

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CATERHAM HIGH SCHOOL**

Iford

LEA area: Redbridge

Unique reference number: 102849

Headteacher: Dr A Atkins

Reporting inspector: Dr Barbara Hilton  
3228

Dates of inspection: 12 - 16 November 2001

Inspection number: 190407

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:	Community
Age range of students:	11 to 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Caterham Avenue Clayhall Ilford Essex
Postcode:	IG5 0QW
Telephone number:	020 8551 4321
Fax number:	020 8551 1933
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor John Tyne
Date of previous inspection:	14 October 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3228	Barbara Hilton	Registered inspector	Biology (sixth form)	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>How well are subjects taught?</p> <p>How good are curricular opportunities offered to students?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p>
9651	Husain Akhtar	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work with parents?</p> <p>Staffing, accommodation and learning resources</p>
23588	Charanjit Ajitsingh	Team inspector	Religious education	How well the school cultivates students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development
8216	Geoffrey Binks	Team inspector	Geography	English as an additional language
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (sixth form)	
12331	Vera Grigg	Team inspector	Design and technology	
10050	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Sociology (sixth form)	
22577	Margaret Hart	Team inspector		<p>Special educational needs</p> <p>Hearing impaired unit</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p>
1779	David Leonard	Team inspector	Science Chemistry (sixth form)	

8052	Kenneth McKenzie	Team inspector	Business Information and communication technology	
31850	David Nevens	Team inspector	Drama Music	
19925	Margaret Price	Team inspector	Mathematics	
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Art Design and technology (sixth form)	Co-ordination of sixth form aspects
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	History Drama (sixth form)	
11720	Philip Winch	Team inspector	English Media studies	

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd  
Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Caterham High School is an 11-18 comprehensive school and larger than most, with 1160 students, including 245 in the sixth form. The school provides for students across the ability range, though attainment on entry is below average, overall. A hearing impaired unit is based at the school and provides specialist help for 25 students. The proportions of students with special educational needs and with statements are average. Most of the statements are for hearing impairment. Other students with the highest levels of need mostly have moderate learning, or emotional and behavioural, difficulties. Almost half the students are from ethnic minority backgrounds, including a small proportion of white Europeans. This is more than in most schools and more than at the last inspection. The school population reflects the diversity and richness of local communities: the largest single group, at 15.1 per cent, is of Indian family background. While many students are bilingual, only four per cent are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The most frequently spoken home languages are Punjabi, Urdu, Turkish and Gujarati. A small minority of students (four per cent) are refugees, of whom a third are from Pakistan and the rest mostly from Middle Eastern and African countries. The student population is mobile: by Year 11, about 18 per cent of the students have joined the school later than Year 7. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals, at 18.8 per cent, is within the average range.

The school is in a moderately prosperous area and well placed for transport. Many students enter from seven local primary schools, with small numbers coming from another 30 schools over a wide area. The school works alongside two grammar and two voluntary-aided schools. Turnover of staff has been high recently, reflecting recruitment difficulties in the London area. The school has been awarded the government's Chartermark for excellence.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Caterham High School is a good school, and improving. Teaching is good throughout the main school and in the sixth form, supported by strong leadership and management. Overall standards at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE are above average and represent very good achievement among all groups of students. The school provides good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Achievement up to GCSE is very good; GCSE results are above average.
- Teaching is good: teachers are knowledgeable and plan lessons well so students learn effectively.
- Students like coming to the school, which welcomes and supports them; pastoral arrangements are strong.
- Most students achieve well in the sixth form, which is gaining in popularity.
- Provision for the hearing impaired is exemplary in many ways; students participate fully in all aspects of the school and achieve very well.
- A positive ethos of equality of opportunity and continued improvement has been established by the very capable leadership team.

#### **What could be improved**

- Achievement in history throughout the school and aspects of modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11.
- The match of courses to the needs of sixth form students to strengthen continuity and success for students.
- Accommodation, especially for sixth formers, students with special educational needs and for lunchtime (dining) use.
- Provision of daily worship for all students.

*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 progress since the last inspection. Teaching is better now and GCSE results have improved in line with those nationally; sixth form results have improved markedly. Good progress has been made on the key issues identified in the last report, including improvement in standards in Years 7 to 9, stretching the most able and improving learning resources. The premises are now much more secure. Ethnic monitoring is in place. The school has planned programmes for

thought-for-the-day and assemblies, although practice is inconsistent. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	B	B	A
A-levels/AS-levels	E	D	D	

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

GCSE results are above average, both for five subjects at the higher grades (A\*-C) and overall. Results in English, mathematics and science have been broadly average and in 2001 they improved in science. In each of these three core subjects, and for GCSE results overall, performance was well above the average for similar schools; achievement is very good from the end of Year 9 to GCSE. In recent years, the results of the Year 9 National Curriculum tests have been below average overall but results were better in 2001, as a result of the introduction of the Key Stage 3 strategy in Years 7 to 9, and they were above average – both overall and for English and mathematics. Results were average in science. The 2001 results reflect very good progress from students' attainment on entry in Year 7, which was below average. Results, both at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE, are improving in line with results nationally.

Standards in lessons observed were above average overall at the end of Year 9, reflecting improvements made in the curriculum. Standards in Year 11 lessons were average, and represented good achievement for students in that year, from their attainment at the end of Year 9. Students achieve better GCSE results in art and drama than in their other subjects. Their results in history are not as good as in their other subjects; French and German results are also low. While boys do not achieve as well as girls overall at GCSE, both boys and girls do better than boys and girls nationally. Students of Indian and Pakistani family background achieve particularly well. Students who are learning to speak English are admitted in all years and they progress well. Students eligible for free school meals achieve a little better than the average nationally. Students with special educational needs achieve well: the great majority are successful at GCSE. Some, including several hearing impaired students, continue through the sixth form and on to university.

Results at A-level, while below the national average, represent good progress, relative to students' GCSE results. A-level results are much better than at the last inspection and girls do particularly well. Results of the advanced vocational course in business and intermediate courses in business and art, are good. The school makes effective use of challenging targets for GCSE and sixth form examinations to raise results. In lessons observed students progressed well. Standards were in line with expectations overall. About 50 per cent of the students in Year 11 stay on to the sixth form; most of the rest continue in education or training and 10 per cent enter employment. In recent years, close to 30 per cent of sixth form students have entered employment at the end of Year 12 and Year 13. A small minority continues in further education and nearly all of the rest – about 70 per cent – progress to university.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good, overall, having significant impact on students' progress.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory, and good in the vast majority of lessons.



Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. Older students, including sixth formers, coach and mentor younger students. Students with special educational needs and from all backgrounds participate well in all aspects of the life of the school.
Attendance	Attendance is consistently good in Years 7 to 11, with little unauthorised absence. Sixth form attendance is satisfactory.

A small but significant number of younger students do not behave well in some lessons - usually with temporary teachers when clear routines have not been established. Sixth form students feel they are treated as adults and respected. They have positive attitudes and their personal development is good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	good	good	good

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

Teaching and learning are good overall and better than at the last inspection. Examples of good teaching were seen in all subjects and of very good teaching in most, including support for students beginning to learn English and those with hearing impairment. Teaching and learning were particularly effective in English, mathematics, design and technology, drama, geography, physical education and art, and good in science. Literacy is well taught in English in Years 7 to 9 and given effective emphasis in all subjects. Numeracy teaching is satisfactory. In the great majority of lessons, which are well taught, students concentrate and learn well. When work is effectively organised, they learn systematically, take responsibility for their learning and show initiative. In a few subjects their participation has not been fostered and they learn more slowly, as in history and aspects of modern foreign languages (speaking and writing). Most sixth formers learn systematically and well, although in some lessons independent learning is not fostered well enough.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good breadth and balance up to GCSE enable students to achieve well. Sixth form provision includes a good range of A-level subjects but vocational aspects are less well developed.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Hearing impaired students are supported very well. Provision for other students with special educational needs is good, but subject teachers do not receive enough practical advice on meeting their needs, especially for those with behavioural difficulties and when there is no classroom support.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good support is provided for students at an early stage of learning English.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall, with strengths in social and moral development. Staff are good role models. Opportunities for reflection are provided in most early morning form times and assemblies, although these occasions rarely constitute worship, which is a requirement.
How well the school cares for its students	Pastoral arrangements are strong and information on students' progress is used effectively to monitor and support their improvement.

Extra-curricular activities are good, including many sports, music, drama and revision activities. Provision for students' personal, social and health education is good. Links with parents are effective; they work closely with the school in promoting good attendance.

### **HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Strong leadership by the headteacher ensures clear direction, and good teamwork among very capable senior and middle managers generates a positive ethos. The sixth form is effectively managed. Strong leadership in many areas of the school has a significant impact on the progress of students, including the hearing impaired.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory, except for the provision of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Planning, monitoring and evaluation, both of results and of priorities for improvement, are strengths.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school has supported growth of the sixth form on a tight budget. The school seeks to get the best value when buying services and in making educational decisions.

All teaching posts are filled, with a good match between qualification and teaching responsibilities, but the school has to rely on temporary staff to fill some vacancies because of recruitment difficulties in London. While some new staff manage very well, others have difficulties and students' learning is interrupted. Learning resources are adequate but not all subjects use computers as much as they should. The buildings are well maintained. Growth in student numbers means that several areas are not adequate: more accommodation is needed, particularly for the sixth form, for special educational needs (including the hearing impaired unit) and lunchtime (dining) use. The outdoor play area (Redgra) is still in a poor condition, as at the last inspection.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like coming to the school.</li> <li>• Expectations are high and their children make good progress.</li> <li>• They feel the school is welcoming, approachable and caring.</li> <li>• Teaching in several subjects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework.</li> <li>• Information on their children's progress.</li> <li>• Range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>• Closeness of working with the school.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with parents' favourable views. Inspectors found homework to be effectively used. Students' progress reports are satisfactory, but some subject comments are brief. The school is about to improve the format of reports. Inspectors found arrangements for the school to work with parents to be satisfactory - and good in many ways, as in promoting attendance. The school provides an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities, with many stemming from physical education, music and drama.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form, with 245 students, is larger than most, and has increased by about 40 per cent since the last inspection. Most of the students progress into Year 12 from within Caterham High School and a small but significant minority join from other schools. Students come from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, as is the case lower down the school. About 30 per cent are bilingual, and a significant minority is at an early stage of learning English: 10 are refugees. Eight students have special educational needs, including five with statements for hearing impairment. Students are usually required to have achieved a grade C in an appropriate subject before embarking on an A-level course, although exceptions are made. Many were of average ability on entry to the school in Year 7. The school provides a reasonably good range of A-level GCE courses and also vocational courses in business and art. The courses provided meet the needs of most students but growth in numbers has not been accompanied by strengthening of vocational aspects, which could help some students to improve their results. Leadership and management are effective. A part-time course has recently been established for trainees from West Ham United Football Club. At the end of both Years 12 and 13, about 30 per cent leave to take up employment. At the end of Year 13, about 70 per cent continue their education, mostly at university, with a small proportion going on to further education.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is effective: students' results at A-level and on vocational courses represent satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress, resulting from good teaching and learning. Systematic monitoring and target-setting have contributed to the improvement in results, which are markedly better than at the last inspection; provision is cost-effective.

### Strengths

- Achievement in English, media studies, drama, and geography and on vocational courses.
- Good teaching enables most students to achieve well.
- Relationships are good; students feel they are treated as adults and enjoy the sixth form.

### What could be improved

- Examination results in chemistry, physics, history and information and communication technology.
- The match of courses to students' needs and aspirations.
- Accommodation for the sixth form.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory with strengths in coursework.</b> Students achieve well, relative to their GCSE results, although A-level results fluctuate: in 2001 they dipped to below average, from above average in 2000. Teaching is good.
Chemistry	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Achievement in lessons is sound and work is well adapted to students' abilities but students do not do well in examinations. In recent years results have been below average.
Biology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students progress well in lessons. While examination results are a little below average they represent satisfactory achievement, relative to students' GCSE results. Teaching is satisfactory.

<b>Design and technology</b>	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results recently have been good on the well taught product design course. Students achieve well.
<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Overall judgement about provision, with comment</b>
<b>Business</b>	<b>Satisfactory and improving.</b> Students are well motivated and achieve well in response to good teaching. Results for the A-level and vocational courses are in line with national averages.
<b>Information and communication technology</b>	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Good teaching helps students to achieve well. A new A-level course has been introduced on which all students were successful in 2001.
<b>Physical education</b>	<b>Satisfactory with some good features.</b> More able AS-level students link physical performance with theoretical aspects but most students are finding the theory difficult; teaching is satisfactory. The part-time course for West Ham trainees is effectively taught and they are achieving well; this is a strength.
<b>Art</b>	<b>Good.</b> In 2001, A-level results were a little below those nationally. Teaching and learning are good on the A-level and vocational courses. Students achieve well, relative to their GCSE results, and work in a wide range of 2 and 3-dimensional media.
<b>Drama</b>	<b>Good.</b> Students progress well in response to good teaching, especially in performance. Results match those nationally.
<b>Geography</b>	<b>Good.</b> Results are in line with national levels, reflecting good achievement on this well-taught course. Students benefit from fieldwork.
<b>Sociology</b>	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Effective teaching helps students to progress well. Results, while below the national average, reflect satisfactory achievement relative to students' GCSE results.
<b>English literature</b>	<b>Very good.</b> Results are very good. Students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are very good.
<b>French</b>	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Results have improved up to 2001 when they were above the national average. Students in Year 13 are making satisfactory progress in well-taught lessons.

Lessons in music, media studies, history, religious education and German were sampled. The quality of teaching was generally good. Students are progressing well, except in history, where progress is satisfactory, and media studies, where it is very good. Results have been generally mixed, but usually low in physics, below average in German and well above average in media studies. Fluctuations in results are partly due to low numbers of students and the poor attendance of some. Work is well planned in religious education, and in media studies the precise use of language is helping students to develop good understanding of concepts.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
How well students are guided and supported	Assessment is used effectively to guide students' progress. Students are known well individually and they feel that guidance and support are good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective. Arrangements are co-ordinated and monitored well. The growth in the sixth form has been managed satisfactorily. Steps have been taken to

	improve results, which are rising. While many students achieve well, further developments are needed to improve the success of all.
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**STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students enjoy the sixth form and advise others to join.</li> <li>• They feel they are treated as adults.</li> <li>• The school helps them to settle into the sixth form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information they receive on their progress.</li> <li>• The match between the subjects they study and their career aspirations.</li> <li>• Their knowledge of who to go to if they have personal concerns.</li> </ul>

Inspectors feel students' favourable views are justified. The areas for improvement were identified mostly by students in Year 12; older students had few concerns. Improvements in monitoring students' progress are planned and will increase students' knowledge of their performance, in relation to predicted examination grades. Tutors are caring and are able to advise students on whom to consult, if they have personal concerns. Inspectors judge that, while for many the subjects offered are appropriate, more coherence and balance in subjects chosen by students would help their progress and career planning.

**COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and students' achievements**

##### ***Main school***

1. The attainment of students on entry in Year 7, while covering a wide range, is below average overall. In recent years, the results of students in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests have been below average overall. However, results were better in 2001, because of the introduction of the Key Stage 3 strategy in Years 7 to 9, and they were above average – both overall, and for English and mathematics. Results were average in science. The 2001 results reflect very good progress from students' attainment on entry, among both boys and girls.
2. GCSE results in 2001 are above average, both for five subjects at the higher grades (A\*-C) and overall. In recent years, results in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) have been broadly average and, in 2001, they improved in science. In each of the three core subjects, results were well above the average for similar schools and they reflect very good progress from the end of Year 9. Overall, GCSE results are very good, relative to those in similar schools and to the results obtained by the same students at the end of Year 9.
3. GCSE results in other subjects are mostly in line with the national averages. Results in art were above average in 2000, and well above average in 2001, and results are consistently above average in geography. On the other hand, results in history were below average in 2001, but not as low as in 2000. Results were below average in both French and German. In 2001, results in design and technology were not as good as in 2000, when they were average, except in resistant materials and graphical products, which were good. Students do better in art, drama, English, mathematics, science and in information technology than in their other subjects. Students have not done as well in history, in recent years, as in their other subjects.
4. Results, both at the end of Year 9 and GCSE, have improved in line with results nationally, since the last inspection. While boys do not achieve as well as girls overall at GCSE, both boys and girls achieve better than boys and girls nationally. Students of Indian and Pakistani family background achieve particularly well. Students who are learning to speak English are admitted in all years and they progress well, keeping up in their classes and taking examinations, with reasonable success. Students eligible for free school meals achieve a little better than the average nationally.
5. The achievement of students who have statements of special educational needs is generally good, relative to their prior attainment, and the achievement of students supported by the hearing impaired unit is very good: most obtain GCSE grades close to national expectations and some achieve high grades in both GCSE and A-level examinations. The achievement in examinations and progress in lessons of students who are at the earlier stages of the special educational needs register is variable. Where there are many students with additional needs in a teaching group and no support, progress and achievement can be slow, especially when the teacher is inexperienced or temporary. Students who are gifted and talented progress well, overall. The proportion of the highest grades (A, A\*) achieved at GCSE is in line with those of all comprehensive schools. Yet the standard of students on entry in Year 7 is below average: the intake is not truly comprehensive.
6. The school makes effective use of targets to improve results. Targets are set annually, for results overall and in individual subjects. Targets usually exceed predictions and are themselves exceeded. The school does better than most in Redbridge, in helping students to achieve well at GCSE.
7. Inspectors found that students work at standards in line with national expectations in most subjects, by the end of Year 9. This reflects good progress, from students' levels of attainment on entry in Year 7, which are below average. In science, for example, students' good achievement starts early in Year 7 and by the time they reach Year 9 they have made good improvement and attain average standards. In English, mathematics and physical education standards are above

national expectations - reflecting very good progress. In these subjects, rigorous planning of the curriculum and consistently good (sometimes very good) teaching are important factors in helping students to progress rapidly. In information and communication technology the progress of most students is satisfactory and standards are average but arrangements for the provision of the subject (a short programme of lessons in each of Years 7, 8 and 9 accompanied by the use of computers in all subjects) do not provide activities which stretch the more able to reach high standards. In modern foreign languages, standards are held back by weaknesses in speaking and writing, although students acquire vocabulary and knowledge of language rules steadily; overall attainment in Year 9 is below national expectations.

8. Standards are broadly average in lessons in Year 11. In several subjects they are higher than this: in science (where very good progress is made across Years 10 and 11) and in art, drama and physical education, in which students also progress well. Standards in both English and mathematics are in line with national expectations, reflecting good overall progress. Broadly average standards observed in design and technology, geography and business education reflect good progress in many lessons resulting from well-planned activities and good teaching. In many lessons students are encouraged to evaluate their own progress and this assists them to do well and reach standards which match the national average, as in music. Understanding in religious education is in line with expectations among students following the GCSE course and students generally make satisfactory progress on the religious topics they study as part of personal, social and health education. In history and modern foreign languages, standards in Year 11 lessons were lower than expected nationally. The best work in history lessons shows depth of knowledge but answers generally are too brief: too often, students do not participate in lessons or discuss issues and they do not learn to develop their ideas. In French and German, listening and reading are better than speaking and writing, in which standards are low. However, good teaching is bringing about improvement, where there is a sharp focus on examination requirements.
9. Written work in English is average and in many subjects teachers pay good attention to literacy, so students progress well in writing and reading. Technical words are used appropriately. On the whole, spelling, punctuation and grammar improve as students progress through the school. Subjects in which literacy could be improved include both history and modern foreign languages, where not enough attention is given to extended writing. Opportunities are provided in all subjects for students to improve their reading and to extract relevant information. Students' understanding of texts is mostly satisfactory. Among younger students, reading aloud is not always fluent, but expression improves as they progress through the school. Standards of numeracy are average. Most students can handle straightforward calculations, sometimes with the use of calculators, although too many students have difficulty in solving straightforward calculations in their head. Lower attaining students do not know their multiplication tables. On the whole, students cope satisfactorily with numbers and mathematical ideas when they use them in subjects and the teacher explains ideas clearly. Numeracy across the curriculum is just starting to be developed, in line with the national strategy.

### ***Sixth form***

10. Results at A-level, while below the national average, represent good progress overall, relative to students' achievements at GCSE. The results of girls are higher than those of boys, and the difference is a little greater than nationally. A-level results have improved markedly since the last inspection. Results of vocational courses in business studies, both at advanced and intermediate levels, and in art at intermediate level are good. Results in the first year (2001) of the new AS-level examinations were mixed but satisfactory in many cases. Students in those subjects where results were not so good have opportunities to retake their examinations and improve their grades. About 50 per cent of the students in Year 11 generally stay on to the sixth form; most of the rest continue in education or training and 10 per cent enter employment. In recent years, close to 30 per cent of sixth form students have entered employment at the end of Year 12 and the end of Year 13. A small minority continues in further education and nearly all of the rest – about 70 per cent – progress to university. Drop-out, when it occurs, is mostly in the early stage of Year 12. On the other hand, late entrants join the sixth form at all stages of the year. This movement among students accounts for some of the low results in the first year of the new AS-level examinations.
11. In many subjects the numbers of students entered are small, so A-level results fluctuate - as in technology, where results were above average in 2000, but below average in 2001. In English,

however, results improved markedly in 2001 and were well above average. Science results have generally been below average, though those for biology are better than those for chemistry and much better than for physics. Results in art, drama and business (in both the A-level and vocational courses) are broadly average. Results in history and sociology are low - although grades reflect satisfactory progress, relative to students' GCSE grades. Results in modern foreign languages have been above average in French and below in German (for the very few students entered). Sixth form courses in physical education have been introduced only recently; while students are progressing satisfactorily on the whole, most find the theoretical aspects difficult.

12. Standards in lessons observed, while mostly satisfactory, were below expectations in a few lessons in several subjects, notably in chemistry, biology, history, French, German and theory lessons in physical education. In other lessons, standards were in line with expectations for A-level work - sometimes better than this, as in English, mathematics, business, drama, music and religious education. In spite of this variation, in virtually all lessons, students progressed satisfactorily and in a substantial majority (just over 80 per cent) they made good gains in learning. However, the relatively low standards in a minority of lessons, considered in the light of some results, suggests that the school should reconsider the examination courses provided in order to help all students to successfully achieve certificates at the end of their sixth form courses. The school has already introduced changes in some cases (for example, in information technology).
13. The school provides lessons in key skills and students are making good progress. Students' standards in communication, numeracy and information technology are generally good and they cope well with these aspects of their courses.
14. Analysis of the school's A-level results compared with the GCSE results of the same students shows good added-value, for girls, particularly. It is not possible to make statistically reliable comparisons of results achieved by different ethnic groups because numbers are too small. From lesson observations no clear patterns emerge - students of all groups are making good progress, overall. The achievement of hearing impaired students is strikingly good. Those who are able are helped to achieve good A-level results and some have progressed to university. The school makes effective use of targets to raise results overall and subjects are starting to assess students' predicted and target A-level grades, on the basis of their GCSE performance. Practice is inconsistent across subjects, but some teachers are using this information very well to raise standards. The school is more effective in helping students achieve well at A-level than most other schools in Redbridge. Yet, within this generally good picture, students' performance in several subjects is weak and there is scope for improving results, particularly in chemistry, physics, history and information technology.

## **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

### ***Main school***

15. Students' attitudes to school are generally good and have a positive impact on their progress. Students say, and parents confirm, that they like their school. Many - about half the year group - choose to stay to continue their education post-16. In many lessons students approach work enthusiastically. In a Year 11 drama lesson, for example, students exploring the concept of interrogation played their parts keenly and this helped them to progress. Students listen carefully to their teachers and readily answer questions, which helps them to overcome difficulties, for example, in a Year 11 science lesson on isotopes. They settle quickly to their work, concentrate well on the tasks they have been given and make good progress. This was evident in a Year 10 geography lesson where a strong work ethos helped students to work hard and make good progress in the identification and classification of rocks. Students with special educational needs participate fully in lessons, have very good attitudes to their work and respond well to the support that they receive.
16. Students' behaviour, as at the time of the last inspection, is satisfactory, overall. Most students co-operate well with teachers in maintaining good discipline in lessons. This has a positive impact on the learning of all in the class. Most students understand that the school has high expectations of good behaviour and they respond well to the system of rewards and sanctions. They behave well outside lessons and move purposefully and carefully in the circulation areas.



Students are trustworthy and show respect for property. Students say that incidents of physical bullying are rare. Inspectors saw some minor incidents of anti-social behaviour. Permanent exclusions have dropped from four at the time of the last inspection to one in the last school year. Fixed-period exclusions have been at a slightly higher rate than in schools of similar size. Exclusions are given only for good reasons and procedures are correctly followed.

17. A small but significant number of students have unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour in some lessons. This is usually when the teacher is temporary and has not established clear classroom routines. These students lack enthusiasm, work at a slow pace, call out and distract others. Their negative attitudes and anti-social behaviour have a detrimental effect on their own and others' learning. Some parents expressed concern about a few students not observing the school's expectations of uniform and behaviour; inspectors found little evidence for the concerns, and for the most part they affect few students, and impact on learning only to a small extent.
18. The students' personal development is good. Relationships are strong throughout the school community. The students say that the school is a friendly place. Boys and girls, and students from all backgrounds, work well together in groups, sharing materials and ideas. Students with special educational needs mix well and join in all activities. Very good deaf-awareness training for all students and staff helps hearing impaired students to participate fully in the life and work of the school. Younger students appreciate the support they receive from older students through the prefect and paired reading systems. Most students are helpful and courteous, and enjoy talking to visitors about their work. They respect each other's beliefs and express their opinions without fear of ridicule, as in a Year 9 personal, social and health education lesson when students were discussing attitudes to relationships. They take responsibility and they help in the classroom and around the school when asked to do so, but generally do not have many such opportunities. Students enjoy raising money for charity and many take part enthusiastically in extra-curricular activities.
19. Students' attendance, satisfactory at the time of the last OFSTED inspection, is now consistently good. At 92.6 per cent, it is above the national average. Truancy from school or individual lessons is rare, and the vast majority of absence is because of illness. Some students are late for school but the school day begins promptly. The students' good attendance rate and punctuality have a positive impact on attainment and progress.

### **Sixth form**

20. Sixth formers are happy in the school; they feel that they are treated as adults and are respected. Students enjoy positive relationships with teachers and with each other. Students are well organised and most complete work within the time limits given. Their attendance is satisfactory; most absence is explained, and agreed with the school. Exclusion is not a feature of the sixth form.
21. Sixth form students show maturity in their thinking and are able to express themselves clearly when discussing their work and plans for future. They have positive attitudes to work, behave very well in lessons and are keen to talk about their interests. Most students have satisfactory study skills and work well with others. Examples were seen of students working well, independently - for example, in information and communication technology, English, drama and, more informally, in coaching younger students. However, the skills of learning independently and using research materials, including the Internet, are not consistently well developed; not enough emphasis is placed on students taking responsibility for their own learning.
22. Students' personal development is good. They develop confidence and a sense of pride in themselves and in their future plans. All students have the opportunity to meet with a tutor on a regular basis to review their progress and set targets for future work. Most undertake these reviews conscientiously. Through the general studies programme and formal and informal contacts with tutors, students learn to make informed choices about personal issues. Many students are wholly committed to their sixth form studies, or combine a little weekend employment without detriment to their sixth form work. A small number, however, are distracted or tired by the demands of employment and this slows down their progress.
23. A range of other opportunities cultivates students' personal development. Students develop confidence and skills in public speaking; there was an interesting debate on *OFSTED* during the

inspection. The work of the school council and the students' social committee provides opportunities for the development of the students' social skills and for decision-making which affects the environment of all in the school. Students take responsibilities seriously. For example, the head boy and head girl and their deputies, prefects and those who hear younger students read are committed and conscientious.

## HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

### *Main school*

24. Teaching and learning are good overall and better than at the last inspection. In lessons seen across Years 7 to 11, teaching was satisfactory or better in 93 per cent of lessons, good or better in 74 per cent, very good in 26 per cent and excellent in two per cent of lessons. Teaching was unsatisfactory in seven per cent of lessons, and most of these were taken by temporary teachers. Learning followed a similar pattern. Examples of good teaching were seen in all subjects and of very good teaching in most, including support for students beginning to learn English, and support for those with hearing impairment or other types of special educational needs. Teaching and learning were particularly effective in English, mathematics, design and technology, drama, geography, physical education and art, and for students with hearing impairment. Inspectors found homework was set throughout the school and generally effectively used.
25. General strengths in teaching include teachers' use of their knowledge to develop students' understanding, and careful planning so that students learn step-by-step. These features are evident in many mathematics lessons. In a lesson with more able students in Year 8, for example, they made rapid progress in simplifying linear expressions because the lesson was well structured and they built on their understanding of collecting like terms, multiplying and using brackets. Similar strategies used with less capable Year 10 students enabled them to make very good progress in solving equations. In physical education, the teachers' excellent subject knowledge and planning ensure that students build systematically on their existing skills enabling, for example, the girls in Year 9 to improve rapidly in badminton and boys in Year 8 to make good progress in swimming. In the best science lessons, teachers enhance students' understanding by means of apt illustrations - as, for example, with Year 11 students who were helped to appreciate the size of an atom compared with its nucleus. Systematic approaches in art help students to understand what is needed and plan for themselves how to achieve desired effects. For example, Year 7 students made very good progress in watercolour painting, through understanding and applying techniques of colour mixing, developing layers and tones. Year 11 students made very good progress in still-life work, through effective planning of two or three-dimensional approaches to capturing images of fruits, using a range of media and collage.
26. English teachers draw effectively on their subject knowledge and how students learn, in asking questions which focus students' attention on what matters. For example, Year 7 students' understanding of stories they had read was enhanced through comparison of the effects created by words such as *gloom* and *dark*, or *plimsolls* and *trainers*. With older students there is good focus on GCSE requirements - as in a Year 11 lesson, where students learned how to structure their answers and made good gains in understanding poems of other cultures. Effective emphasis is placed on literacy in English and other subjects. Reading lessons include a good range of literature, such as *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (in Year 7); a *Harry Potter* book and *A Christmas Carol* (in Year 8); and *A View from the Bridge* (in Year 11). Writing in English lessons is developed systematically, from awareness of vocabulary and effective use of basic punctuation (in Year 7) to developing sentence structure, paragraphing and use of imagery (in Year 9): the teaching of literacy in English is good and is reinforced by work in other subjects. Examples of effective emphasis on vocabulary were seen in most subjects, including in mathematics (to help Year 8 students starting to learn algebra), and in resistant materials lessons (as when Year 11 students made very good progress in understanding the properties of different woods). Writing frames are effectively used in geography and history to help students to structure their answers.
27. The systematic development of numeracy across all subjects in Years 7 to 9 is in its early stages but improvements are planned; suitable activities are already included in mathematics in Years 7 and 8. Students cope with data and numbers encountered in geography, but not all students in science can cope with ratios and the calculations expected in Year 11 in science. Teachers promote the use of information and communication technology in nearly all subjects. Lower

ability Year 11 students in English and history, for example, made good progress in writing letters and in spelling by drafting and correcting their letters using computers. Students use computers effectively to research and many present their coursework using word-processing. Their information technology skills are undeveloped, however, in art, design and technology, geography and music. Lessons in information and communication technology, and business studies, are mostly well planned. Students understand and can explain what they are doing and gain computer skills which help them in their other subjects.

28. Most teachers plan appropriately for the full range of ability. The grouping of students into classes on the basis of their attainment, where it occurs, assists teachers in planning challenging work for all students, including the gifted and talented. In mixed ability groups, students often learn effectively through discussion, as observed in geography (for example, in a lessons on Japan with Year 9 students and about the classification of rocks with Year 10) but only occasionally in history (for example, in lessons on World War I, with Year 9 students). Teachers use questioning well to judge students' progress in lessons. In design and technology, well-planned activities capture the interest of students and involve all in learning. They are prompted to think, through the teacher's well-judged questions which assess the understanding of individuals and challenge them further - for example, to understand about cereals and cereal products (in Year 9) and project design (in Year 11). In most modern foreign language lessons students consolidate previous knowledge and improve their vocabulary. In Year 10 French and German lessons, for example, students progressed satisfactorily when revising clothes and colours (in French) and routines and habits (in German). When planning is good and provides more challenge, then progress is faster, as observed in Year 11 lessons on accommodation (in French) and buying a train ticket (in German). Experienced teachers in religious education enable students to deepen their understanding of religious ideas by capturing their interest and making them think. For example, Year 7 students appreciated the difference between *unlikely* and *impossible* (when learning about miracles) through illustration based on a lottery ticket and Year 10 students made good progress in understanding the nature of God, from a Jewish perspective, through brain-storming and sharing ideas.
29. The quality of teaching by special educational needs teachers is good, and most learning support assistants contribute well to students' learning. Support and teaching by staff of the hearing impaired unit are consistently good. Subject teachers have satisfactory awareness of students' individual education plans and often use them in lessons, although the strategies on plans which relate to improving students' behaviour are not always immediate or practical enough to be helpful to less experienced teachers. Lesson planning is shared with special educational needs staff well in advance of lessons so that proper preparation may be done to support the students; this is good practice. Many teachers use methods which are helpful to all students and particularly those with additional needs: for example, teachers in the English department give clear explanations and teach the new vocabulary which will be used in lessons. Teachers often target appropriate questions at students with special educational needs to ensure that they feel part of the lesson, and careful pre-teaching and preparation enable students with hearing impairment to make presentations and take an active part in class discussion. The teaching of early stage English learners by the specialist teacher is very effective in enabling students to participate fully in lessons. Good support is given to these students at regular lunchtime and after-school meetings and workshops.
30. Teachers mark work regularly and students understand the grades they are given. Students are taught to evaluate their own learning in several subjects: this is a good feature of lessons in music (as when Year 10 students learned how to improve the shape of musical phrases and refine embellishments in their compositions) and in physical education (as in Year 8 lessons on dance, football and swimming). Written evaluation is a good feature throughout drama and helps students to progress well in understanding of their roles and performance - as when Year 7 students learned about creating a role and Year 11 students explained the concept of interrogation. In design and technology, evaluation raises students' awareness of the suitability of their products and effectiveness of their plans.
31. Students are well managed, on the whole. Experienced teachers know students well and usually have high expectations of their work and behaviour. Students nearly always respond by working hard. Some, but not all, new or temporary teachers have difficulty managing students who do not behave well. In a few lessons silliness or rude behaviour was seen. The incidents observed were mostly among younger classes. However, not all students learn to take responsibility for their

learning as they progress up the school. Some find GCSE work difficult and become disaffected. Incidents of poor behaviour usually occurred when students were not involved enough in lesson activities. In some subjects - for example, history and religious education - teachers, including those who are temporary, lack support in coping with difficult students. At the time of the inspection, both history and religious education departments had interim management arrangements, pending the appointment of permanent heads of department.

32. By the time students are in Year 11, most have developed good learning habits. They work systematically, record their work carefully and review their learning to gauge their own strengths and weaknesses. They have a good sense of how they are doing and readily ask if they feel they do not understand. In a few subjects, their participation has not been fostered so well and they are relatively passive (as in history) or their skills are less well developed (as in aspects of French and German). Over the school as a whole, however, learning is good in response to good teaching.

### **Sixth form**

33. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are a little better than lower down the school: more good or very good teaching was seen (in over four-fifths of lessons). Teaching and learning were virtually always satisfactory or better, and usually good. Key skills are separately and effectively taught. Support for students at an early stage of learning English is good, for those who feel they need help. Students with special educational needs receive good support, especially those who are hearing impaired.
34. Teachers' planning is mostly very good. High expectations and challenging tasks involve students in a suitable range of activities. Generally, by the time they are in Year 13, students are well motivated and articulate. In English, for example, Year 13 students collaborated well when analysing the structure of the play *The Importance of Being Earnest* and they shared ideas effectively, to make very good progress during the lesson. Similarly, Year 12 students, working on *Othello*, were enthusiastic, shared ideas and deepened their understanding of how different Shakespearean tragedies rely on different imagery. On the other hand, some Year 12 students need a lot of drawing-out and are slow to respond in class, although they discuss more freely in groups (as observed in a Year 12 class working on *Julius Caesar*). In biology and mathematics, when teaching is lively with good use of questioning to make students think, good learning develops among students; however, they show little initiative in biology, unless required to do so - a tendency also observed in physics and chemistry.
35. Enthusiastic approaches by teachers with thorough knowledge of their subjects help students to progress very well in media studies and art. In both subjects, questioning is well used to guide students' learning and help them consider topics from different standpoints. A suitably wide range of activities is used in most subjects. Support for students with hearing impairment is very good, as it is lower down the school. Learning in geography and biology is enhanced by fieldwork studies, which promote good participation and include evaluation by students of their findings. In contrast, a narrower range of activities is used in history and students do not have enough opportunities to discuss and evaluate each other's ideas - students' answers tend to be brief, and their independent research lacks depth. Teaching is well focused on students' learning needs in French and German, especially on improving their vocabulary and their understanding of grammar. Some students remain hesitant in oral work and this aspect of learning is not strong enough. A wide variety of activities is included in sixth form design and technology lessons, helping students to gain knowledge, understanding and skills.
36. Relationships are generally good. The atmosphere in drama, established by teachers, is strongly collaborative and students confidently argue their viewpoints; concentration and involvement are high. In physical education, enthusiasm and humour result in high motivation, especially among those visiting the school from the West Ham Academy. Teachers know students well and target tasks appropriately. Good links are made between theory and practical aspects of the subject. Students on the AS-level course (newly introduced this year) are finding theoretical aspects difficult. Their motivation and capabilities relate to practical aspects of the course. Assessment arrangements and the scope provided for students who plan their own work on vocational courses help them to learn effectively. Teachers effectively draw on real-life examples from the world of work in business and finance.

37. Most sixth formers learn effectively through systematic approaches. They follow instructions conscientiously and most are well motivated to do their best. Students who are starting to learn English and those who are hearing impaired concentrate hard and keep up in their classes. While most sixth formers have the confidence to ask if they do not understand, a significant minority relies on the teacher to organise work so that they take little responsibility for their own learning. When the teachers do this, students participate and learn well. Left to themselves, a few students in several subjects are passive and do not learn as much as they could.

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

### *Main school*

38. The school's curriculum is well planned and organised to help students make effective progress and achieve good results. Schemes of work include good reference to National Curriculum or examination requirements and in most subjects teachers make very clear what is expected of students in different years, according to their capabilities. This careful planning helps teachers to guide students' progress in lessons and in their coursework - as observed, for example, in the core subjects (English, mathematics and science) as well as in other subjects - such as geography and design and technology. The provision for Years 7 to 11 meets National Curriculum requirements.
39. The school has placed particular emphasis on ways of helping students to progress well across Years 7 to 9 and is implementing the national Key Stage 3 strategy effectively at this stage. In several subjects, and to support students with special educational needs, effective links are in place with local primary schools. The grouping of students according to their attainment levels in mathematics and science is effective and has recently been extended to English. The development of students' literacy skills is well planned in English and reflected in practice in most other subjects. More non-fiction has been included in reading in English, to promote the reading of boys, and a literacy summer school has been held to accelerate the learning of students entering Year 7. Every lunch-time the library is full of students, mostly younger ones, being coached in reading by older students, who are well prepared for this responsibility and monitor the progress of the students they are helping. The system works well and the atmosphere is happy and purposeful. Planning for numeracy has been started, but is not as well developed as for literacy. Mathematics teachers have visited primary schools and augmented their own scheme of work. Many other subjects (for example, science, geography and design and technology) regularly use numbers and mathematical ideas in their work but the strategies used are not systematically developed across the curriculum. Religious education is separately taught and meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Arrangements for information and communication technology are satisfactory: skills are taught across the curriculum and students achieve in line with expectations. National Curriculum requirements are met in Years 7 to 9.
40. Curricular provision in Years 10 and 11 is good. The option system ensures that all students study a broad and balanced range of subjects with choices, in addition to core subjects, being made from among subjects grouped into the categories of humanities, creative studies and modern languages. All students study double award science up to GCSE. While all take one modern foreign language (either French or German), virtually none choose to study two (other than a few students who take a community or home language at GCSE); French and German are not generally popular. The school has recently altered modern languages arrangements lower down the school by introducing German into Year 8, rather than Year 9, in order to improve students' familiarity with and response to languages. Religious education provision is satisfactory. Adequate coverage of the Locally Agreed Syllabus is achieved through topics covered in personal, social and health education in Years 10 and 11; only small numbers of students study the subject for GCSE. About two-thirds of the students study information and communication technology, either as a separate subject or within business studies up to GCSE; other students develop and apply their skills in subjects across the curriculum. Arrangements meet statutory requirements.
41. The school's policy is to meet students' additional needs, wherever possible, in the classroom and students with special educational needs have good access to the full curriculum. Where the school has identified a need for individual or small group teaching for some students, so that they can have counselling or focused teaching to improve their basic skills, this is carefully monitored to minimise the disruption to the curriculum. Extra sessions, before and at the end of the school day, are very effective in helping hearing impaired students to prepare and follow up the work of lessons. Older students may choose a supported studies option that allows them to reduce slightly the number of subjects they study and they find this very helpful. The school is systematically tackling weaknesses in the achievement of boys, where they occur. In design and technology, for example, the GCSE board has been changed and Saturday revision days provided. In French and German the use of information technology has been strengthened and in physical education more emphasis has been placed on preparation for theory papers. Students who are gifted and talented have been identified. No extra classes are provided (although a sailing

club is a popular extra-curricular activity for them). On the whole, their needs are satisfactorily met through teachers' planning. Progress is accelerated among more able groups, in English and mathematics, for example. Not enough is done to lift other students' attainment in modern foreign languages and history.

42. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Requirements are met for health and sex education and raising awareness about drugs. Topics are dealt with at appropriate stages and include study skills and coping with difficult situations - including the behaviour of others and bullying. Good use is made of visitors to the school. During the inspection, a police officer led an effective lesson on safety. Responsibility towards others and citizenship are fostered appropriately. Careers education is satisfactory. In part, this is provided through personal, social and health lessons, starting with developing awareness of responsibility (such as making considered choices) among younger students and going on to offer specific help at appropriate stages - before choosing subjects for GCSE and deciding which subjects or routes to follow, post-16, for example. Good features include special events arranged by the school, including option evenings, the 'Beyond-14 week', a vocational day and a 'Beyond-16 week'. Students are helped to make choices which are right for them and receive information about sixth form courses elsewhere, including at local further education colleges, but there are no close links with other schools or colleges. The careers library includes appropriate information. All students benefit from two weeks' work experience. Support from the careers service is minimal: few students receive independent guidance interviews.
43. Extra-curricular provision is good. Most subjects provide organised revision programmes (some at weekends) for older students. Every week a good range of physical education, music and drama activities takes place and through these subjects, in competitions, matches and performance, satisfactory links are developed with the local community. Students have access to some areas of the school at lunchtimes, to develop their skills and improve their work - for example, the library, art and computing. Clubs are popular among younger students. In science, for example, the interest of younger students has been captured and their skills of observation developed through activities such as finger-printing and making paper helicopters. Visits to France enhance students' facility with language in modern languages, although students have shown less interest in visits to Germany. Visits are regularly made to theatres, concerts and art galleries in London.
44. Improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection have helped to raise standards. Changes include more grouping of students into classes on the basis of their ability and the introduction of the Key Stage 3 strategy (in Years 7 to 9) to improve literacy and numeracy. The school's provision for moral, social and cultural development is good, as at the last inspection. In cultivating students' spiritual development, provision has improved from poor to satisfactory.
45. Spiritual development is promoted mainly through assembly, which students usually attend once each week, thought-for-the-day at morning registration and religious education. Assemblies observed were on the theme of the week, *waste*, at which presentations were made by students, linking the theme with Remembrance Day (the waste of young lives in the war) and the events of 11th September in New York (with the loss of life in the twin towers). Worthwhile issues were shared, for example, the dilemmas of going to war and the need to settle differences in a peaceful manner. Each assembly started off with some music and included a moment for thought and reflection. In one assembly readings, from the Old and New Testaments about Noah's Ark and the flood, helped to create a sense of the spirituality of the occasion. Assemblies are useful as opportunities for students to share their intentions and concerns for others but there is little involvement by the audience and rarely any worship; statutory requirements are not met. The school's religious education programme provides opportunities for students to think for themselves about universal issues and aspects of the curriculum in English, art and music also contribute to the development of spirituality.
46. Provision for students' moral development is good. Adults set a good example for students and ensure good order in the school. Most teachers impart high expectations of behaviour and communicate a strong sense of right and wrong, through the reinforcement of the school code of conduct. This is mentioned, though not stated, in the prospectus. The school name Caterham is used as an acronym - standing, among other things, for a caring attitude, academic excellence, tolerance, responsibility and the all-round development of a person. The reward system promotes the positive: self-discipline, co-operation and consideration of others. Moral development is also fostered through a variety of topics in personal, social and health education, some of which

increase students' understanding of citizenship. In physical education, students' awareness is raised about issues such as taking drugs and cheating in games; in history, in the study of World War I, issues around suicide and self-injury are discussed. Aspects of race, religion and gender and matters of equality of opportunity are discussed in religious education. The need for examining ideas from different angles, seeing things from another person's point of view and showing respect for each other is fostered in many lessons and in the life of the school. Ethical issues involved in research and use of children in experiments are touched on in sociology. In English, students experience a range of literature, including pre-twentieth century texts, discuss moral issues arising from them and consider why characters behave as they do, as in *Macbeth* and *Of Mice and Men*. The positive ethos of the school is evident in its orderliness, in students' willing commitment to fairness and the right kind of behaviour. Students readily think about others less fortunate than themselves and raise money for charities such as the British Legion, Lifeboats, Barnardos, the NSPCC, Red Cross, Jeans for Genes and Breakthrough Breast Cancer.

47. Provision for students' social development is good, and is mentioned in the aims of the school. Students work together in pairs or in groups and share their learning by supporting each other in most subjects. They learn to take responsibility in many ways, for example, through the school council which includes councillors elected by each form. They bring issues about improving aspects of school life and the facilities available to them to council meetings with the headteacher. Senior and other prefects take on a variety of responsibilities in school, including raising money for charities and helping students with their reading. Sports captains and their teams represent the school. These opportunities help students to become familiar with the responsibilities of citizenship. Students learn to take responsibility for their actions and understand the implications of their behaviour and actions on others.
48. Cultural provision is good, in many ways. In literature, drama, art, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, geography, music, physical education and religious education, the school offers good provision for students to deepen their understanding of their own culture and that of others. It is reinforced by organised visits to places in Europe, such as Paris and Berlin, and to London theatres and places of local and other interest. However, since the last inspection the school has become more ethnically diverse. It makes some provision concerning cultures other than European but there is little celebration of diversity. For example, the school has a significant number of Hindu and Sikh students and the festival of Diwali took place during the period of inspection but it went virtually unnoticed in the school. Ramadan, likewise, began in the same week - yet was unmarked. However, teachers demonstrate in their lessons, particularly in personal, social and health education sessions, how to challenge stereotypes and develop cultural awareness. Visitors like the local police are invited to school to talk about issues related to personal safety. Christian and Jewish representatives are also regular visitors, but no representatives of other faiths have been invited into school and no links made with parents to support multi-cultural awareness. Most displays and notices around the school and classrooms do not recognise any multi-cultural dimension and there are hardly any attractive welcome posters in a range of languages. A few good examples are provided, however, in religious education. Not enough is done to raise students' awareness of the richness of a multi-cultural society, which they themselves represent.

### **Sixth form**

49. Sixth form provision is satisfactory. The range of A-level courses is reasonably good, and the school does its best to accommodate students' subject choices; English, mathematics, art, information technology and business are the most popular. Courses in two vocational areas are provided full-time - business studies (at intermediate and advanced levels) and art (at intermediate level) - as well as a specially arranged part-time course for trainees at the West Ham Academy. Key skills are effectively taught, linked to personal, social and health education and general studies.
50. Students appreciate the induction course at the start of Year 12. Sixth form tutors give individual assistance to those who join later - and a significant minority do so. Students feel welcomed and fit in easily but a few take courses which subsequently they feel may not best fit them for their chosen careers. Careers education is satisfactorily provided as part of the personal, social and health education. Few students benefit from individual careers interviews, however, because the service provided by the local careers service has been reduced. Few links are in place with local colleges of further education, but aspirations are raised through links with and visits to local



universities. Collaboration with professional organisations enables students to explore career paths in medicine (Med-link) and teaching (T-link). In several subjects work-related issues are considered (for example, on business studies courses, in drama and in geography). A strong link has been established with West Ham United Football Club; the school is providing a part-time course for its young trainees. Generally, however, vocational aspects of sixth form subjects are little touched upon and do not receive enough emphasis.

51. Students with special educational needs, especially those with hearing impairment, are supported well. Support is available for students starting to learn English, but some sixth formers need more encouragement to take up this opportunity: reticence is holding back their progress.
52. The sixth form has responded satisfactorily to local needs. It is popular and results show that students achieve as well as can be expected - and usually better - relative to their performance at GCSE. Since the last inspection, the range of A-level courses has been extended, the vocational course introduced in art and the one-year GCSE course phased out. Nonetheless, factors such as the drop-out on the early stages of some courses (for example, the intermediate level business course) and the relatively few high grades gained in many subjects, suggest that alternative courses, or ways of achieving better balance and coherence among subjects chosen, should be considered. Significant proportions of students enter employment at the end of Year 11 (10 per cent) and Years 12 and 13 (30 per cent in each year). Inspection evidence shows that vocational aspects or relevance are under-emphasised on chemistry and design and technology courses. The scope exists for extending the range of vocational courses to provide the means for more students to gain accreditation for their sixth form study and to improve success rate. In providing for the progression of its own students into the sixth form (and about half of Year 11 stay on at Caterham) as well as students from elsewhere who join in the sixth form, the school has, to a large extent, replicated the traditional sixth form curriculum. Most students in the sixth form are studying the subjects they liked lower down the school.
53. Sixth form students take an active part in the life of the school community. Arrangements for their continued spiritual, moral and social education are good. Many of the features of the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development apply also to them. Lessons in personal, social and health education include topics in health and sex education and drugs awareness, as well as covering the Locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education; statutory requirements are met. Visits and conferences extend opportunities directly provided by the school. Sixth formers work as senior librarians and senior prefects and as assistant tutors helping with paired reading, and are seen around the school supporting younger students. They arrange Christmas performances and contribute strongly to musical events, including the choir and carol concert. The students' social committee organises events such as a barbecue, a dinner, debates and sports and raises money for charity through special days. Opportunities are enhanced by cultural events and visits. During the inspection, Year 12 English students benefited from a day-long theatre visit to deepen their understanding of the interpretation of literature. Field visits in biology and geography and visits to Paris and Berlin for modern foreign languages, as well as to the Institut Francais and Goethe Institut in London, enable students to apply their learning and improve their skills in relevant subjects. Other organised activities include visits and conferences on history, and on management. Drama, music and art students benefit from visits to theatres, concerts and galleries in London. The debating society is popular. In recent years, small groups of students have undertaken a wide range of projects both locally - for example, assisting in nursery schools - and internationally, as in a cycle expedition to Malaysia and art restoration in Romania. Overall, the range of enrichment opportunities is good.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

### ***Main school***

54. The pastoral system is strong. The school has maintained the caring and supportive ethos which prevailed at the time of the last inspection. On the whole, educational and personal support and guidance for students are good. Students are valued and well known by the staff. Relationships between tutors and students are good. Continuity of care is assisted by form tutors and heads of year moving up the school with students. Opportunities for individual discussions with students are good. Heads of year and their assistants are caring and show concern. They work hard to give help and guidance to students who have academic or personal problems - for example, by

mentoring. Students' individual needs are met, for example, through the grouping of students by ability, through study skills days and by specialist support. Inspectors confirm the parents' views that their children are well looked after at the school and that their needs are well met.

55. Students starting to learn English are supported well. The identification of students with special educational needs is sound and their progress is satisfactorily monitored, through standardised testing and through reviews of their individual education plans. The progress and achievement of hearing impaired students are very well monitored. The school carries out efficiently its statutory duties to monitor and review the provision for students with special educational needs and to plan for transition to the next stage of education. The provision described in statements of special educational need is generally fully implemented. However, while there is good co-operation with the health authority, speech and language therapy is not currently provided and there are sometimes delays in replacing outgrown hearing aids and ear-moulds; such delays have a negative impact on students' hearing and therefore on their learning. Staff of the hearing impaired unit are actively seeking ways to improve their situation, for example, planning their own language interventions as teachers of the deaf, but they cannot fully compensate for the lack of provision specified and needed.
56. The school has good procedures to ensure students' well-being, health and safety. Their welfare is well supported through the curriculum, including sex education and drugs awareness, and by visiting specialists. Child protection procedures are correctly in place. The designated person, a deputy headteacher, is knowledgeable in child protection matters and keeps others well informed of procedures. Two features of accommodation in science present hazards: ducting of services in one laboratory obstructs free movement and an extractor fan in a preparation room is inefficient. The arrangements for first aid are good; several members of staff are qualified and a good number have received basic training. A welfare assistant co-ordinates first aid and is based in a well-equipped medical room. She provides good quality care for students who are ill or injured. Through her effective monitoring of accidents problems can be anticipated or averted, adding a further dimension to the welfare and personal support for individual students.
57. The school has good arrangements for promoting students' personal development, including tutorials and the programme of personal, social and health education lessons. Extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors also support students' personal development. Students and parents receive good information and guidance at option choice times. Students' personal development is actively monitored by the pastoral team and through the reporting system.
58. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are generally effective: the school is orderly. Students understand the clear system of rewards and sanctions. Whilst the behaviour policy generally works well, it is not consistently applied; for example, the behaviour management of new or temporary teachers is weak in a few lessons. Usually the problem is caused by a few students but affects the learning of all in the lesson. Good behaviour is reinforced in many lessons, assemblies and through the examples of adults working in school. The school has good systems in place to monitor and inform parents of behaviour, for example, through the annual progress report which has a section on behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating any bullying or oppressive behaviour are effective. Students and parents say that reported incidents are dealt with very effectively. Counselling and support services are available for students who find it hard to control their behaviour. Students who are in public care are well monitored and they reach and usually exceed their targets in examinations.
59. The school's procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Registration requirements are met and attendance information is appropriately processed. An administrative assistant follows up absences by contacting home on the first day of absence. Spot-checks detect any internal truancy. Holidays taken in term-time are discouraged. Patterns of absence are monitored by the pastoral team and parents are contacted if there are concerns. The education welfare service is used well. Good attendance is rewarded. A late slip system is in place, but still some students are late to the school.
60. As at the time of the last inspection, procedures for the assessment of students' academic performance are good. Students are tested on entry and later at appropriate stages of their learning. Grades are collected centrally and analysed, using commercial software, and potential outcomes are predicted. The information is shared with the heads of departments, the pastoral team and class teachers and used to track performance. Assessments are monitored carefully to

show differences in performance of groups of students. Academic progress is also monitored well through good, informative marking and a programme of regular assessments. These are used effectively in Years 9, 10 and 11 for reports to parents, to monitor and support students' academic progress and to set individual targets. The targets set and the progress made towards predicted grades are regularly reviewed.

61. Assessment information is used well in most subjects to maximise students' learning, ensure that targets are met and therefore to raise standards. For example, in Year 9 science the information has been used to identify aspects of investigation work which need emphasis. In English, Year 11 students who are assessed as borderline are given opportunities to re-draft and improve their coursework assignments. The assessment co-ordinator manages this aspect of the school's work very capably. The school is set to improve monitoring by amalgamating the pastoral information with the assessment information to form a central database of students' overall performance.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

62. Arrangements for assessing and guiding the progress of sixth formers are satisfactory. Work is carefully marked on the whole. Teachers know individual students well and remind them of ways of improving their work in lessons. In most subjects teachers encourage the students to take responsibility for their own progress by providing them with the specifications for the qualifications they are working towards. The involvement of students in monitoring and improving their own progress is a strong feature on vocational courses. Arrangements for the assessment of hearing impaired students are very good, as they are lower down the school.
63. In common with many schools, targets are set for overall examination results in the school, based on students' prior performance at GCSE. Analysis of results obtained shows that progress in the sixth form is a little better than expectations and in recent years girls have achieved better than boys. The school is starting to introduce targets for students in each subject, with the intention of sharing these with students at an early stage of their course. Practice is not consistent across departments but, when more uniform, should tackle the concern expressed by several students that they would like more information on their progress, relative to predicted examination grades.
64. Information on academic progress and many aspects of personal development are well documented in records of achievement during Year 12 and form the basis of references for employers and universities which are usually finalised in Year 13. Formal reports are issued twice each year; the first is an interim report in the autumn term of Year 12. This includes little space for subject comments and some are only superficially completed. The quality of information in reports from departments is sometimes deficient and unfocused.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

65. Students receive satisfactory advice and support in relation to their studies. The induction arrangements at the start of Year 12 provide a good introduction to the sixth form and expectations of students. The personal, social and health education programme includes study skills and computer skills which assist students in taking responsibility for their own learning. Aspects of careers education are covered and visits are made to universities, to broaden horizons and help students to make decisions about their futures. Individual careers interviews are no longer provided, because of changes in the local careers service. Arrangements are in line with those in many sixth forms but problems arise because some students commit themselves to studying sixth form subjects which they like, rather than those which form a good basis for progression into a particular vocational area. In reviewing its sixth form arrangements, the school should take account of course coherence, alongside flexibility.
66. Students state that general guidance and support arrangements are good. A small minority of sixth formers are bilingual and just starting to learn English. They have access to good language support, although this is not automatically provided. Students with hearing impairment receive very good support, as they do lower down the school. Sixth form staff and tutors are caring and very ready to give help and reassurance. The school makes use of counsellors and local authority support services; yet not all sixth formers are sure where to go for personal advice. The

school could provide more information about its facilities, particularly for sixth formers new to Caterham High School in Year 12.

## HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

### *Main school*

67. Parents have high expectations of the school and, overall, their views of the school are positive. They say that their children like school. Parents feel that the school has high expectations, that teaching is good and that their children make good progress. They are pleased with the standard of care and find the staff are very approachable. They feel that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible, that teaching is good and teachers have high expectations. Inspection evidence supports parents' favourable views. A significant minority of parents has concern about homework. The inspection team found homework to be appropriately and, usually, effectively used. Some parents expressed concern about the range of extra-curricular activities. Inspectors found that the school provides an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities, with many activities stemming from physical education, music or drama. Opportunities for students to improve their work, in revision clubs, for example, are good. The issues raised by parents at their meeting with the registered inspector reflected, to a large extent, the findings of the questionnaire. Additionally, they drew attention to the difference between the school's results and those of other local schools, particularly those with a selective intake. Parents seemed unaware of students' good progress and how much the school helps students to improve their results (especially up to GCSE). Several parents commented on the casual attitudes of a few students towards the rules on school uniform. Inspectors observed a little non-compliance, but nearly all students are appropriately dressed.
68. The school has effective links with its parents, as at the time of the last inspection. Parents support the work of staff in helping the students overcome academic or personal problems. Most have signed the home-school agreement. Their direct contribution to the life of the school is almost wholly through the parents' association which has raised money for the benefit of the school and students, for example, through the purchase of a minibus. They also assist at school events, for example, productions. A small proportion of parents feels the school does not work closely with them. Inspectors found arrangements to be satisfactory, and good in many ways, for example, in promoting attendance. A number of parents stated that they had not been informed about after-school events involving their children. The school has proper arrangements in place, but their use is not monitored, to ensure effectiveness. The school works very closely with parents of students with special educational needs. Opportunities are good for parents to meet with the special educational needs co-ordinator or staff of the hearing impaired unit and most of these parents attend their children's annual reviews. Overall, parents contribute satisfactorily to their children's learning.
69. The school provides satisfactory information to parents which helps them to support their children's education. Students' progress reports are satisfactory. They describe their children's strengths and how they can improve their work, but in some subjects comments are brief and the targets are too general. The school is about to adopt a more useful format for the reports. Parents are invited to consultation evenings which provide valuable opportunities for them to discuss their children's progress. Helpful booklets are provided on the curriculum in each year but there have been few meetings on the curriculum, for example, on the Key Stage 3 strategy (for Years 7 to 9) which the school is implementing. The school invites parents to meetings at times when students make choices, for example, option choices for GCSE. The prospectus and annual governors' report are informative, but some information is not included. The prospectus does not contain local and national examination results but these are distributed later, when they become available. The governors' annual report does not contain information about provision for students with special educational needs.

### *Sixth form*

70. A number of parents commented favourably on the sixth form; they like the continuity and pastoral support it provides, as part of the whole school. Sixth formers' views of the school are mainly positive. They enjoy being in the sixth form and advise others to join. They feel the school helps them settle into the sixth form and that they are treated as adults. They feel several aspects could be improved: the information they receive on their progress; the match between the subjects they study and career aspirations; and their knowledge of whom to go to if they have personal concerns. Some of the sixth formers' concerns reflect the time at which they completed their questionnaire (the early part of the autumn term); far fewer concerns were identified by Year

13 than Year 12 students. Nonetheless, the school could consider amending its induction arrangements to strengthen students' understanding of sixth form procedures and support available, especially for those who have joined Caterham High School in Year 12. Assessment arrangements are being strengthened to provide students with more information on their progress, relative to predicted examination grades. Improvements remain to be made in the match between students' career aspirations and the subjects studied.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

### ***Main school***

#### **Leadership and Management**

71. The school is very capably led and managed. Overall direction is clear and policies for equal opportunities and for teaching and learning underpin the work of the school. Annually, targets for results are agreed. These exceed predictions and have effectively improved achievement over the last few years. The headteacher provides a very effective lead in planning for improvement and co-ordinating the work of the school. He is assisted by able senior colleagues: teamwork is strong among deputies and assistant heads. Leadership in most areas of the school is good - it is strong in English, mathematics, art, drama, geography, media studies, physical education and the hearing impaired unit. This quality of leadership has a significant impact on students' progress. At the time of the inspection, interim management arrangements were in place in history and religious education, pending the appointment of permanent heads of department. This limited the support given to new and temporary staff. Regular meetings involve staff with responsibilities and all teachers; consultative arrangements are good. Commitment to improvement is generated across the school; for example, there is awareness, and practical steps are in place across subject areas to improve the language skills of those beginning to speak English, of strategies to help the hearing impaired and of ways of raising the achievement of boys. The school has achieved the government's Chartermark for excellence in recognition of the overall quality of its provision, including the effectiveness of leadership and management.
72. The school's management promotes an ethos in which students of all backgrounds and abilities are encouraged to participate and achieve highly. Special educational needs, low prior achievement or the need to learn English as an additional language are not seen as barriers to success. Special educational needs in the main school has had a lower profile in recent years and the new co-ordinator faces an enormous task to bring the school up to date with recent developments. A good start has been made and administration of statutory processes is good.
73. The governing body fulfils its statutory requirements, except for the provision of worship. The governors are knowledgeable and well aware of the scope of their responsibilities. They receive regular reports on results and expenditure, and safeguard the interests of the school. In this very well-run school their meeting schedule is lighter than in many schools. Most matters are discussed in the termly full governing body meetings; there is no regular cycle of sub-committee meetings, which could involve them more closely in improvement of the school. Relationships with the headteacher and senior staff are cordial and professional; governors effectively delegate many of their responsibilities to them and contribute to performance management arrangements. Overall, they operate with satisfactory effectiveness.
74. Arrangements for planning, monitoring and reviewing the work of the school are very good. Good use is made of management information systems. Members of the senior management team are systematic and thorough in monitoring results, teaching and learning, attendance and many other features of the life of the school. Performance management arrangements are in place. Most stages of monitoring are well documented. For example, heads of departments review results annually and compile an evaluation of results in their own subject. A few aspects of monitoring have been introduced recently - for example, of results by ethnicity. Where information on areas of weakness has been available, the school has taken strong action as, for example, in their efforts to improve boys' GCSE results. The school is well aware of strengths and weaknesses, and developments planned - for example, of sixth form provision - are appropriate.

75. Finances for several purposes are used well. The school receives larger allocations for special educational needs than most schools, on account of the hearing impaired unit. All of this income is properly spent and accounted for. Likewise, funds received for staff development are appropriately spent, usually related to aspects of the school's plans for improvement.
76. The school manages its finances well. It has managed to fund substantial growth in sixth form numbers from an annual budget which is a little below average (when account is taken of expenditure on special educational needs). However, it has been left with no scope for reducing class size - and many teaching groups in Years 7 to 9 contain 30 students. For the size of the school, relatively few support staff are employed to help students with special educational needs (for example, those with moderate learning, or emotional and behavioural difficulties) cope in their lessons. Arrangements to support teachers new to the school are good in many ways, but some new teachers would benefit from more practical support in coping with challenging behaviour.
77. The school has a good sense of best value - and a statement explaining this has been in place for two years. Best value is sought in contracts - for example, in planned maintenance and catering - as well as in matters directly affecting teaching. Developments to improve standards in Years 7 to 9, and raising boys' achievements, are seen as important and cost-effective investments in improving school performance. Resources are allocated to departments, partly by formula and partly on the basis of developments planned, and also contribute to investment in improvement. When account is taken of the amount of money coming into the school, which is a little below average, and its overall effectiveness, the school provides good value for money.
78. Many strengths in leadership and senior management have been maintained since the last inspection. At the last inspection, the management and leadership of departments were judged variable but, overall, sound. They are better now and several areas of the school's work are strongly led. The key issues of the last report were tackled vigorously, soon after the inspection, and good progress has been made, including improvement in standards in Years 7 to 9, stretching the most able and improving learning resources. The premises are much more secure. Ethnic monitoring is in place. The school has introduced daily opportunities for reflection, in form-time and assemblies, although practice is inconsistent. Teaching is better now. GCSE results have improved in line with those nationally and sixth form results have improved markedly. A very good management information system has been installed. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good. In view of the well-established and very good systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, its strong leadership and commitment to helping all students to achieve well, the capacity for further improvement is good.

## **Resourcing**

79. Teachers are suitably qualified by training and, in nearly all cases, by experience to cover appropriate aspects of the curriculum, including special educational needs. The school, in common with many in the London area, has found difficulty recently in recruiting teachers and has worked hard in trying to fill all teaching posts with permanent staff. However, success has been limited in some areas and temporary teachers are used, which affects the continuity of students' learning. Staff new to the school, including the newly qualified teachers, are well looked after in most respects. However, several, mainly temporary, teachers find the behaviour of disaffected students difficult to manage. Performance management arrangements are in place and clearly linked to the school's priorities for improvement. The school makes effective use of in-service training to increase the expertise of staff. Recently, all teachers participated in literacy training and effective strategies are now in use in most subjects. Training in some areas has had less impact on learning opportunities. For example, although staff have benefited from opportunities to improve their skills in information and communication technology, computer applications present little challenge to students in several subjects in Years 7 to 9. Administrative, technical and lunchtime staff provide good service for the school.
80. The overall quality of the school buildings is satisfactory. They are well kept and wisely used. The public areas are well organised, with displays which reflect the positive ethos of the school and aspects of its work, for example, the performing arts. Outdoor play areas are well maintained and of an adequate size. The sports hall (new since the last inspection) and the swimming pool are very good resources. These are also used by the outside community, generating significant funds for the school. However, there are some shortcomings, notably accommodation for students with special educational needs including the hearing impaired, and for general lunchtime use: the

dining area is congested and cramped. There are not enough practice rooms for music and the use of the hall for drama imposes constraints. Little benefit is gained from the sports ground a short distance from the school, because of its lack of secure changing facilities. The outdoor play area (Redgra) was in poor condition at the time of the last inspection and remains so now. Good standards of cleanliness and care, provided by the caretaker and cleaning staff, maintain a pleasant functional environment. Security arrangements are good.

81. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. The book stock is satisfactory and books are used well in many subjects. The librarian is enthusiastic and the use of the library has improved, so that it has a good impact on learning. Overall, provision of computers is good, but some subjects, including science, music and modern foreign languages do not have easy access to them. The use of computers, whilst satisfactory overall, is not developed well enough in art and music. Community resources, including local leisure and the local authority's residential facilities, are appropriately used and support students' learning. Overall, the resources available to the school and their effective deployment have a positive effect upon students' learning and the standards achieved. Teachers are helped to cope with paperwork by helpful administrative and learning resources staff.
82. The hearing impaired unit is appropriately resourced. However, resources, including staffing resources, are inadequate for the numbers of students who are on the register of special needs but who do not have a statement, and are less than is generally seen in similar schools. This is having a negative impact on learning in some lessons where there are many needs and little support. The deployment of learning support assistants sometimes appears unhelpful, with several additional adults in some lessons and none in classes where support is clearly needed to assist students with moderate learning or behavioural difficulties. Occasionally a learning support assistant is present but does not have a clear role because of the nature of the lesson activity. The department has no real teaching base despite the fact that the school has identified a need for teaching in small groups and for counselling. The lack of dedicated accommodation means that time is wasted moving students and equipment from room to room and that resources, such as the computer and software to assist learning, cannot be fully used. Some of the resources to support students with behavioural difficulties - such as the counsellor and the inclusion teacher - are part of the pastoral system rather than the special needs department, and this can lead to relative isolation of staff and fragmentation of support. Closer arrangements for liaison would be beneficial and a dedicated special educational needs base would make this much easier.

## ***Sixth form***

### **Leadership and management**

83. The sixth form is effectively co-ordinated. On a day-to-day basis, arrangements work well. The sixth form is distinct yet also an important part of the whole school. Sixth formers are known well individually and benefit from responsibilities they undertake; many contribute effectively to the school as a whole (for example, by mentoring younger students, and through participation in the orchestra and in productions) and through positions of responsibility (as head boy or head girl or prefects). They also enjoy the special facilities in the sixth form centre - for example, the snack bar and their computing facilities - and opportunities such as the debating club and events organised by their own sixth form council. Curricular arrangements work well. Students who join late are assimilated into groups and they receive appropriate support from their teachers.
84. The range of courses offered (mostly A-levels) suits the abilities of most students, but there has been relatively little investment in developing vocational aspects of courses - which is surprising, given the significant minority of students (30 per cent) who leave at the end of each sixth form year to enter employment. Growth in numbers (substantial in some years) is funded at a level determined by the number of students in the last school year, until the start of the summer term. This retrospective funding has limited the scope for development. The school has been keenly aware of best value in all practical matters.
85. The sixth form aims to develop a culture of success. In many ways it is successfully managed. Students' personal development is good and students from all backgrounds work together harmoniously. Results are in line with, or a little better than, expectations, when account is taken of the attainment levels of students starting in Year 12. Bearing in mind that expenditure on the sixth form is contained within its income, which is a little below average, the sixth form operates



with satisfactory cost-effectiveness. Governors have been vigilant about the sixth form but have no separate committee to oversee it: they receive information on results and staffing, as they do for the school as a whole. The head of the sixth form is a member of the senior management team, and it is from this forum that the drive for improvement comes. Students' progress is monitored carefully. Following review, the school has taken effective action to improve examination results. New courses have been introduced in information and communication technology and changes have also been made in drama. The school is aware that aspects of the sixth form could be further strengthened and has included the sixth form as a priority in its development plan.

## **Resourcing**

86. Staffing arrangements are satisfactory. Whilst overall the number of teachers is in suitable proportion to the number of sixth form students, several small teaching groups have been afforded, to accommodate student choice. The most generous example of this is a very small German group in Year 12. Teachers are suitably qualified for the courses provided; inspection evidence is that teaching in the sixth form is a little better, overall, than lower down the school. Arrangements for monitoring sixth form teaching are systematic, as for the school as a whole. Overall, the sixth form is adequately resourced (with books, learning resources and computers). Where general classrooms are used for sixth form lessons, lessons are usually suitably accommodated, but too many chemistry lessons are taught in classrooms because laboratories are already in use. Students studying art do not have studio workshop space where they can work on their projects outside lesson time. Growth in sixth form numbers means that the sixth form base is wholly inadequate: at break and lunchtimes it is standing-room only and the teaching spaces are cramped. More accommodation is needed.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

87. *To raise further the standards of work, attainment and progress of students, the governors, headteacher, senior management team and staff should:*

### **Main School**

- (1) improve achievement in history throughout the school and modern foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 by strengthening students' motivation and skills (paragraphs 3, 35, 154 and 165);
- (2) strive vigorously and, with governors, work collaboratively with the local education authority to improve the outdoor play area (Redgra) and accommodation, especially for students with special educational needs and for lunchtime (dining) use (paragraph 80);
- (3) enhance opportunities for reflection in assemblies and in thought-for-the-day to allow for worship (paragraphs 45 and 73).

### **Sixth form**

- (1) focus teaching on the skills and understanding that students need to improve their results in chemistry, physics, history and information and communication technology (paragraphs 14, introduction to 191, 200, 221 and the introduction to 238);
- (2) improve the match of the sixth form courses to the needs and abilities of students so as to strengthen continuity of learning and students' opportunities for success (paragraphs 12 and 52);
- (3) strive vigorously to improve accommodation for the sixth form, in the context of overall planning for the school (paragraph 86).

88. *In addition to the preceding areas for improvement, the following less significant weaknesses need attention:*

### **Main school**

Practical strategies for teachers new to the school on the management of students with behavioural difficulties (paragraphs 31 and 79); deployment of classroom assistants for students with special educational needs (paragraph 82); the range of activities using information and communication technology in art, music and other subjects across Years 7 to 9 (paragraphs 27 and 158); appreciation of the richness and diversity of the multi-cultural community (paragraphs 48 and 189).

### **Sixth form**

The development of sixth form students' independent learning skills (paragraph 37).

The school has a good sense of its own strengths and areas of improvement. All of the issues identified by the inspectors are reflected in school plans, notably, improvement for the sixth form and in accommodation. The implementation and monitoring of the school's teaching and learning policy will cover learning in subjects mentioned by inspectors, as well as the development of students' independent learning skills.

## **THE HEARING IMPAIRED UNIT**

89. The school has a well-established hearing impaired unit which can cater for a maximum of 25 students, most of whom have a severe or profound hearing loss. Students attend classes in the main school. Their support takes the form of additional teaching in the unit and support in targeted lessons by a teacher or special support assistant.
90. Students make very good progress in lessons. They achieve very well, overall: while it is not normally appropriate to judge the standards achieved by hearing impaired students against those expected nationally for their age, at Caterham High School many attain in line with national expectations. Some students achieve high grades in GCSE and A-level examinations and go on to university courses. A number of students have additional physical difficulties and some are bilingual or just starting to learn English. In all cases achievement is higher than would be expected, relative to students' attainment on entry to the school.
91. The unit provides a consistently very high quality of teaching, both through supporting other teachers in subject lessons and in reinforcing students' learning. The teaching in all lessons seen was very good. Planning is excellent: teachers adapt the plans of subject teachers and plan pre and post-lesson support which ensures that their students understand the lesson, take an active part, and can clarify any outstanding difficulties. Teachers' planning is dynamic and responsive to the needs of students which emerge from the very good assessment made. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, both in respect of their skills in teaching hearing-impaired students and in the subjects which they support. Strategies for developing literacy and numeracy skills and appropriate use of information technology are very good. Teachers use a rich variety of strategies appropriate to their students' needs – for example, note taking and summaries on whiteboards, the use of annotated texts and support books and the use of technology – such as overhead projectors - to support the spoken word. The extent and quality of the preparation which they undertake, for example, to support A-level lessons, are impressive. Not all unit teachers are fully qualified teachers of the deaf; some are fully trained and some are in the process of training or preparing for training. Nevertheless, all display the highest levels of skill and commitment. All have extremely high expectations and aspirations for their students. Relationships are excellent, as is team-work between teaching and support staff. The very high quality of teaching leads directly to secure learning, while the excellence of relationships gives students the security that enables them to work with confidence alongside other students who can hear. For example, inspectors observed two extremely impressive presentations by hearing impaired sixth form students on their art and geography projects which were delivered clearly, confidently and to a very high standard.
92. Students in the unit have access to the full curriculum of the school, including modern foreign languages, which can present them with particular difficulties. A sensible arrangement allows them to opt for additional support rather than a second foreign language and to give up French in the later years, but some students go on to study one or two foreign languages to examination level. Students also have an additional curriculum which focuses on their language development

and on their understanding of their own hearing impairment. Excellent emphasis is placed on positive expectations. Provision for students' personal development, offered according to particular needs, is very good.

93. The assessment of hearing-impaired students, continual monitoring and the tracking of their progress are very good. All staff have very detailed knowledge of their students' strengths and needs. Unit staff are available for students at all times, from early morning to late afternoon, at break times and during the lunch hour. The care and maintenance of students' hearing aids and equipment are very efficient. Liaison with other professionals, with parents and feeder schools is very good. Visits to feeder schools begin more than a year before a student is due to transfer into Caterham High School.
94. Leadership and management within the hearing impaired unit are exemplary; resources are fully used, liaison with subject teachers is very good, teamwork in the unit excellent and deaf awareness training extremely strong and useful. The teacher in charge achieves an ethos in which students and staff give of their best.
95. The department is well resourced as far as staffing, books and equipment are concerned, but delays sometimes occur in replacing outgrown hearing aids and ear-moulds, which constrain students' learning. The accommodation, on the other hand, falls far short of acceptable standards. It is cramped, airless and lacking in natural light. It has too little office and storage space. It offers no opportunities for reverse integration in which mainstream students could join unit students for particular activities. Students taking examinations in the department's classrooms, particularly in summer weather, must be significantly disadvantaged by the lack of ventilation and the poor lighting.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	145
	Sixth form	74
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		68

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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#### Years 7 – 11

Number	3	37	67	28	10	0	0
Percentage	2	26	46	19	7	0	0

#### Sixth form

Number	0	19	42	11	2	0	0
Percentage	0	26	57	15	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

#### Students on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	915	245
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	185	33

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	32	5
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	208	8

#### English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	307

#### Student mobility in the last school year

	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	48
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	63

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.15
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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001 (2000)	87 (86)	94 (93)	181 (179)

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	61 (35)	64 (50)	60 (45)
	Girls	75 (61)	69 (71)	61 (58)
	Total	136 (96)	133 (121)	121 (103)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	75 (55)	73 (68)	67 (58)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	33 (13)	43 (42)	27 (22)
	National	33 (28)	43 (42)	32 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51 (51)	59 (52)	54 (55)
	Girls	62 (72)	60 (78)	55 (74)
	Total	113 (123)	119 (130)	109 (129)
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	62 (70)	66 (74)	60 (73)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (23)	39 (42)	27 (33)
	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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001 (2000)	83 (108)	85 (70)	168 (178)

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	38 (46)	80 (104)	83 (107)
	Girls	52 (36)	82 (65)	85 (70)
	Total	90 (82)	162 (169)	168 (177)
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	53.6 (46)	96.4 (95)	100 (99)
	National	49.8 (47.4)	88.8 (90.6)	95.7 (95.6)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	42.3 (40.3)
	National	39.1 (38.4)

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001 (2000)	23 (37)	40 (27)	63 (64)

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	11.3 (13.4)	16.2 (15.2)	14.6 (14.4)	0 (1.0)	3.5 (2.3)	2.3 (1.2)
National	(17.7)	(18.6)	(18.2)	(2.6)	(2.9)	(2.7)

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	88
	National	N/A

### **Ethnic background of students**

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	67
Black – African heritage	49
Black – other	16
Indian	174
Pakistani	67
Bangladeshi	14
Chinese	10
White	726
Any other minority ethnic group	37

### **Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	21	0
Black – African heritage	9	1
Black – other	2	0
Indian	8	0
Pakistani	5	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	89	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	73.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.7

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	27
Total aggregate hours worked per week	576

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.7
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	22.0
Key Stage 4	18.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	3,561,212
Total expenditure	3,539,739
Expenditure per student	3227
Balance brought forward from previous year	118,809
Balance carried forward to next year	140,282

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	33.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	30.1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	9.4
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

Number of questionnaires sent out	1097
Number of questionnaires returned	209

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	55	9	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	25	60	6	2	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	48	11	4	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	57	10	5	3
The teaching is good.	26	56	10	0	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	52	14	4	10
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	45	6	3	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	46	3	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	22	49	16	3	10
The school is well led and managed.	27	51	7	2	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	26	53	9	1	11
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	49	11	2	19

### Other issues raised by parents

Twenty parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector. The issues they raised reflected, to a large extent, the findings of the questionnaire. Additionally, they drew attention to the difference between the school's results and those of other local schools, particularly those with a selective intake. Several parents commented on the casual attitudes of a few students towards the rules on school uniform.



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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Results in the standardised tests at the end of Year 9 improved significantly in 2001.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good or better.
- Students' attitudes to their work are very positive and they work hard.
- The department is very well led and managed; teamwork amongst English teachers is excellent.

#### Areas for improvement

- Results in GCSE English literature are not as good as those in English language.
- Boys' results in the GCSE examinations are significantly below those of girls.

96. At the end of Year 9 in 2001, the results of national tests were above the average for all schools nationally and well above the average for similar schools. This is a significant improvement on results of recent years. The proportion of students reaching the higher level 6, or above, more than doubled, moving from well below average to average. Two students achieved very high levels – one assessed as level 8 and one as exceptional performance, the only student in Redbridge to gain the highest level. Results in English are similar to those in mathematics and better than those in science. Boys did better than girls, which is contrary to the national trend. The attainment of students, including those with special educational needs, and those speaking English as an additional language, represents very good achievement up to the end of Year 9, relative to their achievement on entry, which is below average.
97. In 2001, results in the GCSE English language examination, while in line with the national average, were well above the average for similar schools. Results were better than in 2000, when they were a little higher than in other subjects. In English literature, 2001 results were below average, though a little better than in 2000, when they were similar to results in other subjects. The proportion of students gaining the full range of grades (A\*-G), however, is average overall. More students than in most schools are entered for the examination. Girls do better than boys in both English language and English literature, to a greater extent than nationally. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good in English language and satisfactory in English literature, relative to the results of the same students in the national tests at the end of Year 9.
98. In lessons and work seen, standards are above average by Year 9: students have made very good progress since Year 7. Students in Year 9 speak fluently, though not always in standard English. Many students have a wide vocabulary, which helps them to develop their ideas, while the less able answer more briefly. In whole-class work and small groups, students listen well. They respect one another's ideas and respond appropriately. Students read aloud clearly and accurately, though often with little expression; they understand most of what they read. For example, a Year 9 class practising for the national assessment tests coped well with a passage about a journey in Zaire, understanding its purpose. Students read a good selection of fiction and non-fiction in Year 9 lessons, which began with silent reading. Students write confidently in various styles - letters, poems and narratives - and they are competent in producing both reflective and descriptive writing. Comments on books they have read are usually interesting and informative. Students organise their writing and paragraph it carefully. Sentence structure and the way ideas are linked are sometimes limited in style but spelling, punctuation and grammar are sound, except in the work of the less able, where errors mar expression. Frequent drafting of work is helping to raise standards of accuracy and to promote the use of more effective vocabulary. More able students write with flair and imagination, achieving a high level of technical accuracy.
99. In Year 11, standards are average and for this year group standards were below average at the end of Year 9: students have progressed well across Years 10 and 11. Students speak with greater confidence and answer questions at length. For example, in a very good Year 11 lesson on the poem, *Nothing's changed*, students commented on their impressions of the poem using suitable vocabulary and justified their opinions. Listening skills are good. Students listen

carefully to what the teacher says and this helps them learn rapidly. Students read aloud well, as in a Year 11 lesson on *A View from the Bridge*; students read parts clearly and with expression. Subsequent discussion showed they had a clear understanding of what was happening. Many students grasp hidden meaning, though the less able take words at face value. Writing becomes more extensive in Years 10 and 11. Students continue to write in different formats. In the best work, students writing on *A Day in the Life of Me* used precise vocabulary and sequence ideas well. They compose poems in the style of well-known poets. All students learn to comment on characters and plot in plays and novels. While the more able focus well on the topic, students of middle and lower ability tend to stray from the point. For example, in essays on *Of Mice and Men* about George and Lennie's dream, some students wrote about George and Lennie too generally. Students working at the equivalent of GCSE grade D, or lower, lapse into retelling the story instead of giving an opinion, and do not support their views with quotations which are explained and explored fully. Sentence structure improves by the end of Year 11. Students make good use of the short sentence; expression is clear and accurate enough for points to be clearly made. Drafting continues to play a key role in raising standards of accuracy and the presentation of final drafts is good. Computers are well employed to help students enhance the appearance of their work.

100. Teaching and learning are good. They are always at least satisfactory, good in over three-quarters of lessons, very good in nearly a quarter and occasionally excellent. The consistently good teaching explains why students achieve very well in English. Because teachers present interesting and stimulating work, students enjoy the lessons, work hard, behave very well and have very good attitudes to their work. Teachers have very extensive subject knowledge, which enables them to question students to assess what they have learned and to make them think more deeply. In an excellent lesson on *A View from the Bridge*, the teacher's questions led students to see how language reveals character, and that the way an actor speaks a line is crucial. Occasionally, teachers direct questions to the same students and opportunities to develop speaking throughout the whole class are missed. Classroom management is very good and expectations of what students can do are high. Lessons are well planned. Teachers share the aims and the learning outcomes of the lesson with students. Pace is brisk and only occasionally is time lost in the distribution of resources partway through a lesson, or when students are not actively involved early enough in the lesson. Teachers generally vary activities well so that students concentrate for the full hour and learn new skills rapidly. Very effective use is made of group work. For example, in a very good Year 7 poetry lesson, the teacher formed mixed ability groups to rehearse a stanza from *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. Students improved their reading skills, listened well, showed respect for others' views, and reached a deeper understanding of the poem. Different work is available to challenge students of all abilities, as in a Year 9 lesson on descriptive writing, where the less able benefited from more structured work to help them learn. Marking is very good. Teachers annotate work to indicate errors and write extensive comments to encourage students and indicate how the work can be improved. Teachers work very hard to provide interesting resources for learning, and to share their enthusiasm for the subject with their classes.
101. Units of work allow for full coverage of the National Curriculum, including aspects of drama and information and communication technology. For example, in a Year 11 class of lower ability students, the teacher gave students the opportunity to draft letters on computer. This enabled students to develop independence in learning, as well as writing skills. They grew in self-confidence and behaved well. Assessment procedures are very good. Students' achievements are efficiently recorded and data used in future planning. Year 11 students working at about the borderline of GCSE grades C and D benefit from an accelerated learning programme at lunchtime, and the high ability students have extension activities, which widen their reading experience. Assessment data is also used in target-setting and this is helping to raise standards. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department leads by example and has created a very good team spirit amongst colleagues, so that teachers share ideas and work together to do their best for every individual. The policy of buying enough books for students to take texts home enables teachers to set worthwhile homework and extend students' experience of English. Accommodation is enhanced by good wall displays of students' work and of key words, such as 'simile' and 'alliteration', to which teachers refer in lessons. These help students to learn rapidly.
102. Improvement since the last inspection is good, overall. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are much better, moving from well below to above average. Standards in GCSE English language have been improved. Results are not as good in English literature, but almost every

student is entered. Teaching and learning are better: work is carefully matched to students' abilities. Given the head of department's expert leadership, the commitment of all teachers to raising attainment and the very positive attitudes of students, the capacity for further improvement is good.

### **Literacy**

103. The standard of literacy in the school is average. Literacy across the curriculum is well developed. All teachers recently attended a training day, which updated their skills. Opportunities are given in most subjects to allow students to practise their skills in reading and writing. Good attention to literacy is evident in several subjects – such as design and technology, geography, physical education and art, but in history literacy is underdeveloped. In modern foreign languages, reading schemes are used well. Students read aloud in religious education, where girls' reading is better than boys. In mathematics, students read aloud questions clearly. Opportunities for reading aloud are provided in history, where students' comprehension is satisfactory, although reading is not always fluent or expressive. Most teachers use key words in their lessons, and many classrooms display them well. In history, however, words are not displayed. Teachers explain key words clearly – as observed, for example, in science, geography, physical education and business education. Attention is paid to spellings and, in design and technology, spellings are tested. Writing is at least satisfactory in most subjects. In mathematics, students write explanations, summarise findings and give conclusions. In art, students write extensively on artists and this aspect of the subject is well developed in the sixth form. Students present written work well in science and attain a good level of accuracy, but in French and German spelling is weak. They use technical language well in most subjects, such as 'agri-business' and 'fodder' in geography. Students write creatively in religious education, though rarely in other subjects (except for English). In modern foreign languages, extended writing is not systematically developed. Extended writing is well used in the sixth form – for example, in drama evaluations and media studies assignments. Teachers correct technical errors in their marking. Staff assisting students with learning and language difficulties focus closely on reading and writing, so that students make good progress in literacy.

### **Media Studies**

104. Media studies is a popular subject at GCSE level. Results in 2001 were broadly average, but achievement was good. Girls did better than boys. In 2000, results were above average and a little better than in other subjects. Standards depend on the prior attainment of students choosing the subject. In 2001, a significant minority of lower attaining boys was entered for GCSE. In lessons and work seen, standards are average. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well, in line with the very good scheme of work. Effective use is made of group work. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, students collaborated well in discussion about which story from a given list should be placed on the front page of a tabloid newspaper. They learnt rapidly through sharing ideas, and behaved well. The subject is very well managed and there is good collaboration between the two teachers.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

### **Strengths**

- Students achieve highly at the end of Years 9 and 11 relative to their prior attainment.
- Teaching and learning are good; students learn effectively because teachers prepare the lessons well.
- The leadership and management of the subject are very good.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Numeracy strategies, to improve students' mental skills in coping with number operations.
- The consistent use of comments when marking students' work to give them better advice on how they might improve.
- Support in large classes which include many students with learning difficulties.

105. Results of the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 have steadily improved over the last three years. In both 1999 and 2000 results were in line with the national average when compared with all schools and above the average when compared with similar schools. Girls performed better than boys. In 2001, results improved further and were above the average when compared with schools nationally and well above the average when compared with similar schools. This represents very good progress for both boys and girls relative to their attainment levels on entry to the school.
106. In GCSE examinations in 2000 and 2001, the proportions of students gaining the higher grades (A\*-C) and results across the full range of grades (A\*-G) were close to the national averages. In 2000, the proportion gaining the highest grades (A\*,A) was well below the average nationally, but this proportion doubled in 2001, although still remaining below the average. The results in 2001, overall, remained similar to those in 2000, being in line with the national average when compared with all schools and well above the average when compared with similar schools. Students achieve highly relative to their results in national tests at the end of Year 9.
107. Standards in lessons and in the work seen during the inspection, while covering a wide range, overall are in line with the national expectation of students of similar ages. Standards are relatively higher in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. By the end of Year 9, the majority of students have made good progress. They have a sound grasp of number. The higher attaining students use and apply a range of methods in solving simple algebraic expressions and equations; they recognise patterns in number sequences and express these in a generalised form; they represent mappings and co-ordinates as simple linear equations and understand and use fractions to express quantities in a ratio. Students with average ability are introduced to number patterns through Pascal's Triangle and the Fibonacci Sequence; they express the patterns in words rather than in a generalised form. The number skills of lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, are less secure and some of the students have poor knowledge of multiplication tables. They understand linear and square measures and use these to find areas of simple shapes. All students undertake tasks involving mathematical investigation, for example, to find and relate borders to different sizes of pond, in which they are required to explain how the activity has been developed, make predictions from their findings, test their predictions and draw conclusions. These tasks promote students' thinking and literacy skills and standards are good.
108. More able students in Years 10 and 11 attain highly. Year 10 students, for example, confidently use algebra to manipulate expressions and equations, including Pythagoras' rule and trigonometrical ratios. They use calculators competently to develop the graphs of the sine and cosine ratios. By the end of Year 11, the higher attaining students have further developed their understanding of graphs and can find areas under a curve by summing the areas of strips (applying the trapezoidal rule). Students from middle ability sets attain in line with the national expectation. For example, they understand the idea of percentage and calculate percentage increase and decrease of quantities; they read and interpret data from linear and quadratic graphs. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, improve their algebraic skills more slowly. By Year 11, they simplify expressions and solve simple equations. They have some understanding of place value and are able to round numbers to a given number of decimal places. However, they are less confident in rounding to a given number of significant figures. For example, they were confused to find that 0.005 did not equal 5 when rounded to one significant figure. Students are helped to do well relative to their prior attainment, in formal assessments at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE, through the programmes provided in the revision clubs.
109. Teaching is good overall and students learn well; very good teaching was observed in about one in six lessons. Teachers plan carefully; lessons are well structured and teachers generally maintain a suitable pace, in keeping with the students' capacity to learn. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are very good; they explain the work clearly and sequentially so students understand and learn systematically. Students and activities are mostly well managed, so good relationships are developed, enabling students to participate and be involved with the work of the lesson. In a Year 8 lesson, in which teaching was very good, students improved their mental number skills and their understanding of algebraic methods; they simplified algebraic expressions by expanding brackets using positive and negative terms. The purpose of the lesson was shared with the students so they understood what they were expected to learn. They were encouraged to participate by being given opportunities to explain to the group how they had worked through the problems; this helped reinforce their learning and they made very good progress. Occasionally, teachers' expectations are not high enough and students' concentration

lapses. For example, in a Year 7 class, a minority of boys failed to listen to instructions and tended to call out for attention. This distracted other students and slowed down the work of the lesson.

110. Students' progress is regularly assessed through tests and examinations; the information thus gained is used effectively. Teachers keep up with the marking of the students' work. Some add helpful comments in students' books to inform them how best to improve. Students would benefit from this good practice being used more consistently by all teachers in the department.
111. Students' attitudes to learning are good overall; in a quarter of the lessons they are very good and only occasionally are they unsatisfactory. Students show interest in lessons and mostly focus well on the tasks. They confidently explain answers to the class when requested. Those who attain highly are mature learners: they concentrate throughout and are motivated to succeed. Behaviour is good overall. A small minority of students can create disruption by calling out loudly in class or questioning the teacher, either to draw attention to themselves or to embarrass the teacher. Occasionally, this behaviour is not handled effectively by the teacher and a student is sent out of the lesson; this slows down progress.
112. The department is well led and managed. Teachers work together effectively and all undertake some responsibility for the work of the department. They have a commitment to help students achieve as highly as possible. Teachers in the department have taken on extra work to minimise disruption to students' learning in the light of the current difficulties in recruiting an extra teacher. Activities to improve number skills have been included into the schemes of work for Years 7 and 8 with plans to extend these activities into Year 9. Monitoring of this development is not yet rigorous enough to ensure that activities to promote mental number skills are effectively and consistently used by all teachers in the department. The provision of support teachers for students with learning needs is just satisfactory, overall. Students with hearing impairment and those in the early stages of learning to speak English are supported well and make satisfactory, sometimes good, progress. However, a number of fairly large groups with a high proportion of students with learning difficulties do not have enough classroom support for the students. For example, in a Year 7 class of 28 students, 15 of whom had identified learning needs, not enough individual help was available to enable them to use computers for their learning in mathematics. The teacher, helped by one classroom assistant, worked extremely hard to minimise the students' waiting time so that they all made at least satisfactory progress; the task was onerous and daunting. The provision of extra-curricular activities enhances the work of the department. Students have opportunities to reinforce their learning by attending revision classes, which are well attended. The mathematics club provides activities, puzzles and opportunities to enter national challenges; these help to improve the students' knowledge and understanding of mathematics.
113. Improvement since the last inspection report is good. Results in the National Curriculum tests and in GCSE continue to improve. The overall quality of teaching has improved, as well as students' achievements. Although the quality of the teachers' marking is better than at the last inspection, good practice is not yet consistent throughout the department.

## **Numeracy**

114. Standards of numeracy are average, overall. Activities to strengthen numeracy skills feature in the schemes of work for mathematics for Years 7 and 8, with plans to develop these into Year 9. Teachers' practice in developing students' numeracy skills is not consistent across the department. Too many students lack competence in handling numbers mentally; more opportunities are needed to promote their mental skills. The lowest attaining students have difficulty with some multiplication tables. By the end of Year 9, students use calculators competently. By the end of Year 11, higher attaining students use number operations effectively in calculations, which include symbols, for example, in algebraic and trigonometrical expressions. The lowest attaining students improve their skills in handling numbers and, for example, can expand brackets, but their retention skills are weak: they tend to forget work they have covered.
115. A whole-school policy to develop numeracy across the curriculum is agreed. but is not yet well established. Subject areas have identified the ways in which they use numeracy, as well as some strategies which could be employed to promote a more systematic approach. No systems are in place to monitor assignments in other curricular areas. Some subjects do use number and number operations effectively. For example, in design and technology, students use their

knowledge of lines and angles when constructing isometric drawings. Students in geography competently use four-figure references and co-ordinates in map work. Effective use is made of symmetry, enlargement and scale in art; pottery and sculpture help to raise students' spatial awareness, but some opportunities are missed by failing to explain the relationship between linear and square measures. Numeracy is being developed in science. While little use is made of graphs and bar charts in Years 7 to 9, students were observed calculating and tabulating results, and students in Years 10 and 11 use number operations effectively in calculations, as, for example, related to Ohm's Law. Overall, students are able to cope with the demands of tasks in subjects; standards are satisfactory.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Results of GCSE examinations are above average and improving.
- Teaching is good and students achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Work is well matched to students' abilities.
- Teachers encourage students to be scientific when making observations.
- Students are helped to consolidate their learning and widen their scientific horizons through revision sessions and science clubs.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of key learning objectives, to focus students' attention more sharply.
- Capturing students' interest by pointing out the relevance of topics.
- The consistency of marking and the use of targets to help students to improve.

116. When students enter the school in Year 7 their attainment is below that expected for their age. They achieve well through Years 7 to 9, so that their attainment in lessons and the work seen during the inspection is in line with the national average by Year 9. Their good achievement begins early in Year 7; they start to make predictions and draw simple conclusions consistent with the results of their experiments, for example, finding the relationship between angles of incidence and reflection when a mirror reflects light. By Year 9, their understanding has improved more quickly than average. About one third of students can relate differences in the properties of ice, water and steam to the arrangements of their particles, and almost all can describe the functions of the parts of a plant, though a small number cannot do this without help. Students handle laboratory equipment carefully and safely. Recent results in the National Curriculum tests reflect students' attainment in lessons. In 2001, the results were in line with the national average and with the average in similar schools. They were higher than those in 2000, largely because boys did markedly better. Results have been improving over the last three years.
117. In GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining the higher (A\* to C) grades in 2001 was above the national average and well above the average in similar schools. Bearing in mind their National Curriculum test results two years earlier, this represents very good progress for these students. The 2001 results were better than those for 2000, particularly for the top (A\* and A) grades. Girls did better than boys.
118. Students continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11. Attainment in the lessons and written work seen in Year 11 during the inspection was above average, reflecting recent GCSE results. Students in a higher ability set achieved well when they worked out for themselves the pattern of chemical composition which distinguishes alkanes from alkenes, and one or two were sufficiently sharply focused to spot an error on their worksheet. All know the main functions of the major organs in the human body and almost all can describe some ways in which the body maintains constant internal conditions. All students in Year 11 are likely to gain a grade in forthcoming GCSE examinations. The progress of students with special educational needs and those learning to speak English is similar to that of other students. No evidence was seen during the inspection that the progress of any one group of students is markedly different from that of any other group. All work very well together, often in ethnically mixed groups.
119. Most students write well, as a result of encouragement by teachers to do so through correction of their work; however, some students fail to learn from the advice given and repeat earlier errors. Students' numerical skills are adequate for the tasks set, but they are not yet developed

systematically. Although their use of information and computer technology in science is carefully monitored, progress is restricted because the department does not have enough equipment of its own and the computer rooms are too often heavily booked to allow easy access for science classes.

120. Teaching and learning in science are good. About two thirds of the lessons seen during the inspection were good or better, though one unsatisfactory lesson was observed. Key features of the good teaching seen were teachers' good subject knowledge, encouragement for students to make careful observations and explain any anomalous results, setting work that is well matched to students' varied abilities, and good relationships between teachers and students which encourage all to participate. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher used an analogy to help students remember that the overall size of an atom is very large in comparison with the size of its nucleus; a well graded worksheet then guided higher attaining students towards finding out for themselves some key differences between alkanes and alkenes. In Year 7, the teacher encouraged lower attaining students to use a writing frame to help them describe systematically a method for separating chalk from water. Teachers encourage students to be scientific in making accurate observations and attempting to explain those that do not fit the pattern, as in a Year 9 lesson, when students examined the results of an investigation into factors that affect the rusting of iron, and one group found that a nail covered with varnish unexpectedly rusted. Relationships between teachers and students are generally good and teachers make good use of praise to encourage students to participate in question and answer sessions. In some lessons, students' attention is not focused sharply enough on the key learning points and these are not then reviewed at the end; they leave the lesson without a clear view of what they have learned. Opportunities are not always taken to engage students' interest by pointing out the relevance of their work. In Year 11, students covered the processes of fermentation and fractional distillation, but without realising their importance in industry. The quality of teachers' day-to-day marking varies and often does not focus clearly enough on learning targets to help students improve their science.
121. The department is well led and teachers work well together as a team committed to further raising attainment; for example, they have recently co-operated on updating schemes of work and have devised systems to increase students' awareness of what they need to do to achieve higher levels or grades as they approach examinations. Students appreciate the support they receive from their teachers, for example, as when helping them to catch up following absence. Their scientific horizons are widened by opportunities to attend extra-curricular activities, such as science clubs. All students have a textbook to keep at home and this promotes good learning because teachers are able to set homework tasks that extend and consolidate work from lessons. The laboratory technicians provide a very good service in support of teaching. Some class sizes in Year 7 are too large for teachers to manage practical work safely. The ducting of services in one laboratory obstructs free movement and is hazardous. An extractor fan is needed in the main preparation room; the school has plans to provide this.
122. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Results of National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations are better now than they were then. Teaching and learning have improved so that almost all lessons are at least satisfactory and about two-thirds are good. The weakness in provision for information and communication technology in science, pointed out at the last inspection, still remains.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Students, boys especially, achieve better results in art than in most of their other subjects.
- Teaching is good, with many good features, enabling students to achieve well.
- Good management and curricular planning, with well-organised resources.

### Areas for improvement

- Strengthen further initiatives introduced to raise the achievement of the more able students.
- Develop further the use of assessment related to National Curriculum levels and descriptors, sharing them with students.

- Improve facilities and opportunities for students to use information and communication technology, including computer-aided design.

123. Students achieve well in art. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, show attainment overall to be in line with national expectations, though few students reach the higher levels. Boys and girls achieve equally well and there is no noticeable difference in the standards which students from different backgrounds reach by the end of Year 9. Inspection evidence confirms these standards, with some potential to raise achievement further, particularly amongst the more able. Students are being encouraged to aim for the exceptional performance category following the school's recent identification of the gifted and talented. Students with special educational needs and impaired hearing make good progress and enjoy the creative visual aspect of the subject. GCSE results were above the national average in 2000 and improved further, to well above average in 2001. Girls achieved very well and better than boys, but the difference is considerably less than that nationally. The achievement of boys is good - in 2000, they obtained better results in art than for any of their other subjects.
124. Through a well-planned programme of tasks in Years 7 to 9, students develop a good understanding of the art elements of line, tone, and texture. Practical activities are well integrated with the study of the work and styles of major artists, and the aims and objectives of art movements, past and present. The work of both male and female artists is well represented. Students produce original work in a wide range of two and three-dimensional painting and drawing media. Year 7 students, for example, design and make clay tiles. They study medieval art and sculpture, comparing the bold iconoclastic style with three other cultural styles of their own choice, before designing their own tile. Their preparatory work shows clear understanding of the process, and above-average skills in handling clay and making tiles. Year 9 students also demonstrate good understanding of basic art elements, especially shape, pattern, and form, when making low-relief picture frames using plaster. Their use of colour harmony, in drawings of shells from direct observation, is particularly good.
125. Students continue to make good progress as they prepare for GCSE. Most ideas originate from direct observational studies, often from organic forms, or made objects. These are developed and enlarged to finished works, usually incorporating students' own ideas and the styles and techniques of the work of their chosen artists. Students show secure understanding of the properties and use of a range of media. Year 10 students follow a process of exploration, discovery and experimentation, and record their studies effectively in sketchbooks. Many of these contain exciting imagery, with strong pattern quality and rich vivid colours. For example, their work for the theme *Adorn, decorate and embellish* includes a variety of influences, from delicate drawings of Fabergé items, to strong colourful symmetrical Indian patterns. Year 11 drawings of a variety of objects in a box for the theme *Inside* show above-average skills, especially in the use of tonal gradation to convey form. These studies are later enlarged and developed into colourful, well-balanced compositions. Also notable is above-average awareness of proportion, in sculpture based on cross-sections of large fruits, such as pomegranates.
126. Students work well in lessons, they have very positive attitudes to the subject in all years and behaviour is good. They enjoy the practical applications and take pride in their work. Students form good working relationships with their teachers and among themselves. Boys and girls, and students from all backgrounds, work extremely well together. Some use their own cultural background and style to add interest to their work. A calm, purposeful atmosphere prevails. Although personal studies and study skills are satisfactory, and homework is used effectively, independent learning is underdeveloped. Students could be encouraged to show more personal initiative and to consider the development of themes, beyond those provided by the teachers, for example.
127. Teaching is good with many very good features; it is never less than satisfactory. Teachers have very good command of the subject and a wide range of art, craft, and design expertise. They communicate their ideas well, sharing through example and well-presented demonstrations. The teaching of direct observational drawing is particularly good; students are shown how to interpret negative and positive shapes in still-life work. Teachers use a range of strategies to motivate students through whole-class, group and individual activities. The quality of classroom management and the organisation of resources are very good. Teachers are respected for their firm, yet fair, approach and their pleasant classroom manner. Planning is a strength, providing a systematic approach to the National Curriculum, and covering examination requirements and



assessment criteria at GCSE level. Literacy is well integrated with contextual work in all years. Reference is made to scale, enlargement and proportion, but some good opportunities are missed for developing mathematical ideas further.

128. The department is very well led and managed. Teamwork is a strength, with shared enthusiasm and strong commitment to raising standards. Above average standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Improvements have been made in the schemes of work which cover the National Curriculum and in assessment which follows the new nine-point scale; further development is planned to share assessment information with students. Not enough opportunities are provided for the use of computers in art; more computer resources are needed to fully meet the information and communication technology requirements. The restricted accommodation is becoming problematic as the school roll increases. Regular contact with local schools, colleges and the community has led to exhibitions featuring students' work. Links with the examination boards have been beneficial in promoting high standards.

## BUSINESS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in business education in Years 10 and 11 is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- GCSE results are in line with the national average.
- Teaching is well planned to help students to progress.
- Information and communication technology facilities are used effectively.

### Areas for improvement

- Results in the GCSE examination, which dipped in 2001.

129. One examination course is provided which deals with business studies and information studies, and requires the use of computers. Results in the GCSE examination in 2000 were above the national average but the percentage of higher (A\* to C) grades fell in 2001, to about average.
130. The standard of work seen in lessons was in line with expectations for the GCSE course. During Year 10, students have good opportunities to improve their key-boarding skills, which are put to good use during lessons. Year 10 lessons observed usually began with students using a typing-tutor for a short time, to work at their own pace and improve their skills. Almost all students were able to use two hands well and achieve a reasonable speed. Students in another Year 10 class were familiar with different types of business structure and used correct business terminology during question and answer sessions. Most students discussed aspects of business location with some confidence and they were keenly aware of environmental implications. They showed strong awareness of disability issues, such as access to buildings and facilities in the workplace. Students in Year 10 were making rapid progress in learning to use presentational software to illustrate some aspects of their work. By the end of a lesson, all students had constructed several pages and the most able had included some animated features. In Year 11, the ability range was wider. The more able group responded well during a question and answer session and worked with confidence, maintaining good levels of concentration as the teacher explained the construction of an unfamiliar database on their computers. Many were working at above-average levels in terms of both information and communication technology and business understanding. Word-processed business documents were well presented using formal layouts. Progress in the other group was slower; they needed much more guidance and support with their information and communication technology work, including help in moving around the computer network to find and save files. Attention spans were shorter and students had to make considerable use of prompt sheets, which they had been given. While attainment in this group was mostly average, with some low attainment, students were making good progress in relation to their abilities.
131. Teaching is effective. Students responded to good teaching in all lessons. Lessons were well planned to cater for a range of abilities. Aims were shared with students and targets set at the beginning of lessons. Pace was good and time used effectively. Teachers worked hard to include all students. In one lesson, a hearing-impaired student made good progress, with additional support from the unit staff. In another lesson, a recent arrival in the group whose English and information and communication technology skills were limited, was given additional attention to

ensure that progress was made. Although no group activities were seen during the inspection, students are encouraged to collaborate in class, where this is appropriate. Students gave each other good support during computer-based work. Marking is regular and thorough. Diagnostic comments are regularly made on written work and much detailed oral feedback is provided during lessons.

132. Staffing difficulties have affected this subject recently; teaching during the inspection was by part-time and temporary teachers. The subject has been without a permanent head of department and is awaiting the arrival of a new appointee next term. At the last inspection, a similar course, based on office practice, was provided - but results cannot be directly compared with that subject. Results have fluctuated in the last two years. Information and communication technology resources have improved substantially since the last inspection. Arrangements made by the school have provided effective interim co-ordination of the subject.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good, which enables students to make good progress.
- Emphasis on literacy, which strengthens students' understanding and communication of their work.
- Students behave well and are enthusiastic.
- The department is well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' knowledge of their levels of attainment, to assist in raising standards.
- The provision of extension work to enable students to achieve higher standards.
- The use of information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9.
- Timetable arrangements, to provide greater continuity in learning and more time in which to make products, in food technology.

133. The provision in design and technology caters for all students in Years 7 to 11, with the exception of the few who are disapplied the full National Curriculum, for good reasons. Subjects studied throughout are food technology, graphics, resistant materials and textiles.
134. Design and technology GCSE results overall are below the national average but improved in 2001, with those in graphics and resistant materials being above the national average for the higher (A\*-C) grades. In food technology and textiles, the percentage of students gaining those grades was below the national average, due mainly to absenteeism and lack of completed coursework. However, the proportion of students who gained a grade (A\*-G) was close to the national average in food technology, and all students obtained a graded result (A\*-G) in textiles, graphics and resistant materials, which is better than in most schools. Overall, students did not achieve as well in design and technology as in their other subjects.
135. Teachers' assessments in Year 9 show that students achieve well relative to their performance in other subjects and they do better than is the case nationally. Standards seen during the inspection matched national expectations. When students enter the school, the overall standard is below the national expectation, as many have neither experienced the full design, making and evaluating process, nor handled a range of materials. Therefore they all, including students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, make good progress to reach the expected level at the end of Year 9. These standards were seen in lessons and in an analysis of students' work. In Years 7 to 9, students develop good research skills, for example, drawing on information gained in visiting the Bethnal Green Toy Museum as well as from the internet. They understand the characteristics of products and materials at the expected level, as seen when they explored the characteristics and types of clocks. Students test their finished products and evaluate their effectiveness at a satisfactory level, for example, by using a star diagram to record the sensory qualities of food.
136. Students continue to make good progress to reach national expectations at the end of Year 11. They use information from a wide range of sources, including conducting their own research. Students recognise the needs of groups of people, such as vegetarians, and work with a range of materials and tools, including working drawings using information and communication technology. They evaluate thoughtfully, for example, a student stated that the soft, jelly-like buttons on a mobile phone were valuable to an intensive user. Students' presentation skills improve rapidly, due to good teaching of graphical skills. They use information and communication technology extensively in Years 10 and 11 for a variety of purposes, but little was seen in Years 7 to 9.
137. The quality of teaching is good overall in Years 7 to 9, with some very good features. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is predominantly very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. All lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives, and a variety of interesting tasks which motivate students and help them learn. For example, students were asked to explain to each other how to turn a corner when using a sewing machine, which ensured that they understood the process. Activities are carefully timed so that much is covered. Relationships are very good, so students readily ask for assistance, and maintain their progress. All teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and students respond well - as, for example, when students move to the information and communication technology area outside the classroom, and continue with their

work unsupervised. They work purposefully and strive to attain high standards. Questioning is very good and includes all students, including those with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language. Students are prompted to think, and therefore learn. For example, students were asked 'what else' and 'why', when exploring the properties of wood. Teachers' demonstrations are clear and focus students' attention on the most important points as, for example, when showing that circles on an isometric drawing become ellipses. The clarity of the explanation and the enjoyment of the subject by the teacher ensured that all listened, watched and learnt the process. Lessons were best taught by teachers trained in the aspect of design and technology covered in the lesson. Where a teacher not specially trained in an aspect taught the lesson, although good features were evident, that teacher did not have the depth of subject knowledge to further students' understanding. Work is well marked, with clear targets set to enable students to improve. Teachers place a great deal of emphasis on literacy, explaining technical language and checking understanding. This assists the progress of students with hearing impairment and those learning to speak English as an additional language.

138. Students learn effectively. They behave well and give their attention to the tasks set. They are very careful when practising new skills. They listen and watch demonstrations carefully, and are therefore confident when tackling new skills. Consequently, they seldom need to ask for further help. They are ready to help each other, as observed, for example, when Year 7 students tested filed metal strips to see if burrs were still present. They discuss their work sensibly. For example, Year 10 students discussed how best to use a chosen fabric for effect when making soft furnishings. They are interested in the subject, as when a Year 9 student asked how manufactured wood was joined. Students become so involved in their tasks that they are reluctant to stop: occasionally, there was a general sigh of disappointment when they had to finish.
139. Progress since the last inspection is good. GCSE results have improved and there is no longer any weak teaching. The subject is well led and managed by a committed head of department, who is determined to raise standards. After a period of instability in staffing, the department is working effectively as a team, and contributing to developments by, for example, producing units of work. The curriculum is enhanced by visits, which further develop students' understanding. The subject contributes to students' cultural development through the use of different designs and foods, and the promotion of tasks reflecting other cultures. Systems are in place to assess students' levels of attainment, but students are not informed about the level at which they are working, so their contribution to their own progress is limited. Not all units of work include extension work for those who are more able or work quickly. Information and communication technology is well used in Years 10 and 11, but it is little used in Years 7 to 9; this important part of the curriculum has yet to be developed. The two-week timetable causes some problems in developing continuity in learning - for example, when the only two lessons each fortnight are given on consecutive days. Lesson duration - one hour in food technology - causes problems, for many dishes cannot be cooked in that time. For example, bread was made by students, but could only be cooked with the attention of the technicians. The relatively short lessons seriously affect the progress of students taking GCSE courses, because their scope for the exploration of design and making, which is an important element in the course, is limited. The department has tried to counter this by the introduction of study days, but more time is needed.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- Students make good progress in characterisation and dramatic techniques.
- Teaching is good with some very good features; students' imagination, expression and communication are developed well.
- The scheme of work is wide-ranging and provides many opportunities for exploring moral, ethical and social issues.
- Assessment and evaluation are used very well to help students to progress.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' oral communication of their own views of performance.
- Students' experience of ethnic diversity through use of a wider range of materials and activities.

- Accommodation, aspects of which are unsuitable.

140. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is in line with national expectations, overall. Progress in lessons is good - sometimes very good. Students enter the school with no real experience of drama, but teaching promotes rapid improvement in vocal and physical expression, and good progress is maintained across Years 10 and 11. Standards in lessons are above average. GCSE results are a little above the national average and students achieve better results in drama than in most of their other subjects.
141. Students' skills and understanding are developed systematically through a series of projects, many of which also address wider issues - for example, ethical, personal, environmental and social issues - and gradually introduce students to important theatrical works. All projects have potential for a wide range of dramatic improvisation. In Years 7, 8 and 9, for example, these include *The Way West*, ghost stories, refugees and colliery disaster. Students' vocal techniques are good when they are assuming a role. They have good command of tone, pitch and emphasis to develop vocal characterisation and to promote sense and meaning. However, they tend to speak casually when asked for judgements of their work and need guidance and practice in stating their views clearly and directly. Students are encouraged to experiment and to try new means of expression. Students in Year 8 improvised together, using sound effects to create an aural impression of the seaside. Their first version was created lying on their backs without looking at each other, while for the second, which had more successful formal shape and dynamics, they sat facing each other. From their immediate experience they learnt how much more difficult it is to communicate and respond without facial focus. In Year 9, small groups of students improvised body shapes to represent war, in response to a recording of African tribal drumming. The demands made on the students were high, and their responses were successful because the teacher made sure they developed what they had understood in the earlier part of the lesson. Attainment was satisfactory.
142. Students in Years 10 and 11 consider more abstract topics, including childhood, injustice, class and status. In a lesson which is part of a current project on anarchy and order, based on Dario Fo's *Morte Accidentale di un Anarchico*, students in Year 11 explored techniques of interrogation and persuasion and achieved sophisticated and strikingly good results within a short time. Students' written evaluations of their work are good; they have regular practice in this, which is a good feature, especially in GCSE classes. Students with special educational needs make good progress, in all years. Teachers adapt work for them. Students at an early stage of learning English sometimes learn more slowly. Their support from subject and specialist teachers is satisfactory and they are helped by other students.
143. Teaching is good, as it is based on detailed planning which identifies skills and knowledge to be learned and high expectations of students. These are shared at the start of lessons, so students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, and reviewed at the end of lessons, to consolidate learning. While the approach of all three teachers is unified and committed to high expectations and standards, each brings a wide variety of experience and teaching methods, which enrich learning. Students explore their own and each other's vocal and physical responses within the secure and disciplined framework provided by the staff. As they gain more experience and confidence, students develop real self-discipline and control, which promote creativity. This process is close to the working practice of professional theatre.
144. Teachers use assessment well, as part of overall planning and in lessons. Students are taught to evaluate their own work and that of others. They develop confidence in making supported critical judgements and apply these in forming opinions of established theatre. Teachers constantly encourage and praise effort and achievement in lessons. Together, these positive experiences promote attitudes in which students care for each other and value each other's efforts. Students are enthusiastic about the subject, concentrate on their tasks and are keen to make progress. Most of them respond positively and sensibly to questions, ideas and new challenges. Many students extend their experience by taking part in theatre productions organised by the school. These have included plays and musical theatre. The drama club provides further opportunities, with its public presentation showcase, external intensive drama workshops for students in Year 10 and visits to professional performances.
145. The department is strongly and effectively led. Generally above-average standards and good teaching and learning have been maintained since the last inspection. The curriculum and extra-curricular activities are efficiently co-ordinated, and staff work as a team sharing common aims,

communicating well with each other and with students. Recently appointed teaching staff, including the head of department, have brought a range of new experience and specialisms which are extending the opportunities available to students. Specific and successful strategies promote participation in activities by boys, who are reticent. As a result, more boys are now choosing to study drama in Years 10 and 11. When the scheme of work is reviewed, it would benefit students to be exposed more directly to issues and source materials which will help them to mature in an ethnically diverse society. However, the many very good features of drama provision are not well supported by accommodation. All three spaces used have disadvantages. The drama studio, while traditional in design, has no natural light and is stuffy and depressing. The hall, though a large, well-lit space, has over-resonant acoustics and lessons are frequently interrupted by its use as a thoroughfare and by nearby food preparation. The youth club is the most suitable area, but its use is restricted by other activities.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Well-qualified and experienced teachers plan lessons carefully and help students to achieve well.
- Teachers are skilful in developing language and literacy skills for all students.
- A strong focus on direct observation and fieldwork techniques helps students to develop skills in these areas.
- The department is well led and well organised.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology within lessons, particularly for organising and handling data.
- The schemes of work for Years 7 to 9, to incorporate fully recent changes of the National Curriculum.

146. Attainment in geography by the end of Year 9 is in line with standards expected nationally. Achievement is good: students make good progress across Years 7 to 9 because they are taught effectively by experienced teachers. Attainment in Year 11 by students taking the optional GCSE course is near the national average. Achievement is satisfactory: some students progress well but a minority of Year 11 students do not complete coursework and revision in line with teachers' expectations, which lets down their performance.
147. In the Year 9 National Curriculum assessments in 2001, students' performance was slightly above that nationally. Girls attained somewhat more highly than boys. Boys, however, achieved a slightly better level than boys nationally. The work seen in lessons in Year 9 and in students' notebooks shows that students can construct and interpret maps and charts satisfactorily and that they are able to organise and complete studies of countries confidently. The completed units of work in Year 9 indicate that good progress has been made. Students in Year 7 are still at a very early stage of learning how to create and to interpret maps. Some need help to identify major countries on a world map. Thorough and effectively planned teaching helps them to achieve well by the end of Year 9.
148. GCSE results are broadly in line with the national average. Achievement is satisfactory. In most years, including 2001, about half the candidates achieve passes at a higher grade (A\* to C) and almost all entrants successfully gain a graded result. The fact that this is an optional course means that each year group is different in composition, which accounts for some fluctuation in examination performance. For example, the proportion of higher grade passes in 2000 dipped to four out of ten rather than the average five out of ten, largely because only twenty-four girls out of eighty-four students took the course. (Girls tend to reach higher grades than boys, as they do nationally.) Overall, students with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English achieve well in geography. This is due to good preparation and awareness of particular needs by teachers and, in some cases, to good support teaching of students with hearing impairment. In most year groups, including the current Year 11, students' overall levels of attainment have been improved by the completion of good fieldwork projects. The residential fieldwork studies in North Wales by students in Year 10 build upon regular activities within the school geography curriculum. They give all students an invaluable opportunity to work in depth on

such topics as a river profile from mountain source to the sea (River Conwy) or the development of a seaside resort (Llandudno). Students not only learn valuable observation and measuring techniques in the field but also are given support and guidance in the organisation of the data and its presentation in final form. Samples of work seen were of a good standard, reflecting considerable effort on the part of students and good preparation by teachers. The students who take full advantage of teacher support and guidance to complete their coursework in depth achieve well; those who attend school less frequently in Year 11 and do not complete assignments are less successful.

149. Teaching in geography is good and leads to most students making good progress. Some lessons are particularly successful when students are given the opportunity to discuss, think and come to their own conclusions. A Year 10 lesson on the identification and classification of types of rocks, for example, worked particularly well because all 19 students handled sets of rock samples and in groups discussed rock characteristics, before reporting back to the larger group and then summarising the findings using the correct geological terminology. They were all actively involved in the lesson. Teaching is an area which has improved since the last inspection. In the lessons observed there were no 'slow starts' to lessons or any lengthy introductions, as mentioned in the last report. Detailed planning and good use of time are now general characteristics shared by the three specialist teachers. As a result, students anticipate that they will be expected to work at a brisk pace and are ready to participate from the beginning to the final recapitulation and questioning. The strong features in teaching mentioned in the last report continue to help students to succeed: good knowledge of individual students' needs, the use of relevant up-to-date videotape and newspaper evidence, insistence on regular homework, and thorough assessment procedures. A particularly strong feature in teaching observed in this inspection is the emphasis placed on developing students' language and literacy skills by highlighting new vocabulary, checking that spellings are noted and by clear and careful explanation of new and unusual terminology. While this is useful to all students, it is particularly valuable for students at an early stage of learning English and to students with hearing impairment.
150. The use of information and communication technology has not been developed within the geography curriculum in recent years as much as in many other schools. However, many individual students word-process their own longer written studies and insert illustrations collected from CD-ROMs and web-site sources; some produce good graphs and charts to illustrate fieldwork. An interesting library-based Year 8 project giving students opportunities for individual research on aspects of historical and geographical knowledge of Italy requires some information-seeking from a commercial CD-ROM source. However, this is an area that needs to be strengthened further.
151. The department is well led and efficiently managed. All members of the teaching team contribute to the department's strength by assessing work and progress regularly and by marking students' work helpfully. A thorough evaluation of public examination performance is made annually, with all teachers contributing. The curriculum has been modified well to adjust to the changes made in GCSE courses and for the new AS and A-level courses. No students have been disadvantaged by the many recent changes. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. While aspects of teaching are better, two areas need to be improved. More use needs to be made of information and communication technology in the handling and processing of data. Revisions of schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 need completion to bring them more firmly in line with the revised orders of the National Curriculum.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **unsatisfactory** but is **now improving**.

### Strengths

- Standards are improving lower down the school: younger students progress well to reach average standards in Year 9.
- More able students achieved satisfactory GCSE results in 2001.

### Areas for improvement

- Examination results, which are well below average.

- The variety of activities used in lessons to increase the motivation of students, Year 11 students particularly.
- The in-class support given to new teachers.

152. GCSE results are well below average, but were a little better in 2001 than in 2000. The performance of both boys and girls in history is markedly lower than in their other subjects but their relative performance varies; there is no steady trend. In 2001, more able students achieved reasonably well: the proportion of the highest grades (A\*, A) matched the national average. In Year 11 lessons, standards remain below expectations for the final year of the GCSE course.
153. At the end of Year 9, students reach average expectations in both the lessons seen and teacher assessments. They understand the importance of historical sources as evidence. When discussing the cause of events, the more able students distinguish between short and long-term causes. Although they understand chronology in broad terms, they do not always use dates accurately. They do not consider in any depth how reliable a source might be. Almost all students produce some extended writing which is sensibly organised and relevant. Standards at the end of Year 9 reflect good progress from attainment on entry, which is below average.
154. A substantial minority of students shows little interest in the subject. A few do not attend lessons regularly, do not complete coursework and they miss examinations. This distracts from the purpose of the lessons and affects the progress of all adversely. However, Year 10 students are more interested, work harder and reach average standards in lessons. For them, progress is satisfactory. The best work of Year 11 students shows some depth of knowledge and an ability to link it to evidence. Most students give brief answers which, although accurate, offer no detail or development. While students do not have a wide general vocabulary, they understand specialist terms. Some of the students who lose heart are those of low attainment or with special educational needs, who perceive the demands of coursework and the effort of learning as too great, but they have the basic skills of literacy required to do well. In a Year 10 lesson on the analysis of historical evidence, students interrogated sources well, establishing their reliability and usefulness as evidence. More able students understood the significance of neutrality and the benefit of hindsight.
155. The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in about two thirds of the lessons seen, but the teaching in some other lessons had unsatisfactory features. The subject knowledge of all teachers is good and arouses interest in the topic. In Year 9 lessons, students' imagination was stirred by details of life in the trenches of the First World War. As a result, both boys and girls produced good pieces of extended writing. Teachers make the aims of the lesson clear to students and plan carefully. However, they often rely too much on exposition and do not provide enough opportunities for students to participate. Although not seen in the inspection week, videos are used well and often help students to memorise details. In Years 7 to 9, teachers fail to control some classes effectively; they are unable to find methods of interesting students, who are reluctant to learn. Hearing impaired students have very good support in many lessons. Their learning support assistant knows the lesson content and is able to supplement the teacher effectively. No support was seen for students with special educational needs, and some of these students were disruptive. They are able to understand the work but lack concentration skills. Their individual education plans or pastoral support plans generally offer no suggestions that help the teacher during the lesson. New teachers need more practical support. Bilingual students or those at an early stage of learning English benefit, as do all students, from the emphasis on explaining vocabulary and the use of initial sentences to help them structure their writing. Even greater emphasis needs to be placed on literacy as the amount of writing required often reduces motivation, as in Year 11.
156. The department has not focused with enough clarity on the need to raise standards, although some improvements have recently begun. The use of information and communication technology has been included in revised schemes of work, though access to computers sometimes restricts the work done. GCSE students do not have their own core textbooks covering the entire course, which restricts class work and revision. When three classes are held simultaneously, one teacher has to use classrooms sometimes far away from resources. On occasion, the classroom is unsuitable. For example, a music room is used with a poorly sound-proofed practice room adjacent, for a class that includes hearing impaired students. The department has improved some areas of weakness identified at the time of the last inspection: information technology is used more frequently, students' writing is more extensive and more able students achieve A\*



grades. However, improvement overall is unsatisfactory because teaching is no longer generally good and standards in Year 11 are too low. At the time of the inspection, an acting head of department and temporary teacher were in post. Areas for development are to increase the motivation of Year 11 students and to include a greater variety of activities in lessons. New teachers need more practical support and help.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**, but there are **weaknesses, particularly in Years 7 to 9**.

### Strengths

- GCSE results improved significantly in 2001.
- The teaching of information and communication technology on the GCSE course is good.
- The provision of computers is better than nationally.

### Areas for improvement

- The cross-curricular scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 needs revision to provide more regular opportunities for students to use information and communication skills in all subjects, and at higher levels.
- The assessment of the information and communication technology capability of those Year 10 and 11 students who do not take one of the information and communication technology-based courses.
- Review the responsibilities undertaken by staff, to ensure that the load on the head of department is more reasonable.

157. The focus of this report is on cross-curricular information and communication technology up to Year 11 and on GCSE information and communication technology. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory overall, although students have relatively few opportunities in Years 7 to 9 to work towards the higher levels. GCSE results in information and communication technology are broadly in line with the national average.
158. Students in each of Years 7 to 9, have a brief (four-lesson) introduction to information and communication technology. Otherwise, there is no systematic teaching of relevant skills. Examples were seen of effective development of students' information technology skills, as when Year 7 students used computers to present their survey results as pie charts. Standards are adequate but the cross-curricular approach does not provide enough opportunity for the more able students to attain the higher National Curriculum levels. The long-established scheme of work needs revision. Some subject departments need to play a greater role in contributing to students' information and communication technology experiences, notably music and art. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson for lower ability students, although most students could enter instructions to create a basic shape using commercial software, most were unable to write a procedure to make a pattern by rotating the shape, without help. Examples of word-processed work in English reflected use of only very basic features of the program. In a Year 8 geography lesson, the full potential of an information source was not exploited by students who were researching information on Italy. Although there has been some improvement across Years 7 to 9 since the last inspection, there is still more to do to.
159. In Years 10 and 11, those students who take GCSE examinations in information and communication technology or business and information studies (about three-quarters of the students) are able to develop their information and communication technology capability by acquiring skills and knowledge to a good level in a variety of applications. Attainment in lessons in Years 10 and 11 was mostly satisfactory, and sometimes good. Examination coursework shows that students increase in confidence as the course progresses and they learn to tackle more demanding software applications. Many were able to produce word-processed work and achieved a high standard of presentation for a specific audience. The use of spreadsheets was much in evidence and students are able to use appropriate formulae and analyse information effectively using a range of graphs. For other students in Years 10 and 11 who do not take one of the examination courses, there is no assessment of their information and communication technology capability but the curriculum has been mapped and they have adequate experience across the curriculum so that requirements are met. Spreadsheets are regularly used in mathematics, science and design and technology. In most subjects, word processing is used regularly and the Internet has become an essential research tool in some subjects. A shortage of data-logging equipment holds back some applications in science: there is scope, which is not being used, for students to have hands-on experience in using information and communication technology for measuring, using sensors and analysing the data obtained in practical work.
160. Teaching on the information and communication technology course is good. Lessons are well planned, a good pace is maintained and the teaching of computer skills is good. Students make

good progress, as demonstrated in the much-improved examination results. Assessment is thorough and practical sessions feature a great deal of detailed diagnostic comment, as teachers support individuals around the class. However, across the subjects of the curriculum, the picture is not so encouraging. Some teachers seem reluctant to use computers to enhance teaching and learning in their subjects. The New Opportunities Fund information and communication technology training for staff has not been fully implemented by all departments, so not all teachers take advantage of information and communication technology to enhance teaching and learning. The number of girls taking information and communication technology courses has improved since the last inspection, and there is no significant difference in the relative performance of girls and boys in lessons or in examinations. Students with special education needs are well supported by information and communication technology teachers; this includes new arrivals, who sometimes have few relevant skills.

161. The computer network has been greatly improved and extended since the last inspection. It is large, of good quality and extends throughout most of the site. It is serviced by a full-time technician but the head of the information and communication technology curricular area is also the network manager. Additionally, he has a heavy teaching commitment in information and communication technology and in mathematics. At times, these conflicting demands are difficult to reconcile, especially if there are problems with the network during the school day. He manages commendably well, but adjustment to his load would allow more time for curricular development and monitoring across Years 7 to 9, which remains an area needing attention.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- GCSE results improved in 2001 in both French and German.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management are good: measures are in place to raise standards further.
- Assessment procedures and helpful marking make students aware of their progress and how to improve.
- Information about progress and attainment is used to amend what is taught.

### Areas for improvement

- GCSE results are well below the national average.
- Attitudes to learning a modern foreign language are unsatisfactory.
- Oral standards are weak: opportunities are limited for students to speak independently.
- Students express themselves poorly in writing: not enough progress is made in writing in Years 7 to 9.

162. At the end of Year 9, teachers' assessments show attainment to be above the national expectation. Girls do better than boys. The level of attainment is static at a time when it is rising nationally. Reading and listening are better developed than speaking and writing. At the end of Year 11, although GCSE results in both French and German at the higher grades (A\*-C) improved slightly in 2001, attainment is well below the national average in both languages. Results are much lower than at the time of the last inspection, though this is to some extent due to changes in the format of the examination, which then consisted entirely of coursework. In French, boys' results have been low for three years, whereas girls' results, though below the national average for girls, have risen steadily. In German, there is no trend in girls' results, which fluctuate wildly. Boys' results have declined sharply in each of the last two years and are now very low. Girls do better than boys in both languages, by a much greater margin than nationally. Few students gain the highest grades (A\*,A). Students do not do as well in modern foreign languages as in most of their other subjects. However, in 2001 all students gained a grade across the full range (A\*-G), indicating satisfactory attainment by lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs and those with hearing impairment who completed the course.

163. Evidence from lessons and other work seen shows that attainment at the end of Year 9 is a little below the national expectation, especially in speaking and writing. Nearly all students enter in Year 7 with no previous knowledge of French or German, which they all study in Years 8 and 9, so that progress in these years is satisfactory overall, and better in French than in German.

Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in French in appropriate teaching groups, though their needs are not always addressed in mixed ability German groups. Students with hearing impairment make good progress when supported. Students acquire vocabulary and knowledge of language rules steadily, so that by the end of Year 9 they identify the main details in most of what they hear or read, and higher attaining students understand the meaning of extended extracts. In oral work, most students can exchange several items of information in role play, but they have limited opportunities for independent speaking, so that pronunciation and intonation are weak, and most responses are brief. They find it difficult to phrase questions, especially in German. Much of their writing consists of mechanical exercises, devised to practise grammatical points. Evidence is scant of progression towards producing paragraphs with extended content, in which they apply the language rules they are learning. In German, they often fail to use capital letters for nouns and word order rules are poorly applied. Although the foundations are in place in what is taught to enable students to access the higher National Curriculum levels, the evidence indicates that this does not happen frequently enough and with sufficient accuracy to justify awarding these levels. Although girls do better than boys in assessments, the difference in performance and participation in lessons is not significant. There is no evidence of significant difference in the levels attained by students from the wide range of ethnic backgrounds.

164. Inspection evidence confirms that attainment by the end of Year 11 is below average. Standards reached by the end of Year 9 are not reflected in GCSE results or in work seen, so that progress in Years 10 and 11 is unsatisfactory. However, good teaching is beginning to bring about some improvement and satisfactory progress is being made in Year 11 lessons, where there is a sharp focus on examination preparation. Boys participate as well as girls, but there are comparatively few of them in the more able sets. Comprehension skills continue to be best developed; however, most students require several repeats of tape-recorded language before extracting its meaning. The adoption of the written coursework option is beginning to improve writing skills, although content is much better than accuracy, reflecting the poor foundations established in Years 7 to 9. Many students write only brief paragraphs on familiar topics, with higher attaining students extending their range to include accounts of recent holidays, or what they did last weekend. Despite a lot of basic errors, they convey information satisfactorily. Oral standards remain weak and fall a long way short of the conversational language needed to score highly at GCSE. Pronunciation remains weak, as too much speaking is based on written preparation, and students are diffident about speaking aloud to the class.
165. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching, especially in Year 11 and to those lower sets where small class size is an advantage. While a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed, this was largely confined to temporary staff, of whom there were more present during the inspection than usual in the school. Large numbers of students have a negative attitude to learning a subject whose relevance to their needs is not apparent to them. This makes the job of teaching them very difficult, especially where teachers are ill-equipped to deal with the challenging behaviour which sometimes accompanies poor attitudes. This is most marked in mixed ability groups in German in Years 8 and 9, and also in the substantial amount of unfinished work seen in exercise books. However, most teachers cope well and manage behaviour through effective teaching. The fundamental weakness in the overall satisfactory teaching is that teachers use too much English to conduct lessons, so that the impact of their subject knowledge on learning is reduced. Students do not hear as much as they should of the foreign language and are not expected to use it themselves in routine class situations. Expectations are not high enough. As a result, oral standards are unsatisfactory, and unnecessary problems are created for students in the early stages of learning English. Planning for lessons does not include regular opportunities for speaking independently. In the best lessons, there is good planning which enables students to make progress in a range of skills as they participate in varied and well-timed activities. In a Year 11 German lesson on buying a train ticket, students learned and practised new language with the teacher, revised time on the clock, tested their knowledge through a listening task, then used the acquired language in role play with a partner. They made progress in a good learning atmosphere. In a minority of lessons, activities are poorly timed. Where they last too long, students become bored and subsequent tasks lose the intended impact on learning because there is too little time left for them.
166. Lessons contribute well to the development of students' basic skills, especially in Years 7 to 9. The routine of lessons is varied by the use of computers and reading schemes. Survey results

are shown as pie charts in Year 7. A strong focus is placed on learning language rules, although this can consume too much time at the expense of creative activities. Teaching methods are generally effective in individual lessons but risk being repetitive over a period of time. This fuels the perception of some students that French and German are boring subjects and has a negative impact on their desire to learn. In many lessons seen during the inspection, students were doing the same work, so that tasks were not matched to their ability and the more capable were not stretched. Where teaching is lively and tasks are varied, as in a Year 11 French lesson on learning the perfect tense, students sustain concentration and make good progress. Marking is well used to improve learning. Teachers add comments to help students to understand errors, and often relate work to National Curriculum levels, so that students are aware of their progress. Homework is set in every lesson and complements work done in class. However, opportunities are lost to extend higher attaining students through more demanding homework.

167. A fairly new team is providing good leadership and management for the subject. Lesson observation and sampling of exercise books take place regularly, and help is given in the evaluation of teaching and learning. Good assessment procedures, based on regular testing, enable students to have a clear idea of their progress and how to achieve the targets set for them. Consideration of this information has led to recent changes in the content of what is taught, plus a change of examination board. There is evidence, especially in amended schemes of work, that these changes are beginning to improve the rate of progress in learning. However, planning does not have a sharp enough focus on the need to improve oral skills and the performance of boys in Years 10 and 11. Although GCSE results are not as good as at the time of the last inspection, evidence from recent results and the work now being undertaken to further raise standards indicate that there has been satisfactory improvement since that inspection, and the department has the capacity to maintain this.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Students make good progress across all years.
- An appropriate balance of activities is used in developing students' knowledge and understanding.
- Students have many opportunities to analyse, evaluate and develop critical judgements.
- Assessment systems are effective and help students to improve.
- Students can enrich their experience through individual instrumental and singing lessons and public performance.

### Areas for improvement

- Provide students with more resources and training in music computer technology.
- The scheme of work in Year 7 to build more effectively on the varied musical experiences of students on entry to the school.
- The range of musical sources used to explore more ethnically diverse styles and traditions.
- Teaching strategies used to improve the learning of students whose behaviour is challenging.

168. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are slightly better than nationally. GCSE results are in line with results nationally. Since the last inspection, there has been a considerable reduction in the number of students entering Year 7 who have had instrumental lessons and understand musical terms and notation. Students' practical skills and knowledge of music on entry are now below average overall and reflect the wide variety of different experiences they have had in previous schools.

169. Students make good progress through Years 7 to 9 in the development of practical skills in performing and composing and in accumulating knowledge and understanding about music. Standards are a little above national expectation, in Year 9. In Year 7, students' ability to concentrate, listen constructively and answer questions on what they have heard is too varied. Because good strategies are used to improve their appraising skills, most students achieve better in Year 8, and in Year 9 they demonstrate more confidence in evaluating through listening. In all three years, however, some students find it difficult to be quiet when music is being performed and do not always value the contributions of their classmates.

170. Students' attainment in lessons in Years 10 and 11 is above national expectations. Most students preparing for GCSE in Year 11 show fluency in composing, and write scores and instrumental parts accurately and with correct transpositions. Compositions adopt conventional styles but are well written for the instruments and effective texturally. Students make good progress in understanding the effects of key changes in developing musical ideas. They experience a wide range of musical styles. In Year 10, performances in rehearsal included a piano trio playing music by Frank Bridge, vocal duets with piano and a rock group adapting a song by Eric Clapton. Students' listening and analytical skills are well developed throughout Years 10 and 11. They recognise, understand and define, in technical terms, the characteristics of music from various periods. In a Year 11 lesson observed, students approached a project on historical styles by effective listening and interpretation of the score. They applied their knowledge well, and made good progress in evaluating the musical features of several periods, represented by, for example, Mozart's *C major Piano Concerto* (classical) and Beethoven's *Sonata in G* (romantic). Their level of accuracy was good and they justified their answers with confidence.
171. Students with special educational needs generally keep up in their classes. Those who learn more slowly receive good support from class teachers, and often from other students, in group activities. Students with hearing impairment participate fully in lessons and achieve appropriately. In Years 7, 8 and 9, higher attaining students and those with more instrumental experience than others could be encouraged to take more responsibility in lessons.
172. Teaching and learning are good, overall. They are often very good in Years 10 and 11. Both full-time teachers have a wide knowledge of different types of music, high-level performing skills and considerable professional musical experience. They are complemented by visiting teachers of wind, string, brass and percussion instruments, singing, piano and African music. Teaching is well planned and good features include high expectations of students, monitoring and supporting them and encouraging them to refine and improve their work. In Years 7 to 9, the objectives and outcomes of each lesson are shared with students; they are engaged by being encouraged to relate what they already know to new tasks and to transfer their understanding. Analysis and demonstrations precede individual or group practical activities so that the purpose and outcome of tasks are clear. Students in Year 7, for example, worked in groups to rehearse a three-part arrangement for class performance on glockenspiels and xylophones. At the beginning of the lesson students heard each melodic line, and discussed its structure, learning about pitch, time-signatures and some technical words at the same time. In group rehearsal most had a clear idea of the sound of their part and how it would fit together to make the complete piece. Similarly, Year 9 students were introduced to the conventions and characteristics of classical opera through the teacher's illustrated outline of the main points to see and hear and followed by recorded and video excerpts from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. They made good progress, which was consolidated by homework in which they were required to complete a worksheet which set searching questions using technical language.
173. Very occasionally, the management of the behaviour of younger students is unsuccessful and leads to time being lost, which holds back students' progress. A few students in Years 7 to 9 have still not understood the need to listen attentively and that they cannot do so if they are restless or talking, which can also distract other students. They show little respect for performance of their classmates. Despite this, most students are enthusiastic about their work and respond well to new challenges. Older students are keen to share their ideas and take pride in what they achieve.
174. Good learning during the first three years is supported by a comprehensive assessment system which accumulates records of students' achievement and progress. This profile, which involves self and group evaluation, as well as the teacher's views, is linked to the National Curriculum levels of attainment and the new national assessment in music at the end of Year 9. The process makes an important contribution to the development of students' abilities to evaluate and make supported judgements in the subject higher up the school. Schemes of work are generally well planned, given the low level of musical experience of many students entering in Year 7, but more could be done to accelerate their understanding, and to introduce them to a wider range of musical traditions.
175. Choirs and instrumental groups rehearse at lunchtime and after school and students contribute to many performances both within the school and externally. A measure of the enthusiasm and commitment of participants in these activities is shown by their willingness to attend rehearsals,

often in the evening or at weekends, in order to maintain the school's reputation for high standards in extra-curricular work. Little scope is provided for gaining computer skills in music and programs are not used in teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9. Additional resources are needed to create opportunities and interest for these students, helping to raise standards overall.

176. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Its many features and activities are co-ordinated with skill and consistency. Teaching remains good, as at the last inspection, and extra-curricular opportunities are extensive. GCSE results, while not as high, are in line with the national average. Commitment is strong to maintain and improve the standards of learning and achievement, to increase opportunities and to continue to raise the profile of music in the life of the school. Overall, good standards have been satisfactorily maintained since the last inspection.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Students achieve well in GCSE examinations.
- Above average standards reached by Year 9, especially in games and dance.
- Leadership of the department, which is effective in raising standards.

### Areas for improvement

- More challenging activities are needed for the higher attaining students in the lower ability groups.
- The variety of tasks used in GCSE theory lessons, to encourage better retention of facts.

177. GCSE results in 2001 were below the national average, but students achieve well, often gaining higher grades than in their other subjects. Overall standards in Year 11 lessons are in line with national expectations, with strengths in several activities. Students progress well throughout, particularly across Years 7 to 9.

178. When the students arrive in Year 7, their physical education skills are below expectations for their age. By Year 9 they are above average in their skill level and in their understanding of physical education concepts. This represents very good achievement over time and improvement since the last inspection. Particular strengths are the students' skills in games, such as netball and football. They use advanced tactics and pass with control and accuracy. Their ability to analyse their own and each other's performance also contributes to the improvement of their skills. A good example of this was seen in a swimming lesson where those students unable to take part physically acted as coaches. Their observations led to immediate improvement in the swimmers' stroke technique and a sense of achievement for all. Students understand the importance of exercise for a healthy lifestyle and are beginning to know the names of muscles because of the new literacy initiative. Dance is a particular strength. By the end of Year 9, the girls have above-average understanding of how to choreograph and perform dances using both music and poems to stimulate ideas. Their work is imaginative and shows good technique in complex moves and rhythms. A few students are working below expectation. The Asian girls tend to have limited ball skills and a minority of boys find co-ordination in gymnastics difficult. However, they achieve well relative to their ability. Students with special educational needs are well integrated into lessons throughout, with tasks and equipment altered to meet their needs, if required. The needs of students with hearing difficulties are nearly always considered. The use of white boards, effective demonstration and support of their fellow students ensure that they are clear about the task, resulting in good progress.

179. Standards reached by students overall at the end of Year 11 are in line with national expectations. A significant minority use refined techniques in their chosen activities and their performance is more consistent and effective. Many of the girls have advanced netball skills. They effectively use a variety of tactics; for example, they quickly change from defensive to attacking play and a few have exceptional ball-handling skills. The boys display their football skills similarly well. They have good vision on and off the ball and effectively change their pace to outwit their opponents. All students achieve well. They make good progress in table tennis and dance, where they have had little previous experience.

180. Students studying for GCSE attain above average standards in their practical work, but a significant minority has problems in understanding theory. Their games skills are advanced and they are able to accurately analyse each other's performance, using appropriate technical vocabulary. The boys have a good range of shots in badminton and a few are able to outwit their opponents with speed and guile. The girls' techniques are not so well developed and many play shots with a square stance. Those few students, mostly girls, who are above average in their theory have a good depth of knowledge and are able to link theoretical aspects to practical work. However, a significant minority has little depth of knowledge and is not confident in the use of technical language. Students' recall of facts is below average, especially under test conditions. Overall, however, students achieve well relative to their ability.
181. The quality of teaching and its impact on the students' learning is good. The best teaching is in Years 7 to 9, and often has excellent features; this is an improvement since the last inspection. The teachers always let the students know what they will be expected to do by the end of the lesson. Their expectations of high standards are nearly always consistent and they continually encourage students to strive for better performance, relative to their ability. The teachers use a variety of methods which are successful in developing practical, evaluative and planning skills. An example of this was seen in a Year 9 netball lesson, where the teacher's high expectations resulted in the girls learning how to receive a ball and turn in the air before landing, in order to face the direction of play. Good demonstration ensured that the students had a clear idea of the correct technique. Question and answer sessions are used effectively to assess the students' knowledge and to provoke thought. Tasks always progress logically and with sufficient time to consolidate skills before moving onto the next stage. In two lessons the tasks did not always challenge or meet the needs of all of the students within the group. The more able students in the lower ability sets were not challenged enough and, as a result, did not make as much progress as could be expected. Marking of GCSE theoretical work is constructive, but teachers do not always use a consistent approach. Homework assignments do not provide a wide enough range of tasks to develop good recall of facts. Students' notes are checked to pick up on areas of incompleteness and weakness. The established code of conduct is well respected but is not consistently reinforced by teachers. Very recent changes in staffing have had an unsettling effect and students with behavioural difficulties experiment with the expectations of newer teachers. However, students are encouraging of each other's efforts, particularly of those who are less able. The mutual respect and shared enthusiasm between the teachers and the students make a considerable impact on the quality of work. This is particularly evident in the popular extra-curricular programme where students enjoy team and individual success in local, county and national competitions in sports such as football, cricket and netball.
182. Very good leadership of the department has ensured rapid progress since the last inspection. The students achieve well at GCSE and standards have risen in Years 7 to 9. The teaching on the dance programme has led to results above average and exciting work. Application of the assessment policy ensures that the students are graded on entry to the school, which provides a starting point for tracking students' progress. Assessment information is used to update the programmes of study to meet the needs of the students and to deploy the considerable expertise of the teachers' own skills to the best advantage. Regular daily discussion and well-planned team-teaching opportunities contribute to creating a physical, intellectual and challenging environment for the students. The addition of an excellent sports hall facility is also having a positive impact on standards. The outdoor hard surface play area, however, is still in a poor state of repair and is not an effective teaching space in wet weather.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Students achieve in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed syllabus.
- Students develop satisfactory understanding of the religions they study.
- Religious education contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- GCSE results are in line with the national average

### Areas for improvement

- More emphasis on reflection, analysis, evaluation and interpretation.



- Cultivate links with the local community to make religious education more real and experiential in this multi-religious school.
- Develop opportunities for all students in Years 10 and 11 to gain accreditation in religious education.

183. Overall, attainment in religious education is satisfactory. Girls' performance is better than boys' but there were no significant variations noticed in lessons. Students who have English as an additional language and those with special educational needs do well in relation to their prior learning.
184. GCSE results for 2001 were in line with the national average and better than in previous years, when they have been below the national average; however, only 18 students took the examination, just ten per cent of the year group. In Years 10 and 11, most students study religious education as part of the personal, social and health education curriculum, which incorporates the requirements of the Redbridge Agreed Syllabus. Students' attainment and progress broadly meet its expectations but their capacity to evaluate issues of belief and value and to relate knowledge and understanding gained to their own outlook and experience are not well developed. Lack of opportunity for most students to study religious education for examination reduces their motivation to study at a deeper and reflective level. A short examination course in religious studies could be beneficial and help to raise standards.
185. In Years 7 to 9, attainment is broadly in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. At the start of Year 7, many students have little understanding of the subject. Progress in lessons is good but better in learning about religion than learning from it. Many activities provided are planned to promote reflection. For example, students in Year 9 did a word-search of some key words and then explored whether God exists. After reading a story about Edward and the ant, and then writing about it, they began to develop an understanding about how small we are in relation to the wide world, which prompted thought about God. Students in Year 8 are making better progress; standards are set to improve. In a lesson observed they learnt how religious ideas can be expressed in art by studying different pictures of Christ based on African, Chinese and a variety of western traditions and then expressing the image in their own chosen artistic form. They extended their understanding of ways of relating belief to practice. Religious education also makes a sound contribution to literacy as opportunities are made available for students to practise listening and speaking, reading and writing. They learn key words, do story boards and extended writing, make notes and write articles for newspapers in lessons and as homework. Few applications of numeracy or information technology were seen, except Sikh Gurmukhi numerals and book covers in displays of Bibles.
186. Students studying for GCSE in Year 11 make satisfactory progress and attain in line with expectations. They study moral issues such as euthanasia in the context of a soap opera and the portrayal of religious themes in film. For example, after seeing the film *the City of Angels* they discussed the definition of an angel. They understood that it is derived from a Greek word *angelos*, which means messenger, and that there are many references to angels appearing in the Old and New Testaments. They asked perceptive questions about the nature of angels and were particularly interested in exploring whether angels have human feelings. One of the students raised the issue of the distinct lack of female angels in the film. Students in Year 10 develop a sound understanding of the principles of Judaism and recognise similarities with some Christian principles. They know the meaning of 'covenant' and its significance for the Jews and understand, after reading the *Shema*, that God in Judaism wants to be known, and is the only single God who requires to be worshipped. Their work shows that they are developing a satisfactory understanding of social and moral issues such as non-violence and coming-of-age from the perspectives of the two world religions they study and from the knowledge of key figures such as Martin Luther King. However, their responses to religious issues are often superficial and their reasoning requires more focus.
187. Students respond well to religious education, particularly when teaching is linked to their interests and experiences. They like to talk about different religions, their relationships with each other and sharing their own experiences but they have few opportunities to do so in classes. Most students work well together and respect the feelings and beliefs of others, but a small number of disruptive students can slow down the pace of learning and hamper the achievement of all, when they are not managed well.

188. The quality of teaching is mainly good, with some satisfactory and unsatisfactory elements. All teachers have specialist knowledge of religious education. In most classes, they use this effectively. Lesson planning is generally good and takes into account the needs, interests and motivation of students. Help sheets are provided for those who need such support but the more able are not stretched enough. Few opportunities are provided for research. Examples were seen of effective rounding-off and conclusions to lessons which enabled students to share their progress and the teacher to draw out the religious significance of stories and pictures. These features had a positive impact on students' learning. Homework is consistently set and marked and students are advised and guided about how to improve their grades. Expectations of good quality work are clearly shared with students. The challenging behaviour of a few students in several classes is difficult for new or inexperienced staff to manage, and distracts others from learning.
189. The religious education curriculum meets statutory requirements for Years 7 to 11. The school has devised a good scheme of work based on the Redbridge Agreed Syllabus for Years 7 to 9 and for the GCSE examination. Other statutory religious education is delivered through the personal, social and health education course, which is allowed within the agreed syllabus, but this tends to undermine the distinctiveness of religious education. The GCSE full course is available to all but only taken up by a relatively small number of students so many miss out of the depth this provides. Students have the opportunity to visit a local church and there has been a trip to Berlin, in relation to the study of the Holocaust. Visits are not arranged to other local places of worship. Visitors from Jewish and Christian communities are invited to talk to students about religious and moral issues. However, no visitors from Muslim, Sikh and Hindu communities are invited to contribute to religious education, assemblies or participate in celebrations. This is a shortcoming, especially as there are students in significant numbers from these backgrounds. Religious education makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They learn about the existence of God and explore religious experiences, miracles and the signs of God. They learn to respect each other's beliefs, have opportunities to share experiences and help each other. They also learn about social and moral issues such as racism, sexism, euthanasia and abortion.
190. Leadership is sound. Responsibilities of head of department were being undertaken on an interim basis during the inspection, and temporary teachers had covered a vacancy for several months. Leadership has ensured compliance with the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Targets are set for each student. All staff are subject specialists with higher qualifications but not all are very experienced. The two specialist rooms include sensitive displays of artefacts, pictures and students' work and create a pleasant learning environment. Resources are adequate and supplemented by the school library.

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

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000 (the latest year for which national results are available, for comparison).

### ***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Computer Studies	10	40	72	10	13	0.8	1.7
French	1	100	78	-	17	1.0	1.8
German	1	100	83	-	18	1.0	2.0

### ***GCE A level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	6	83	89	67	45	6.7	6.0
Chemistry	5	60	89	40	42	4.4	5.9
Biology	6	100	88	17	34	4.7	5.3
Physics	4	25	88	-	41	1.0	5.7
Design and Technology	6	83	92	50	29	6.7	5.4
Business Studies	14	100	91	21	30	5.6	5.3
Business Voc	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10.3	10.8
Computer Studies	19	42	85	16	23	2.3	4.6
Media Studies	3	100	N/A	67	N/A	7.3	N/A
Art and Design	14	100	86	14	45	4.6	6.4
Drama	6	100	99	0	36	3.7	6.5
Geography	4	100	92	25	37	4.5	5.7
History	2	100	89	-	34	3.0	5.4
Sociology	8	75	88	25	37	4.5	5.5
English literature	15	93	96	14	36	4.3	5.9
French	3	100	91	33	39	5.3	5.7
German	1	-	92	-	41	-	5.9

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection covered mathematics in detail, including A and AS-levels and GCSE re-sit courses. In sciences, the focus was on biology and chemistry, but physics was also sampled. In **physics**, examination results at A-level in 2000 were very low in comparison with the national average, but they were a little higher in 2001. Bearing in mind their GCSE results, students did much less well than expected in both A-level and AS-level examinations. Two lessons were observed during the inspection and both were good. In one, learning was good because the teacher guided students towards designing experiments to measure flux density, which they then carried out. Students' attainment in lessons was below average for their courses, but higher than that indicated by past examination results. Reasons for the difference are that poor attendance (partly because of timetable clashes) and poor recall of earlier work have a detrimental effect on examination results. The department has addressed the latter by changing to a modular examination for all current students. Many students have difficulty in coping with the level of technical language needed for advanced courses in physics.

#### Mathematics

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory, with strengths in course work**.

##### Strengths

- Students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results.
- Coursework modules are a particular strength.
- The subject is very well managed.
- Teaching is good and often better than this; teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and explain the work clearly.

##### Areas for improvement

- More opportunities for students to make extended contributions in class discussions.
- The planning of work programmes for students in the GCSE re-sit courses.

191. Results in the sixth form have fluctuated in recent years. In 2000, the results in the A-level examination were above the national average; all students passed and a high proportion gained the highest (A, B) grades. Results in 2001 fell below the national average and three students failed to gain a pass grade. Students achieve higher standards in their coursework projects than in the end-of-module examinations. Overall, students achieve well relative to their GCSE results. Results for AS-level taken by Year 12 students in 2001 were satisfactory for most students, but several did not pass. They have the opportunity to re-sit and improve their results. In 2001, few students who repeated their GCSE course improved their grades; only one student gained grade C and more than half did not pass. This modular course has now been replaced by a full year's course, to give students more time to adjust to the requirements of the course, but the allocation of time remains low.

192. Standards in the work seen in lessons and in the students' folders are better than the examination results. In Year 13, standards in mechanics and statistics are satisfactory. Students have a sound understanding of mathematical ideas and apply them effectively in new situations, for example, in using calculus to find volumes of revolution. Students have an effective working knowledge of the subject's vocabulary, for example, in statistics they use and understand random variable and expected average. They use calculators competently on the whole, although some students do not use the memory facility to best effect. Standards on the Year 12 AS-level course are good, overall. Students apply their knowledge well, for example, when using formulae to estimate areas under curves and when applying rules of integration to simple functions. Students re-sitting GCSE mathematics have a wide range of attainment levels. Most of them work hard and they are keen to succeed. The allocation of time given to the course is not enough for them to make the necessary improvement. The attainment of about half of the GCSE students is satisfactory; they are able to simplify algebraic expressions by expanding brackets and have adequate recall of how to factorise quadratic expressions, although some students cannot recall how to deal with negative powers (for example,  $x^{-3}$ ). The attainment of the remaining students is low. A few are still uncertain about multiplication tables but they are able to sketch simple straight-line graphs (such as  $y = 2x$ ) and interpret data from the graph. The frequent absence of a

minority of these students limits the progress they can make over time. The recall skills of many are weak.

193. Teaching is good and in about one in three lessons it is very good. Students learn well as a result. Lessons are carefully planned; they are well structured and mostly maintain a good pace. High levels of challenge are provided in the AS and A-level courses. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and how it can be taught. Consequently, students are well motivated and enjoy the challenge to succeed. Although students are encouraged to widen and deepen their understanding of the subject through good quality coursework projects, not enough opportunities are provided for students to make extended contributions to class discussions. In the GCSE classes, work programmes to address the students' range of attainment levels need to be developed. The presentation of students' work is usually good but the standard in the GCSE group varies too much and some errors in their calculations are overlooked. Students would benefit from constructive comments to show them how to improve.
194. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Teachers work well together and have a commitment to help students achieve as highly as possible. Teachers meet regularly and changes are introduced to improve results, for example, a new syllabus has been introduced for the GCSE re-sit course. Further development is needed to take greater account of the students' previous levels of attainment and the limited time allocated to the course.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Students' achievement in lessons is sound.
- Work is well adapted to students' abilities.
- Students appreciate the help they receive from their teachers.

### Areas for improvement

- Continue to build on students' achievement in lessons to improve examination results.
- Make clear to students that lateness to lessons is unacceptable.
- Improve contact with science-based companies and higher education institutions.

195. A-level results in 2000 were below the national average and lower than this in 2001, but the number of students taking the examination was very low in both years. Two of the three students who took the examination in 2001 gained a pass grade, one of these at B. In relation to their GCSE results two years earlier, students did much less well than expected. Similarly, students who took the AS-level examination in 2001 did much less well than expected considering their GCSE results a year earlier, although they will have an opportunity to re-take the examination and improve their results.
196. The achievement of current Year 13 students in lessons and the written work seen during the inspection is satisfactory; attainment is still below average but higher than that suggested by recent A-level results. Students find it easier to work with concepts as they are introduced than recall earlier work for tests and examinations. In one of the lessons observed, students achieved well because the teacher used good subject knowledge to help them improve their practical skills. However, students make too many careless errors in their written work including, for example, in writing equations to represent organic reactions.
197. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course; their attainment at present is below average for the AS-level course. Students' achievement in individual lessons is better than their progress over time, as in Year 13. In one of the lessons seen, students quickly understood how analysis of successive ionisation energies reveals the pattern of electron arrangements in atoms because the teacher made clear that they were expected to succeed and supported them individually. Poor attendance by about a third of students is a significant factor in explaining why standards are higher in lessons than those reached in tests and examinations; attainment seen in lessons relates only to those students actually present. Slack punctuality by other students is not helpful in raising attainment.

198. Teaching is sound overall, and students' learning in their lessons is satisfactory. The main features of teaching that help students to learn are good subject knowledge which is well used in confident delivery, good lesson organisation, and breaking the work down into steps which support learning. In a Year 13 lesson, the teacher organised a practical session so that students were guided towards improving their experimental technique; they quickly learnt how to obtain accurate results in their titrations. With Year 12 students, the teacher adapted a worked example from a textbook to help students understand how to work out the molarity of a solution; they then applied their learning in solving other problems. Students are not always appropriately challenged; for example, when carrying out practical work in groups of three, rather than individually, they were not challenged to achieve their own satisfactory results. Teachers' written comments in their feedback to students are inconsistent in quality and do not always indicate clearly what the student needs to do to improve.
199. Students are mostly attentive during lessons, though several in Year 12 do not concentrate as well as they should; in Year 13 students are more focused on what they need to do to achieve their target grades. Although they speak appreciatively of their teachers' efforts to help them, a factor in poor examination performance is students' reluctance to do sufficient work outside lessons. Several have difficulty in coping with the language demands of advanced chemistry and this limits their ability to work independently or extract relevant information from text or reference books.
200. Leadership of the department is satisfactory overall. Teachers are using a variety of approaches to try to improve examination results. Parents are contacted at an early stage when unsatisfactory effort or poor attendance becomes apparent and teachers give up their own time to run lunchtime 'help' sessions. However, the approach to students' lack of punctuality in arriving to lessons is inconsistent and sometimes too relaxed. Little reference is made to the commercial or vocational significance of topics to engage the interest of some students and there are few contacts with science-based companies or higher education institutions. Resources are not well used to support learning. Too few computers and textbooks are located in the department to allow teachers to supervise students effectively during their private study time and too many lessons are taught in classrooms because laboratory accommodation is limited. The last inspection report made little reference to the sixth form but improvement since then has been limited; too many students fail to obtain a grade in examinations.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- Achievement is satisfactory, overall.
- Teachers place good emphasis on key points of knowledge.
- The best lessons engage students' interest and they learn well.
- Learning resources are used effectively to cultivate learning and understanding.

### Areas for improvement

- Provide more consistent opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve reference to expectations of students in schemes of work.
- Place more emphasis on language development.

201. Performance in A-level examinations in recent years has been a little below average, overall, although results have fluctuated - in 2000 results were average and, while they were below average in 2001, all students passed. Males and females achieved equally well. Until 2001, students were rarely entered for AS-level examinations. In the first year of the new arrangements about half the students achieved satisfactorily and the rest have the opportunity to re-sit and improve their grades. The part-time course for trainees at the West Ham Academy is new, so no results have been awarded. Achievement in lessons is good.
202. The standard of work of students in Year 13 is broadly average. Most are achieving in line with expectations, based on their GCSE performance. In Year 13, students are drawing on their earlier knowledge to develop understanding of genetics, including monohybrid and dihybrid inheritance. Most give accurate answers in class and they carry out practical exercises effectively (for example, counting the dark and light cob grains to work out the phenotypic ratios of

corn-on-the-cob), including calculations of their results and interpretation of the ratios. Standards of numeracy are satisfactory. Their written work is mostly accurately expressed and well presented, although some have difficulty organising their ideas effectively when asked to prepare essays - for example, on gene technology and its applications. Students in Year 12 have made a satisfactory start on the AS-level course. They are building on their knowledge gained for GCSE about the structure of cells and transport across membranes, making satisfactory progress in understanding the mechanisms of different types of transport - diffusion, osmosis and active transport. Some of the students joined the school newly at the start of Year 12 and for many the standard of work expected in the sixth form seems like a big jump. Most are coping happily with demands but a few are held back by their lack of familiarity with English (which they are just beginning to learn). The football trainees on the West Ham United course, eight weeks into their course, are achieving well and are on course to achieve certification by the end of the year.

203. Teaching is satisfactory and appropriate for sixth form work. Strengths include good subject knowledge, good planning of lessons and sharp emphasis on key points - which are often rehearsed in chorus with students. In the best lessons, teachers are enthusiastic about their subject, which engages students' interest. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, a lively question and answer session helped students to revise their earlier understanding of basic genetics which they applied in practical activities to determine inheritable patterns. In pairs, they made effective use of computer software and investigated *Drosophila* inheritance successfully. They enjoyed their lesson and learned well. Teachers' systematic approaches ensure that students build step-by-step on earlier learning. Students develop good habits in using recommended textbooks, because teachers regularly refer to them. Students are prompted to consider the ethical aspects of science - for example, genetic engineering - through issues raised by teachers and tasks they are set. Some respond very well and make effective use of information technology to extend their understanding (obtaining up-to-date information on the manufacture of *Cipro*, the drug used to control anthrax, for example). Others - a significant minority in some lessons - seem passive, in spite of clear presentations by the teacher, and show little initiative. Students' participation in their work is best when the teacher makes plain what is expected of them, and breaks this down into manageable stages. In a lively Year 12 lesson, students made good use of their time in preparing presentations on the movement of substances into and out of cells. The teacher's expectations of the different aspects of the topic they should research and also their style of presentation (in their own words, not read from text) were made clear and helped students to think about their learning and progress well. Relationships are good. Students work together responsibly and well.
204. Biology is effectively co-ordinated within the science department. Teamwork among biology teachers is good. Schemes of work give a satisfactory outline of topics covered but do not indicate expectations of students at each stage. Assessment is used effectively to monitor and set overall targets for achievement. This could be developed further to help students to understand how to improve their grades, both through improving the comments added to marking and also through explanation in lessons. Direct comparison of results with students' GCSE scores shows them to be in line with, or better than, expectations. In most years, however, a few students do not do so well. When individuals are considered, many reasons emerge - for example, combining study with part-time work, and highly disparate sixth form subject combinations which do not reinforce understanding through the study of related areas. Many have done very well to achieve good results at GCSE and find it hard to sustain an academic approach at A-level. Since the last inspection, biology has retained its popularity and A-level results have been about average within the school. Most years several students fail to gain a grade; there is potential for further improvement.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

Design and technology product design is studied at AS and A-level. The course covers elements of engineering and manufacture and was inspected in detail.

### **Design and Technology**

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

#### Strengths

- High achievement by individual students.
- Good teaching and learning overall, with some very good features.
- Course content and structure are good and involve a wide range of resources.

#### Areas for improvement

- Subject delivery, to promote and improve the quality of drawing and design in the students' work.
- Develop links with outside agencies to cultivate more independent approaches by students and a stronger awareness of the commercial market.

205. Results in A-level design and technology (product design) in 2000 were well above the national average. In 2001, twice as many students entered and all achieved a pass grade. Overall results were below average, but represented good achievement in relation to students' prior attainment. AS-level results were good in 2001. They indicate a potential upward trend in standards, and now there is a substantial increase in the popularity of the course. Standards match course expectations, which represents satisfactory achievement overall, with good achievement by students with special needs, including those with impaired hearing. Courses involve a wide range of contexts, materials, processes, and the analysis of test results, considering efficiency, function and fitness for purpose.
206. Current work in Years 12 and 13 involves the study of design and realisation of prototype solutions to manufacturing activities. Ideas for useful products identified by students cover a wide range, from fashion items, including colourful hearing aids, to furniture in the Memphis style. Year 13 students have satisfactory knowledge of how the properties of a range of materials influence design solutions, and how mechanical and electrical movements can be combined to control events. In the best work, students relate their work to similar commercial applications. For example, they study and compare electric lighting fittings, and component parts of vacuum cleaners. Students' freehand drawings and technical diagrams of these show below average drawing skills, but some appreciation of component assembly, and of the advantages and disadvantages of types of construction. Design sheets are generally well presented and the best work displays flair for design, through strong corporate image and colourful graphics. However, in weaker projects design proposals and evaluations lack depth of understanding of the subject. Learning, through discovery and experimentation in practical work, is generally good. Students are developing satisfactory knowledge of the properties of materials and the processes of making and assembling components to meet specific needs.
207. Although students are developing the confidence to modify and improve their own work, their study of the design of commercial products is somewhat limited. Relevant study skills and independent learning are not developed enough. Further links with outside agencies could be beneficial in developing this important aspect of the subject. Students' understanding of aesthetics, and bringing critical factors to bear on the evaluation of outcomes also need strengthening, for example, through detailed appraisal of the examination assessment criteria. Information and communication technology, including computer-aided design, is used but has not significantly impacted on overall standards. However, the department has exciting plans to develop these aspects of the subject further, linked to computer-aided manufacture.
208. Teaching and learning are good because teachers are very enthusiastic; they have very good knowledge and command of the subject, and motivate students with interesting practical tasks. Lessons are well planned with clear aims and objectives. All resources are to hand, and lively demonstrations stimulate interest and enquiry. Teachers know the students well and are very willing to provide individual tutorials, both during lessons and after school. They write constructive comments about students' work, set clear attainment targets, and have strict deadlines for the completion of tasks. Students learn to appreciate the importance of time management. However, teachers' expectations of students could be higher in some instances, in line with the exacting standards of an advanced course. Students would benefit from more detailed guidance about design principles, freehand drawing, and study skills. Students have very positive attitudes: they are keen to learn, and take their work seriously. They form good working relationships with their teachers, and peers.
209. Staff are enthusiastic and hardworking. Subject management is good, and improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory, overall. Development plans to improve standards, course delivery and the use of computer technology are good.



## **BUSINESS**

The focus of this report is on business studies at AS-level and A2 level and two vocational courses: business at advanced level and the course leading to the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in business at intermediate level.

## Business

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

### Strengths

- The advanced vocational course: students are well motivated and achieve well.
- Teaching is good: students are encouraged to work independently and to use computers effectively.

### Areas for improvement

- Advice and guidance for students embarking upon the GNVQ intermediate level course.

210. A-level business studies results have improved in the last two years to be in line with the national average and all students passed the most recent examination. This follows a long-term decline in standards. AS-level results are currently being reconsidered. On the advanced vocational course, attainment is in line with the course expectations. Results on the intermediate course are broadly in line with the average, although there is a high drop-out rate in its early stages.
211. In lessons seen, standards on the A-level (A2) course in Year 13 were below average. The group has experienced some uncertainty in recent months, with staff changes and their AS-level examinations being regraded, following an appeal. The students are now making effective progress in response to good teaching. In an activity to determine their depth of knowledge on financial concepts the majority of students contributed extended, articulate responses. Most students used appropriate business terminology. Although their understanding lacked depth, the activity enabled them to make good progress during the lesson. The attainment of the Year 12 AS-level class is, overall, in line with expectations, with some good achievement. They were able to use business terms and explain concepts accurately in a discussion based upon examples of current business activity. Good stimulus material and thoughtful teaching revealed that they had good understanding of marketing issues, including the impact of marketing upon different consumers and groups in the economy. Achievement was good and there were no discernible differences in terms of gender or ethnicity.
212. Standards observed in the advanced vocational course were good. Students were highly motivated, showed interest in their work and were able to think and work both independently and in groups. Teaching was good, maintaining a stimulating working atmosphere. A variety of strategies were used to help students understand aspects of business finance. In a whole group session, half of the group were able to offer extended answers to support conclusions which they had come to after watching a video about company finance. Through the use of a timely local example and some personal business experience the teacher was able to move the remainder of the group forward, enabling them to understand the issues involved. Students from Years 12 and 13 were encouraged to work in mixed year groups, which was effective in providing different insights to their current assignments. Information and communication technology skills are mostly good and most students use numbers appropriately in their work.
213. Standards on the GNVQ intermediate-level business course are satisfactory overall. Students have good access to information and communication technology and most have satisfactory information and communication technology skills. About two-thirds of the group are able to cope readily with profit and loss calculations, which they have to use in the business finance unit.
214. Teaching and learning, overall, are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and draw on knowledge and experience of business to capture students' interest. Expectations are high. Students understand the assessment arrangements, which most find helpful in improving standards. On all courses work is regularly marked with appropriate comments and is appropriately assessed according to the requirements of the course. Occasionally, lessons are too teacher-directed, but in most lessons students are encouraged to work independently and use information and communication technology effectively.
215. Day-to-day co-ordination is good; in the absence of a head of department, arrangements are being held together by other heavily pressed staff. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory. Since the last inspection the advanced vocational course has been successfully established, but the intermediate course has not prospered to the same extent. In the early stage of the intermediate course too many students drop out, and this needs investigation. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory but, to maintain momentum and effective long-

term planning, curricular leadership is needed. The new head of department takes up post in January.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of this report is upon AS and A-level courses in both computing and information and communication technology. Sixth formers use information and communication technology in all their other subjects and applications are discussed in their key skills course.

### Information and communication technology

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

#### Strengths

- Good teaching, including support for individuals, helps students to achieve well.
- Access to good quality information and communication technology resources.
- Students' positive attitudes and willingness to improve.

#### Areas for improvement

- Results in examinations at both AS and A2-levels.
- The popularity of information and communication technology courses with girls.

216. Examination results in both AS and A-level computing have been consistently below the national average in recent years. The small number of students who recently took an examination at A-level in information technology, achieved better results: they all passed, although the grades were still below the average. Students in Years 12 and 13 are now all following the information technology courses at AS and A2-level. Standards in lessons, at both levels on the new courses, are satisfactory, and students achieve well overall, although there is a wide range of ability within groups. Leniency in interpretation of entry requirements for the course in the past has resulted in some candidates finding aspects of the work very demanding. No significant differences are apparent in attainment by gender or ethnicity, in lessons and examinations.
217. Teaching in lessons is good, with some very good features. The well-planned lessons observed provided students with good challenge. Targets were discussed and set at the beginning of practical sessions. Explanations were clear and precise. Good guidance was provided for students, helping them to plan and improve their coursework. Teachers maintained a good pace and held students' concentration during lessons by creating a good working environment and giving well directed support to individuals and small groups. In one Year 12 (AS-level information technology) lesson students were in the planning stage of a piece of coursework. The teacher worked hard to involve as many of the large group as possible in class discussion. Students were keen to produce a good standard of work. Many members of the group were able to make articulate and extended contributions to the lesson. Most were able to demonstrate good word-processing and well-developed keyboard skills as they planned their work, creating flow diagrams on screen. They were building effectively on their satisfactory knowledge of spreadsheets from their work for GCSE. Many were able to talk with confidence about the more advanced functions which they could use to customise their spreadsheets for their identified end-user. In a second, parallel group, students were recording their macros effectively, evaluating their progress and often revising designs to make them more suitable or easier for the client to use. The more able were exploring possibilities for using visual basic functions in their work. In both groups almost all students were making good progress and attainment overall was in line with expectations.
218. A Year 13 A2-level class, including students with a wide ability range, was observed exploring the concept of normalisation in relation to a database which they were constructing for their coursework. Most were making at least satisfactory progress and about half made good progress but the demands of this session were causing problems for some members of this group. However, they had the confidence to ask for recapitulation during the lesson, helped each other well, and overcame difficulties. A hearing impaired student was able to take a full part in the lesson with the assistance of specialist support. Attainment overall was in line with expectations.

219. The information technology syllabus now being followed is appropriate for the majority of students at the school who wish to take an advanced course in the subject. Assessment is thorough, students are well supported when working at computers and receive detailed diagnostic comments about their work on screen and on paper. The size of sixth form groups (over 20 in each of the Year 12 classes) makes this a demanding task for teachers. Some sixth form students volunteer to help with the running and maintenance of the school computer network in order to increase their understanding of aspects of the syllabus. In addition, they also provide valuable support for information and communication technology groups elsewhere in the school, both during and outside lesson times. These opportunities help to consolidate and extend their learning and enhance their personal development.
220. All Year 13 students have the opportunity to attend weekly key skills lessons which include an element of information and communication technology. Many sixth formers use a great deal of information and communication technology throughout their subjects and courses and the complexity of the applications depends on the subject. Students cope effectively. Standards are satisfactory.
221. Sixth form information and communication technology is well led, but heavy demands are made on the head of subject, who is also network manager. Strengths and weaknesses of the subject are well understood and planning addresses weaknesses. The examination being followed has been changed, to improve students' examination success, and this needs continued monitoring. The subject is increasing in popularity, yet still does not appeal to girls as much as to boys (this was noted at the last inspection). Over the last few years the quality of the computers has improved substantially. Access to them is generally good, although there is sometimes congestion when demand is high. Teaching is now good; at the last inspection it was mostly sound. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory but, to maintain curricular improvements, some easing of the load on the head of department is necessary.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The inspection focused on physical education. Both the newly introduced AS-level course and the sports science diploma for West Ham trainees were inspected in detail. An optional programme of activities is provided for all students in the sixth form. Because of timetable arrangements this aspect was not inspected. The range of activities at present is limited, mostly to games, but there are appropriate plans to introduce more courses of a vocational nature. No other courses are provided in this curricular area.

### Physical education

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory** with **some good features**.

#### Strengths

- The diploma course for the West Ham Academy trainees is well taught.
- The environment for students is supportive.

#### Areas for improvement

- The range of activities to stimulate independent learning needs enlarging.
- The range and match of examination courses to students' needs and capabilities.
- The variety of vocational courses and activities in the core programme.

222. Students in Year 12 are achieving satisfactorily, relative to their prior attainment, in the newly introduced AS-level course. Their theory results at GCSE were generally below average. While two students are working above course expectations, the majority of the students are not meeting the requirements of the course, which is not suited to their needs. A particular strength of more able students is their ability to link physical performance with theoretical aspects. They are able to research topics effectively and contribute well to class discussions. In homework assignments students do not show the same understanding and their notes lack depth. The students do not have the study skills required for independent learning.
223. A particularly positive feature in the sixth form is the introduction this year of a sports science diploma course for the West Ham United Football Club trainees. The trainees attend the school for one and a half days each week and are currently achieving well. They have a good

understanding of anatomy and, for example, can relate how muscle fibre response contributes to their own personal performance.

224. Overall the teaching of AS-level in physical education is satisfactory. The most effective teaching involves interesting explanation of facts reflecting the teachers' good subject knowledge. An example of this was seen in an anatomy lesson where the teacher likened the central nervous system to a power station and the effect that would occur if it were de-activated. The students could relate to this analogy and grasped the concept easily. At present there are too few teaching strategies to develop students' theoretical understanding or to stimulate independent study. Tasks do not always take into account the students' different starting points in this subject. The lower attaining students struggle and the more able are not fully extended. Homework assignments are marked regularly and constructively and notes are checked for completion. Targets set are appropriate for their level of attainment. Some students make good use of computer skills in their homework but information and communication technology skills could be used more effectively within the teaching programme.
225. The West Ham trainees respond well to teaching and course requirements. There is a mutual respect between the teachers and the students which creates an effective and supportive learning environment. The more able students work well independently. On occasion, a few students do not work as diligently as could be expected. They are easily distracted.
226. All courses are well managed and there is a determination to improve further the teaching and the standards achieved. A careful analysis of work so far has resulted in some changes in the depth of delivery and in teaching styles. The permanent base for theoretical lessons creates a suitably stimulating environment and is well resourced. The notice boards are informative and celebrate the students' achievements. At the last inspection, very limited sixth form provision was reported. Many improvements have been introduced and it is now satisfactory, but examination courses need to be better matched to students' capabilities.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of this report is on A-level courses and the course leading the General National Vocational Qualification (at intermediate level) in art and design and A-level courses in drama. Sixth form music and media studies were also sampled.

### Music

Students have taken A-level examinations in two out of the past three years. Results have been mixed: some high grades have been obtained, alongside low grades. Numbers entered were low in 2001 and overall students have achieved in line with expectations. In the lessons seen, progress and attainment were good - but attendance is not reliable and could affect both Year 12 and Year 13 results. Students' mature attitudes help them to improve their style and personal presentation. Their evaluation skills, learned lower down the school, are used to good effect in improving individual performance, for example, on the trombone and trumpet (Year 13) and guitar, piano and trumpet (Year 12).

### Media Studies

In 2001, results in GCE A-level media studies were very high and much better than in recent years, when results have been average. AS-levels results were very good; all students gained a grade and half reached the higher grades A and B. These results represent very good achievement. Two post-16 lessons were observed and, in both, teaching and learning were very good. The teacher's extensive subject knowledge helped students to learn rapidly how to analyse a poster (Year 12) and how to evaluate how news is produced and manufactured on television (Year 13). Very strong emphasis is placed on the precise use of media language when exploring concepts.

### Art

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

Strengths
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- Students achieve well on A-level courses: the proportion gaining the highest grades is close to the national average.
  - Students learn well as a result of good, often very good, teaching.
  - Courses are well planned and suited to students' needs and capabilities.
  - The subject is very well managed; teamwork is strong.
- Areas for improvement
- Students' independence in learning and artistic expression could be developed further.
  - No accommodation is available to allow students to work undisturbed on individual projects.

227. The 2001 A-level results showed considerable improvement on the previous year. While below average overall, students passed and the proportion of high (A, B) grades, at 36 per cent, was only just below the national average for recent years. These results reflected good achievement by the students; less than half had attended the main school in Year 11. The 2001 AS-level results were above the national average for recent years, again reflecting good progress from GCSE. Current work confirms a rising trend in standards, and good achievement in both courses. The GNVQ Intermediate course was started in 1999, as an alternative to A-level, and to extend student choice. All students passed in 2001, and two merits and one distinction were gained.
228. Standards in lessons and students' work match course expectations. Both AS and A-level students have made a good start to their course, with appropriate productivity and progress evident in folders. Students work in both two and three dimensions, and in a range of media including ceramics. Work from direct observational drawings of natural forms and other still-life objects results in well-balanced compositions. Shapes and forms are selected and enlarged to develop exciting semi-abstract work. Students use a wide range of techniques and media, showing a fluent ability to review and refine their work as it progresses. Colours are carefully selected to express their ideas, and they understand how hue and tone work together to convey form. They study the work and characteristics of a wide range of artists from different times and parts of the world, and are able to make connections with their own work. Examples include the decorative, symmetrical pattern quality of Indian art, contrasted with the free style of Klimt and the delicacy of O'Keeffe. Less good is their ability to develop their work in a completely personal and individualistic way. Students talk with confidence to the whole group about their work, showing average knowledge and enthusiasm, although evaluations largely centre around how they hope to use various media rather than the quality of their work in terms of appropriate assessment criteria.
229. Students on the GNVQ course are developing vocational and technical skills in line with course requirements. Their wax-resist and silk painting work is competent and shows good understanding of how shapes, flowing lines and translucent colours can be combined to create strikingly effective art work. Their figurative work shows good progress. Following a visit to the Henry Moore Foundation, students learnt much from his use of contour lines to express form. Students benefit from the combined expertise of four teachers. Tasks are well integrated, presented as units and have clear objectives, for example, to explore specific techniques, or analyse the meaning of the term, visual language.
230. The quality of teaching is largely good, with much very good teaching. All teachers have good subject expertise and enthusiastically promote their subject. Courses and lessons are well planned to cover all necessary course requirements. Challenging work and targets are set which extend students' visual awareness. The teaching of direct observational drawing is a particular strength. Evaluations of students' work in progress and overall assessment are good. Teachers have good understanding of students' individual needs and are very willing to provide one-to-one tutorials and arrange visits and extra classes after school. Students respond well to this teaching style and to the varied and rich resources provided. They have positive attitudes and take their work very seriously. However, there is room to strengthen students' evaluation of their own work, so they understand more clearly how to improve. There is scope for more independent learning - for students to develop and exchange ideas in open group discussion, and to take individual initiatives. Some use is made of information communication technology and the Internet to enhance presentation and for research, but this could be further developed, as could the use of digital photography and computer-aided design.
231. The quality of leadership is very good. Direction for the subject is clear and development plans are good. Courses are well managed and teamwork is a strength. Unfortunately, popularity of art causes pressure on accommodation. The department does not have a designated area in which sixth formers can work undisturbed on individual projects.

232. Improvements since the last inspection are good, with the introduction of the GNVQ course, and improvements in assessment and monitoring procedures. The priority now is to raise the attainment of students at all levels. It is a great credit to the department that a high proportion of A-level students continue their studies on art college foundation courses.

## Drama

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

### Strengths

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and motivate their students to work hard.
- Students make good progress, particularly in performance.
- Students are able to evaluate their work objectively and consistently well.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' writing skills need improvement for them to obtain the highest examination grades.

233. Standards in drama are broadly average. For the past three years, students have always obtained an A-level grade, but few have gained the very highest (A) grades. The AS-level results in 2001 followed a similar pattern. The number of students involved is too small to reveal genuine differences in the achievement of boys and girls.
234. The standard of work by Year 13 students on the performing arts A-level course supports the pattern of examination results. Students' attainment is strongest in performance and evaluation. Preparing a community performance project, students show a sound knowledge of performance theory. They know the impact they want to make on the audience and the range of techniques which they can use. As students try out various presentations, they realise, for example, the need to project their voices more effectively. Their research into the Thompson/Bywaters trial of a local murder has given them a sound understanding of the characters involved. Their evaluative skills are good. All contribute constantly and they listen and then try out ideas. As a result, their performance improves and the impact on the audience increases. Their use of language is weaker than other skills. Their general vocabulary is not wide but they understand and use technical terms well. Although students know that in some roles, such as the judge in the trial, they must use formal standard English, they do not always do so. The quality of written work is variable but generally below their performance skills. However, all students are able to convey in writing their understanding of dramatic ideas and evaluate, as they do in lessons. They achieve at least in line with course expectations and well, relative to their prior attainment. Most have studied drama at GCSE and this enables them to build effectively on performance skills.
235. Year 12 students show similar strengths in performance and evaluation. The course they are following prepares them for drama and theatre studies at AS-level, which continues in Year 13 to A2-level. Students have very sound analytical skills. They were observed starting work on Berkoff's *Metamorphosis*, and effectively analysed and used their experience of *The Messiah*, by the same author, to draw some perceptive conclusions about his aims and techniques. Students remembered the work they had done on Brecht in Year 11 and built on it well in developing ideas about Berkoff's aims and techniques. Two or three used technical language very ably in discussion and all understood it. Generally, they have a wider vocabulary than Year 13 students. In lessons, there is a difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Boys find it more difficult to maintain levels of concentration, which was noticeable in the warm-up exercises.
236. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have good subject expertise. For example, as a result of the teacher demonstrating how a character might behave, the students' performance improved. When reading a text, the teacher's precise explanation of how the lighting would illuminate the characters on stage increased students' understanding considerably. Above all, students enjoy drama because of the teacher's enthusiasm. Lessons are well planned and carefully structured, but students are encouraged to work independently. Students rise to the challenge in the lessons. For example, they strive to meet deadlines, which they know will occur in performance. Teachers are aware of the weakness in written work and mark it carefully, offering additional help where necessary. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good.

237. Good standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Drama is well led and managed. The head of department has thought carefully about the development of AS-level and A2 courses. The change to drama and theatre studies will remove some of the difficulties of co-ordinating the music and dance aspects of the performing arts course. The programme of theatre visits and school productions widens the students' experience and learning and contributes well to their personal development. Pressure on accommodation for drama is growing with the increase in numbers studying the subject but the spaces used for sixth form lessons are satisfactory. The youth centre provides a good space and acoustics, although equipment has to be moved over for each lesson.

## HUMANITIES

The focus was on A-level courses in geography and sociology. History and religious education were also sampled.

### History

History is provided at GCE AS and A2-levels. Numbers of A-level students have been small but are growing and examination results vary from year to year. The grades obtained are generally mixed, with some low grades, as they were in 2000 and 2001. AS-level results in 2001 included a higher grade. Examination results broadly reflect standards seen in lessons; progress is sound. Teaching is satisfactory. Strengths include good subject knowledge and high expectations of students, although over-reliance on exposition limits students' participation in lessons and their understanding of historical ideas. Most students select what is relevant and try to explain and judge from different standpoints. The literacy of students is barely adequate for A-level work, which holds back their progress.

### Religious education

Standards are satisfactory both for A-level courses and also as provision included in personal, social and health education, as part of the Redbridge Locally Agreed Syllabus. Results for the first group of students who took the AS-level examinations in 2001 were satisfactory. Students take examinations at the end of Year 13 for the first time in 2002. The work seen in lessons and students' work during the inspection confirms that they are achieving well and attaining satisfactory standards. They show good understanding and judgement in their critical analysis of texts, research and scholarly opinion. Teaching is good; the course is well planned and teachers give good guidance to students on improving their work.

### Geography

Relatively small numbers of students follow the AS and A-level course. Currently, nine students are following the A-level course in Year 13 and nine follow the AS-level course in Year 12.

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

#### Strengths

- Well-qualified and experienced teachers help almost all students to complete the course successfully.
- Success on the A-level course has matched that nationally over the past years.
- Very good use is made of residential fieldwork in Year 12.
- The subject is well managed.

#### Areas for improvement

- Greater use could be made of information and communication technology for the recording and analysis of data in the coursework.
- Thought needs to be given to the entry criteria for admission to the AS and A-level courses.

238. Attainment in geography at A-level has been broadly in line with national levels over the last four years, although the small numbers make statistical comparison difficult. Achievement has been good. All candidates have gained graded passes in the last three examinations, 1999 to 2001, and most candidates have reached or exceeded their estimated grades based on GCSE results. The work in progress of the current Year 13 indicates that this group is likely to achieve similarly



well in the 2002 examination. Results were good for the AS-level examination in 2001. The fieldwork assignments based on the work done on the residential field trip to South Devon were all graded highly. In work seen during the inspection, students had good planning and analytical skills. In essays on living with hazardous environments, students considered management solutions critically and in terms appropriate for A-level.

239. The students in the first term of the AS-level course in Year 12 have a lower level of skills and background knowledge of the subject than others in Year 12 groups in recent years. Although attainment overall is lower than is generally expected at this stage of an AS-level course, the work seen in a lesson on managing human environments showed that most students are enthusiastic and are making satisfactory, and in some cases, good progress. Energetic and determined teaching is an important factor in the improvement of students' knowledge and understanding. For example, in a lesson about rural development, challenging questions made the students think back to earlier (GCSE) work and research sources of information in order to compare problems arising in Britain with those in Malawi. While the students needed patient prompting, they made good progress and by the end of the lesson most were working at standards appropriate for AS-level.
240. Teaching is good. The three specialist teachers sharing the teaching have complementary subject specialisms and interests within the subject. They have a clear understanding of the particular needs of students with special educational needs and of those for whom English is an additional language. They are particularly adept at giving clear explanations of new terminology and at reinforcing the use of recently learned terms. For example, one teacher, referring to the Fohn affect of the warming of leeward mountain slopes, explained that the North American *Chinook* wind comes from a native American word for *snow eater* – an explanation worth a brief detour, in order to fix the word in the memory. The good quality of teaching leads to good learning. In lessons there are particularly good relationships between teachers and students and among the students themselves. Activities help students to take responsibility for their own learning. Year 13 students were very supportive, for example, of a student giving a presentation to the whole group on Formula One racing, as part of her work on the geography of sport and leisure. They asked pertinent questions, introduced comparable references from their own individual studies and congratulated her on the completion of the illustrated talk. The group had clearly enjoyed and benefited from their detailed study of the topic which related to their own lives and interests and had included a field-exercise on identifying an appropriate site for a new stadium, for the relocation of a football club. Students are enthusiastic about their work and have a realistic knowledge of their own level of performance.
241. Sixth form geography is well organised and well led. Care has been taken to choose appropriate topics that match students' interests and teachers' areas of expertise. The course devised ensures that all students have the opportunity to benefit from residential fieldwork in a non-urban environment. This provides a substantial, well-taught foundation in Year 12 for any one-year students, as well as for those going on to complete the A-level course. Students are encouraged to use up-to-date sources of information such as *Geography Review* and the web-sites referred to within articles to collect relevant information. Assessments are carried out regularly by all teachers and assist in the regular monitoring of students' progress. Good standards have been maintained since the last inspection. However, current Year 12 students have lower levels of skill and background knowledge than others in recent Year 12 groups. For example, two did not take the subject at GCSE level and those who completed the GCSE course achieved lower grades than usual for entry to an AS or A-level course. This is in contrast to the background of those who were successful in AS-level examinations in 2001, all of whom started with GCSE grades of C or above.

## Sociology

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

### Strengths

- Effective teaching helps students to make good progress.
- Year 13 coursework topics are very interesting to students.
- Students make satisfactory, and often good, progress from starting points at GCSE which are lower than for many other subjects.
- Marking is regular and constructive and helps students to improve their work.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students sometimes find it difficult to write evaluations of their work in depth.
- Year 13 students find it difficult to apply theoretical concepts to unfamiliar situations.
- Resources such as information and communication technology are not easily available in lessons.
- Materials used by teachers do not always stretch the most able students.

242. Results in 2001 for AS and A-level sociology are below recent national averages for the proportions of students achieving a pass and those achieving the top grades of A and B. In the last few years, results have declined but small numbers taking the examination have been low, so it is difficult to compare results with those obtained nationally. Also, sociology is not studied at GCSE, so students are not familiar with the subject when they embark on sixth form work. Comparison of individual students' A-level results in sociology with their GCSE performance in other subjects shows that achievement is satisfactory for both male and female students, and in line with expectations for their ability; some students have achieved more than predicted. Trends over time show that boys generally achieve in line with their other subjects whereas, in 2001, girls achieved better results in their other subjects.
243. Standards observed in lessons and work seen during the inspection were average in the large Year 12 class, and considerably better than those shown by recent examination results in terms of the critical understanding of key concepts and ability to evaluate terminology. The work of Year 13 students is at a level which, though below average overall, is in line with expectations based on the ability of students in the small class of three. There is no evidence of differences in the learning of girls and boys or of different ethnic groups.
244. In lessons observed and work seen, Year 13 students showed a sound understanding of pluralist theories in interpreting the relationship between power and the state in modern society, based on Talcott Parsons' functionalist theory. The most able student showed good understanding of relevant concepts in the first part of his essay, but drifted off the point when rushing his conclusion. Less capable students in the group had not evaluated the influences of social class on voting patterns in sufficient depth. In their AS-level work, students were achieving in line with national standards on course work projects, but they find examination questions difficult. One student could explain orally the difference between Bernstein's elaborated and restricted codes and give good practical examples, but found it difficult to remember sociologists' names. Students' knowledge of research methods, and the quality of data collected and presented is below average overall, and analyses tend to be generalised. There is little evidence that students in Year 13 have explored the ethical issues facing researchers or applied this understanding to their own research.
245. Year 12 students have made a good start to their course. The most able student, capable of grade A in the examination, shows, in her essay, a very good understanding of how Marxist theory can be applied to one of Britain's richest entrepreneurs, but does not provide evidence that she fully understands ethical issues involved in using children in sociological experiments. The weakest students usually work hard to apply their own knowledge in giving examples of the mass media. Most students describe stereotypes well with the help of content analysis, and effectively evaluate ways in which women are represented in the media. In a good Year 12 coursework project seen, a Moslem girl drew on her own cultural heritage very well to analyse ways in which the removal of the burqa (veil) affected women's self-esteem.
246. The teaching and learning of sociology are satisfactory overall, with many good features which help students to make good progress in learning new topics. Teachers' broad subject knowledge helps them to give students clear explanations of concepts and theories, although most students rely too much on teachers to provide material for discussion. Teachers generally plan lessons well, and this results in students making good progress in lessons because discussions are interesting and teachers use a good mix of theoretical and practical tasks.
247. Teachers develop students' awareness of different methodological approaches for handling qualitative and quantitative data well, although lack of availability of information and communication technology limits its use as a tool to explore statistical data. In a Year 12 lesson on Townsend's poverty studies, the teacher skilfully used empirical data in the deprivation index to help students understand theories relating absolute and relative poverty and discern the relevance of theories to the contemporary world and to their own experience. In a less effective

Year 12 lesson, the pace of students' learning was reduced because half of the class had missed the previous key lesson on research methodology, as they were on a school visit. They did not appear to be fully involved and some students tended to be marginalised in class discussion. As a result of the effective teaching, most Year 12 students show enthusiasm for their learning, but the small, weaker Year 13 group responds with less vigour, although their attitudes are mostly good. Students in both years do not read around topics sufficiently, other than from resources provided, and do not always complete their worksheets. They are not used to monitoring their own progress and cannot always explain how well they are doing or understand how what they are doing fits into the course as a whole. Teachers' assessment of students' work is satisfactory and meets examining board requirements. Day-to-day use of targets for all students would improve the pace of learning over time. In both years, teachers encourage all students to use the Internet and text books for research, and set appropriate homework tasks to extend work in lessons. The lack of easily available resources, including computers, and a base room, affects the pace and continuity of learning achieved over time.

248. The subject is competently managed within the history department. A new scheme of work has been well implemented to cover the requirements of the new AS and A2-level syllabuses, and lists the main topics to be covered. Additional topics for higher-attaining students are not specified, and evidence of planning to develop students' key skills of information and communication technology, number and communications was not seen. Individual students are well monitored through their course, although little departmental analysis of data was seen. This is understandable in view of recent changes in departmental management and teaching allocation. The range of resources available for students' use has been considerably broadened over the last two or three years. Links with the local community for visits and speakers are underdeveloped. During the past year staff have had good professional training. No reference was made to sociology in the last report. In the last few years results have reflected satisfactory progress. The subject has good capacity to improve further.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature at AS and A-levels, and English GCSE, and French A-level courses. German was also sampled. No students are studying German in Year 13, and only one in Year 12. In the lesson observed with one student, teaching was good. German A-level results over the last three years have been below average.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Results in 2001 in A-level English literature were very good and mark a significant improvement on recent years.
- Teaching and learning are very good; marking is exemplary.
- Students are fully committed to their work; they collaborate well in groups.
- Sixth form work is very well led and managed; teachers work closely together to help students achieve high standards.

#### Areas for improvement

- Results in A-level before 2001 were well below average: there is a need to sustain the impressive results achieved in 2001.

249. In 2001, results in the English literature examination were well above the national average for 2000 and much better than in recent years. All students gained at least a grade C. This represents very good achievement in relation to these students' grades in GCSE. In comparison with other school subjects in 2000, results were average. No significant difference is apparent between the results of male and female students, but few male students study English. Results at AS-level were below average, overall. This is because students did not take a third module. In the two modules assessed, students achieved well. All but one did at least as well as predicted and five did significantly better. Results for the GCSE re-sit examinations are good, relative to the previous attainment of students, many of whom are new to the school; a significant minority of students

has English as an additional language. In 2000, half the candidates attained a C grade, though fewer did so in 2001.

250. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards are above average in AS and A-level classes. In Year 12, students are making very good progress in the early stages of the AS-level course. They build well on their prior knowledge of Shakespeare's plays to help them understand the subtleties of the language in *Othello*. In pairs, they collaborate well and showed good problem solving skills when identifying speakers of brief quotations taken from the text. They realised that the style of speech reveals character. Discussion was wide-ranging and enthusiastic. Students read aloud extracts clearly and fluently, often with expression, conveying clear understanding. In Year 12 GCSE classes, achievement is good. Students find the language of Shakespeare difficult, but persevere. They miss implicit meaning and do not fully appreciate the dramatic irony in *Romeo and Juliet*. Skilful teaching leads to greater appreciation of the text. When commencing a study of *Julius Caesar*, students learned about the historical background to the play. In groups, they discussed the connection between robe, dagger and scroll in relation to the play. Dictionaries were referred to efficiently to extend vocabulary.
251. In Year 13, students achieve very well. They composed a possible examination question on *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and in groups they discussed in depth how to express the question precisely. This led to a greater understanding of what the play is about. They discussed the dramatic quality of extracts from *A Streetcar Named Desire* and read the text aloud, showing a good understanding of character. They came to conclusions about the sort of people Mitch and Blanche really are. In group work, students listen very well, are supportive of one another's learning and show a clear commitment to the task. Written work is good. Students showed appreciation of the authors' purpose in assignments on *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, *Birdsong* and *Sons and Lovers*. More able students sequence ideas well and focus on the topic, while others sometimes express points vaguely and do not substantiate opinion with evidence from the text. Students generally sustain an appropriate style – as when writing about Mr Knightley in *Emma*, or about dramatic effect in *Othello*. Occasionally, there are lapses from standard English into a more informal style.
252. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which enables them to assist students to understand challenging texts and appreciate how authors use language to achieve an effect. For example, in a lesson on *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the teacher drew attention to significant detail and the class came to see how Stanley uses language as a weapon. Group work is a characteristic of the lessons. Teachers give students the opportunity to discuss their ideas and extend their thinking. Very good collaboration gives students the chance to reflect on and modify opinion. Because relationships are excellent, students feel free to express opinions and this active involvement leads to rapid learning. Teachers' very good guidance in analysing language – as in a Year 12 GCSE class studying *Romeo and Juliet* – leads students to a better appreciation of the text. The marking of assignments is excellent. Teachers give extensive comments to indicate how students can raise their standards. Their hard work and unstinting support for students are rewarded by the high standards students achieve.
253. The head of department provides very good leadership and management. Units of work are well planned and resources to aid students' learning are efficiently deployed. The work of the four teachers involved in post-16 courses is well co-ordinated so that all work as a team, highly committed to helping students do their best. Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good. Standards are significantly higher in the GCE A-level course.

## French

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

### Strengths

- Results at A-level were good in 2001.
- Most of the teaching is good.
- Teachers use a good range of authentic materials to stimulate learning.
- Students are encouraged to research topics independently.
- Students have positive attitudes: they want to learn.

Areas for improvement

- The AS-level course is too demanding for students who have average prior attainment.
- Schemes of work lack measures to improve the range of students' language skills and knowledge.
- The use of English by both teachers and students hinders progress in speaking French.

254. Over the last three years, results at GCE A-level have improved steadily from being well below average in 1999. In 2001, eight students were entered, and achieved results which were above the national average for 2000. Three students achieved the highest (A, B) grades, and all passed. Performance was consistent across the different elements of the examination. Results at AS-level for the five students now in Year 13 are much lower, though some have yet to re-sit parts of the examination. The unconfirmed results indicate progress which is broadly in line with prior attainment.
255. The evidence from work seen in lessons, in students' files and from a discussion with Year 13 students shows that attainment is below average overall. Whilst there are examples of good work in both years, especially oral work in Year 12 from native speakers, many students are struggling to make adequate progress and are finding the work very difficult. This applies equally to male and female students, some of whom achieved average grades at GCSE and have found the transition to AS-level far more demanding than they expected. Students in Year 13 have generally satisfactory comprehension skills. They take notes, and summarise the content of quite complex recorded extracts, in acceptable French. They gradually improve the range of their vocabulary and their understanding of tenses, moods and challenging grammatical concepts, so that they understand the meaning of what they hear and read. They participate in discussions in French, building and defending arguments on topics such as animal rights and alcohol abuse, though they find this work difficult because their active vocabulary is less well developed than their comprehension, and they need to search for words to express themselves. Pronunciation is weak, especially of words that are closely similar and of some verb endings. Students do not use French spontaneously, as they lack confidence. The quality of written work varies too much. Factual content is usually good but complex language, which is taught and practised in mechanical exercises, rarely appears in written assignments. As a result, there is a lack of ambition in much writing, and standards are further limited by the frequency of basic errors in gender and number. Students make good use of the Internet to research topics and enhance the content of written assignments. One male student, who is profoundly deaf, is making good progress.
256. Attainment in Year 12, at this early stage of the course, appears to be similar overall. Two of the six students are native speakers. Prior attainment is varied, and standards in work seen indicate that progress so far reflects this. Students benefit from regular opportunities to participate in oral work, in which the expertise of the native speakers helps the others. Standards in pronunciation vary considerably, from perfect, to the inclusion of errors which seriously impede communication, such as wrongly pronouncing third person plural endings. However, students persist well and improve as they begin to discuss challenging issues such as teenagers' rights in society. Written work in files consists entirely of grammatical exercises; they have not yet attempted an essay. Most of their answers are accurate and indicate the ability to follow a model. Comprehension skills are satisfactory, and sometimes good. In the lesson observed, they understood quite challenging clues, which enabled them to do a crossword in French.
257. The quality of teaching is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Good teaching helps students to make satisfactory progress in learning in lessons. Teachers have a good command of French and use it well to conduct most activities. Unfortunately, they sometimes lapse into English, reducing the impact of their expertise, and do not always require students to use French in addressing teachers and fellow students. This affects oral standards adversely, and reflects expectations, which should be higher. Lessons are well planned so that students always have some opportunities to use French for themselves, either orally or in writing, including narrating accounts and building arguments. Teachers use a good range of resources, supplementing dedicated course materials with articles from French sources, including video clips and the Internet. They encourage students to carry out their own research rather than spoon-feeding the content of topics. Small group size helps teachers to build good relationships, and this assists learning. A good sense of co-operation develops between students, especially in oral work. Marking is thorough and diagnostic, with lengthy comments designed to inform future learning. Homework is set regularly and is appropriately demanding.

258. Work in French in the sixth form is satisfactorily managed, overall. Foreign language assistants are deployed effectively, providing individual conversation opportunities for all students. Teachers have quickly come to terms with the requirements of new courses, leading to the provision of adequate schemes of work, which are being amended as experience of the course increases. However, there is no bridging unit to prepare students for the study of prescribed topics, so that they feel that they are constantly catching up. They find this frustrating and an obstacle to progress. Students appreciate the opportunity for an extended weekend in Paris during Year 12, which boosts their oral confidence and gives them some cultural insight, although there is no provision for a longer stay in France, for instance, through work experience, which would have a greater impact on progress and knowledge. Their awareness of contemporary French culture and society is very limited. In the last inspection report, no judgement was made on results in the sixth form, and results have recently improved. Other comments about good standards in A-level classes remain substantially true. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.