its aims and is seen by the community as a centre of excellence in education. Work to produce this plan is under way. All members of the community, including parents and students, are involved. It is this openness to accommodating the views of all that has been a major factor in restoring the confidence of the community in what the school is seeking to achieve.
- 66 As the school has worked through each of the two one-year development plans, good procedures have been put in place for reviewing progress. This review has been central to the work of the headteacher, who has progressively involved others in this work and has built up the awareness of all in the school about how to measure success in terms of the impact of actions on students' learning and achievement. Much has been achieved in the past two years and a good foundation has been laid for further development of review processes in the school. Many middle managers are relatively new to their posts and currently their skills in rigorous review of colleagues' work are inconsistent. The school recognises the need for further training for these staff in order to help them bring greater rigour and more consistency to their evaluations in order that they can help their colleagues become even more effective.
- 67 Until two years ago, governors had very little knowledge of the school and its situation and were, therefore, unable to fulfil their roles and responsibilities properly. There has been a radical change in this situation. A new chair of governors has established a close and effective working relationship with the headteacher and together they have changed the way in which the governing body works. The establishment of a very good committee structure ensures that all governors are able to play a full part in helping shape the strategic direction of the school. Governors are now very well informed about what is happening in the school and are effective as critical friends. Governors have been involved in developing the aims, values and beliefs statement and in drawing up the school development plans which have guided the school on its road to recovery. Governors now fulfil almost all of their responsibilities. They do not, however, ensure that the school curriculum meets all statutory requirements and that all students are able to take part in a daily act of collective worship.
- 68 A major strength of the governing body is the commitment it has made to securing the school on a sound financial base. Two years ago the school had a very large budget deficit which resulted in the headteacher and governors having to make hard decisions about how to move the school forward while at the same time reducing its deficit. Governors are now able to set a balanced budget, while at the same time making funds available to reduce the budget deficit. This has come at a cost however. Teachers teach classes which are above average in size and they spend a greater proportion of the week teaching than is the average nationally. It is testimony to the commitment of staff that they have not allowed these factors to reduce their effectiveness. What is significant is that there is less time for managers to undertake management tasks, such as review and evaluation of the work of others. This makes

it vital that their skills in these areas are honed so that they can be effective in the short time available for these tasks.

- 69 Financial administration in the school is now secure. All matters identified in the most recent auditors' report have been dealt with. Good working relationships between the headteacher, the director of finance and the chair of the governors' finance committee help ensure that the school remains within the budget as set. Generally, the school administration is smooth and efficient, with administrative and clerical staff providing very good support for teachers. The school is making good use of new technologies in administration and also in helping to manage the wealth of data now available to teachers. The use of computers and related equipment in the curriculum is, however, inadequate.
- 70 The school's priorities for development are well matched to its aspirations, which are mainly focused on enabling students to achieve excellence. To this end the school has set itself challenging but achievable targets for students at the end of both key stages in the next two years. Careful attention has been paid to the changing academic profile of students now coming into the school and targets for students currently in Year 7 are to be developed with this in mind. This is possible because the school is progressively making better use of the data available on students' attainment.
- 71 This use of data is just one example of the way in which the school is seeking to apply the principles of best value. Comparing the school's performance with that of others is now well established as a means of helping to identify what further work needs to be undertaken. Comparing financial data with those of other schools has also been instrumental in helping shape the budget in difficult circumstances. Good progress has been made in the review of what the school does. The headteacher has played a strong part this, but the principles of challenge, as a means of improving quality, have not been fully disseminated throughout the school. A real strength is the level of consultation which now takes place. From the holding of a 'blue sky day' earlier this year to consult with bodies such as the local education authority, the diocese of Guildford and community representatives, to the weekly meeting between the headteacher and senior students, this is a model of good practice. Good progress has also been made in using competition to secure best value, but the need for further improvement is recognised. Currently, for example, the school does not have sufficiently robust systems for checking that it is securing good value from all contracts which it awards.
- 72 The school generally has sufficient adequately qualified staff to teach the curriculum, though it has not been able, in the recent past, to staff mathematics or information and communication technology with sufficient teachers qualified in these subjects. Generally, it has been possible to retain staff recently, largely because of the good working atmosphere in the school and the sense of optimism that now exists. Arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school or to the profession are good, with each newly appointed teacher given a mentor to help them settle in. The school provides effective placements for initial teacher training students and it also supports two teachers on a graduate training programme. Arrangements for the appraisal and performance management of teachers are in place, but the programme is running behind schedule.
- 73 Accommodation is adequate for the school's current number of students. Since the previous inspection, new science laboratories and a purpose-built creative arts building, which includes a very good drama studio, have been added. There are sufficient classrooms for subject teaching. Accommodation for subject teaching is

arranged in suites, but some English, mathematics, geography and religious education lessons take place in non-specialist rooms and this leads to inefficiency. ICT rooms are very well appointed, but the management of their use is poor and they often stand idle. There is a need for a new sports hall to enable the school to meet the requirements of physical education. Students have very good access to green space on the attractive school site.

- 74 Limited space is available for the preparation of resources in science. There is a shortage of storage in science and art and there is no facility to display three-dimensional work in art. Some teaching in design and technology is disturbed by the noise generated in the open plan rooms and some art lessons are limited by the need to reorganise the room for use by other subjects. The quality of display throughout the school is good, with much celebration of students' achievements. Wheelchair access is now available across the ground floor areas.
- 75 The level of learning resources in departments is satisfactory, apart from religious education, where there is a shortage of textbooks and artefacts, and in design and technology, where there are no facilities for computer aided design or manufacture. The special educational needs area is well resourced. Departments make good use of the resources available to them. The equipment base for ICT is weak. While the school has plans for improving the number of computers and related equipment, these will be insufficient to meet the needs of all subjects when they are properly fulfilling the requirements for the application of ICT within their schemes of work.
- 76 Although there has not been an audit of the stock of books in the school library, inspection evidence indicates that the number of books does not meet the recommended level. Many of the existing books are old or are out of date. The library is not open to students before school or at lunchtimes, but it is available for students to use for an hour after school. Subject teachers do not, systematically, guide students to use the library as a resource for independent study. There are plans to install a bank of computers in the library in the future. At the moment the library provision is not meeting the needs of students in the school.

The Dyslexia Cluster⁶

- 77 The Dyslexia Cluster is located in the same area of the school as the special educational needs department. Funded by the local education authority, it is a good provision for the 22 students with special educational needs at present on roll. It is well led and managed. Standards for 16 year olds are in line with their ability and show good progress from when they were 14. Some students achieve success in GCSE examinations that compares well with mainstream students. Standards for 14 year olds are in line with their ability and show good progress from when they entered the cluster as 11 year olds.
- 78 The school has secure procedures for assessing these students and, with the review and monitoring that is in place, is very effective in meeting their needs. Strategies for teaching literacy skills on the withdrawal programme are very effective. The support for learning, both in the cluster and in mainstream lessons, is very effective with the right blend of help and challenge. The cluster liaises well with other agencies such as physiotherapists, parents, students, support staff and teachers to meet the wide range of additional needs.

⁶ This is the name given to students in a unit, located at the school, which provides for 22 students with specific learning difficulties who attend the school from a wide area of west Surrey.

- 79 The cluster offers a good quality curriculum for its students. The withdrawal programme for English is very well organised so that all students have the same curriculum as mainstream students but at a level matched to their individual needs.
- 80 The school has clear procedures for keeping in touch and communicating with parents of students in the cluster. They are encouraged to be involved in supporting their children's learning and in school life. Parents are properly involved in identifying needs, provided with appropriate support and information and involved in regular reviews of their children's progress. The school makes use of interpreters to communicate and keep in touch with parents who speak little English.
- 81 The cluster works very closely with the special needs department and benefits from the support of a very experienced, well-informed governor. The department's use of information and communication technology to inform and support teaching and learning is good, but restricted by lack of access to the Internet and the school's network. Through regular meetings and frequent informal discussions, there is good monitoring of the work of the cluster.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to further raise standards in the school and to improve provision, staff and governors should:

- develop the skills of staff with management responsibilities, especially in the areas of:
 - rigorous evaluation of each aspect of the work of tutors and teachers;
 - review of teaching and learning, particularly regarding the planning and use of objectives and the teaching of students with English as an additional language;
 - identifying and sharing good practice throughout the school;
(Paragraphs 7, 10, 23-24, 30, 38, 41, 45, 52-53, 64, 68, 87, 94, 109, 115, 117, 133, 144 and 157-160)
- improve arrangements for the management and teaching of mathematics throughout the school by:
 - employing sufficient qualified teachers of mathematics;
 - ensuring that students are able to engage in a wide variety of mathematical experiences;
 - implementing a programme to support the development and application of students' mathematical skills across the curriculum;
(Paragraphs 3, 6, 24, 25, 28, 33, 64, 72, 99, 104, 105, 108, 109, 112 and 117)
- improve provision for the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) by:
 - strengthening overall management of ICT in the school;
 - establishing a system which will ensure that all students in Key Stage 4 receive their entitlement to a course in information and communication technology;
 - ensuring that all separate subject requirements for information and communication technology are met throughout both key stages;
 - establishing a central system for the collation of assessment evidence about student's performance in ICT in order to aid planning and to monitor that all requirements are met;
 - ensuring that the existing resources are used for more of the week;
(Paragraphs 4, 7, 26-27, 35, 64, 69, 73, 75, 86, 111, 118, 124, 126, 130, 134, 140, 142, 149, 151-161 and 179)
- improve the effectiveness of the programme for teaching personal, social and health education by:
 - implementing plans to increase the time available to teach this subject throughout the school;
 - ensuring that the scheme of work provides a clear framework to support systematic planning for the essential elements of citizenship and careers education and guidance;
 - ensuring the effectiveness and consistency of the teaching of the programme through a rigorous system of evaluation of tutors' work;
(Paragraphs 36, 40-41, 45, 64, 66 and 94)
- make the library into an effective learning resource area for all students by:

- improving the number and quality of books to a level required by all subjects;
 - including library use as part of the schemes of work of all departments;
 - integrating library use with the school's approach to literacy;
 - ensuring that the library is adequately staffed;
 - making the library available as a resource for students throughout the day;
 - implementing the plan to provide better computer facilities in the library.
- (Paragraphs 32, 76, 85 and 126)*

In addition, governors should include the following in their action plan:

- establish a strategy for promoting students' spiritual development in lessons;
(Paragraph 41)
- prepare students better for life in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society;
(Paragraphs 36 and 45)
- ensure that all students attend school regularly and arrive on time;
(Paragraphs 21 and 49)
- ensure that all students can take part in a daily act of collective worship.
(Paragraphs 41 and 67)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

125

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 3 | 23 | 59 | 36 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 2 | 19 | 47 | 29 | 3 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y7–Y11

Number of pupils on the school's roll

685

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

120

Special educational needs

Y7–Y11

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

37

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

143

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

38

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

43

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

28

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 8.6 |
| National comparative data | 8.1 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 2.2 |
| National comparative data | 1.1 |

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

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

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2001 | 59 | 40 | 99 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above | Boys | 32 | 39 | 37 |
| | Girls | 27 | 19 | 20 |
| | Total | 59 | 58 | 57 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above | School | 60 (64) | 60 (59) | 58 (47) |
| | National | 64 (63) | 66 (65) | 66 (59) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above | School | 17 (31) | 30 (31) | 24 (19) |
| | National | 31 (28) | 43 (42) | 34 (30) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above | Boys | 38 | 35 | 36 |
| | Girls | 28 | 20 | 21 |
| | Total | 66 | 55 | 57 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above | School | 68 (58) | 57 (57) | 59 (34) |
| | National | 65 (64) | 68 (66) | 64 (62) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above | School | 29 (28) | 30 (32) | 22 (13) |
| | National | 31 (31) | 42 (39) | 33 (29) |

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

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

| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| | 2001 | 86 | 60 | 146 |

| 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 | 35 | 75 | 81 |
| | Girls | 28 | 56 | 57 |
| | Total | 63 | 131 | 138 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 43 (50) | 90 (86) | 95 (90) |
| | National | 48 (47) | 91 (91) | 96 (96) |

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

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | 37.5 |
| | National | 39.0 |

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

| Vocational qualifications | Number | % success rate |
|--|----------|----------------|
| Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied | School | 0 |
| | National | n/a |

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 3 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 1 |
| Indian | 10 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 4 |
| White | 639 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 28 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 | 0 |
| Indian | 0 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 64 | 4 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 1 | 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 – Y11

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 39.4 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 19.2 |

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|---|-------|
| Total number of education support staff | 11 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 199.5 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|---|------|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 78.1 |
|---|------|

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 26.1 |
| Key Stage 4 | 21.5 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| Financial year | 2000 - 2001 |
|----------------|-------------|

| | £ |
|--|-----------|
| Total income | 1,930,019 |
| Total expenditure | 1,860,633 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 3,143 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | -156,288 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | - 86,902 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 8 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 20 |

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0.04 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 3 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate 15%

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 685 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 103 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 47 | 40 | 7 | 6 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 43 | 50 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 16 | 62 | 10 | 5 | 7 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 21 | 55 | 14 | 9 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 34 | 50 | 2 | 3 | 11 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 49 | 41 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 64 | 30 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 68 | 26 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 46 | 39 | 11 | 2 | 2 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 48 | 42 | 4 | 3 | 3 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 41 | 47 | 7 | 2 | 3 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 36 | 43 | 15 | 3 | 3 |

Other issues raised by parents

Many parents wished to express confidence in the steps being taken to improve the standing of the school in the community. Some concern was expressed about the quality of teaching in mathematics.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards in English are improving.
- Students make good progress.
- Teaching is good overall and some of it is very good and excellent.
- Good provision is made for students with special educational needs and for higher attaining students.
- The department makes good use of assessment procedures.
- Good links have been made across many subjects for improving speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

Areas for improvement

- Further refinement of target setting and skills audit for individual students.
- Further development of the planned use of information and communication technology.
- Monitoring of cultural experiences to ensure coverage of the diversity of cultures in society at large.
- Curriculum links with primary schools.

82 Standards in English have improved since the previous inspection and are now predominantly close to the national average at the end of Years 9 and 11. With the exception of the present Year 7 students, whose attainment is in line with the national average, students enter the school with attainment in English that is below the national average. Students, therefore, make good progress in English. There was a dip in the national test results in 2001 at the end of Year 9, which has been carefully analysed in order that there will not be a repeat this year. The school's performance in English is in line with similar schools. An increased number of students take GCSE English and English literature by the end of Year 11. As in the previous inspection report, English results are slightly below the national average and English literature results are above. However, the number of students gaining A* to G grades in both examinations has improved and the number of students gaining A* to C grades in English literature is above the national average.

83 Teachers target students carefully in order to raise standards. There are more boys than girls in the school and the department has precise strategies for motivating boys, such as selecting texts that appeal to both boys and girls. These strategies help to raise boys' standards which, as nationally, are below those attained by the girls. There is good provision for students with special educational needs, who make good progress. The department has successfully focused on the needs of the most able students, providing them with excellent challenges and using their work as a model for other students.

84 Students speak with confidence. There are good links with the work in drama, which helps to develop good oral presentation skills. Students are keen to answer questions and most use a sound range of vocabulary. Where students do give colloquial responses, such as when Year 9 students were discussing *Macbeth*, teachers 'translate' their responses into phrases that are acceptable in the written form. Teachers deliberately highlight the more sophisticated vocabulary and phrases used by the higher attaining students and encourage all students to think of other

ways of expressing their ideas. Good teachers constantly check for understanding of key vocabulary and concepts. This is beneficial to all students, particularly those with English as an additional language. Students benefit from respectful and mature relationships with their teachers and each other, which encourage the development of good listening skills. They show an interest in the topics addressed and pick up on each other's arguments. This is true among students of all abilities. From the top express set in Year 7, creating modern-day scripts for *Othello*, to the lower set in Year 11, where they rise to the challenge of discussing a poem by Simon Armitage, students listen attentively and build on each other's ideas.

- 85 Boys and girls across the attainment range are keen to read in class. They enjoy reading versions of Shakespeare that teachers have adapted to meet different reading levels. Reading aloud is fluent, but not always expressive. Students use a wide range of texts in class and across all subjects. Students with special educational needs receive good individual and small group support that improves their reading skills and builds confidence. Year 10 students enjoy listening to Year 7 students read and all involved benefit from this arrangement. Year 7 students successfully organise and manage their own fiction loan library, which attracts large numbers and encourages them to read further. They produce useful book reviews that help others choose books and allow them to share their own enjoyment. However, the school library does not offer an exciting range of books and is not open often enough to encourage full use for personal and independent research. As a result, homework that requires independent research is mainly done on computers at home or through the public libraries rather than in school.
- 86 Carefully structured teaching helps to improve writing skills. Constructive marking with clear targets for improvement helps students understand how they can gain better levels and grades. Students are beginning to spot their own mistakes and to self correct and redraft their work. Teachers in many other subjects are now focusing on literacy skills, which is leading to students improving their spelling, punctuation and presentation. Teachers of English are very aware of the need to help students, especially in the middle and lower bands, to translate their good spoken ideas into a correct written form. Students benefit from writing for a wide range of purposes and appreciate that styles change according to the situation. Written work is well displayed in classrooms, providing good models for others. Some work is word-processed or desktop published in dedicated information and communication technology (ICT) lessons. Some Year 11 students use computer aided presentations to illustrate their oral assessment work. Despite this, the planned inclusion of ICT is at an early stage and is thus under-developed.
- 87 Throughout the department, teaching is good overall and it is very good or excellent in over a third of lessons. Teachers have high yet realistic expectations for students' work and behaviour that establish a hard-working and well-focused atmosphere. This means that students concentrate and take a full part in the lesson. Every lesson starts with a clear explanation of the aims and tasks, which helps students understand the key concepts and skills. All teachers constantly use questions effectively to check for understanding. In the very good and excellent lessons, the questions are probing and carefully targeted to encourage a full exploration of the issues under discussion. This includes confirming that students who have English as an additional language have understood. In these lessons, teachers ensure that all students are involved in a wide range of activities that challenge the different attainment levels and appeal to different ways of learning. The department actively promotes different approaches that are successfully raising the attainment of boys. For example, teachers think carefully about the choice of text and offer options that rely on factual accounts as well as imaginative responses. In the least successful

lessons, the main issue is a lack of tight timing or attempting to include too much in one lesson. This leads to rushed conclusions to lessons, where students have insufficient time to consolidate the learning properly. The very good relationships established with students by all teachers in the department encourage open discussion of a wide range of issues that leads to thoughtful student responses. This allows for issues such as bullying and race to be openly discussed. However, the material used is not adequately monitored in order to ensure that the rich diversity of society is fully covered.

- 88 The department works well as a team, sharing good ideas and putting them into practice. This has led to significant improvements since the last inspection, such as the development of good assessment procedures and the adaptation of lessons in the light of this assessment. Students now have individual targets and are involved in self-assessment and assessing their peers through carefully shared criteria. The new audit of skills for each student is not refined enough to make it a useful way of monitoring individual progress.
- 89 The links between the work in primary schools and the early years of secondary is apparent in some of the lesson structures. There is a lively summer school for Year 6 students that helps bridge the move from primary to secondary education and this is appreciated by students and parents. These links are not, however, well enough developed in order to build on the students' experiences and knowledge before they come to the school.
- 90 There are good links with the senior management team and the department has taken an active part in developing the good literacy focus across all subjects. This includes providing a teaching pack for use at tutorial times which, for example, explores different grammatical points such as nouns and adjectives. The department has also encouraged all subjects to display and reinforce spellings for key specialist terms. Teachers across the subjects are conscientiously reinforcing good practice in spelling, punctuation and different styles of writing. This concerted effort is playing a major role in raising students' standards in English still further.

Drama

Overall, provision for Drama is **very good**.

Strengths

- Examination results, which are very good.
- Teaching, which is very good, especially in Years 10 and 11.
- There is a high take-up of the subject at examination level.
- The facilities and range of extra-curricular activities are very good.
- Assessment arrangements are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Training for non-specialist teachers.
- The auditing of coverage of a diverse range of cultures.

- 91 Standards in drama continue to be well above the national average for GCSE and above national expectations in Years 7 to 9. The very good provision for drama encourages a high take-up for GCSE, where groups are larger than usual. The head of department is well aware that, in line with national research, boys do not perform as well as girls in GCSE and is actively trying different strategies to raise boys' standards. The lively range of activities attracts boys as well as girls and also

develops a variety of skills that encourage students from the complete range of attainment to take part. As well as performance, there is a strong emphasis placed on the importance of the technical side of lighting, sets, make-up and costumes. This leads to separate certification.

- 92 All students respond positively to drama throughout the school, displaying energy and enthusiasm in their lessons. They benefit from working in small groups and developing their ideas. In Years 7 to 9, the oral work undertaken reinforces good speaking and listening skills. The scripted work complements work undertaken in English and helps students appreciate the finer details of writing a play. Students show a keen awareness of the need to consider body language, the use of space, the creation of atmosphere by lighting, the use of music and the development of characterisation. This provides a very good basis for work in Years 10 and 11, where students further refine their skills and set them within a theoretical framework. A third of the students plan to continue their studies in the sixth form. Students respond well to the challenge of recognising different influences in drama, such as those of Brecht and Stanislavsky.
- 93 Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good overall. Non-specialist teachers are well supported by carefully detailed schemes of work and suggestions for lessons. This ensures that students cover a wide range of activities and explore their own creative ideas as well as working on scripts. Not all the teachers involved feel fully confident with the range of techniques needed to manage the group work involved. However, students behave responsibly and remain on task. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is consistently very good. Springing from a confident knowledge base and considerable experience, there is a willingness to take risks and encourage students to extend their work. This leads to lively and creative lessons where all students, regardless of their academic attainment, flourish. Gifted and talented students, whether in performance or the technical side, are challenged by the work prepared for them and many succeed in gaining external recognition, for example gaining a place in the Brits College for acting.
- 94 Numerous visits to the theatre and visitors to the school further enliven the work undertaken. For example, students work with a professional BBC make-up artist, learning how to make wounds and how to age characters. There are also very good links with the Globe Theatre through the *support an actor* scheme and with playwrights such as Willy Russell, who awards certificates for particular achievements. Students and parents greatly appreciate the school productions that involve a wide range of students across all years. The productions build student confidence and a sense of responsibility because students take charge of many aspects of the production, including the box office, where they must make sure that they cover their costs. Drama thus makes a very good contribution to students' personal, social, and moral development. There is now a need to formally monitor all these activities both in lessons and outside to ensure a good coverage of different cultural perspectives.
- 95 Assessment continues to be very good with an emphasis on students reflecting on their own work as well as evaluating other groups. The criteria are clearly shared with students, who respond in a mature way with constructive criticism that leads to improvements. Written work plays an important part in the assessment procedure and this is carefully marked with positive comments and clear indications of levels and grades. This ensures that students understand exactly what they need to do to improve further.

- 96 The head of department is energetic and reflective, creating an area of learning that, as in the previous report, is a strength of the school.

MATHEMATICS

The overall provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Standards are improving throughout the school.
- Good relationships with students support their learning and the standards they achieve.
- The implementation of the mathematics strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about their teaching.

Areas for improvement:

- The number of specialist mathematics teachers in the school.
- Timetabling arrangements for mathematics.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) for all years.
- The implementation of a strategy for numeracy development in all subjects.

- 97 Results in 2001 for students at the end of Year 9 were below the national average, though better than in the previous year. This improvement was the result of satisfactory teaching and an increase in students' numerical confidence. Results were below those in similar schools. In mathematics, results are below those achieved by the same students in English and similar to those in science. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have, over the last three years, improved at a similar rate to those nationally.
- 98 The results gained by students in GCSE examinations in 2001 were also below average, but were better than in previous years. The proportion of boys achieving the A* to C grades was higher than girls, when nationally the opposite occurs. The proportion of students achieving A* to G grades was above the national average. When considering the average point score achieved by students in 2001, they have made satisfactory progress given their Year 9 test scores two years previously.
- 99 Students in Years 7 to 9 are gaining considerable benefits from the implementation of the mathematics strand of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, which has been introduced initially in Years 7 and 8. Lively warm-up activities at the beginnings of lessons are used effectively to increase students' confidence and understanding of many basic number relations. Students are generally confident with number calculations and tasks which involve fractions, decimals and percentages. These skills are enhanced further by work from other subjects such as design and technology, where students measure accurately and weigh quantities using the appropriate units. In science, students make good use of a range of diagrams and graphs to depict data collected from experiments. They evaluate the formulae used with electricity accurately. The lack of a whole school approach to numeracy means that the contribution of all other subjects to promoting the application of students' numerical skills is currently not well developed and is not monitored in any way. Students use calculators confidently for more difficult calculations, for example, when computing the mean value of a set of numbers in mathematics lessons. However, they are less confident in using these in other subjects.
- 100 Students in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress with their mathematics. Attainment in lessons reflects this progress and is similar to the results achieved in the national tests at the end of Year 9. More able students in the express sets of

Year 7 achieve well across the different aspects of the subject because the work set is challenging and extends their knowledge and understanding.

- 101 By the end of Year 11, students are achieving improved standards, although standards are still below the national average. Attainment in lessons is slightly better than indicated by the results in previous GCSE examinations. For example, students in a Year 11 group of more able students extended their knowledge and confidence by tackling a variety of questions as part of their revision programme. These students discussed different approaches to solving a quadratic algebraic equation, including using the standard formula.
- 102 The overall achievement and progress made by students with special educational needs are satisfactory. For example, some of these students in Year 7 make impressive progress with their understanding of simple probability because of the very effective teaching that builds students' confidence in their understanding of the work. The support these students received from their teacher was outstanding and made a significant contribution to their learning. In another Year 9 group, similar students received very effective support from their teacher and the learning support staff present. These students learnt how to find further terms in a sequence by considering the pattern it formed. In a Year 10 class, several students with special educational needs practised multiplication and division of numbers with two decimal places by 10 and 100. As a result of intensive oral work, these students demonstrated their understanding and moved on to tackle other more complicated questions with greater confidence.
- 103 The achievement of more able students is improving and more of these students are reaching Level 7⁷ by the time they are 14 years. There is a strong possibility that these students will achieve the A and A* grades in GCSE examinations in future years.
- 104 The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall, though in two lessons seen during the inspection it was unsatisfactory. Good or very good teaching occurred in nearly half of the lessons seen. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Teachers work hard at planning interesting lessons that motivate and stimulate students to learn and this is influencing the standards they achieve and the progress they make. However, the lack of specialist mathematics teachers for a considerable time, particularly in Years 10 and 11, has had an adverse affect on the standards students achieve in their work and in national tests and examinations.
- 105 In the very good lessons, teaching is exemplified by well planned and structured activities. These lessons start briskly with an effective oral or mental activity to develop students' basic numerical skills. In many lessons, effective use is made of white boards for students to display their answers and for the teacher to assess their understanding. On most occasions these 'starters' usually link into the main activity. Expectation of students is high and teachers expect them to listen and contribute orally in response to teachers' questioning. The skilful mix of probing questions, discussion and a range of tasks enables every student to make good progress and achieve high standards in these lessons. In lessons where teaching and learning are less effective, the work set is not matched sufficiently well to the needs of all students in the group. In particular, the needs of the more able and less able students are not met, resulting in students becoming frustrated. Currently, the only specialist teacher of mathematics has very good subject knowledge, which is effectively used through exposition, demonstration and asking challenging questions of students.

⁷ Level 7 is one National Curriculum level above average for students of this age.

- 106 Teachers make substantial efforts to integrate students from ethnic minorities, those for whom English is an additional language and those with identified special needs into the teaching group. All these students make progress that is in line with other students in the group.
- 107 Teachers develop very positive relationships with their students, which results in them gaining good learning habits, displaying positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons. Teachers assess student performance largely through homework and regular testing of knowledge learnt. Assessment records provide valuable evidence from which a student's future attainment can be predicted. As a result of this information, students are set realistic targets for improvement and are given sufficient guidance about what they need to do to reach them.
- 108 Teachers have yet to build on the success of the implementation of the mathematics strand of the Key Stage 3 Strategy to other aspects of the mathematics curriculum. Nor have they given enough consideration in their planning of lessons to the skills students will need to use. In addition, they do not pay enough attention to the way students present their work and come to classes prepared and equipped for lessons.
- 109 The three part lesson⁸ has been widely adopted by teachers as the main teaching approach to mathematics. However, at the end of lessons, some teachers do not effectively review the learning that has taken place and, thus, students are not always in a position to assess their own work and progress. As a result, students do not benefit as much as they could and teachers are not well placed to plan the links to the next lesson.
- 110 Teachers make good use of large whiteboards in each classroom to inform students about the content of the lesson, the key words to be used and the homework that will be set. Good use is made of words displayed to develop student's understanding of important mathematical terminology. The department actively encourages students to develop other literacy skills through reading texts aloud, answering questions and listening to other students' ideas and answers. However, teachers do not adequately help develop students' listening skills.
- 111 The mathematics curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the requirements for GCSE. The absence of regular use of ICT within the mathematics curriculum is of major concern. Displays of students' work demonstrate what they have learnt and act as stimulus to others. The stock of mathematics books available to students in the school library is poor.
- 112 The department has good facilities and the time without a head of department has been well managed by the acting co-ordinator of mathematics. Despite the recent staffing problems there is a good team spirit. The co-ordinator has ensured that the department continues to be effective and efficient. The department has made very effective use of the local education authority numeracy consultant to support individual members of staff and to assist with the planning and implementation of a training programme for the department. The school has been fortunate to find non-specialist mathematics teachers among the staff who have willingly agreed to teach mathematics. However, the match of teachers to the demands of the subject is unsatisfactory. This has resulted in some teaching groups not having a specialist teacher for over 12 months. As a consequence, students have not developed

⁸ This is an approach advocated by the Key Stage 3 strategy, in which lessons have an introduction, a development phase and a summary which, amongst other things, helps students review the progress they have made in their learning during the lesson or sequence of lessons.

sufficient mathematical knowledge and understanding to enable them to tackle the demands and rigour of more challenging work, particularly that associated with the higher levels of the National Curriculum. The attainment for these students at GCSE in forthcoming years is likely to be below their real capabilities. This situation has been compounded further by poor timetabling, which requires some students to have two mathematics lessons on one day and for many classes to be taught mathematics by more than one teacher. In part the situation will be resolved by the arrival of a new head of department and another specialist mathematics teacher in the near future. Overall, the department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Results in national tests have been improving.
- Good provision for students with special educational needs.
- The assessment and tracking of students' progress, which is very effective.

Areas for improvement

- Achievement in the GCSE examinations.
- Further development of schemes of work.
- Greater use of computers.

- 113 Results in national tests for 14-year-olds at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were below national average levels and below those of similar schools. However, the proportion achieving higher Levels 6 and 7 was in line with that of similar schools. Boys' results were better than those of girls. There has been a trend of improvement since the previous inspection and results in 2001 were considerably better than those in the previous year. The results in the GCSE examination in double award science in 2001 were below the national average. They were slightly below those achieved in 2000. The boys again did better than the girls. The results have shown little change since the previous inspection, but have fluctuated considerably since 1996.
- 114 Standards of work seen during the inspection are better than those seen in recent tests and examinations and are average overall. Students' achievement in relation to their prior attainment is good. Lower attaining students, and particularly those with special educational needs, make good progress. Science is making a positive contribution to the development of students' literacy skills. The use of writing frames and key words helps them to produce well-written accounts of their experiments. Students with special talents in science make satisfactory progress, but could be challenged more. The good quality of the teaching throughout the department and the positive attitudes and good behaviour of the students contribute to good rates of learning in lessons and, thus, to good achievement.
- 115 Standards of work seen in Year 9 are average, in contrast to the below average results achieved in the national tests. Students perform better in class because the teachers continually monitor their progress. There is also less information to deal with and remember than in the tests. However, there is considerable evidence of improving standards in Year 7. The introduction of thinking skills into the scheme of work and the sharing of good practice by the teachers has had a positive effect in meeting the specific learning needs of the students. Students acquire a good

knowledge of science. However, several students have difficulty in explaining their experimental results. For example, below average attaining students in Year 7 could test soils for acids and alkalis, but could not relate their results to the strengths of the acids using a colour scale chart. Students with special educational needs are provided with modified learning materials and given good support from both teachers and learning support assistants to reach standards in line with their abilities. Students with English as an additional language make good progress overall. However, there are a few cases where students who are at an early stage of language acquisition do not receive sufficient specialist support. Students with specific learning difficulties are well integrated into science lessons and make good progress. Most achieve well because of the combined support of the class teachers and staff from the cluster. Students generally achieve well in relation to their prior attainment through Years 7 to 9.

- 116 Standards of work seen in Year 11 are average, which is in contrast to the below average results in recent years. Students in Year 11 generally have a sound knowledge of science. They have good practical skills and the majority now produce good coursework investigations. These students have good planning and observation skills, but their evaluations of results are not so good. For example, higher attaining students carried out an experiment to identify animals in leaf litter. Their observations were precise and they could identify most of them. However, despite seeing that most of the animals were at the bottom of the litter they could not link this with temperature, light and humidity. The amount of investigative science has increased considerably since the previous inspection. Lower attaining students are well supported in lessons and in Year 10 the new GCSE modular science course matches the needs of all students, with a specific use of information and communication technology written into each module. For example, Year 10 students used a computer-aided presentation to illustrate the ways smoking damages health.
- 117 The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of science and their planning and preparation is very good. However, while literacy is dealt with very effectively, the application of students' mathematical skills in science is not equally strong because there is no systematic approach to identifying when these skills are being used. Teachers use a wide variety of strategies and resources and because of this students learn well. For example, diagrams of a large number of birds captured the interest of Year 7 students and generated a lively discussion as to whether the birds should be classified by diet, size or bill shape. Learning objectives are clear. They are shared with the students and reinforced several times. They are generally summed up at the end of lessons. Learning is best where challenge is high and the pace is brisk. For example, Year 11 students were given circuit diagrams and were then challenged to set up a variety of electrical circuits. They then had to explain the differences in readings on ammeters and voltmeters and due to their perseverance and sharing of ideas the students achieved this. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection, but there were a few incidents in the lower school where management strategies were not effective in controlling a minority of disruptive students. Students' work is marked regularly, but the comments sometimes lack depth. The use of levels and grades would help the students to improve. However, this is done to some extent when teachers put right common errors in homework by going over it as a whole class exercise.
- 118 The department is well led and well managed. The head of department now has a clear view of what needs to be done to raise standards. The development plan reflects these intentions. Teachers have been monitored by lesson observations and given verbal and written feedback. The range of teaching strategies has improved

since the previous inspection and the head of department ensures that good practice is shared. Schemes of work have been rewritten in Years 7 and 9 with the introduction of thinking skills into the Year 7 scheme. The Year 9 scheme matches materials to the needs of all students. As a result, standards are improving and this is reflected in the national tests. There are good procedures for assessing and tracking students' progress and target setting is used effectively. The use of computers has improved since the previous inspection. Students now gain experience in research and word processing and, to a lesser extent, data logging and the use of spreadsheets. However, computers are still not used enough on a day to day basis. The two new laboratories added in 1997 ensure that the accommodation is satisfactory for teaching and learning. The facilities now allow a greater focus on investigative science and more practical work generally.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Good teaching of art.
- Teachers know their students well and provide for their individual needs.
- The promotion of creativity is good.
- The links which are made with the artistic community.
- The contribution made by the department to the school's literacy strategy.
- The new accommodation which has been provided.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of adequate reproductions of artworks.
- The use of computers to generate creative art.
- Facilities to display students' three-dimensional work.
- Resources for video animation.

119 In the most recent GCSE art and graphic design examinations, the percentage of students achieving grades A* to C almost matched the national average. In previous years, results had been above the national average and results in 2001 reflect the changes that had taken place in examination criteria for art.

120 Standards of work, as seen in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection, are average. These standards are achieved because, although initial attainment is low, the teaching is good. Students arrive with very varied levels of ability and many have very weak observational drawing skills. By the end of Year 9 the majority of students, both boys and girls, achieve or exceed the level expected nationally. This is very good progress. Achievement in relation to prior attainment is good. Students are able to record accurately in pen and ink due to good teacher demonstration. They work hard and demonstrate their imaginative use of vibrant colour in delightful portraits that are done with flair. Students develop sound understanding of human proportion in well-considered accurate drawings and employ simple freehand measuring in repeat pattern designs. Students make good progress in developing their observational drawing skills, but the standard for many in this aspect of the subject is often less than expected for their age.

121 Students are familiar with a range of artists and different artistic movements from the well-planned scheme of work. In large group presentations, the teachers' introductions of the work of new artists to Year 7 students would be better with sufficient reproductions of artists' work of a size to enable all students to see. An

appropriate art vocabulary is acquired from the regular emphasis that teachers place on new words and pronunciation in lessons.

- 122 Students demonstrate a good knowledge of the art of others in their own work. Awareness of the values integral to the art of different cultures is also very well addressed. One student's response to the question of whether the style of Aboriginal art was better than European representational art was that they were 'not better or worse but merely different'. This thoughtful comment is typical of the sensitive way students consider issues and express themselves. They demonstrate a grasp of issues of right and wrong in studies of Picasso's *Guernica*. A sense of social responsibility is shown in group discussions of the effect of graffiti art in public places when teachers employ effective question and answer techniques to encourage students to think.
- 123 Sketchbook work is well established. Students understand their purpose to record ideas and discoveries very early. This was shown well when Year 7 were successfully trusted to go into the school grounds to find natural forms for sculpture and one student spontaneously said that they had better take their sketchbooks in case they needed to record something new. An open-ended approach to work, sometimes combining words and image to produce the unexpected, results in the students developing a creative way of thinking to support their craft skills.
- 124 In Years 7 to 9, self-assessment is a regular feature. Students with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress. Students are very considerate of each other and regularly provide good care and support for each other. There is no significant difference seen in the work of boys and girls. The supportive teaching and the way lessons are planned enables high attaining students to work to their potential, but some higher ability students still find some work insufficiently demanding. In Years 7 to 9, students are able to use computers to research different artists, but they do not use them to generate creative artwork. They enthusiastically explore simple video animation processes, but the standard of their work is frustrated by the lack of suitable equipment. While there are opportunities for students to visit art galleries, not all students are able to benefit.
- 125 In examination years, students are able to enter for either art and design or graphic design courses. These courses are popular and attract a higher number of students than the national average. Overall, the attainment of students at the end of Year 11 is average and this reflects good achievement over the two-year courses.
- 126 In Years 10 and 11, small groups assess each other's work. This helps them identify what they need to do in order to improve. Students are provided with good guidance material in these tasks, but they do not show their work to each other in an adequate manner, with the result that their discussion is not as well informed as it should be. Teachers know their students very well and encourage them to develop work on a personal theme. This results in a sense of ownership and responsibility and encourages students to build up a good body of work. Annotation continues to be a strength of the way they develop and record their ideas. Many students employ poetry to stimulate and embellish their work. They are able to express their opinions and judgements in writing and will discuss their work confidently. They work in a range of different scales and students demonstrate accurate measuring. They develop new painting techniques and more sophisticated use of colour by working in the style of artists such as Monet. In Years 10 and 11, all students visit art galleries and are familiar with a broader range of different art forms. Their knowledge is further well informed from the good stock of books in the studios, but provision to support private research in the library is poor. Students are able to find out about the

graphic work of the artist Escher on CD-ROM, but the use of computers to create graphic design or art is not yet firmly embedded.

- 127 Leadership is good and the department has made good progress since the previous report. Many successful working links have been made with the local artistic community so that students are provided with additional stimulating and enriching experiences. Cross-curricular links with music and drama promote the integration of the creative arts. The new purpose-built accommodation provides a good working environment. At times, however, lessons are cut short in order to prepare the room for use by other subjects. Storage is still unsatisfactory. Facilities to exhibit and celebrate students' achievements in three-dimensional work are inadequate. Homework is a regular feature of all lessons and is now effectively linked to lesson topics. Group work, such as the well-crafted Millennium, is now a regular feature. There has been a very effective promotion of students' awareness and experience of three-dimensional activities, such as the imaginative 'living willow' sculptures in the school grounds which students produced when working with a professional artist-in-residence.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Leadership and management by the new head of department are good.

Areas for development

- Examination results.
- Year 10 course work.
- Work with computer aided design and manufacture.
- Improving selected design ideas.

- 128 GCSE results for 2001 are significantly below national and similar school averages and lower than students' other examination results. This is a decline since the previous inspection. Results for the electronic products and food technology options are very low.
- 129 The current work of 16 year old students is below what is expected at this age, although there is some good quality work overall in graphic products, covering all required elements for examination coursework. There is some good practical work in resistant materials, indicating students' good practical skills. In food technology, students have knowledge of basic nutrients and some can develop food for people with particular dietary requirements. However, they only know a limited range of methods of testing and comparing foods. In the electronic products option, a significant proportion of students have little understanding of the function of the components they are using and have not carried out enough development of electronic circuits.
- 130 Teachers' assessments of 14 year old students' work in 2001 show standards to be below expected levels. The work of students currently in Year 9 is also below average, but that of younger students is better. Students can analyse the requirements of a design problem, but some initial research does not relate to chosen design ideas. Copying a given diagram, for example for a moisture tester, does not constitute research. They can take account of the possible users of the items they propose to make. Students can use modelling as an aid to design, but

their skills in developing a chosen idea are weak. They work confidently in a practical environment, producing work that is in line with expectations. Students have experience of artwork from other cultures in, for example, textiles technology. Course organisation leads to students having a restricted choice of materials within some resistant materials topics. Overall, not enough use is made of information and communication technology to support students' work in all year groups.

- 131 Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Gifted and talented students also make satisfactory progress, although planning does not take enough account of their needs for them to achieve higher levels.
- 132 Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed during the inspection. Students make good progress when lessons are well organised and time is used well. Learning is effective where the teacher recognises and responds to concerns that need to be clarified on a whole class basis. Students learn well and are enthusiastic when a good range of resources is provided, for example, in textiles technology when planning to make bags. Students learn well when teachers' good knowledge of the subject is used to good effect when working with individuals. Where homework is relevant to a topic being studied it makes a positive contribution to students' learning. However, homework could be more effective. Students could be asked, for example, to test foods in food technology rather than to make a cover design for a folder.
- 133 Teaching is less effective where teachers do not place enough stress on the development of elements of product design, such as when students research a range of joining methods but then all use the same kind. Learning is hindered when lesson organisation leads to periods of inactivity as students wait for resources. Teaching is ineffective when planning is inadequate to meet the needs of a significant proportion of the class and thus results in students making slow progress in their learning.
- 134 Leadership and management of the department are good. The recently appointed head of department is raising the image of the subject, with good support from a senior manager. Staffing is satisfactory, but some staff have not had adequate training in the use of information and communication technology in design and technology. Accommodation, overall, is very good, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. However, the open plan arrangement of the two resistant materials rooms leads to unnecessary noise levels transmitting from one area to another, which has a negative effect on teaching and learning. Teaching resources are unsatisfactory. There are no facilities for students to experience computer aided design and manufacture and there is not enough equipment to teach students about pneumatic systems at the required levels.
- 135 The curriculum for 11 to 14 year olds covers work with a satisfactory range of materials. However, the large number of units of work leads to some elements, such as the development of chosen designs, not being covered in sufficient depth. Some units of work stress superficial design elements rather than the principles of product design. There is good emphasis on the development of students' literacy skills, leading to a satisfactory understanding of specialist terms. A satisfactory range of options is offered to GCSE level, but there is no work-related curriculum or course to suit the needs of lower attaining students. In Year 10 too much time is given to the development of skills that are not directly related to designing and making assignments. No scheme of work is available for electronic products. Provision for the development of students' numeracy skills has not yet been incorporated into planning.

136 The basis of a very good assessment system is in place for students up to the age of 14, which could involve students in setting targets for their future work. However, all staff do not yet use this system. Annual reports to parents contain insufficient details of what students know or understand and what skills they have.

GEOGRAPHY

Provision for geography is **good**.

Strengths

- GCSE results are improving and are close to the national average.
- Good teaching enables students of all ages to learn well.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology.
- Opportunities to undertake fieldwork.
- The match of provision to needs for the highest and lowest attaining students.

137 In the 2001 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, attainment was judged to be below the national average. However, an examination of students' work and teachers' assessments during the inspection indicates that teachers' judgements are generally too low. In fact, attainment is similar to that of students of the same age nationally. This represents good progress, since attainment on entry to the school is below the national average.

138 The 2001 GCSE results were close to the national average for the number of students gaining A* to C grades. However, the number of students who achieved the highest grades in their examination was lower than nationally. Observation of lessons and an examination of students' work indicate that overall results are likely to be similar this year. However, there will be a significant increase in the number of students who achieve the highest grades. All students work hard in this subject and take a pride in the presentation of their books and coursework. They do a lot of work in the time available.

139 Students in Years 7 to 9 make good progress. They quickly acquire the skills needed to use maps effectively. In Year 7, students demonstrate the ability to give six figure grid references for specific locations. They show a secure understanding of map symbols and the ability to use contour lines to identify the shape of the land. By the end of Year 9, students have a secure understanding of the differences between less and more economically developed countries. They are able to explain why poor countries remain poor and are beginning to think sensibly about issues such as 'fair trade'.

140 In Years 10 and 11, students receive detailed guidance on the completion of coursework. Their work is regularly assessed to ensure that they are on target to achieve the grades expected of them. Teachers mark their work informatively so that students know what they have done well and how it could be improved. There are regular opportunities to practise past examination questions and effective and interesting revision lessons are an important part of the Year 11 scheme of work. As a result, students make good progress and achieve standards that are appropriate for their ability. Students use geographical terminology well and they have a secure understanding of a broad range of basic geographical facts. The highest attaining students are able to provide detailed explanations as well as descriptions. They

have also developed the ability to understand that there are often opposing viewpoints about geographical issues. They are able to compare these before reaching valid judgements about which view they should support. Students build up detailed case study material that will support them in their examinations. Good examples of revision lessons were observed during the inspection. Students can use information and communication technology to support their work, but this aspect remains underdeveloped and students use it insufficiently in their coursework.

- 141 Students with special educational needs and English as an additional language are generally well supported by learning support assistants when they are present in lessons. Teachers sometimes provide more structured worksheets or use different teaching strategies to ensure these students are able to take a full part in the lessons and achieve the same basic learning objectives as the rest. However, this is not always the case and, on some occasions, the lowest attaining students are unable to tackle the work set for them. When careful thought is put into the teaching strategies used with these students, they find the lessons interesting and enjoyable and, therefore, show good levels of motivation and do a lot of work. When the work is not well matched to their needs, they become bored and their behaviour deteriorates. Teachers are now trying to include extension activities in their lessons to ensure that the highest attaining students are sufficiently challenged. They are aware that both these aspects of their teaching still need further development.
- 142 Frequent opportunities are planned to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills. Key words are identified in each unit of work and teachers ensure that these are understood and used appropriately. There is evidence of persuasive writing, letter writing and the use of literature to promote empathy. On a regular basis, students are asked to read aloud to the class and the rest are expected to listen carefully to them. This makes a positive contribution to the development of speaking and listening skills. Students regularly use graphical methods to derive or show information. However, geography currently makes only a very limited contribution to the development of students' information and communication technology skills and the department is aware of the urgent need to develop this aspect of their teaching.
- 143 Overall, the quality of teaching is good. More than half of the lessons observed were good or very good. The scrutiny of students' work and the standards achieved clearly show that there is effective teaching, which results in students making good progress from the minute they come into the school. Teachers demonstrate a very secure understanding of the subject. This means that students receive accurate information and clear explanations of new skills or concepts. Teachers are particularly good at explaining difficult ideas by using real life examples which students find easier to understand. Lesson planning is thorough. Intended learning outcomes are shared with the students so that they know exactly what is expected of them. Teachers mark work carefully and suggest how it could be improved. This is done particularly well in Years 10 and 11 and results in the production of good quality coursework. Teachers have high expectations of all students, who generally respond positively to this. They behave well, listen carefully and work hard. In the best lessons, the pace is very fast and a particularly interesting range of teaching strategies is used to good effect. Effective use is made of videos, television programmes and newspaper articles to stimulate initial interest. When students have the chance to undertake fieldwork, it brings the subject to life for them and they really enjoy these experiences. This is, however, an under-developed aspect of the work of the department. Teachers are quick to spot circumstances where their intervention will help to move students on. Questioning is used very effectively to enable students to extend their ideas or to enable them to work out answers for

themselves. Homework is set regularly which either builds upon what has already been done or prepares students for the next step in their learning.

- 144 The department is effectively managed and there is a clear commitment to raising standards. Schemes of work have been rewritten following recent national guidance and these are clear and easy to use. They ensure that there is a consistency of approach from all teachers in the department. Monitoring is still in the early stages of development and is not yet sufficiently rigorous to have a real impact on teaching and learning.
- 145 There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Results have improved at both key stages, as has student progress. The quality of teaching has improved and is now good overall. Provision for the use of information and communication technology is improving, but remains insufficiently developed.

HISTORY

Provision for history is **good**.

Strengths:

- Rapid development of subject skills are made from Year 7 onwards.
- A very strong emphasis is placed on raising standards of literacy.
- Teachers have a very sound and secure grasp of subject knowledge.
- There are very positive relationships in classrooms.
- Subject management is good, with very clear and detailed documentation.
- Very thorough marking procedures have been developed in the department.

Areas for improvement:

- Higher grades at GCSE.
- More consistent development of independent research skills.
- The variety of classroom materials for lower attaining students.
- The use of information and communication technology throughout the subject.

- 146 In recent GCSE examinations, results have been above national averages and this was also the case in the 2001 examination. Few students, however, achieved the highest grades. In lessons seen and work analysed during the inspection, students develop their understanding of the subject rapidly from the start of Year 7, often working from a low knowledge and skills base on entry. They also learn to organise information well and are soon at ease with the use of sources. This was well illustrated in some detailed use of sources on medieval village life in Year 7 exercise books. Students' oral progress is good and they also learn to write for a variety of purposes. There is a commendable emphasis throughout on raising standards of literacy through the use of key words and subject terminology. As a result, attainment is close to national expectations by the end of Year 9. This is borne out by accurate teacher assessments at this stage. Students continue to make good progress in Years 10 and 11 so that by the age of 16 most have developed a detailed knowledge of the subject and can examine historical issues in depth, as in some very detailed note-taking on the American West in Year 11 exercise books. Higher attaining students are confident in their oral work but lack opportunities to develop the independent research skills that would enable them to achieve the highest grades at GCSE. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, but need a wider range of materials to suit their individual needs.

- 147 The quality of teaching is good overall and there are also elements of very good practice in classrooms. Teachers have a secure grasp of subject knowledge which they use very effectively to promote students' learning. The promotion of very good relationships helps teachers and students to explore historical issues together and gives students the confidence to be active participants in lessons. There are occasions, however, when teachers talk too much. Classroom management is very strong and teachers ensure that all students are included in the learning process through carefully targeted questions. Teachers plan lessons well with clear aims and objectives that they share with students, who also benefit from the chance to reflect on their progress at the end of lessons. A wide range of activities is used to engage the interest of students and stimulate their learning. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 8 lesson on the Industrial Revolution, during which the teachers used modern artefacts, video, paired work and class discussion to give students a very clear idea of the radical changes during that period.
- 148 The attitudes of students are very good. They enjoy history lessons and respond very well to challenges. A purposeful learning atmosphere is maintained in all lessons and students are eager and willing to participate in class discussions. This was demonstrated well in a Year 9 lesson in which students discussed the origins of the Cold War and all took part in a mature and thoughtful debate on the differences between capitalist and communist regimes after 1945. The previous inspection report noted that students lacked initiative in some lessons. This is no longer the case and students are now eager to take a lead and show responsibility.
- 149 The department is managed well with a dedicated and well-qualified teaching team. Teachers monitor students' academic performance very thoroughly and students are also involved in assessing their own work. Departmental documentation is very clear and detailed and there are well-judged plans for future development. Marking techniques give students a very clear indication of how to improve their written work. The department has a very strong commitment to raising standards of literacy in all years. Display is used very well to enrich classrooms and provide a very pleasant working atmosphere for students. There are some visits to historical sites but, overall, the programme of trips and visits to support learning in history is limited. The use of information and communication technology has yet to make a sufficient impact on the work of the department and is under-used in the subject curriculum.
- 150 Overall, the history department has made good progress since the previous inspection. It has a very strong teaching team and has clear plans for the future. The key issue now is to ensure that all students reach their full potential, particularly in relation to the higher grades in GCSE examinations.

Humanities

- 151 In recent years, GCSE results have been above national averages and in the most recent examination the proportion of students gaining the A* and A grades was almost double the national average. This was a notable achievement. There is currently one group of students studying the subject in each of Years 10 and 11. They are making good progress, especially in terms of note-taking and essay writing. Some very detailed coursework essays were seen comparing factual and fictional accounts of the Holocaust. Teaching in the subject is good with very strong subject knowledge used well to enthuse and motivate students. As a result, students thoroughly enjoy their lessons and are very keen to participate in debate and discussion. The subject makes an important contribution to the personal development of students, but does not make enough use of information and communication technology in the curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- All 11 to 14 year old students have timetabled lessons in the subject.

Areas for development

- Statutory requirements, which are not met.
- Provision for 15 and 16 year old students.
- The teaching of ICT.
- Provision for students to develop and apply their ICT skills in other subjects.
- Assessment and monitoring systems.
- Efficient use of resources.

- 152 The standards students attain by the age of 16 are well below expected levels. Students do not have specific ICT lessons in Years 10 and 11 and there is no system in place to ensure that they receive their entitlement through other subjects. This is similar to the situation at the time of the previous inspection. Some 15 year old students make good use of ICT in English to produce computerised presentations and students following the business studies option can import images from the Internet to enhance their presentations for particular audiences. Planning shows that ICT is used in science to capture data and to interpret their findings. In design and technology some students can use a good mix of text, graphics and digital images. There is no evidence of students using spreadsheets at the appropriate level or of the use of computers for control or for designing information systems.
- 153 The standards students attain by the age of 14 are below expected levels. Teacher assessments for 2001 show a similar picture, but these assessments are unreliable as they do not take account of the fact that only some of the required aspects of the subject were covered in that year. However, there has been an improvement since the previous inspection as students now cover work in all the required aspects of ICT. Most students are confident users of computers. They know how to access work with the use of passwords and have sufficient facility to use e-mail and open attached files. This allows them to have contact with people from other cultures, for example with students in a school in Canada. Good lesson planning leads to students being able to decide which are good Internet sites and which are not. In science they can capture data, for example, when studying the cooling of materials and represent their results in the form of graphs. Students can give instructions for a computer to carry out immediate commands, but this work is at a much lower level than expected at this age. They can assemble a slide presentation on screen to illustrate work in English, for instance when looking at the morality of foxhunting. Students have some facility with desk top publishing, using a mixture of text and graphic images, but at a lower level than is expected. Work with spreadsheets is at a low level for this age. No difference between the work of boys and girls was observed during this inspection.
- 154 Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Learning support assistants are not involved in planning or briefed before lessons and this limits their effectiveness in ICT lessons. Some support materials take insufficient account of students who have lower levels of literacy. Gifted and talented students make satisfactory progress, but there is no special provision for them.

- 155 Overall, teaching and learning are unsatisfactory. They are poor for 15 and 16 year olds because there is no planned programme to ensure that these students receive their entitlement. Teaching and learning are satisfactory for 11 to 14 year old students. Where there is successful teaching and learning, teachers use questions well and sensitively to reinforce and extend students' understanding. Good preparation, for example, when setting up a topic to use e-mail links to another school, led to students learning well. When resources are provided which enable them to work at their own pace, students respond well to the challenge offered.
- 156 Teaching is less effective when expectations of behaviour are not made sufficiently clear. Where teachers are not vigilant, students lose concentration, for example, when a small number of students send e-mails to each other rather than focus on the task set. One lesson was not fully effective, as the teacher had not established the level of students' mathematical ability before setting a task requiring an understanding of how to measure angles.
- 157 There have been considerable recent developments, including timetabled lessons for all students between the ages of 11 and 14, the increase in the number of workstations, preparation for the networking of computers and the establishment of the school's own internet website. However, there have been insufficient developments from the time of the previous inspection to raise the levels of students' attainment, particularly of 15 and 16 year olds. The school has not made certain that all departments teach ICT so that all 15 and 16 year olds receive their entitlement. There are plans in place for this, but they have not yet been implemented. The school has not yet sought parental permissions for students to have Internet access, which is recommended best practice.
- 158 Staff training is planned, but at the moment teachers are not expert enough to be able to teach ICT at the same time as they teach their subjects. The ICT technician makes a good contribution to the subject, often helping students. Accommodation is satisfactory for the courses currently on offer. Unsatisfactory use is made of the existing resources, which are slightly below the recommended minimum for this kind of school. Library facilities for ICT are unsatisfactory, but plans are in place for them to improve.
- 159 The curriculum for students up to the age of 14 is satisfactory, but it is poor for students in their last two years in school. Many students make good use of the ICT facilities out of school time.
- 160 Assessment is unsatisfactory throughout the school. There is a system in place for 11 to 14 year old students, but it is so new that it has not yet helped teachers to plan future work for students. As students' work is all saved on disk, the lack of printouts means that they cannot benefit from teachers' written comments to help them to improve their work. There is no system in place for collating information related to the work of 15 and 16 year old students.
- 161 The use of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory. There is some good use in English, science and business studies, but in all other subjects it is unsatisfactory and the requirements of this element of the National Curriculum are not met in those subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teachers plan their lessons carefully.
- The resources used in the subject are of high quality.
- Good use is made of assessment.
- Lesson aims and objectives are presented clearly to students.

Areas for improvement

- The use of the foreign language in lessons.
- The behaviour of some less able students.

162 By the age of 14, students' attainment is in line with national averages. This is true for both French and German. In Years 7 and 8, Spanish has now replaced German as the second language for more able students. Students' attainment and progress are good in this language, considering the amount of time they have studied it. Students achieve well in most language lessons. There have been a significant number of changes in staffing in the last two to three years. This has reduced the motivation of some less able students, whose rate of progress is slower than that for other students.

163 In Years 10 and 11, students' attainment in French and German is similar to the national average. Students' GCSE performance in French in the last two years is slightly above average. In German, results were well above the national pass rates in 2000, but were a little lower in 2001. The school's policy for GCSE languages has been to enter a larger number and from a wider ability range than is usually the case in other schools. When this is taken into account, attainment is often better than the straightforward comparison with national pass rates indicates. When compared to their other subjects in the last two years, students' attainment in modern languages is also good. There is no significant variation in the attainment of boys and girls except in German in 2000, when girls' attainment was lower than would be expected nationally. Analysis and observation of students' work at the time of the inspection, however, indicate that this is not a long term trend. Throughout the school, overall levels of attainment and achievement show improvement since the last inspection.

164 Towards the end of Year 9, more able students in French have developed good listening skills. They follow their teacher's instructions in rapid French with little hesitancy. This results from the teacher's insistence on using the foreign language to manage most of the lesson and the need for students to focus carefully on the information given, maintaining good levels of attention. In a lesson on parts of the body and explaining illness, students made good progress in learning an extensive range of expressions. As a result of detailed planning, new language was presented in careful sequence, enabling all students to progress well. The teacher's insistence on accurate pronunciation through chorus work and repetition resulted in good accents and careful imitation of sounds.

165 In Year 8 there is good achievement in the development of reading skills. In a French lesson, students worked with short readers and other written extracts. The students' reading was carefully guided by very high quality reading cards. The cards were matched to their National Curriculum levels and contained attractive, up-to-date illustrations and plenty of exercises to help students build their comprehension skills. In spite of this careful planning, however, the more able students would have

benefited from the challenge of being required to find and understand longer and more difficult words in the text.

- 166 The attainment of a few less able students is lower than would normally be expected by the end of Year 9. In a lesson for lower ability students in French, resources and activities were well matched to students' levels. Pictures were provided, for instance, for matching to written sentences about daily routines and clock faces were successfully used to help students tell the time. Student progress was regularly monitored and the support given to individuals was good. In spite of the quality of planning and teaching, the behaviour of a minority of students reduced the levels of concentration and attention of other students. This was one consequence of changes in staffing and lack of continuity in teaching.
- 167 In German, higher ability students in Year 9 make good progress in using a range of different tenses. In a lesson on the past tense most students spoke about previous activities and routines with good accuracy. They listened to cassette recordings at speed and accurately picked out a range of details. In this lesson, careful provision was made for students of different abilities through setting simpler or more difficult tasks to match their levels. This approach shows good improvement since the last inspection. Revision built into lesson planning enabled most students to achieve well in reading short texts about holidays they had taken. However, some over-reliance on written exercises and use of English to explain German words led to a slow pace of working by some boys in this class.
- 168 In Years 7 and 8, Spanish is studied by more able students. Standards and levels of progress are usually good. In a lesson on homes, houses and location the quick presentation of pictures on the topic focused students' attention and maintained concentration. Work sheets of high quality guided students to confidently match written information to the correct picture of a range of different dwellings and situations. Similar guidance was provided to help students in a class survey of where they lived. Skilled organisation resulted in a minimal use of English as students moved around the classroom and behaved responsibly.
- 169 By the time they are 16, students are making good progress in acquiring a broader range of vocabulary and new expressions in French. Those of average and above average ability learn how to use different tenses. In one lesson they described what they did in their summer holidays, for example, and used future tenses to write about further plans and activities. Some have progressed to write at good length about part-time jobs with details of their earnings and working hours. Work is usually well presented, indicating a careful approach and positive attitudes.
- 170 In Year 11, students have developed good listening skills. Working on the topic of restaurants and hotels, they listened to rapid taped dialogue and most of them confidently picked out a range of details, including customer names and room numbers. Guidance by the teacher, who produced a grid to record answers, ensured accurate responses and paired work helped build more confident oral answers. Most students maintained good levels of attention. Finishing the lesson with a board game for practising key words also sustained motivation right to the end.
- 171 By the end of a Year 10 French lesson, students were confident, for example, in simulating a telephone restaurant booking giving a range of different requirements. This is a result of very good teaching. Students of all levels of ability achieve well as they record up to 20 different details about booking a meal. Teachers' assessments of students' attainment is also very effective in relating their score to GCSE grades to help them evaluate their own progress. In German, students made good progress in

identifying similarities between German, Dutch and English. They make good progress in writing about a wider range of topics to include travel and transport, giving and understanding directions. Most understand their teacher's fluent German and follow instructions accurately.

- 172 The quality of teaching is good, although there are inconsistencies between lessons. Teachers produce very good resources to match students' individual needs and to ensure that as many of them as possible are included in lesson activities. They work hard to manage students' behaviour. They usually achieve good levels of co-operation, but this is not always the case in relation to a few below average ability students. The aims and objectives of lessons are always made clear to students. Planning ensures regular practice of the language being learned. Homework is usually carefully marked and in sufficient detail to help students learn from their mistakes. Assessment of written work is good, ensuring that students are well aware of their National Curriculum levels and that they are set precise targets to help them improve. In a few lessons, teachers use too much English. This means that students are not always sufficiently challenged by having to listen carefully and work to their full potential by answering accurately in the foreign language.
- 173 Teachers in the department benefit from being provided with good written guidance and detailed schemes of work. They work well together to prepare and share resources. They think carefully about their planning and teaching.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The quality of class teaching is good.
- The department is very well led.
- A good contribution is made to students' social and cultural development.
- The quality of students' performances is impressive.
- Arrangements for assessing students' progress are very effective.

Areas for improvement

- Planning for students of different levels of attainment.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) resources to enhance students' performing and composing skills.
- Ensuring the quality of the provision of instrumental and vocal tuition.

- 174 National Curriculum teacher assessments for 2001 show students at the age of 14 attaining in line with national averages. At GCSE no students were entered for music in 2001. In 2000 all students attained A* to C grades. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results have tended to be above national averages, but as numbers are small, comparisons are statistically unreliable.
- 175 By the time students are 14 years old, their attainment in music is close to national expectations. This means that they have made good progress from when they entered the school when their attainment was below national expectations. In Year 9, students show a good understanding of the style and structure of 'pop' songs and can combine melody and harmony very successfully in composing their own songs. Higher attaining students can develop their ideas into more extended pieces. The quality of singing is good and students perform confidently and with a sense of style.

- 176 By the time students are 16 years of age, their attainment in music is average. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. Students in Year 11 have a good understanding of musical devices used in composing. They can compose original pieces of several layers which show good understanding of harmonic structure and effective development of musical ideas. They can use music sequencing software on computers effectively to compose and notate their pieces. The quality of students' performing is good, with fluent and expressive individual and group performances. However, their knowledge and understanding of technical terms are insecure. A few higher attaining students achieve standards which are well above average.
- 177 The quality of class teaching is good overall. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Effective use of demonstration and examples enables students to acquire a better understanding of musical concepts and of what they have to do and how. This was shown in a Year 8 lesson about the blues where the teacher's modelling of improvisation and effective encouragement enabled lower attaining students to improvise successfully over a 12-bar blues chord pattern. A range of short activities is often used to help students focus their attention and this works particularly well with students who have special educational needs, enabling them to make good progress in lessons. High expectations, good management of students, lively pace and enthusiasm result in students behaving well and working productively. Students show good attitudes to their learning and enjoy their lessons. When students work in groups they are very supportive of each other and can be trusted to work sensibly around the music area without constant supervision. However, teachers' planning does not always provide sufficiently well for the needs of the more musically able in Years 7 to 9. Consequently, these students do not always make sufficient progress by the end of a lesson. Opportunities for reviewing what has been learned are often missed at the end of a lesson. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good overall. The teacher's subject knowledge and understanding of the GCSE requirements are very good. The teacher knows the students well and uses effective methods that enable all students to make very good progress, particularly with their performing and composing work.
- 178 Since the previous inspection there has been a significant increase in the opportunities for students to take part in musical activities outside class lessons. Students can learn to sing and to play a wide range of instruments. However, there are some inadequacies in the quality of this provision and there are inadequate systems of quality assurance. Students can also participate in a wide range of activities, including choir, samba band, orchestra, workshops such as African drumming and gamelan, and the school productions. The standard of singing achieved by the chamber choir and by those taking part in *Little Shop of Horrors* is excellent. These well-supported activities contribute greatly to students' social and cultural development.
- 179 The leadership of the department is very good. The head of department has a very clear vision for the further development of music in the school and in the wider community and has worked hard to raise the profile of music in the school since being appointed three years ago. Evidence of this is the increasing number of students who opt for music at GCSE. Arrangements for assessing students' attainment and progress have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. Detailed schemes of work are now in place across all years, but the learning for students of different levels of attainment is not always included. Teachers make very good use of the resources they have, but there are insufficient instruments when two classes of students are taught at the same time. ICT equipment is still limited, as

was the case at the time of the previous inspection. Students do not have sufficient access to music sequencing via software or keyboards for enhancing their performing and composing skills and for meeting the demands of GCSE coursework. Overall, however, improvement since the last inspection is very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The overall quality of provision of physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- The teaching of physical education is of good quality.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided.

Areas for improvement

- The involvement of students in the planning and evaluation of their work.
- The chance for students in Years 10 and 11 to take a GCSE in dance.
- The inclusion of a health and fitness module in the curriculum on offer.

180 In July 2001 the proportion of students gaining A* to G grades in the physical education GCSE examination was better than the national average. Although the number of students gaining A* to C grades was below the national average this represented a significant improvement on the previous year's results. The grades that students gained in this examination compared very favourably with results achieved by the same students in their other subjects. Although there were more boys than girls taking the examination, there was no significant difference in their attainment levels

181 Students arrive from their primary schools bringing with them a wide range of physical education skills and experiences, with many below the level expected. They settle into the school quickly and most make good progress so that by the time they are 14 years old most students are attaining average standards. By the end of Year 9 most students are able to apply techniques, skills and competition rules to several aspects of the subject including soccer, netball, cricket and athletics. Basic skills are well developed and provide a sound platform for future developments. A good example of this was observed in a Year 9 cricket lesson where students were showing good striking and catching skills and then were beginning to refine and improve their batting and fielding ability. In athletics, average ability is being successfully converted into expertise in several track and field events. The standard of swimming is good. Many students arrive at the school not able to reach the national attainment target for 11 year olds of swimming 25 metres. Good progress is made in the school's swimming pool and by the end of Year 7 there are only a few non-swimmers. By the end of Year 9 most students confidently demonstrate good skills in a range of swimming strokes, life saving skills and personal survival techniques. Good levels of skills on the trampoline were observed, with students demonstrating forward and backward somersaults that were performed with style and fluency.

182 This good progress is maintained during Years 10 and 11 and by the time they are 16 years old most students are attaining average standards. Satisfactory levels of skills are very evident in a range of activities. Many students have a good understanding of tactics and strategies and are able to apply the skills they have learned when they are playing full games. Students understand the effect of exercise on their bodies and how to prepare themselves properly for physical activities. Students confidently lead their classes in effective warm-up routines. Students in the

examination groups are developing understanding and expertise in both the theoretical and practical aspects of the subject, although some students in Year 11 are finding success in the theoretical part of the examination difficult to attain. There has been a considerable increase in the number of students who have opted to take the examination in Year 10 and inspection evidence suggests that these students are making good progress and reaching good standards of attainment.

- 183 School teams take part in many inter-school competitions and gain much success. Many students have represented Elmbridge district in a variety of sports and others have gained regional representative honours.
- 184 Students with special educational needs make good progress. When introducing skills, teachers give clear demonstrations of the important points when learning the skills so that all students know exactly what is required. In addition, teachers give good individual support and coaching that helps students of all abilities. Students are very supportive of each other and help each other to improve their performances. Talented students are encouraged to extend their skills, both in school lessons and in other clubs and activities.
- 185 The teaching of physical education is good overall. All staff are specialist trained and are secure in their command of the subject. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives which are shared with the students. Relationships between teachers and students are sensitive and supportive. Teachers show a care and concern for their students while encouraging the best in fair play, co-operative and competitive experiences. Some students are being required to evaluate each other's performances, but in order to meet National Curriculum requirements this aspect needs to be developed. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and their students respond very positively to this, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Most students behave well and work hard. Their enjoyment of the subject is very evident.
- 186 The physical education curriculum meets the statutory requirements at both stages. The time allocated to the subject enables the students to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Occasionally, large group sizes create difficult teaching conditions. Schemes of work reflect the National Curriculum requirements and support what is being taught. The use of the excellent off-site facilities at Sandown Park enables students to take part in golf and skiing as part of the Years 10 and 11 curriculum. The curriculum would be improved still further by including a health and fitness module for all students and by enabling the Years 10 and 11 students to do a GCSE course in dance. There has been a considerable improvement in the number of extra-curricular activities that are on offer and many staff, including non-specialists, give generously of their time to provide a wide range of activities which are well supported by enthusiastic groups of students. As part of the well organized Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, 25 students who are completing the silver level of the award will soon be involved in a 200 kilometres cycling expedition in Normandy.
- 187 The management and leadership of the department contribute positively to the standards achieved. Good quality documentation covers all aspects of the department's work and helps the teaching of the subject. Although the school has good outdoor facilities, including an outdoor swimming pool, the indoor accommodation is limited. When inclement weather prevents the use of the outdoor facilities, the shortage of suitable indoor alternative accommodation makes it difficult for students to complete the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. Hard-working teachers work together as a team, showing a commitment to the improvement of the department, and are very supportive of each other.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision for religious education is **good**.

Strengths

- There has been good improvement overall since the previous inspection.
- Good teaching enables students to learn well.
- Students' achievements are good.

Areas for improvement

- Giving students more responsibility for their own learning.
- Making marking more effective.
- Providing more and better textbooks and increasing the use of information and communication technology (ICT).

- 188 Students' attainment at GCSE Short Course examination level has significantly improved since the previous inspection, when results were below the national average. In the 2001 examination, the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades was slightly above the national average for the subject. This improvement is the more significant in that, between 1999 and 2001, the number of students entered for the examination almost doubled, from just over half of the year group to nearly the whole of it.
- 189 There are no national standards for religious education at age 14. However, in work seen during the inspection, the attainment of students in Year 9 was higher than at the previous inspection and in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for their age. Students have a sound knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country and of their origins and distinctive features. They have a satisfactory grasp of religious language, concepts and ideas. They understand why the beliefs of practising members of faith communities are important to them and how they shape their lives. Their skills in making a personal response to religious questions are, however, less well developed than their knowledge or understanding.
- 190 Again, in work seen during the inspection, the attainment of students in Year 11 was higher than at the previous inspection and in line with the expectations of both the locally agreed syllabus and the GCSE Short Course examination syllabus. For example, they have a sound understanding of Christian and Jewish perspectives on a range of ethical issues, such as those surrounding the family, marriage and divorce, the sanctity of life and social harmony. They can evaluate religious and secular responses to the issues and make a reasoned personal response to them.
- 191 Students achieve more highly than at the previous inspection. Boys and girls of all levels of prior attainment achieve well at ages 14 and 16, making good progress both in lessons and over time. This is because they are taught well, come to lessons keen to learn and work hard. Boys achieve as well as girls because they are given clear short-term targets in closely planned lessons. Students with special educational needs or from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve well because teachers create a secure ethos in the classroom in which students feel able to take risks in their learning.
- 192 Students' knowledge, skills and understanding develop well because they are challenged with work of increasing depth and complexity year on year. By Year 9

they can, for example, grasp the highly abstract concepts of Buddhism. By Year 11 their skills have developed sufficiently for them to be able to compare, evaluate and make a personal response to the classic philosophical arguments concerning the existence of a God, ranging from William Paley's *Argument from Design* to the problems of evil and suffering.

- 193 The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall. It is sometimes very good. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a good grasp of their subject, know clearly what they wish their students to learn and routinely share their aims with them. They have high expectations of students. They plan their lessons well to achieve their aims and catch and hold students' interest through a good variety of stimulating and challenging activities and tasks that are well matched to their individual needs. For example, Year 7 students made excellent gains in understanding Mohammed's message about the Oneness of God because of the teacher's excellent planning, which built effectively on prior learning and then led them step by step to grasp the key concepts through a well balanced sequence of stimulating activities. Students were totally absorbed by highly imaginative work requiring them to think laterally in deriving key concepts from visual images and the challenge of then expressing them in writing. Throughout, the teacher constantly challenged students' thinking and extended their understanding through highly skilled questioning, culminating in lively review of how far the lesson's aims had been achieved.
- 194 Teachers create a secure ethos in the classroom in which sensitive issues can be discussed. Students of all abilities and backgrounds learn well because they feel able to contribute to lessons, knowing that their teachers and peers will listen to their views and opinions with respect. Teachers set worthwhile homework that extends the learning in class. This good teaching is underpinned by very good relationships based on mutual respect and caring.
- 195 Where teaching is less secure, it is sometimes overly directive in style and does not sufficiently enable students to take responsibility for their own learning and develop skills of independent learning, research and enquiry. The development of these skills is also hindered by the unsatisfactory provision of textbooks in the classroom and school library and too few planned opportunities to develop and use ICT skills in lessons. Marking, while conscientious and supportive, does not always do enough to help students understand how to raise the level of their attainment.
- 196 The quality of leadership and day-to-day management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take if standards are to be further raised and has done much to improve provision in a short space of time. For example, procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress have been improved and are now good. Many more students can now follow the GCSE short course examination and provision will be further improved with the introduction of a GCSE full course from September 2002.