

INSPECTION REPORT

FOREST GATE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Forest Gate London

LEA area: Newham

Unique reference number: 102775

Headteacher: Mrs M F Wheeler

Reporting inspector: Mrs S D Morgan
1355

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 26th April 2002

Inspection number: 190518

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 - 16
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	Forest Street Forest Gate London
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Wenborne
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1355	Mrs S Morgan	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p> <p>The school's results and students' achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p>
9291	Mr S Ward	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development
8402	Dr V Johnston	Team inspector	<p>English</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	
1503	Mr T Browne	Team inspector	Mathematics	
29742	Ms P Fyans	Team inspector	Science	
23880	Ms O Hall	Team inspector	<p>Art and design</p> <p>Special educational needs</p>	
22491	Ms L Small	Team inspector	Design and technology	How well does the school care for its students?
13623	Mr J Waddington	Team inspector	Geography	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
10817	Mr G Rayner	Team inspector	History	How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
15208	Mr A Briggs	Team inspector	<p>Information communication technology</p> <p>Music</p>	

4617	Mrs R Fox	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well is the school led and managed?
30800	Mrs B Colley	Team inspector	Physical education	
10761	Dr P Willan	Team inspector	Religious education Equal opportunities	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Forest Gate is an average-sized mixed community comprehensive school with 1039 students in Years 7 to 11. Boys make up almost two-thirds of the school roll. The proportions of boys and girls are similar in each year group. Overall, students' attainment on entry is well below average. The percentage of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average, at 45 per cent. An average proportion of students has been identified as having special educational needs. These students have a range of needs, with most having emotional and behavioural and/or learning difficulties. An above-average proportion of students have statements of special educational need. Students come from a wide range of ethnic groups. Almost a fifth of the students are white and four other ethnic groups make up a significant proportion of the rest of the school: Bangladeshi 23 per cent, Indian 17 per cent, Pakistani 17 per cent, Black African heritage 10 per cent. The number of students speaking English as an additional language is very high, and 91 are at an early stage of learning English. Over ten per cent of students are refugees or asylum seekers. In most years there is a turnover of around ten per cent of students. Forest Gate is taking part in a number of initiatives, such as the Excellence in Cities Programme and hosts the borough's City Learning Centre. The school has gained Investors in People and Sportsmark statuses. The inspection of this school included a detailed inspection of the quality of provision for students who are learning English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a positive learning environment in which students feel valued. In relation to their standard of work at the start of Year 7, students are achieving satisfactorily. However, the standards they attain in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 remain well below the national average. Students are making satisfactory or better progress in almost all subjects. Teaching is satisfactory in all subjects and good in some. The headteacher, senior managers and governors are providing good leadership and have a clear view of how to enable the school to improve further. The school provides sound value for money and its effectiveness is satisfactory.

What the school does well

- Students achieve well in subjects such as art and design, drama, General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) information and communication technology (ICT), media studies, music and physical education because of consistently good teaching.
- The school is a welcoming and inclusive community which helps students develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Relationships throughout the school are good and built on mutual respect.
- Very good provision is made for a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including extension and revision sessions which support students' learning.
- The headteacher, senior managers and governors lead the school well and this has enabled the recent pace of change to be rapid.

What could be improved

- The range of ways in which teachers help students to read and write well.
- How well students do in modern foreign languages and ICT across the curriculum.
- Teachers' marking and use of assessment information to support students' learning.
- The management of the provision for students with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language.

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 satisfactory improvement overall since it was last inspected in November 1996, with recent rapid improvement following the appointment of the headteacher. The strengths of the school are now being built upon and areas that require improvement are being systematically dealt with. The quality of teaching has improved considerably with a significantly higher proportion of satisfactory teaching than at the time of the previous inspection. Other improvements are evident in areas such as students' attendance, the curriculum, the quality of the learning environment and the leadership of the school. The new and increasingly effective management structure has enabled much to be accomplished in the last eighteen months. However, the school is aware that there is still more that needs to be done, and a number of issues identified in the last inspection report remain. For example, the management of provision for students with special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language. Staff are beginning to work well as a team and there is a strong commitment to continued improvement. The school is well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 11 based on average point scores in GCSE examinations.

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

Results have fluctuated and the trend of improvement in GCSE grades is below the national rate. Over the last three years, the results of boys have been below the national average and girls' results have been well below. The proportion of students who join or leave the school other than at the usual time of admission or transfer is high, at around ten per cent each year. This has an impact on both end of Year 9 national assessments and GCSE results, as many of these students have not followed the National Curriculum or GCSE examination syllabuses. The results for individual subjects varied considerably. They did relatively well in drama, music, Bengali and Urdu. They did less well in English language and literature, science, mathematics, design and technology, French and geography. The 2001 results show an improvement in a number of subjects, including science, design and technology, geography, GNVQ ICT, music, physical education (short course) and religious education. The school met or exceeded the targets for GCSE results in 2001 which had been agreed with the local education authority. These were not particularly challenging and the school has set its own more demanding targets.

In Year 9 national assessments in 2001, overall results were well below average for all schools. Results in mathematics were below average and in English and science well below average. When compared to similar schools, results were well above average. They were above average in English, well above average in science and very high (in the top 5 percent) in mathematics. Girls performed better than boys in English. In science girls performed better than boys, but the performance of boys and girls has varied from year to year. Boys' and girls' results were similar in mathematics. The results for 2001 show improvement in all three subjects.

Current standards in Years 9 and 11 show some improvement, although they still remain below average. In relation to their standard of attainment when they come into Year 7, overall students' achievements are satisfactory over their time at the school. Their achievement in Years 7 to 9 is generally satisfactory. In art and design and physical education students achieve well. Students achieve satisfactorily overall in Years 10 and 11, with particular strengths in art and design, drama, GNVQ ICT, media studies and music. In modern foreign languages and ICT across the curriculum students are not achieving as well as they should.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to work hard and succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Although there is some boisterousness around the school students generally behave well, both in and outside lessons. The rate of fixed term exclusions is very high, but exclusion has been used appropriately.
Personal development and relationships	Boys and girls of all ages, backgrounds and abilities get on well with each other and with the adults in the school. They work well together particularly in pairs and groups.
Attendance	Satisfactory, and much improved since the last inspection, but too many students arrive late to school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

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.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. This is an improvement on the last inspection, as the proportion of satisfactory teaching has increased significantly. Teaching is most effective in Years 9, 10 and 11 and weakest in Year 7. Students' learning reflects the overall quality of teaching; it was satisfactory across the school, best in Year 10 and least effective in Year 7. Teaching and learning are good overall in art and design, specialist ICT lessons, music and physical education. In English and mathematics teaching and learning are satisfactory. In science they are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' management of students is good. This has a positive impact on students' learning and progress and enables them to work hard and concentrate during lessons. Teachers also take considerable care to prepare students for GCSE examinations and this has a positive impact on the results they achieve. A weakness in teaching which is evident both in students' written work and in lessons is the lack of consistent development of students literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. In the majority of lessons, teachers provide work that meets students' needs, but in some, expectations are too low for higher-attaining students and work is not adapted well for students with special educational needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English. This results in some students making insufficient progress in their learning. Weaknesses are also evident in the quality of teachers' marking and use of assessment information to guide students' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. The curriculum meets students' personal, academic and social needs. An increasing choice of vocational subjects is being offered to older students. Good partnerships with other educational establishments and the community are being developed. The extra-curricular programme is very good. A continuing weakness is the failure to develop ICT skills across the curriculum and to fully meet National Curriculum requirements.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Most students make satisfactory progress in lessons where there is good support. However, curricular provision is unsatisfactory because there is no coherent literacy programme and inconsistencies in support for students in Years 10 and 11.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Satisfactory for those students who have sufficient knowledge of English to take full part in lessons. Unsatisfactory for those who need support to learn English, in order to cope with academic work, especially that involving literacy.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school is effective in supporting students' personal and social development. Students are made to feel valued and as a result they develop an increasingly mature attitude to learning.
How well the school cares for its students	Good procedures are in place to ensure the well being, care and protection of students and staff. Students' personal development is well supported. However, assessment arrangements and the monitoring of students' academic progress are unsatisfactory and do not effectively support students' learning.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Well. The school is working hard to communicate with parents in an informative way that is sensitive to the diverse cultural backgrounds represented. Parental involvement in many of the formal activities arranged by the school is not strong. However, the attitudes and standards of behaviour that most students bring into the school from their homes are important factors in their achievement.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher leads the school very effectively and manages the school well. She is well supported by the leadership group. Good structures have been put into place by the headteacher which have led to recent rapid improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Governors play an active part in the life of the school. They fulfil most of their responsibilities satisfactorily, although some statutory requirements such as those for ICT and the daily act of collective worship are not fully met. They are appropriately involved in planning developments and in questioning how well the school is working.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. An appropriate set of priorities has been identified in the school development plan. They focus on areas such as raising achievement, working closely with the local community, improving the school environment and providing better value for money. These have yet to be fully monitored and evaluated.
The strategic use of resources	Overall, staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. The principles of best value are applied well. Use of the budget is carefully analysed. Consultation takes place before changes are made to aspects of school organisation or the curriculum.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework. • The working relationship between the school and parents, including more information about how their children are getting on.

Parents commented favourably about the considerable improvement that had taken place since the appointment of the headteacher. However, they expressed concern over a lack of information on matters such as their children's progress, the curriculum and homework. Evidence gathered during the inspection supports parents' positive comments. However, inspectors found that the school is working to build a closer relationship with parents and that the quality of information is satisfactory. Inspection evidence also indicates that the quality and quantity of homework set are satisfactory.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. In this report, the term “standards” refers to students’ attainment relative to some clear benchmark, such as National Curriculum levels at the end of a key stage. “Above average standards”, for example, means that a higher proportion of students of a particular age are succeeding at or beyond the level set than is the case in the majority of schools. “Achievement” means how well students are doing now in relation to their prior attainment, for example what they could do when they started Year 7 or Year 10.
2. The proportion of students who join or leave the school other than at the usual time of admission or transfer is high, at around ten per cent each year. This has an impact on both end of Year 9 national assessments and GCSE results in a number of subjects, as many of these students have not followed the National Curriculum or GCSE examination syllabuses. An analysis of 2001 GCSE results indicates that students who started at the school in Year 7 and continued until Year 11 did considerably better than those students who joined in or after Year 9. Twenty five per cent of students who are admitted to the school after Year 7 are from refugee or asylum seeking families. Of these students, just under twenty per cent have had little or no formal education prior to their arrival at the school and are at an early stage of learning English. These factors have an impact on the standards they attain.
3. GCSE results have fluctuated over the past four years. In 2001, the overall results achieved were well below average at GCSE compared with schools nationally, having been average the previous year. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A* to C passes (31 per cent) was well below the national average and the proportion gaining five or more A* to G grades was below average. An above- average proportion of students gained one or more A* to G grades. The trend of improvement in GCSE grades is below the national rate. Over the last three years the results of boys have been below the national average and those of girls well below the national average. The results of girls are lower because of the smaller number of higher-attaining girls who attend the school. Results for individual subjects in 2001 varied considerably. Comparing students’ results in each subject shows that they did relatively well in drama, music, Bengali and Urdu. They did less well in English language and literature, science, mathematics, design and technology, French and geography. The 2001 results show an improvement in a number of subjects, including science, design and technology, geography, GNVQ ICT, music, physical education (short course) and religious education. The school met or exceeded the targets for GCSE results in 2001 which had been agreed with the local education authority. These were not particularly challenging and the school has set its own more demanding targets.
4. The 2001 results, when compared to students’ prior attainment in the end of Year 9 national tests are above average, and when compared with those of similar schools ((that is, schools with a similar proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals) well above average. Using the comparison with similar schools the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades was well above average. The proportion gaining five or more A* to G grades and one or more A* to G grades was also well above average.
5. Taken as a whole, standards of students in Year 11, as observed in lessons during the inspection and through students’ work, are below average. However, students’ achievement is satisfactory. In GNVQ ICT standards are above average and students achieve very well. In art and design, drama, music and media studies students achieve well. This is because teachers have good subject knowledge

and high expectations, and plan activities which are well structured to meet students' needs. Students' do not achieve well enough in modern foreign languages.

6. Overall, the school's results in the national assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well below average, and similar to those of the previous three years. The 2001 results in mathematics were below average and well below average in English and science. In English, girls' results were higher than boys' but by a narrower margin than nationally. In science girls performed better than boys in 2001, but the performance of boys and girls has varied from year to year. Boys' and girls' results in mathematics were similar. Results for 2001 show improvement in all three subjects and indicate that standards are improving. The trend of improvement is above the national rate. Compared with similar schools, results at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above average. They were above average in English and well above average in science. In mathematics they were very high, in the highest five per cent nationally.

7. Overall, when students enter the school in Year 7 their levels of attainment have been well below average. The most recent national assessment results indicate that students' achievement is satisfactory in English, mathematics and science. Current standards broadly reflect these results. Standards in almost all other subjects, as observed in lessons and through written work, are below average. However, students' achievement is satisfactory. In art and design and physical education, students achieve well. In these subjects, teachers concentrate on developing appropriate skills and improve students' confidence and self-esteem. Students do not achieve well enough in ICT across the curriculum and modern foreign languages.

8. Recent initiatives following a staff training day on literacy are beginning to improve literacy across the curriculum. The promotion of literacy by focusing on key words and specialist vocabulary has been introduced in some subjects. In a few subjects writing guidance, such as 'frames' outlining the sequence to be followed, have recently been introduced and are beginning to help students to write more effectively. Independent reading is now done twice a week in form time, supported by collections of books in each classroom. However, the school is aware that much still needs to be done and standards attained by students are still lower than they should be. Students are given too few opportunities to develop their skills and confidence in independent writing, as too much of the written work they are set involves short tasks such as completing gaps in a text, and so their independent extended writing is weak. During a major building programme, which created significant constraints on classroom space, the library had to be used as a subject teaching area. The lack of a functioning library to support independent reading and writing activities has limited teachers' opportunities to promote literacy skills across the curriculum, although in several subjects including science this is compensated for to some extent by use of the Internet to research up-to-date information. Numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory at present. Some subject teaching makes a contribution to students' skills. For example, as well as work with formulae there is some drawing and interpretation of graphs in science. Similar skills are evident in both history and geography, although the interpretation of graphs, charts and data is at a low level. Good numeracy work in food technology lessons involves analysis and calculation. Numeracy is strong in art. Students talked about the use of scales for enlarging in art, where they also explore tessellation and pattern making.

9. Students with special education needs achieve satisfactorily overall, in relation to their prior attainment in most areas of the curriculum. Examples of good achievement are found in art and music where activities planned are explained and demonstrated effectively so that students know how to improve. Their progress in the lower sets, for example in mathematics, is inconsistent because planning has weaknesses and resources and teaching methods are inadequately adapted to the needs of the students. A similar lack of resources in science and English is evident where students have weak reading skills and so many students struggle to read worksheets. Students with a statement of need

make steady progress on the programme to improve their reading, spelling and number application. Monitoring of progress in reading across the age range is still at an early stage and many students with reading ages below 8 years have made insufficient progress year-on-year. This group of students has now been identified by the school and additional support is planned. From the evidence gathered in lessons, looking at written work across subject areas and talking to students, their achievement is more consistent where support for students is well targeted. Comprehension and spelling skills are weak and there is less opportunity in many subject areas to progress extended writing. Students have good opportunities to increase their language, social and collaborative skills development in art and music lessons where students learn to listen, respect each others' thoughts and opinions in discussions so that they increase confidence and self-esteem.

10. Progress of gifted and talented students is satisfactory overall. There are examples of extended opportunities for higher-attainers in subjects such as art and design and music. However, extension activities are inadequate in geography and history.

11. Most students who speak English as an additional language are sufficiently fluent in English to be able to cope with the work they are expected to do. They are in the majority in most classes, and the standards and achievement reported in subjects and the school as a whole reflect the attainment of these students. However, students who are at an early stage of learning English are less successful because the work is too rarely adapted to meet their needs and they are given too little help in learning the language. This means that some are slow to learn to speak English confidently, to read it with understanding and to write independently in it. This affects their learning across the curriculum. Their achievement is unsatisfactory, despite the informal support and help they get from other students.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

12. In the last inspection report students' attitudes and behaviour were judged to be satisfactory. Attendance at the time of the last inspection was poor. Since then, as a result of the school's good provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, attitudes and behaviour have improved, and are now good. Attendance rates have also improved significantly, and are now satisfactory.

13. In questionnaire responses, 92 per cent of parents indicated that their children like school. Discussions with students confirmed this. Students clearly value the investment that they feel has been made in their education through the improvements in the school's facilities and in the new buildings. As a result, they have growing self-esteem and self-confidence in their ability to succeed. Students particularly enjoy practical activities, and this is reflected in their achievement in subjects such as art and design, music, drama and in GNVQ ICT. In almost all lessons, students had a positive attitude to learning. They were keen to learn, taking an active part in answering teachers' questions and settling quickly and without fuss to individual work or work in small groups. The very small number of lessons where attitudes were less positive invariably involved younger students who had not yet learnt to follow the school's orderly routines. In these lessons, students called out too much and did not always listen to what others were saying.

14. Students learn to respect and appreciate the cultural diversity that exists within the school and, as a result, the school functions as a racially harmonious community. Relationships throughout the school are good. Boys and girls of different abilities and from different backgrounds mix and work well together, both in the playground and in lessons. Students work productively together in pairs or small groups. A particular strength is the unusual extent to which students of different ages mix and get on well with one another. This has been fostered by the organisation of tutor groups which, unusually, do

not group students by age. Students speak very positively about the benefits of this structure which many believe has contributed to reducing the incidence of bullying.

15. Students who speak English as an additional language generally work willingly in lessons, and are keen to learn. Most of those who are not yet fluent in English are very shy and reserved about contributing to whole-class discussion, although they try to answer when a teacher directs a question to them. They often contribute more in pair and small group work, helped by the support of their friends. The students are very helpful towards each other. The school's system of providing new students with a 'buddy', usually someone who speaks the same first language, helps them to integrate and make friends. It also contributes to their learning of English and supports them in coping with the academic work they are expected to do.

16. Special needs students are positive and show good attitudes to study through their responses in lessons where they are well supported. Students who are withdrawn from some lessons for specialist help are keen to learn, take responsibility and organise and plan well for literacy and numeracy lessons because teachers have high expectations of behaviour and involve them in interesting activities. Special needs students are appropriately integrated in mainstream classes. The majority gain confidence in the small group settings to improve their speaking skills, organisation and presentation of work overall. However, many students' independent learning skills are weak, partly because of their difficulties in literacy and numeracy.

17. Behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is good. Although there is sometimes some boisterousness and horseplay as students move around the school site, it is generally good-natured. Students appreciate and respond well to the school's rules which are accepted as being generally sensible and for their mutual benefit. They appreciate that there are few pointless rules. For example, they are allowed to chat as they arrive at school assemblies and await their start, but they readily fall silent and are attentive when assembly begins. At matches held with neighbouring schools during the inspection, students' attitudes and behaviour were exemplary. Although there was only one permanent exclusion last year, there were 101 fixed-term exclusions. This number is very high and is much higher than the figure at the time of the last inspection. There is no evidence, however, that exclusion has been used as an inappropriate sanction. The use of fixed-term exclusions has helped to establish clearly the boundaries of acceptable behaviour.

18. Students' personal development is good overall. Students respond well to the trust they are given, and no evidence was seen of any vandalism or graffiti. Students are able to take on some responsibilities through the school's system of house councils, and students of all ages benefit from the opportunities for social interaction offered by the mixed-age tutor groups. A number of students in Year 10 have volunteered to be trained to become peer mentors, helping other students with their problems. Older students have particularly benefited from their involvement in a local sports leadership programme, where they help coach pupils from local primary schools. As a result, students learn to develop leadership skills. Students find it difficult to work and learn independently. Although many older students learn to use ICT to support their learning, students of all ages make too little use of books and have little experience of using a library for reference purposes. Some younger students are too dependent on their teachers, and do not always come to their lessons well prepared, for example with pens that work and rulers for underlining.

19. Attendance is satisfactory overall. The rate of attendance over the last year has been a little above the national average, although unauthorised absence – much improved since the last inspection – remains higher than average. Punctuality is still an issue, with a significant number of students arriving a few minutes late at the start of the day, although generally students move quickly between lessons and return promptly from break.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. The percentage of lessons which were satisfactory or better has risen to 96 per cent; it was 75 per cent in the last inspection. In just under half of the lessons, teaching was good or better, this figure is similar to that reported at the time of the last inspection. Very good or excellent teaching was observed in just over ten per cent of lessons. This is again an improvement. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen; during the inspection it was below four per cent, while in the last inspection it was over 20 per cent. Teaching was good overall in art and design, specialist ICT lessons, music and physical education. It was satisfactory in all other subjects.

21. The school has made good progress in improving the quality of teaching. It has done this despite considerable staff turnover. Considerable efforts have been made to recruit appropriate staff and this is starting to have beneficial effects on teaching and learning across the school. New staff including supply teachers are given good guidance and support. However, staffing shortages remain, particularly for staff to support students who are at an early stage of learning English and for a special needs co-ordinator. Teaching is better overall in Years 10 and 11, than in Years 7 to 9. This improvement is having a positive impact on examination results in a number of subjects, for example in science, drama, media studies, music, GNVQ ICT, and physical education.

22. The lessons in which teaching was good or better were characterised by teachers planning activities that met the needs of all and ensuring lessons were varied and interesting. For example in music, lessons had a practical focus and teachers provided support and encouragement which enabled students to gain confidence to develop their performance skills. In the best drama lessons, considerable skill was shown in getting all to participate. The teacher skilfully questioned students and was able to elicit reasoned arguments from them to support their interpretations. This challenged and motivated students to think about their work and enabled them to develop their performance skills. Art and design lessons were well planned to provide students with first hand experiences. Effective demonstrations were given together with clear explanations about the work that was expected. Teachers provided good oral and written feedback about students' work which helped them to identify areas which required improvement. This motivated students and enabled them to learn efficiently. In physical education a strength of the teaching is a focus on consistently building up students' skills and understanding. Work is well planned and teachers offer extension work and revision time to help students consolidate their learning. Strong features in a number of religious education lessons included teachers' enthusiasm for the subject. Lessons were divided into short tasks and whole- class discussions encouraged students to explain their thoughts and provided good opportunities for the teacher to reinforce key points. Effective use was also made of a range of resources, for example, to help students develop understanding of aspects of the Sikh religion and make comparisons with Islam and Christianity.

23. A number of strengths were seen in the teaching and learning in many lessons that were satisfactory or better. Teachers' good subject knowledge, understanding of GCSE requirements and careful examination preparation are particular strengths of teaching in many subjects. This enables students to gain the skills and knowledge required for examination success. Interest in the subject matter was communicated by teachers very well, and this motivated students to work hard. A strength of teaching in many subjects is teachers' positive strategies for organising and managing class activities. For example in English, explanations given by teachers are generally clear and this enables students to start work quickly and use time efficiently. Positive relationships are evident in almost all lessons. Students are willing to ask questions to develop their understanding. They settle to work

quickly and work conscientiously on the tasks set. Teachers set homework regularly to consolidate what has been learned and to provide a link with what is to be covered next lesson.

24. Where teaching had weaknesses or was unsatisfactory, lessons often lacked pace and challenge. Teachers had not planned the work to meet the needs of all students and some students did not make enough progress. This was true for a small number of lessons in several subjects. For example, in English, teaching often met the needs of average-attaining students but did not provide sufficient challenge for higher-attainers and too little guidance for lower-attainers. This weakness in many subjects usually occurred because teachers did not mark students' work regularly and collect and use assessment information to identify individual learning needs. A weakness in the teaching of modern foreign languages is the use of too much English in the classroom, which means that students do not have enough opportunities to listen to and practise the language being taught.

25. In some lessons teachers focused on developing students' skills in writing, for example, through the use of outlines or writing frames which provided a structure to follow. This was particularly useful for lower-attaining students and teachers are starting to use this effectively, for example, in history. However, this is not consistent and teachers provide insufficient opportunities for students to develop their skills in independent writing and the lack of library resources has further limited opportunities for teachers to develop students' literacy skills. Teachers satisfactorily developed students' numeracy in a number of subjects through applying skills such as the drawing and interpretation of graphs in science, history and geography. Teachers promoted numeracy work well in art and design and food technology lessons. In some lessons, in subjects such as art and design, geography and music, teachers' planning effectively incorporated the use of ICT skills into lessons. However, overall there is insufficient planning for the use of ICT to support work in most subjects.

26. The quality of teaching and learning for special needs students observed is satisfactory overall. In the lessons observed, it was consistently good in art and design, and music. In sets for lower-attaining students and support groups, particularly in mathematics, teaching expertise has weaknesses because the activities are insufficiently adapted to the needs of the students. Planning is often not sufficiently linked to students' individual education plans, and relies on what the teacher thinks is best for the student. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to students' learning in mainstream classes, through their knowledge, expertise and sensitive handling of students with difficulties. Teachers and assistants know their students well, and their good relationships helps students feel more confident. The director of learning support services provides electronic data and individual education plans on all students with special needs to subject areas. However, some teachers do not make use of this and as a result, planning towards students' targets lacks rigor. Targets are not always known and remembered by students because they are inconsistently recorded in planners.

27. Teachers use some good strategies for involving students who speak English as an additional language in practical and discussion work, such as using visual prompts as well as words to explain key points. Occasionally, teachers allow students to record information in their first language, which helps them to keep up with the content of the subject. As most students speak English well, they answer teachers' questions clearly and relevantly in class discussion, and take part in pair and small group activities confidently. Teachers are generally good at identifying the students' need to learn subject-specialist language, and so explain new and unfamiliar vocabulary. Key words are displayed in some classrooms, to help students remember specialist vocabulary and how to spell it.

28. Some of the students who enter the school at an early stage of learning English are confident and resourceful learners, and within a couple of years are fluent and confident both orally and in reading and writing. They have worked hard to achieve this, and have been benefited from the informal support given by other students. Others are less independent, and need a more systematic and

structured approach to learning English. They do not receive it as teachers pay too little attention to meeting their language needs and for involving them in lessons. For example, additional resources such as translations of key words into students' first language, to help them understand the content of the lesson, are not available. Teachers are insufficiently aware of the need to explain in very simple language, and to ensure that the students understand everyday words and expressions as well as more complex and subject-specific vocabulary. The students are not given enough guidance in how to write successfully in English, including how to sequence and structure their independent writing and the correct grammar to use. As a result, these students often appear to have understood more than they actually have, for example when they have copied down information written by the teacher on the whiteboard, following a class discussion to which they have not contributed.

29. In some lessons, 'partnership' teaching involves the class teacher working with the school's specialist staff responsible for English as an additional language. Although having an additional teacher in the lesson is helpful as it enables students to have extra support, the partnership teaching has not focused systematically enough on particular language-learning issues, including developing subject teachers' skills in meeting individual needs.

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

30. The overall quality and range of learning opportunities offered to students are satisfactory. Many of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report have been dealt with. There is now a clear and well-considered vision for the development of a high-quality curriculum to meet the interests and aspirations of all students. For example, the opportunity for AS level study for gifted and talented older students has been introduced. Co-ordination of the curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 has been improved and the religious education curriculum for older students now meets statutory requirements. The need for a structured and intensive programme for developing the reading and writing skills of those students identified as having low standards of literacy has been implemented only partially. A continuing weakness is the failure to provide sufficient access to ICT for younger students and so statutory requirements are not fully met.

31. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is satisfactory. For students in Years 10 and 11, the choice of externally-accredited courses is steadily improving, for example in physical education. Students now have increased choice in matching examination courses to their preferred educational paths. A vocational GNVQ ICT course has proved both popular and successful. Apart from this course there are no other vocational courses at present. However, there is now a clear strategy to develop similar vocational courses in the curriculum which, when fully implemented, will improve its balance. These developments are appreciated by parents and students alike.

32. The introduction of setting in mathematics and science has had a positive effect in enabling a proportion of students to undertake higher level work which is well matched to their abilities. The sizes of teaching groups in these and other areas of the curriculum have been reduced and this has made the teaching task more manageable for staff and further strengthened relationships between both students and their teachers.

33. Additional support for student learning is good. There are opportunities for students to extend their achievements in a number of subjects including mathematics and ICT. Study outside timetabled lessons is very well supported in science, with consistently high attendance from students whose motivation to learn has clearly been enhanced. Apart from these weekly events, the school also operates strongly attended and successful summer and holiday schools. These are well focused on raising educational

standards through work on study skills and accelerated learning.

34. A well-staffed and resourced breakfast club is effective in raising the self-esteem of students, particularly those in younger age groups and is a provision which is highly regarded by students interviewed during the inspection. It also provides an attractive venue for students to undertake homework and discuss educational progress with staff in an informal setting.

35. Both the quality and range of extra-curricular activities are very good and reflect the highly-inclusive ethos of the school. They reflect significant commitment from all sections of the school community and encompass drama, careers, revision sessions and provision for gifted and talented students as well as gender-specific clubs and many other activities both during and beyond the school day. Music and the creative arts are particularly well represented. Despite limited on-site sports facilities, students have access to excellent opportunities for participation in a wide range of sport and standards are high. The school is a centre of excellence for cricket.

36. Students who are at an early stage of learning English are not withdrawn for language support, even on first arrival in the school. They are taught within mainstream classes, occasionally with extra adult support. This is a successful curricular arrangement for those who are fluent enough to understand what is going on and to read and write successfully. It is unsatisfactory for those whose English is very limited as they do not receive the focused language teaching that they need to learn English quickly. As a result, a few students have remained at an early stage of learning English for a year or more.

37. The quality and range of learning opportunities for special needs students with low reading ages on entry are restricted by the lack of a coherent and varied literacy programme. The range and relevance of support and scope for vocational learning for older students is currently insufficient, although there are plans to increase the range of vocational courses offered. The minority of students receiving extra support for multi-sensory and literacy work in the learning support area are withdrawn from mainstream lessons in rotation so that they have appropriate access to all subjects. The school has improved the number of learning support staff since the last inspection. The lack of a co-ordinator for special needs this academic year has had a detrimental effect on progression. As a result curriculum provision has weaknesses and is unsatisfactory. The gifted and talented provision is good overall. A register of students' visits and planned extension activities is tracked and the programme provides a positive experience for many students.

38. Recent initiatives following a staff training day on literacy are beginning to improve literacy across the curriculum. However, the school is aware that much still needs to be done before strategies for teaching literacy skills become satisfactory. Numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory at present. Some subject teaching makes a contribution to students' skills. The mathematics department has planned a whole staff training session to develop policy and practices. This should enable students, across the curriculum, to build on the numeracy skills they learn in mathematics lessons.

39. A well-planned, timetabled personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) has been introduced. The syllabus covers a wide range of issues. Key areas, such as sex and drugs education and alcohol abuse, are covered in several years to reflect students' needs for more information as they mature. A number of speakers and visitors from outside agencies make a positive contribution to the programme.

40. Careers education is good. There is a well-planned course in Years 9 to 11, within the PSHE programme. Close and effective liaison with the local authority Careers Service provides students with good access to expert individual guidance. The teaching programme is enhanced by several other

activities, both within and outside the school. These include a Year 10 careers day, a Year 11 transition day and visits to trade fairs. All students have the opportunity to take a two-week work experience placement, usually in Year 10. This is organised by the Trident organisation for the great majority of students, but they can arrange their own placement if they prefer.

41. The school has taken many steps to ensure equality of access and opportunity. There is a clear policy statement on inclusion, reflected in all other school policies. Race equality is promoted through PHSE, extra-curricular activities and the planned curriculum. The code of behaviour reinforces expectations of respect and equality. Analysis of examination results includes consideration of race and language background. A research project is to evaluate the school's measures to create 'space' for their girls, traditionally in a minority in the school. However, some weaknesses in provision remain, for example, for those students who are at an early stage of learning English.

42. Links with primary schools are good. The school has provided accelerated learning opportunities for gifted primary age students in mathematics. There are close links with post-16 establishments both for academic and vocational courses. Those links for students with special educational needs are less coherent and are to be reviewed by the school.

43. The impact of the community on students' learning is satisfactory. The introduction of an externally-funded City Learning Centre (CLC) has greatly enhanced the access of all students to high quality ICT equipment and improved learning opportunities. The school has worked hard to broaden the range of interests represented on the governing body, and this has provided a very good platform for strengthening the support of the locality for the school.

44. The school provides well for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and, as a result, students feel valued and develop a positive attitude to learning which contributes to their achievement. Provision has improved since the last inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory.

45. Students' social development is well supported through the tutor group system, where students of different ages mix, and through opportunities to taken on responsibility as representatives at meetings of their house council or, for older students, as peer mentors or participants in a successful sports leadership programme. In lessons, students are encouraged to work together productively. The 'buddy' system, in which students are paired with new entrants to the school who speak English as an additional language, makes a good contribution to students' social development and awareness of their responsibilities towards others. Although many students do not start school with an understanding of orderly learning routines, such as putting up their hands before answering and listening to others' contributions, these are reinforced by teachers so that they become part of students' normal routine as they progress through the school. In turn this contributes to students' moral development as they learn to value the views of others.

46. There is good provision for students' moral development through the application of the school's code of behaviour, which is consistently applied and considered by students to be fair. Students' self-esteem is raised by the improvements in the school environment, and in particular the new buildings and equipment, so that they are increasingly encouraged to take a pride in themselves and in their school. In the main, students are trusted around the school site, although many rooms, including toilets, remain locked when they cannot be supervised. Teachers in many subjects take the opportunity to engage the students in consideration of and debate on moral issues. For example, in geography students discuss the ethical issues involved in the balance of trade between Western and developing countries.

47. Provision for cultural development is good. Through PSHE and religious education, as well as in

other subjects, students are encouraged to learn about and respect the diverse cultures represented in the school. As a result, the school works as a racially harmonious community. Students experience a range of music from different cultures, both in lessons and in assemblies. Art and design offers good opportunities to learn about and appreciate the work of a range of artists, although these mainly represent Western art movements and there are relatively few opportunities to study art from other cultures. In English, teachers make good use of the opportunities to explore literature from other cultures, as part of their GCSE work.

48. Provision for students' spiritual development is satisfactory. In some subjects, good opportunities are taken to promote reflection and a sense of wonder. For example, in a physical education lesson in Year 9, the teacher marked out a length for students to walk in order to demonstrate the jump that had been achieved by an Olympic triple jump medallist. Other examples were seen of students writing or acting with empathy from the perspective of others and assemblies include some opportunities for reflection. However, the school has made no effort to comply with legal requirements for an act of collective worship. This was also identified as a weakness in the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

49. Overall the school cares for its students well. Improvements have been made in areas such as procedures for monitoring and improving attendance, careers provision and the PSHE programme. However, there are weaknesses in the monitoring of students' academic performance.

50. Child protection procedures are good. Policies are up to date and linked well to local guidance. All staff are well informed on the procedures and are aware of the person who has overall responsibility for child protection. Information on child protection is published in the staff handbook and new teachers are fully informed as part of their induction when they join the school.

51. Procedures for promoting positive behaviour are good. There is good provision through the PSHE programme to ensure students are aware of what to do in the event of bullying. The school ensures that incidents reported are dealt with and recorded. The recently-introduced house system is intended to provide opportunities for students to share their concerns, with older students providing a supportive counselling role to younger students. A programme to provide training for Year 10 students to act as mentors is in the process of being established. Relationships between staff and students are good, and based on mutual respect.

52. Welfare arrangements are good. The school uses the support of the education welfare officer well. Trained learning mentors support students who experience particular difficulties. A good example of this was seen when a small group of students needing specialist support were taught in a food technology lesson. They were given opportunities to increase their confidence and self-esteem with 'one-to-one' support from the behaviour support teacher and three learning mentors. Students were given individual targets, which were regularly monitored by the staff to encourage good personal development. This provision enabled students to receive help. There is good liaison with the education welfare officer and the local education authority agencies. The school provides good information and support for vulnerable students.

53. The school has been successful in improving attendance since the last inspection, due to its effective systems for monitoring and promoting attendance. Electronic registers are taken at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. The school's attendance officer attempts to contact a student's home on the first day of any unexplained absence. There is close and effective liaison with the Education Welfare Officer, who has a full-time attachment to the school. Certificates are awarded for

100 per cent attendance and there is a weekly competition in each house for the tutor group with the best attendance, which results in that group winning custody of the house mascot. Punctuality is less consistently promoted. For example, not all house assemblies awarded a *Punctuality Pup* mascot. Although registers are taken in most, though not all, lessons, these are manual records which are not linked with the school's central register and so do not quickly identify any in-school truancy. This is a weakness that was identified in the last inspection. Although the school now has plans to extend electronic registration to lessons, implementation of this improvement has been slow. The school does not compare students' progress and achievement with their attendance records.

54. Health and safety procedures are good. Staff are made aware of their responsibilities as part of a risk assessment process. The appropriate staff and outside contractors are used to monitor and carry out specific safety checks. All safety concerns around the school are reported in the health and safety book and the site manager organises the necessary procedures to ensure all reported matters are dealt with. Risk assessment procedures are in place and assessments are carried out before students are taken on trips and visits.

55. Procedures for dealing with accidents and caring for students when they are ill are good. There is a school nurse who attends to students when they are ill in school. She administers and monitors medication when this is requested for students who need to take medication on a regular basis. Parents are contacted if a student is ill and needs to go home.

56. Staff know the students well. Students respond well to the individual support they receive and this is effective in providing personal support and guidance. Regular house assemblies are an important part of the schools' work in promoting positive attitudes, good behaviour and attendance. The school benefits from a strong team of staff with both pastoral and academic responsibilities who meet regularly to ensure a high standard of pastoral support for individual students.

57. The PSHE programme is good. It is timetabled as a lesson for Years 7 to 11 and taught by a small team of staff who have had specialist training. PSHE issues are also covered in tutor time and assemblies. The provision for careers education and work experience is good overall and students benefit from two-weeks of work experience in Year 10.

58. The good level of care and support contributes well to maintaining high standards of behaviour. The school promotes a clear code of conduct and a good system of rewards to encourage positive behaviour. Management of behaviour in the classroom is generally good. Inappropriate behaviour is dealt with quickly and followed up effectively by staff. The school monitors students' behaviour and uses exclusion as an ultimate sanction, to reinforce the standards of behaviour and effort expected. There is good emphasis on ensuring that all students are included in the educational opportunities and activities provided in the school.

59. The quality of care and welfare for special needs students is generally satisfactory across the key stages. Staffing and accommodation disruption has affected the quality of monitoring and care afforded to the students. Students are identified in Year 6 in the primary schools and induction and reassessment in Year 7 is appropriate. Weaknesses occur in the regular monitoring of progress and movement up and down the Stages of the special needs register. The new Code of Practice is tentatively in place and assessments and teacher comments are collated and fed back to students and parents. Individual education plans have been reviewed and student profiles detail what students can do. However attainment levels are not always used to record achievement. Annual reviews meet requirements and attendance of parents at review meetings is appropriate. Parents, students and outside specialists are usually involved at all stages of assessment. However, there are some inconsistencies in making the targets known to students. The quality of support from external agencies

is appropriate for students with statements and on Stage 3 of the special needs register (Action +). Numbers on the lower stages of the register are high. Support and training for teachers so that they take responsibility for identification and assessment under the new Code of Practice, (Action), has yet to be fully implemented.

60. In contrast to the good procedures for supporting students' personal development, there are major weaknesses in the school's assessment and monitoring of students' academic performance. Assessment arrangements in the majority of subjects, particularly at Years 7 to 9, are unsatisfactory. However, the good procedures in art and design involve students in self-assessment and in science the test results are recorded in a database. Assessment using National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 is limited and some results reported in 2001 were not accurate. The assessment of ICT across the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is poor, in contrast with the arrangements for the GNVQ ICT course that are very good. There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment information to guide planning and to support students learning.

61. The school has sound central records of students' performances in Years 7, 9 and 11. These are analysed to identify the achievements of some groups of students, for example according to gender and ethnicity. The analysis appropriately extends to checking the achievements of bilingual students and those who join the school in different year groups. However, such information is little used in subject areas to help change approaches in order to raise achievement. It has been used to identify those students who have 'borderline' predicted results and they are given extra attention. Record-keeping and analysing performance data are weak within the majority of subjects. For example, the English and mathematics departments do not keep central records that fully track the progress of students in these subjects.

62. The teachers provide individual students with sound support in lessons, and this tends to be better in relation to GCSE examination requirements. The use of target setting is under-developed. Students receive one report at the end of each year, but due to circumstances beyond the control of the school they have not received the interim report as intended. The annual targets in subject reports are of variable quality and value.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. Parents are generally satisfied with the performance of the school. The great majority believes that the school expects students to work hard and achieve their best, and are happy that their children enjoy school and are doing well. The majority think that the school is well led and managed and are highly appreciative of the impact that the headteacher has had on improving the school since her arrival. Parents expressed concern over a lack of information on matters such as their children's progress, the curriculum, and the quality and quantity of homework. Evidence gathered during the inspection supports parents' positive comments, for example on the leadership of the school. Inspectors found that the school is striving to build a closer working relationship with parents, and the quality of information is satisfactory. Entries in students' diaries and evidence gathered in lessons and from written work indicate that the quality and quantity of homework set is satisfactory.

64. Since the arrival of the present headteacher, the school has worked successfully to improve links with parents. A regular newsletter has been introduced, the high quality of which is valued by parents. The music department also produces a good, termly, newsletter. Parents are very appreciative of the headteacher's surgeries that are now provided weekly, and to which they can come without an appointment. The school is sensitively seeking the best way to communicate with parents in the most appropriate language. It believes that, with the large number of languages spoken by students and with

the capability of many parents to understand English, even though it may not be their first language, automatically sending out notices in different languages would not be the most effective approach. Instead, it has successfully followed a policy of appointing staff capable of communicating in a wide range of languages, who contact parents individually, either verbally or in writing, when appropriate.

65. The quality of information given to parents is satisfactory. The prospectus is attractive and easy to read. Homework planners are used satisfactorily, although they would be more effective if there was better monitoring by teachers of the entering and completion of homework. It would be easier for teachers and parents to check this if a homework timetable was included. Although there is a page for this, it is completed by only a few students. Annual reports provide a good range of information about the activities taking place in each subject and about each student's individual progress. Although there is a space in reports for individual targets, there is considerable inconsistency in how these are used by the different subject departments. In a few cases, targets are highly specific and relevant, but in many, they are too imprecise to be helpful. There is also no space for parents to make a written comment in response to the report. Many parents regret that the normal provision of interim reports has been disrupted this year, due to action by some professional teaching associations.

66. The school does not benefit from strong, organised, support from parent groups. A parents' association, acknowledged in the last report as very active, is no longer in existence. The school was disappointed by the low turnout for the last governors' annual meeting for parents. However, governors are attempting to improve this situation by introducing a range of parents' networks with specific year group and subject focuses. So far this year, there have been a music workshop, to publicise new technological resources, an asthma awareness workshop and a briefing for parents on the national Key Stage 3 strategy. A school survey found that a relatively high number of parents provide their children with access to computer facilities at home. The school intends to ensure that the potential impact of this upon learning is realised. The first step is to join Parents' Gateway, a local authority pilot project which will give parents Internet access to information, via a secure password, about their child's attendance and academic progress. Parents make a good contribution to the study of music. Attendance at concerts is good and there is active parental involvement in supporting students in improving their skills as musicians. For example, some parents contribute as visiting musicians and a DJ Club, run by a parent, is a popular extra-curricular activity. Parents make an important contribution to the achievement of students by nurturing at home the positive attitudes towards behaviour and learning that the great majority of students bring into the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

67. The headteacher leads the school very well. She has a very clear vision for the school's development and has put in place a range of good structures, which are leading to rapid improvement across the school. Staff, students, their parents, governors and the local community support her in this. A newly formed senior management team supports her effectively and contributes well to the management of change. Senior managers have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and maintain a strong and visible presence around the school, which helps maintain the orderly environment. Although the school has improved considerably since the arrival of the new headteacher, much remains to be done. Overall, improvement since the last inspection, together with management of these new structures and procedures, is satisfactory.

68. Under this enthusiastic leadership, staff work well to raise the achievement of their students. Challenging targets have been set for future improvement. Most heads of departments carry out their duties effectively. They contribute well to the improving ethos of the school through the newly formed learning area and house system. They have already established close-knit teams that work effectively

to promote the best interests of their students. The school is well placed to effect further improvement, particularly in raising standards.

69. The governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They play an active part in the development and improvement of the school and have been effectively supported by training from the local education authority. The chairman of governors meets regularly with the headteacher and is very well informed about future developments. Governors fulfil most of their responsibilities satisfactorily although some statutory requirements, such as those for cross-curricular ICT in all subjects and the daily act of collective worship, are not entirely met. Governors are fully involved in the planning and development of the school and in questioning how well it is working. Those governors interviewed displayed a thorough knowledge of the work of the school and were keen to ensure that it provides the very best for its students. This is illustrated by the way in which they have taken an active interest in recent appointments, including the headteacher and the finance manager.

70. The school evaluates its performance adequately. Weekly meetings of the senior management team and fortnightly meetings of the leadership group provide an effective structure for ensuring clear and good communications and for monitoring the work of the school. Raising achievement is the key focus of all meetings, and team members are well aware of the areas for development in teaching and learning. These are being dealt with systematically but there are still some weak points, particularly in areas such as assessment and the management of whole school initiatives such as special educational needs and supporting students who are at an early stage of learning English.

71. Each curriculum team, led by a learning director, has produced an area development plan. This has led to the identification of a good set of priorities, summarised in the school development plan. They include raising achievement, establishing the school as an integral part of the local community, improving efficiency and providing better value for money and improving the environment. These priorities have only just been set in place. Although a useful midway evaluation has already been carried out, they have yet to be fully monitored and evaluated.

72. Standards are beginning to improve, showing that the school is starting to make more effective use of staff, accommodation and resources. The most recent audit, carried out in March 2000, identified a number of key issues which have been quickly dealt with. Under the guidance of the new school business manager clear records of spending are maintained and a careful check on the budget is kept. The quality of financial planning has improved and is now good. Priorities, such as necessary improvements to accommodation are carefully considered and well linked to longer-term financial planning. For example, when the school found that it did not have sufficient funds to finance much needed improvements to accommodation, an interest free loan was arranged with the local authority. This loan is currently being repaid. The principles of best value are applied well, as shown in the consultation process which preceded the introduction of the five new learning areas, and there is careful analysis of how the budget is used. The school has started to monitor its performance, to measure it against others and to set targets.

73. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology, including ICT, for example to produce data for tracking students' progress. Few staff use this data effectively, however. Office staff use technology well to support the school, producing interesting and informative newsletters and staff notices.

74. The arrangements for students who are at an early stage of learning to speak English are unsatisfactory, as is the improvement in this area of the school's work since the last inspection. For example, there are weaknesses in assessing the students' competence in English and keeping up-to-date records which are used to track the students' progress in learning the language. The school has

two teachers who specialise in work with students who speak English as an additional language. Their time is not used effectively enough, with too little focus on leading and managing the arrangements for these students.

75. Recent organisation and development of the special needs department is beginning to make effective progress under a new director of learning support. Strengths are in the areas of planning, updating individual education plans and providing clear guidance for staff. However, implementation of the new Code of Practice and reviewing provision for special needs students overall are weaknesses. Staffing expertise and responsibilities are satisfactory. An administrative assistant gives good support. The management of students' overall welfare and the time and space to deal with their concerns at all times of the day is inconsistent because the learning support area lacks a central location. Office accommodation is shared and lacks a confidential area to interview parents and students, though planning is in place for a larger teaching resource area. Resources for special needs students are inadequate and the use of ICT has not been sufficiently developed. Additional funding for learning support is appropriately used to support special needs students. However, overall, the quality of management of the special needs department and its improvement since the last inspection are unsatisfactory.

76. The school has good procedures for the induction of newly-qualified staff, new staff and staff in new posts. It regards this area of its work as an important feature of staff development and as an opportunity to help with recruitment. It also works well to support its student teachers. Two recently appointed teachers were student teachers at the school. They are happy with the good support they are receiving. A very useful checklist is provided for all new staff to help them to understand the aims and ethos of the school so that they can quickly feel they are part of a team. Supply teachers are provided with guidelines so that they know what the school expects from them.

77. Overall, the school has a sufficient number of teachers, including supply teachers, to meet the needs of the students. The match of qualifications and experience is satisfactory. The school's management has focused on raising the amount of good teaching that students receive, and the management structure has been altered in pursuit of this aim. The leadership group is now balanced in terms of gender and reflects the ethnic mix of the school more closely. Although there are staffing vacancies in the learning support department, a director of learning support services has been appointed and is part of the leadership group. Due to restructuring within the local education authority, learning support teachers are now members of the school staff. The use of these, together with the learning support assistants, is integrated into the whole school and is now a strength of the learning support area. However, some staffing shortages remain, particularly for staff to support students who are at an early stage of learning English. Suitably qualified technical support is still inadequate in both science and design and technology.

78. A good programme for performance management is now in place. Teachers are observed teaching once a term and are given feedback on their performance. Most staff who applied were successful in passing the performance threshold. Identified training needs are linked into the in-service training programme. There is an imaginative staff development programme that links training to the school development plan. This enables the school to raise awareness of issues and provide the training framework.

79. Recent improvements to accommodation have been made and it is satisfactory overall, although with some weaknesses. The installation of an Astroturf surface has improved facilities for physical education, however, accommodation for the subject continues to be unsatisfactory. Students still have to travel to Wanstead Flats for many activities, and the school has no sandpit for athletics. While there is a very good food technology room, the design and technology department accommodation has

weaknesses. The resistant materials room is drab and basic, with no suitable clean area for design work. A small room provides very poor accommodation for the school's library. Many staircases are narrow and there is no system of separating flows, so that they become congested at peak times. Although having to accept the constraints of its small site, the school has actively sought to improve the quality of its accommodation and this has resulted in particular strengths in areas that are used on a whole-school basis. A refurbishment of the entrance and circulating area presents a highly positive aspect to visitors, clearly expressing an impression of a school that is moving forward and which values all who go there to learn. Lifts provide good access to most parts of the school for those with disabilities. The CLC, which the school hosts for the local education authority, is inspirationally located at the heart of the school. Subjects located in the very recently-opened Hornbeam Centre benefit from good quality accommodation. This has contributed to a significant improvement for drama, geography and religious education, subjects for which accommodation was a weakness at the time of the last inspection. An absence of litter and graffiti is testament to a high level of both cleaning and respect for the school by all who use it.

80. The quality of resources is satisfactory. Resources for science and religious education, which were inadequate at the time of the last inspection, are now satisfactory. Resources for ICT were also unsatisfactory last time. A combination of benefiting from an arrangement with the local authority to host a CLC, in return for use of its equipment and the school's own programme of updating its own computers, has enabled it to improve to the extent where these are now good. They are not yet having a strong impact in all subjects, but have significantly improved access to students for individual study and research. Resources are good in practical subjects. Those for art and design are enhanced by a specialist library within the department. In music, students' performances benefit from access to a wide variety of multi-cultural instruments and in drama from a good provision of audio-visual equipment. Design and technology is inadequately resourced, lacking for example sufficient control equipment. Weak provision of special educational needs resources across the curriculum makes it difficult for the different subjects to provide appropriate work. The school library is poor. Until very recently it was used as a classroom due to building work which was taking place. It has too few books, provides a poor resource to most subjects and too little support for independent study. This contributes to students' weaknesses in literacy and in independent learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

81. Building on the good improvement made over the last eighteen months, and to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) improve teachers' expertise in helping students of all levels of attainment to read and write well, by:
 - planning a coherent literacy strategy for students in Years 7 to 9, and implementing it consistently across the school;
 - developing staff expertise in planning, resourcing and monitoring work for students with special educational needs;
 - broadening students' opportunities for reading and writing independently, and providing more guidance on how to do this successfully;
 - improving library resources so that students can be encouraged to do independent research and read more widely.

(8, 11, 15-6, 25-6, 30, 38, 80, 89, 105, 109, 123, 138-9, 174, 180)

- (2) improve standards in ICT across the curriculum and modern foreign languages, by:
 - improving the leadership, co-ordination and management of ICT;
 - ensuring that subject teachers use computers to support students' learning, as required by the National Curriculum for each subject;
 - improving achievement in all modern foreign languages and ensuring that teachers have high enough expectations of students;
 - ensuring all modern foreign language teachers have a consistent approach to developing students' speaking and writing skills and fully implement new department policies.

(5, 7, 24, 26, 90, 102, 109, 120, 141, 144, 147-9, 150-158, 174, 180)

- (3) improving the quality of teachers' marking and use of assessment information to support students' learning, by:
- ensuring that all teachers mark students' work regularly and record the grades systematically;
 - ensuring that teachers' marking gives students clear guidance on how they might improve their work in future;
 - improving the accuracy of assessments in the majority of subjects, particularly in Years 7 to 9;
 - ensuring that teachers analyse and use the assessment information that is available centrally, to track students' progress and set targets that will help them raise standards.

(24, 73, 88, 90, 99, 105, 108, 123, 133-4, 150, 155, 165, 179, 182)

- (4) improving the management of the provision for students with special educational needs

and those who are learning English as an additional language, by:

- identifying which students need extra help and assessing their needs more accurately;
- systematically monitoring how well students do, particularly those with a statement of special need or those who are at an early stage of learning English;
- increasing the involvement of parents and carers in drawing up individual education plans;
- providing guidance to teachers on how to support students who are at an early stage of learning English with their academic work, particularly literacy.

(9, 11, 21, 26, 28-9, 36-7, 40, 59, 74-5, 77, 80, 106, 146, 180)

(The numbers in italics show the main paragraphs in which these issues are discussed in the report)

82. The report also identifies some other issues which governors may wish to include in the action plan to be developed following this inspection. They include:

- extending the strategies for improving students' skills in numeracy across the curriculum (as planned) (8, 38, 139, 161, 174);
- increasing opportunities for students to engage in practical work, problem solving activities and time for reflection in subjects such as science, mathematics and history (99, 105, 138);
- ensuring teachers plan work to fully meet the needs of higher-attaining students (24, 88, 123, 131, 138);
- improving accommodation for physical education (79, 174-5);
- improving the level of technical support for science and design and technology (77, 110, 124);
- ensuring that action is taken to comply with legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship (48);
- improve students punctuality at the start of the school day (19);
- improve the time allocation and quality of resources for design and technology (80, 124).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

144

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

43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	15	52	70	5	1	0
Percentage	0.7	10.4	36.1	48.6	3.5	0.7	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll

Y7 – Y11

Number of students on the school's roll	1039
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Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	462
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Special educational needs

Y7 – Y11

Number of students with statements of special educational needs	35
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Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	248
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English as an additional language

No of students

Number of students with English as an additional language	884
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Student mobility in the last school year

No of students

Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	91
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Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	78
--	----

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

Unauthorised absence

%

School data	5.6
National comparative data	8.1

School data	3.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	122	83	205

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	48	67	51
	Girls	54	49	36
	Total	102	116	87
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	50 (41)	57 (39)	43 (34)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	14 (6)	31 (20)	15 (8)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	51	80	68
	Girls	47	61	45
	Total	98	141	113
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	48 (36)	68 (43)	54 (27)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	16 (9)	33 (20)	18 (7)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	107	74	181

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	34	94	105
	Girls	23	62	73
	Total	57	156	178
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	31 (37)	86 (96)	98 (100)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	31.1 (36.1)
	National	39 (38.4)

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	59
Black – African heritage	105
Black – other	20
Indian	176
Pakistani	172
Bangladeshi	235
Chinese	4
White	188
Any other minority ethnic group	85

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	10	0
Black – African heritage	19	0
Black – other	7	0
Indian	7	0
Pakistani	4	0
Bangladeshi	20	0
Chinese	0	0
White	20	1
Other minority ethnic groups	14	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 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	70
Number of students per qualified teacher	15

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	588

Deployment of teachers: Y7– Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	66.1
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	23
Key Stage 4	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	3,430,928
Total expenditure	3,408,410
Expenditure per student	3,265
Balance brought forward from previous year	-65,418
Balance carried forward to next year	-42,900

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	23
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	26

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	5
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1039
Number of questionnaires returned	169

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	46	2	1	3
My child is making good progress in school.	42	47	5	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	34	11	6	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	34	18	7	6
The teaching is good.	37	41	10	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	33	20	8	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	38	5	4	7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	26	5	1	4
The school works closely with parents.	40	30	18	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	42	32	12	3	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	44	34	12	4	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	33	34	9	7	15

*note numbers may not add to 100 per cent due to rounding

Other issues raised by parents

At the meeting held for parents they commented favourably about the considerable improvement that had taken place since the appointment of the headteacher. However, they expressed concern over a lack of information on matters such as their children's progress and the curriculum, and the quality and quantity of homework.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Results are above those of similar schools, and the trend is of an improvement.
- Some teaching is challenging, with work that is adapted to the range of needs within the class, enabling students to learn well.
- The team of teachers is working well together to improve the department's effectiveness and the range of the curriculum.
- Students do well in drama and media studies, both of which are taught separately from English.

Areas for improvement

- Results and the standard students attain are still well below the national average.
- Weaknesses in students' skills in reading and writing, and in their vocabulary, hold back their learning.
- Teachers do not assess how well students are doing regularly enough, and keep systematic records that can be used to set targets and to check students' learning over time.
- The requirements for ICT within English are not met.

83. Results in the national assessments at the end of Year 9 were well below average in 2001. They have risen from a low point in 1999, when the school's English results were very low, that is in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. In 2001, the proportion who gained the expected level 5 was about average compared to schools nationally, but few students gained levels 6 or 7 and almost half did not reach level 5. The trend over several years has been for girls' results to be higher than boys', though the gap between them is narrower than nationally. The results in English were broadly similar to those in science, but weaker than those in mathematics. Compared to similar schools, the English results were above average. Results are affected by students who join the school after the normal admission date, many of whom have not followed the full National Curriculum.

84. Results at GCSE were considerably lower than national results in 2001, in both English and English literature. Overall, boys did less well in both English examinations than in their other subjects, whereas girls' results were broadly similar. The trend in results is of an improvement since the last inspection. The 2001 English results were above the average for schools with a similar proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals. In comparison with their results in the tests when they were in Year 9 (in 1999), the English results were well above average. The department places considerable emphasis in Years 10 and 11 on preparing students for their GCSE examinations, and so most are enabled to take both English and English literature.

85. The evidence of students' written work and the lesson observed showed that standards in English are well below average at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11, and when students enter the school in Year 7. Overall, their achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. Students in some classes achieve well because of challenging teaching. In general, students of all ages are most confident orally when they are talking about matters within their own experience or stating their opinions. They

struggle to articulate complex ideas and to explore abstract concepts. They tend to speak colloquially, and have difficulty with using formal language. This affects the quality of their writing, which tends to reflect the way they speak. Many students lack a broad vocabulary, which holds back their understanding of what they read and limits their ability to express themselves clearly and articulately orally and in writing. Although teachers usually make good efforts to explain unfamiliar language, particularly specialist vocabulary, this difficulty affects the standard attained by both students who speak English as an additional language and those who are native-speakers of English.

86. In reading, high-attaining students generally cope well with the literature texts they have to read in the English curriculum. They notice implications in the texts, such as inferring characters' motives in a novel or play. Average and low-attaining students of all ages often have difficulty with vocabulary, and sometimes with the general knowledge assumed by these texts, and so their response is usually limited to following the broad meaning of the passage. Nevertheless, most Year 9 students know the key elements of the plot in the Shakespeare play they have studied, and the relationships between the main characters. In some lessons, students made good gains in their understanding at a deeper level than this because of well-sequenced work that enabled them to build up their learning in small steps, and the teacher's high expectations of their attainment.

87. In writing, students are generally most confident in narrative. For example, students in Year 10 spent much time in the autumn term on a unit of work on autobiography. Many wrote interestingly and reflectively on their experiences, at some length. They had been helped to do this by prompts such as a series of topic-headings to write about. Most higher-attaining students learn to write at length for the GCSE coursework essays they are set. They have responded well to the extensive guidance classes are given on how to organise this coursework, such as information sheets with notes on features of poems they have studied, and prompts to sequence the information they present. Average and lower-attaining students of all ages generally write very briefly. The sample of written work scrutinised during the inspection showed that some lower-attaining students do little more than write the title and a line or two. Although the written work of students who are still learning English is often carefully done, it tends to be copied rather than being in the students' own words and so does not reflect their actual level of understanding. Spelling, punctuation and handwriting are weaknesses for many students. Although a minority take care to write neatly and accurately, the general standard of presentation is lower than it should be.

88. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in both key stages. Strengths include good relationships between teachers and students, and teachers' firm, positive strategies for managing class activities. Explanations given to students are generally clear and helpful, and so most get on promptly and willingly with the work they are set especially if it involves small-group discussion and practical activities. However, in most classes students are slower to settle to written work as they lack confidence. In all classes, teachers paid good attention to explaining vocabulary. Some provided very good role models in their own use of language and challenged students to speak similarly clearly and precisely, explaining that this would also help them to write formal English better. In about a third of the lessons observed, the teaching was good, and occasionally it was very good. In these lessons, the lesson time was used very well. Stimulating activities extended students' understanding as well as their knowledge. In literature study, the work explored concepts and issues as well as the events of the plot and key features of character. For example, Year 9 students studying 'Twelfth Night' were enabled to appreciate the comedy of a scene by an activity in which the students identified what Malvolio was thinking as he spoke to Olivia, and by watching and discussing a video clip of the scene. The work offered challenges to all in the class because it had been adapted to meet the wide range of needs of the students, and the class worked with enthusiasm and interest. More often, the teaching met the needs of the average-attaining students but gave insufficient challenge to the higher-attainers and too little guidance and support to the lower-attainers and those who are still at an early stage of learning

English. This was usually because assessment information was not gathered and used to identify individual learning needs. Other weaknesses in some teaching include not requiring enough written work to be done, a lack of explicit teaching of the skills involved in reading and writing successfully, and superficial marking which gives students little guidance on how to improve in future.

89. In other subjects, teachers have begun to promote literacy by focused teaching of key words and specialist vocabulary. In a few subjects, writing guidance such as 'frames' outlining the sequence to be followed, have recently been introduced and are beginning to help students to write more effectively. Independent reading is now done twice a week in form tutor time, supported by collections of books in each classroom. These recent initiatives followed a staff training day on literacy, and are beginning to improve the provision for literacy across the curriculum. The school is aware that these initiatives have been implemented with varying degrees of enthusiasm by subject departments, and that much remains to be done. Overall, the provision for literacy and the standards students attain are still unsatisfactory. For example, students are given too few opportunities to develop their skills and confidence in independent writing, as too much of the written work they are set involves short tasks such as completing gaps in a text or writing a sentence or two in response to a series of prompts. This ensures that they have recorded key information, but not that they understand it and can explain in their own words. Students who speak English as an additional language receive too little guidance in how to write successfully in English, following the conventions of formal style and grammar. Students are also given too little guidance in how to read for meaning, including in research tasks. The lack of library resources to support independent reading and writing activities limits teachers' opportunities to promote literacy skills across the curriculum, although in several subjects including science this is compensated for to some extent by use of the Internet to research up-to-date information.

90. The English department's improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory overall, despite its success in raising results in the Year 9 assessments and at GCSE since 1996. However, recent changes in staffing have enabled the department to create a committed team of teachers who are now working well to improve standards and the quality of education provided. Recent developments include the production of a well-written handbook of policies, including a marking policy, and carefully-thought-through curriculum planning for Year 7. Policies such as that for marking have not yet been implemented consistently, and so there is too wide a variation in the quantity and quality of work carried out by different classes. Curriculum planning for the older year groups remains a weakness, and the requirement for ICT within English for all students is not met. The department has not kept systematic records of how well students have done. Too little use is made of assessment information to track students' learning over time and to ensure that teaching is adapted to meet the wide range of needs in each class. The lack of an English office has contributed to the department's slow development of the systems and records that are needed to run efficiently, including analysis of how well students of different ethnic and language backgrounds do. However, the leadership and management of the department are now satisfactory, and the weaknesses are being tackled. For example, staff are enthusiastically tackling projects such as introducing new approaches to using ICT within English.

Media studies

91. Media studies is a popular GCSE option, taken by nearly a quarter of the students in Years 10 and 11. Results have been considerably better than for English. The proportion of students gaining grade C or higher was close to that nationally in 2001, although overall the school's results were below average. Boys and girls did equally well. Three lessons were observed during the inspection, and some students' written work was examined. This evidence indicated that standards are broadly average and that students' achievement is good in relation to their attainment on entry to the course. Year 10 students showed a secure understanding of stereotyping, and made good quality notes on the

representation of women in science fiction films. The evidence indicates that media studies is taught well. For example, a teacher's challenging questions, such as on the links between conventions and genres, enabled another class of Year 10 students to identify features of each accurately. Students have made good use of ICT in their coursework, which is well presented and thoughtful.

Drama

92. Drama is also a popular subject at GCSE. It is taught from Year 7 onwards. Overall, GCSE results are lower than the national average, although students tend to do better in drama than in their other subjects. The evidence of the written work seen and the five lessons observed indicated that standards are broadly average and students' achievement is good. Year 8 students showed a sound knowledge of the story of Antigone, though few appreciated the relationship between her and Ismene and so they initially struggled to bring life to the script. The teacher was very successful in drawing out reasoned arguments from students in support of their interpretations, which helped them to make good gains in their knowledge of how to perform successfully. Year 10 students worked successfully in pairs to explore how status influences characters' relationships. The teacher was particularly effective in encouraging all to participate, and gave good individual feedback that helped students to refine their performance. The class lived up to the teacher's expectations of their behaviour and effort, and so much was accomplished during the lesson. Students are introduced to written work from Year 7 onwards, which consolidates their practical learning and gives them a record of what they have covered. Year 10 students are responding well to the introduction of a drama notebook, in which they record their on-going work in a variety of ways. The quality of this written work is higher than that of the formal essays produced by students in Year 11, though these are competently written.

93. The drama department has links with the English department, but operates independently of it. Good links with other performing arts, including music, contribute to drama performances. The subject is led and managed well. Documentation is thorough, including of schemes of work, and so all who teach drama have a clear framework for their lessons. The improvement in drama provision since the last inspection is good, particularly in the new facilities and resources. The new drama studio is excellent – previously, the lack of suitable teaching space limited the range of work that could be tackled and so had a detrimental effect on the standards attained and GCSE results. The indications are that standards will rise, in response to good teaching and management of the department, and the improved facilities.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good end of Year 9 national assessment and GCSE results in relation to students' prior attainment.
- Students' positive attitudes and good relationships in lessons.
- Effective teaching of mathematical facts and routine methods.
- The team of specialist mathematics teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Students' problem-solving abilities in mathematics.

- Active learning through the use of discussion and appropriate resources.
- Assessment arrangements, to support students and guide planning.
- The use of ICT to enhance the learning of mathematics.

94. Students join the school with overall standards that are well below average. Although the 2001 results at the end of Year 9 were below average compared with all schools nationally, they were very high compared with the average for similar schools. Results have risen over the last three years, and have been slightly better than in English and science. Boys' and girls' results were similar. Students in Years 7 to 9 are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment, even though the overall standards are still below average at the end of Year 9.

95. GCSE results in 2001 were below average compared with all schools nationally. However, the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C was well above that in similar schools. GCSE results have fluctuated since the last inspection, without any significant trend. There has been no real pattern in the performance of boys compared with that of girls. In 2001, boys outperformed girls at GCSE, but this corresponded to the differences in their prior attainment. The department does not have any analysis to show any differences in the performance between students of different ethnicity, nor of those speaking English as an additional language. Inspection evidence suggests that students overall in Years 10 and 11 are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. A considerable number of students join the school after the normal admission date, many of whom have not followed the full National Curriculum or GCSE syllabus and this does have an impact on the results achieved.

96. The work seen during the inspection reflected the examination results. As at the last inspection, standards in higher-attaining sets are around and above the national expectation. In middle and lower sets standards are below the national expectation. Some higher-attaining students have accurate skills in number and algebra, whereas lower-attaining students have most confidence in calculations with whole numbers. Students generally are strongest in applying routine methods they have been taught and less successful in problem solving and fully understanding mathematical ideas. For example, higher-attaining Year 11 students skilfully calculate the sine and cosine of a range of angles, but are less experienced in discussing the general ideas of geometry. Middle-attaining students lack confidence in quickly drawing straight-line graphs from just the gradient and intercept. The lowest-attaining Year 11 students have rudimentary skills in calculations with whole numbers up to one hundred. The highest-attaining Year 7 students included some gifted mathematicians, who demonstrated their ability to generalise formulae in one very good lesson observed. As a result of the national strategies, the students in Year 7 have a wider range of skills in mental calculations than students in Year 11. These skills need to be maintained through the school.

97. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory at both key stages. The majority of teaching seen was judged either satisfactory or good. The scrutiny of work together with lesson observations suggested that students' learning is satisfactory overall.

98. Some common good features to the teaching were seen. Good relationships and effective classroom management contributed to the positive response of students. The teachers have good subject knowledge and this enables them to give clear explanations, and to question students effectively. They share the lesson objectives and key words with students, although insufficient focus on the key words during the lessons limits the progress made by students with language difficulties. Most lessons seen had a good structure; some used effective mental starters and provided enough time for a valuable plenary. Good pace was often a feature, with some teaching that was lively and enthusiastic and set time targets for the students to complete tasks. Some good teaching had a strong focus on examination requirements, a further contributor to the good results.

99. The main weakness in the teaching seen was the narrow range of methods and resources used. Teaching involved predominantly exposition and practice, with too little student discussion and practical activity to help students understand ideas. Students are not routinely taught to check an answer makes sense, or for example in algebra to substitute a solution back into the original equation. Although students are placed in ability sets, the approaches and resources for lower-attaining students do not cater well enough for those with special educational needs or with English as an additional language. On occasions, students with very little English were expected to do exactly the same work as the others in the lesson, and this was unsatisfactory. Assessment is a weakness recognised in the mathematics department. Marking and record keeping are inconsistent, and might be a factor in the generally weak presentation of work. Currently there are no central records to track the progress of students, and performance data in mathematics is not analysed to guide planning.

100. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. They listen attentively and concentrate well. They respond well when given exercises to complete. The students' good effort and hard work make significant contribution to their good results. In one good lesson focused on being systematic in problem solving, students worked productively in pairs and gained an understanding through discussion.

101. Leadership and management are both now satisfactory. At the time of the inspection, the head of mathematics has been in post for one term. He is very clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the department and the development of a team approach to improvement is underway. The head of department has evaluated the provision for Years 7 to 9 having observed lessons. Key developments that are needed include the production of a working handbook of procedures to ensure common approaches to teaching and assessment and record keeping, together with the effective use of practical resources and textbooks.

102. The mathematics curriculum is being well developed in line with the Key Stage 3 national strategy and a purposeful change of syllabus has been made in Years 10 and 11. Timetable weaknesses exist in the blocking in Years 9 to 11 and in split class teaching arrangements. A strength is the provision of a mathematics club and extra classes after school to help students raise their achievement. Literacy within mathematics should give more attention to the use of key words and language needs of students. The use of ICT to support and enhance the learning of mathematics is a major weakness, although a key feature in the development plan. Whilst there is some use of computers, this is not yet well enough planned or organised, for example to make effective use of graph plotting software or spreadsheets. Numeracy across other subjects is generally satisfactory, and a whole-staff training session is planned to develop policy and practices.

103. Overall, improvement in mathematics since the last inspection is satisfactory. Interestingly some weaknesses made in the last report remain such as students in Years 10 and 11 finding it difficult to apply knowledge to solve problems. However, results overall have improved and all the areas for improvement have been recognised by the department. Appropriate action is being taken and mathematics is now well placed to improve further the provision and students' achievement.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Improving attainment, with higher-attaining students results at A* being in line with the national average.
- Good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11.
- Positive student attitudes.
- Very good leadership of the department by the director of studies.
- Very good team work by knowledgeable teachers, including supply staff.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies for developing the reading and writing skills of students at an early stage of learning English.
- Use of assessment data in curriculum development and target setting.
- The use of ICT within the science curriculum to support students' learning.
- The availability of appropriately trained technicians.

104. The results for Year 9 students in the 2001 national tests were well below the average for all schools but well above the average for similar schools. Results were similar to English but below those of mathematics. Girls performed better than boys in 2001, but this trend varies from year to year. Overall, results have improved over the last two years. Results are affected by students who join the school after the normal admission date, many of whom have not followed the full National Curriculum. At GCSE level, the results for Year 11 students were significantly below the national average for A* to C but much closer to the national average for A* to G. Those achieving A* to B were closer to the national averages, with boys doing slightly better than girls, reflecting the lower number of higher-attaining girls at the school. The results have improved over the last two years.

105. The work seen during the inspection broadly reflected test and examination results. By the time they are in Year 9, students are reaching standards which are still well below average. Students are better at remembering scientific facts than they are at carrying out and recording scientific investigations. However, students' desire to do well in examinations together with the careful preparation by teachers helps them to do very well in comparison with other similar schools. Taking account of their starting point, students are achieving satisfactorily in Years 7 to 9. Students in Year 11 are currently attaining standards that are overall below national levels. Although all groups had a qualified science teacher or an experienced science teacher at the time of the inspection, some had had several teachers over the last two years. As a result, these groups had difficulties recalling earlier topics. All teachers prepared the students well for examination questions, using past questions and explaining how marks are awarded. Weekly after school revision classes for both higher and

foundation level students support preparation for examinations. Students' use of number, for example in calculations on power, Ohm's law is satisfactory. In the higher-attaining sets students explain concepts and can use ideas such as reactivity trends to predict chemical reactions. Middle to low attainers have more difficulty with the use of English and spelling and accept information without question. The position is improving in the lower school, where new courses provide more opportunities for students to express their understanding. Overall, students in Years 10 and 11 are achieving well.

106. In lessons, the girls are often quieter than the boys and have to be encouraged to make oral contributions. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily, as do those who speak English as a second language. Learning support assistants are well used to help these students progress. This was especially so in the mixed ability classes in Year 7, where help was given very sensitively to support reading skills. However, those at an early stage of learning English throughout the school need further help to develop their reading and writing skills, as they cannot always read the books or work sheets used. The gifted and talented whilst not always appropriately challenged in Years 7 to 9 make good progress in Years 10 and 11 due to the setting arrangements and the often very good teaching and enrichment activities they receive.

107. The teaching and learning observed during the inspection were satisfactory overall, and good in Years 10 and 11. A few unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Staff teaching these had joined the school recently and had not yet adjusted to the levels of the students in their planning. The variation in teaching was reflected in the students' learning. The quality of teaching for students studying for GCSE was good and some very good and excellent teaching was seen. Lessons were well planned and in the good or better lessons a variety of activities was used to help students learn. Teacher's good subject knowledge enabled them to use question and answer sessions to enable students to show orally what they understood. In some lessons, students had to struggle with reading material that they found difficult. Consequently they did not always progress as well as they could. This was especially true for students at an early stage of speaking English. In other lessons students had stimulating work to do, as in a lesson comparing the chemistry of the alkanes and alkenes. In all lessons, good relationships helped students to learn in a supportive atmosphere that made learning enjoyable. Almost all students behave well and want to learn, although a small number of boys behaved very noisily in two lessons making difficulties for the teachers and other students. Students listened to explanations during lessons and higher-attaining students asked questions showing that they were thinking hard about their work. Students can work independently when suitable activities are provided for them. They work together well and help each other learn.

108. Students are not always expected to write at sufficient length, to develop their scientific thinking skills and their writing skills. Homework is generally used satisfactorily but marking is inconsistent. Students clearly respond well to marking with helpful comments on how to improve. Recent improvements in marking resulted in a corresponding improvement in students' work. Marking of end of unit tests is better and the department monitors achievement regularly. The department is at an early stage in using all the assessment data available within the school to track students' progress. They have yet to use it to set individual learning targets or to plan curriculum change.

109. Students make use of ICT to word process work. Higher-attaining students have used data loggers in the CLC. However, these are not yet available in the department for students to use consistently. Students work in the CLC using the Internet for research, for example finding information about planets. However, the use of ICT varies from teacher to teacher and is currently unsatisfactory. Although students are well provided with textbooks and reference books in the laboratories, the library does not have enough books to support independent learning.

110. The leadership of the director of studies is very good. At the time of the inspection she was also

supporting the acting head of science. The team, which includes three supply teachers, is committed to improving standards. Since her appointment two years ago she has managed the department well and ensured that its work reflects the aims and ethos of the school. As a result standards have improved over the last two years. Although the department is well supported by the one qualified technician they have, there is not enough qualified support to enable them to develop further the teaching of scientific skills. Once its remaining vacancies are filled, the department will be in a good position to continue to raise standards. Although improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, it has been good in the last two years.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Achievement in Years 7 to 11 is good, particularly of students with special needs and those who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Leadership and management of the department and team spirit are good.
- Students' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment in the higher grades at GCSE and monitoring boys' achievement.
- The use of ICT for all students.
- The clay-modelling skills of younger students.

111. The results of the 2001 teacher assessments for students at the end of Year 9 were a little below those reported nationally. The standard of work produced by students currently in Year 9 is average overall with above-average painting skills in higher-attaining students' work on display.

112. Standards in art and design are low when students come into the school, particularly in their drawing skills. However, students achieve well year-on-year. Students in Year 9 have a working knowledge of a wide range of media and materials and use them successfully to explore the formal elements of art. For example, students looked at the work of Escher and were able to explain how the artist distorted his images taken from direct observation. In the students' own drawings of their self-portraits observed from curved shiny surfaces, they recorded the broken images of their features with increasing confidence, building up a series of patterns using line and tone. By the end of the lesson they were using the digital camera to record portraits so that they could distort these on computer. Preparation for practical activity is appropriately recorded in journals, where the standard of annotation and students recording skills are improving steadily. Higher-attaining students are appropriately extended through drawing and colour work. Three-dimensional papier-mâché and card studies based on Mexican Ofrenda and African masks contribute positively to higher achievements and standards though students have too little opportunity to develop clay-modelling skills.

113. Examination results have improved since the last inspection in line with national averages for

secondary schools. Although in 2001 they dipped significantly below average, work seen in Year 11, shows average attainment overall and students are achieving well. The department has analysed the GCSE results and explains the lower-than-average grades in 2001 as caused by the significant number of boys who did well in the practical skills but whose lack of written evidence resulted in their marks falling between grade C and D boundaries. A new marking scheme was introduced halfway through the exam course to improve written evidence in art and design, but students, especially those with English as an additional language, did not have enough time to improve their grades. Students, overall, do well in art and design, better than in many of their other subjects. Boys' and girls' results were similar until 2001 when the results of boys fell.

114. From the evidence gathered in lessons, looking at portfolios of work and in talking to students about their work, the standard of lino printing is above average and annotation of the processes is improving steadily. Students explain the research and investigation they carry out during their studies and projects are revisited to achieve more breadth and depth. For example, students work independently on different aspects of coursework to raise the standard of their drawing by increasing the tonal values through the use of a wider variety of textured pencils. They experiment with a series of colour overlaps in lino printing that focuses their attention on accuracy and detail. In another class, students discussed an existing composition and applied what they had learned to compare similarities in their collage structures. Their study of artists has proved particularly interesting in the Cultural Baggage and Picasso-inspired sculptures where the range of activities has extended opportunities for personal response, particularly for the gifted and talented students who show higher-level thinking skills. This is good improvement on the previous inspection, when contextual studies were not as well developed, and the level of challenge has risen.

115. Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. Students with special needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress. They are keen to learn, enjoy art and many continue lessons into lunchtime and after school sessions. The amount of work covered in lessons is good. At times, the quality of homework lacks rigor.

116. The quality of teaching and learning observed was consistently good and often very good across the age ranges. Teachers have good subject expertise and this is used effectively to plan activities and give students first hand experiences. Effective explanations, demonstrations and the opportunity to see examples of students' work next to that of artists is a strength in all lessons. Displays are well annotated and art vocabulary is prioritised for many students who need additional literacy support. For GCSE students, the approach is very successful. A high level of interest is maintained from visits to galleries and research on the Internet so that students become increasingly able to follow up personal ideas. Teaching and learning intentions are shared and clearly linked to programmes of study and exam criteria. Assessment of learning is well focused across year groups through oral and written comment. In most lessons, skilful questioning consolidated understanding, building on students' knowledge of the formal elements of art and vocabulary. In many lessons, students were taught to extend their numeracy skills in scaling up designs and measuring layouts for repeat printing which gave them confidence to work independently and accurately. In a minority of lessons, students were not engaged by their teacher in talking about their work so that they could learn to evaluate what they had achieved. This happened when lessons ran out of time or homework was collected without group comment.

117. Leadership and management of the subject are good. An enthusiastic and inspiring team work well together and share the commitment to raise standards. Overall, provision for ICT is satisfactory. Portfolios contain some computer-generated work but this is at an early stage and needs to be planned for all year groups. Resources are enhanced by a specialist library within the department, which is used well by students. The head of department has been very successful in collecting and making use

of data to analyse students' potential. Mostly this work has been carried out following the results of GCSE examinations but plans are in place to track students' progress year-on-year from their entry to the school and to standardise teacher assessments at the end of Year 9. To monitor the achievement of boys is a key priority. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

118. The department makes a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Good quality work is exhibited in classrooms and corridors which contributes positively to students' learning and to the overall school environment.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Improved GCSE results in food technology and graphics.
- Students show good attitudes towards their learning.
- Teachers work well together as a team.
- The accommodation for food technology and ICT resources for graphics.

Areas for improvement

- The overall amount of curriculum time allocated to the subject, and the rotation system in Years 7 to 9.
- The use of ICT for computer aided manufacture and specialist computer control technology resources.
- The use of assessment data to plan work to meet the needs of all students.

119. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well below the national expectation and lower than the levels indicated by teachers' assessments. The GCSE results in 2001 were well below the national average. Students' grades were better in food technology and graphic products than in other technology subjects. They did less well in design and technology than in the other subjects across the curriculum. Overall, the girls did better than the boys. However, overall students are given less time to study design and technology than in many other schools nationally, which has contributed to the low standards in the subject. Results are also adversely affected by students who join the school after the normal admission date, many of whom have not followed the full National Curriculum or GCSE syllabus. The learning and achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. The standard of work of students joining the school in Year 7 is well below average and overall achievement throughout the school is satisfactory.

120. The work seen during the inspection indicates that current standards in Years 7 to 9 show improvement in some aspects of the subject, and students are achieving satisfactorily. Students improve their skills across a range of activities including designing and making products in food, resistant materials, textiles, graphics, and electronics. They follow the guidance provided by the

teachers well, and generally respond well to the work in lessons. Students are developing a better range of drawing skills, and are beginning to apply them well in all the specialist areas within design and technology. Although the use of ICT is increasing in the subject, there are insufficient opportunities for students to experience work in computer aided manufacture and control technology. The process used for designing products is also underdeveloped. Students have too few opportunities to analyse existing products and to evaluate the range of materials, features and processes that are used in them, before they design products of their own. As a result, the range of products they design at this stage is narrow.

121. Students following the GCSE courses have a satisfactory range of research and investigative skills and current standards show some improvement. The quality of coursework is improving and students present the stages of their development work well. They are familiar with the process of designing and planning and show the stages of how their products have been developed. There is less emphasis however on analysing existing products and using the ideas to show how they have used the information to make their own designs better. This was seen in two Year 11 resistant materials lessons where students were designing wooden toys. Their toy designs were effective, using mechanisms well to add movement and interest to the designs. However, students made insufficient use of the information they gathered on existing products. They had devoted time to research but then made little use of the ideas they collected. Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory, with accurate and well-developed plans from higher-attaining and average students but the work of lower-attaining students just meeting the requirements of the courses.

122. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and some good lessons were seen during the inspection. In the best lessons, teachers structured the lessons well and provided clear guidance to support students in their work. Teachers showed a good knowledge of their subject, and students accept their guidance with confidence. This enabled students to produce successful products as seen in a Year 11 food lesson where they were developing single portion meals for the commercial market. When questioned, students had a good knowledge of how products are developed commercially, a good understanding of the nutritional requirements and the preferences of consumers. Students were also encouraged to use their knowledge of a range of cultural foods which resulted in them producing ideas using both their own experience and sharing the ideas of others. This resulted in a wide range of products enriching the learning experience of all the students in the group.

123. Teachers worked hard to include all students in the learning activities in all material areas, but there was insufficient planning to fully meet the needs of students with special educational needs or to challenge those who are gifted and talented. Insufficient use is made of assessment information to plan work to fully meet the needs of all students. Teachers used a satisfactory range of strategies to enable students to develop skills in literacy, including the development of technical vocabulary associated with the subject. Satisfactory guidance was provided which enabled students including those with special educational needs to structure some of their writing. However, a higher level of planning is necessary to ensure that students with lower levels of literacy and those at an early stage of learning English have sufficient opportunities to develop competence in literacy. Teachers provided good opportunities for students to develop skills in numeracy. In all specialist technology subjects students were encouraged to be accurate in measuring and marking out materials. Teachers in food technology used effective methods to encourage students to use numbers to rate the products they made and tested. They presented this information well in the form of charts and graphs. In Years 10 and 11 students use ICT well to support their work when processing and presenting data. They use this mainly when conducting surveys about the products they design. However, the use of ICT is not a strong feature of the work produced by middle and lower-attaining students and does not support them sufficiently to help raise the quality and presentation of the work they do. Although students are encouraged to use the library, there is a limited range of books available.

124. Leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department co-ordinates the day-to-day management of the department well. However, overall insufficient time is allocated to the various specialist areas within technology. This results in lack of continuity in students' learning and the range of experiences provided. There is also less time allocated for students to study design and technology than in many other schools nationally. As a result, standards have been depressed and the school enters a lower proportion of students for the subject than many other schools. This leadership issue is beyond the control of the head of department and has had a significant impact on standards in the subject. The head of department has established good working relationships in the team, and staff work hard to maintain high levels of efficiency. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Achievement and teaching are both satisfactory and current standards show some improvement. However, overall resources are inadequate and there is insufficient technician support in the subject.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- GCSE examination results are improving.
- The attitudes and behaviour of students contribute very well to their learning.
- Increasing use of ICT within the curriculum.

Areas for improvement

- The collation and use of student performance data for raising educational standards.
- The pace of learning within some lessons, particularly for higher-attaining students, which affects the standards they attain.
- The standards attained by older students in GCSE examinations, which remain below the national average.

125. Students' performance in the 2001 GCSE examinations showed an improvement but the percentage of A* to C grades remained below the national average. Overall, boys did better than girls but both performed less well in geography than in the other subjects they studied during their last two years at school. The department is aware of these disparities but has yet to formulate and implement strategies for dealing with them. There were no significant differences in the results of students from different ethnic groups.

126. Trends in students' performance at the end of Year 9 cannot be readily identified because the nature of teacher assessment has changed substantially since 1999. On the basis of evidence held by the school, students attain standards that are slightly below the national average by the end of Year 9. Results are adversely affected by students who join the school after the normal admission date, many of whom have not followed the full National Curriculum.

127. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflect these results. Based upon their standards on entry to the school and subsequently to the GCSE programme, students' achievement is satisfactory overall, throughout the school. There are no significant differences in attainment based on ethnicity but girls attain lower standards than boys in their knowledge and understanding of the subject, reflecting the lower number of higher-attaining girls in the school.

128. In Years 7 to 9, students acquire skills in map, atlas, weather and related work close to the national average. They produce a satisfactory body of work. However, lower-attaining students spend unnecessary time on minor features of presentation and colouring of charts and maps. There is less evidence of work on contemporary geographical issues such as pollution and global warming or the ethical debates associated with them. Students demonstrate basic numeracy skills associated with local fieldwork in the production of graphs and pie charts. Older students demonstrate greater confidence in handling extended writing and are able to apply a higher order of analysis in considering urban regeneration and coastal erosion issues. This is supported by the effective use of ICT to desk top publish assignments. Students of lower attainment are less able to define the dynamic processes associated with physical geography. Overall, students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

129. Oral skills of students are satisfactory. Students who are at an early stage of learning English make are able to participate well when there is appropriate learning support to supplement effective teaching. Students whose first language is not English make slower but still satisfactory progress in writing. Concept development is similarly satisfactory but some students observed confused concepts with location names in map work, for example the term 'source' in work on river systems.

130. Attitudes and behaviour are very good throughout the school. Students work hard and are keen to improve, for example in revision work seen in a Year 11 class. Students collaborate well when given the opportunity to do so, but much of the work observed was individual in nature and highly prescribed with no significant occasions where students could exercise choice, irrespective of their age or ability.

131. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is a good emphasis on teaching basic skills such as literacy and numeracy. Key word lists are carefully planned for. Regular and well-judged plenary sessions enable students to feedback on their learning, for example in work on economic development. Although schemes of work are appropriate, there are insufficient extension activities to challenge higher-attaining students. Lack of pace in some lessons means that topics, for example on hazards, are not entered into in sufficient depth for higher grades to be obtained. Relationships are good and students generally speak positively of their classroom experiences and also extra-curricular activities. They expressed some frustration that fieldtrips are not currently offered to students in Year 7. In Years 10 and 11, learning opportunities are restricted by too great an emphasis on external assessment requirements, and the resources for learning are also limited.

132. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Schemes of work are developing well and introduce a balanced range of material, particularly for students in Years 7 to 9. Learning support assistants support students with special educational needs effectively, but continuity of learning is sometimes hampered by students being helped by different staff. Geography is making effective use of new technology though it is not yet at the point where interactive learning can occur.

133. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and the use of student performance data to guide teachers' planning are unsatisfactory. As a consequence staff are not as clear as they should be as to where and how to intervene to raise standards. The performance of different ethnic groups is not tracked and teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 is not yet fully effective.

134. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Schemes of work have been refined and more closely match the needs and aspirations of students. There is greater use of ICT by both students and teachers. Results are now improving for older students. However, assessment and monitoring of teaching and learning have not been sufficiently developed. Strategies for further improving standards, such as, arrangements for tracking student progress and intervening appropriately where students are underachieving or who are at risk of doing so, have not been established.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Staff are well qualified, experienced and hard working.
- Homework consolidates class work well.
- The response of students is good.

Areas for improvement

- Standards, as they are below average in Year 11 and well below average in Year 9.
- The level of challenge for the highest-attainers and opportunities for students to think and reflect in some lessons.
- The use of ICT to support students' learning.

135. In 2001 the results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were very low. The department is aware that these assessments underestimated students' actual attainment. It is reviewing both the criteria that it uses and the tasks set, to ensure that these enable students to show their knowledge, understanding and skills. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is well below average. The highest-attainers have an average level of knowledge of such events as the rise to power of Adolph Hitler. They can select appropriate information to explain how this took place. The great majority have some knowledge of the events that they learn about and can record this briefly in writing. Most, however, have difficulty in describing and explaining what they know in written work of any length.

136. Because only a small number of students took the GCSE examination in 2001, there is too little evidence for statistical comparisons. However, as in previous years, all who sat the examination passed, by gaining at least a G grade with almost half gaining grades A* to C. The subject has not

generally been as popular an option choice as in most schools. However, the present situation is better in Years 10 and 11, with two teaching groups in each year. The standards of current Year 11 students are below average. Higher-attainers are able to analyse sources critically. For example, they confidently explained why a source written by Herbert Hoover, expressing a negative opinion of the success of Roosevelt's New Deal, should be treated with caution. Most students know the main reasons for the events that they have learned about, such as the Cold War. The majority are able to use sources to answer questions, but many are yet to develop a technique for doing so systematically.

137. When students enter the school, their attainment is generally well below average in the subject. This is particularly so with their historical understanding and skills, including the ability to write about what they know. Many have better historical knowledge, although this is still below average. Most maintain these levels into Year 9, and so achievement is generally satisfactory in these years. It is also satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The department's records show that many of those students with the highest-attainment in Year 9 choose to continue to study the subject and that an improvement to below average standards is therefore appropriate. There is no significant variation between the achievement of boys and girls.

138. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In the best lessons, good subject knowledge and understanding enable teachers to guide students well, ensuring that they know the key features of events. Assessment is used well in these lessons, to provide work to meet the needs of students, as in a Year 11 lesson which was planned to improve the way in which sources were used to answer examination questions. Students are supported sensitively, in a way that enhances their confidence. Homework is effective in consolidating what has been learned and provides a good link to activities in the following lesson. In the weaker lessons, there is insufficient systematically planned work to meet the needs of the different groups of students in the class. One result is that there is often insufficient challenge for those capable of the highest-attainment in the group. Although students with specific needs, including those learning English as an additional language, are clearly identified in lesson plans, this does not always extend to the provision of specifically-directed work to meet their needs. However, when learning support assistants are present, this significantly improves the quality of support for students with special needs. In many lessons, opportunities are lost to stimulate students to think and share their ideas about the situations that they learn about. In some cases, this is because they are given too much information during the lesson and too little time to reflect upon and discuss it. In other lessons, it is because teachers do too much for students, for example, by providing the answers to questions, rather than asking students for their own opinions. During the inspection, learning ended early in several lessons, either because teachers told students to finish some minutes before the end, or because they did not insist that the level of effort given by students for most of the lesson was maintained during its closing stages.

139. Teachers provide satisfactory opportunities for students to improve their literacy skills. They are beginning to use strategies such as writing frames to improve students' extended writing skills. This is taking place most strongly in Years 10 and 11, where it is proving helpful to students in showing what they know and understand in written coursework and examination answers. A departmentally-produced Year 11 revision guide contains helpful advice on essay writing. The weakness in the department's provision is in systematically providing for the needs of those students in Years 7 to 9 who are not yet proficient in their use of English. Although the books in the school library are useful to the subject, there are far too few to provide a good basis for individual research. Opportunities for students to apply their numeracy skills do occur. For example in Year 11 work, in which they interpret graphs about unemployment in the USA in the 1930s, in order to form a view about how successful Roosevelt's New deal was. However, there is a need for the department to develop a policy and detailed plans to ensure that full use is made of the opportunities that the subject can provide. Provision of opportunities for students to use computers while learning history is unsatisfactory. These are

provided on a few occasions, such as during Year 9 work on the First World War, but are not guaranteed for students through systematic planning.

140. The response of students is good in history lessons. It is an important factor in enabling them to make full use of the learning opportunities that they are given. The great majority listen carefully and co-operate fully with teachers. In many lessons, students show good initiative in preparing themselves while the teacher calls the register, so that work gets under way quickly. Behaviour is usually very good and sometimes excellent. In a few lessons, a small number of students are less willing to work, or the effort shown for most of the lesson flags during the closing stages.

141. Just enough improvement has been secured since the last inspection for this to be satisfactory. The overall satisfactory achievement of students identified then has been maintained and there has been an improvement in progress made by those with special needs. This was unsatisfactory then and is now satisfactory. However, the level of challenge for those capable of the highest-attainment is too low in many lessons. The department is in the early stages of introducing strategies to improve the weak literary skills that were identified in the last report. Student attitudes continue to be good. There continue to be insufficient opportunities for students to work with computers.

142. The department is satisfactorily managed. The subject leader and experienced, well qualified staff are hard working and committed to the subject and their students. This has led to the collaborative production within the department of some useful resources, such as revision guides for GCSE students. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly. There is however, a need for greater vision and energy in long term leadership, focused on improving provision for those students with English as an additional language and the gifted and talented, if the rate of improvement is to be maintained or, preferably, increased.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- GNVQ examination results are above average and students achieve very well.
- Specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge and prepare students well for GNVQ examinations.
- Students enjoy the subject and are highly motivated towards working with computers.
- The developing resources for the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The consistent use of computers within all subjects to comply with National Curriculum requirements.
- The leadership, co-ordination and management of ICT throughout the school.
- The planned curriculum and the time allocation for ICT in Years 7 and 8.
- Planning, to meet the needs of all students.

143. Teacher assessments and inspection evidence show that, at the end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of students is below national expectations. There are no significant variations in the standards attained by boys and girls and students from different ethnic groups. GNVQ ICT examination results have been above the national average for the last two years. These results are better than for most other subjects within the school.

144. In Years 7 and 8, all students are taught ICT as part of a shared timetable alternating with design

and technology. As a result, they do not have enough time to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum fully. To compound this further some Year 7 students have access to only half the subject time of other Year 7 classes. Consequently, by the end of Year 9 the work of many students is below the standard expected and they do not make sufficient progress with the full range of computer applications. There is little evidence of modelling, for example using spreadsheets to work out different scenarios relating to costings of a project. In Year 9, students receive weekly ICT lessons. The well-planned scheme of work offers students the opportunity to incorporate a variety of software applications into their projects, as was demonstrated through a project dealing with a trip to a London museum. Unfortunately students have not gained sufficient ICT knowledge and skills to progress at the pace necessary to achieve high quality results in one year. Skills connected with measuring, recording and controlling events are not as well developed as word processing and image manipulation. Students enjoy the subject and are keen to learn. They work very well co-operatively in pairs and independently from the teacher. Key words and note taking skills have been recently implemented to reinforce literacy skills but development of numeracy skills has yet to be dealt with.

145. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average and students achieve very well. All students study ICT as a discrete subject or as part of the GNVQ course. From Year 10 onwards, students become good independent users of technology. They organise themselves and their work well, quickly accessing software and relevant files. They confidently create databases, use word processors and develop spreadsheets. They are able to discuss the advantages of particular programs for particular tasks and are given the opportunity to reflect on wider issues relating to ICT in society. Students within the GNVQ course make very good progress. They work very well within lessons willingly and enthusiastically undertaking tasks designed to challenge them fully. They are confident and competent users of an appropriate range of software applications. They work very well within the 'Windows' operating system, cutting and pasting between various applications, using formulae, graphs and sorting information in spreadsheets, and they successfully redraft their commentaries and reports effectively using word-processing. In GNVQ classes in Year 10, students showed good evidence of research skills and the ability to select and combine information from various sources. In one Year 11 lesson, students carefully considered which data was necessary for their project and how best to present it, without relying upon their teacher for guidance at every step.

146. Within the ICT department students learn very well because the specialist teaching is generally good and on occasions very good. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is very good and is used effectively to direct and support students' learning. Students arrive at lessons ready to learn and they respond very well to the challenge of the work by applying intellectual effort with a high level of sustained concentration and enthusiasm. Expectations are appropriate for the ability of the individual students in Years 10 and 11. During all lessons observed, students were managed well. Relationships between teachers and students are good. Students encourage and assist each other to progress during lessons. When required, support for individuals was sensitive and effective. In the better lessons, learning outcomes were clear and appropriate and lessons ended with a plenary to reinforce learning. In a very good lesson explanations were clearly given using interactive equipment to demonstrate procedures and to take students through them step-by-step before they undertook the task themselves. However, learning materials do not always cater sufficiently for the needs all groups of students within lessons.

147. In many respects the ICT department has made very good progress since the last inspection. The introduction of the successful GNVQ examination courses is the strength of the department. The accommodation for the subject has been greatly enhanced by the addition of a new computer suite. Significant improvements have been made in the provision of hardware as a result of carefully planned expenditure. The location of the CLC within the school has greatly enhanced students' opportunities to use high quality ICT equipment on a regular basis. This resource is highly valued by the students.

However, the time allocation for ICT within Years 7 and 8 remains a concern as it was at the time of the last inspection. The use of ICT to support learning in other subjects is unsatisfactory and does not fulfil the National Curriculum requirements. The school library is not used by students even though there is a satisfactory range of ICT textbooks to enhance their independent study.

148. The cross-curricular use of ICT is unsatisfactory. The requirement for all subjects of the National Curriculum to include aspects of ICT is not met. Some subjects utilise the excellent facilities of the CLC based within the school but this use lacks any strategic planning. The result is that cross-curricular access to ICT is very uneven, with good practice in music and media studies and unsatisfactory use in several other key areas such as English and mathematics. There has been a recent significant investment in ICT resources for use throughout the school including interactive whiteboards and digital projectors and 30 new laptop computers for use as a virtual suite. However, without strategic planning and management these resources will not be able to deal with the current unsatisfactory situation.

149. The leadership and management of ICT are unsatisfactory. There is no clear educational direction for the subject. The GNVQ courses are well managed but the scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 fails to ensure progression from year to year and falls short of National Curriculum requirements. Strategic management and co-ordination of ICT throughout the school are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of clearly defined roles and confusion regarding the planning and assessment of ICT throughout the school. The managers identified as having specific responsibility for ICT fail to co-ordinate their approach and do not have any formal routine means by which they can monitor delivery and ensure compliance with statutory requirements. As a result of this unsatisfactory management, the requirements for ICT within the other subjects of the National Curriculum are not met and the organisation within the ICT department lacks clear direction. Despite the good quality results and teaching of the GNVQ course the overall provision of the subject is weakened by its inconsistent use within other subjects especially in Years 7 and 8. Consequently, overall improvement is unsatisfactory.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teachers' good classroom management.
- The good attitudes and behaviour of most students.
- Teachers' good linguistic knowledge.
- The range of languages offered to students.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' expectations of students and their achievement in all four languages.
- Assessment procedures and students' knowledge of their learning.
- The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching in the subject.
- The consistency with which members of the department implement new policies.
- The use of ICT to support students' learning.

150. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 indicated that standards were very low in comparison with the national average. Very few students gained level 5 and above, as opposed to almost half of students nationally. These assessments were inaccurate because the department did not implement the National Curriculum changes to the levels in September 2000.

151. GCSE results in French have been well below national averages for most of the time since the

last inspection, although in 1997 results were in line with national averages. In 2001, they were well below national averages in French for the A* to C grades but in line with national averages for the A* to G grades. In Spanish they were well below national averages for A* to C grades and below for A* to G grades. Comparisons over time are not possible in Spanish because of the small numbers entered. In Urdu and Bengali, three quarters of those entered gained an A* to C grade. There were no A* grades in French and Spanish and very few A grades. Girls did better than boys in line with the national trend. No boys took Spanish and 50 boys were entered for French, about half the cohort and similar to the national figure for boys.

152. The evidence of students' work and lessons observed show that standards attained at the end of Year 9 are below national averages in French and Spanish and in line in Urdu. No Bengali was observed in Year 9. In French, average-attaining students write short descriptions about people and their homes; higher-attaining students have covered the past tense but are not yet using it in their written work. In Spanish, higher-attaining students understand the teacher's fluent use of Spanish but give one-word answers when replying to questions about places in Spain and why they are significant. Standards in Year 8 are higher in both French and Spanish. In Spanish, higher-attaining students understand the teacher's Spanish well. They recall work on past tense verbs and use them accurately. They write several sentences on self and daily routine in the present tense. In French, students of average attainment give opinions about their hometown and use relative clauses well. Speaking and writing skills are not as well developed as listening and reading skills in either language because students are given too few opportunities to use the languages for themselves.

153. At the end of Year 11 standards are also below the national average in Spanish and well below average in French. In Spanish, students understand presentations about personal information and recall a variety of vocabulary about themselves and their families. They write letters to pen friends about school and their holidays and use the past tense with support. In French, they take part in role-plays of several exchanges in the present tense but work at a basic level. Standards in Year 10 are higher in both French and Spanish. In French Year 10 students use the present tense well and ask basic questions on personal information. In Spanish, higher-attaining students have covered the past, present and future tenses and use them well. No teaching was observed in Urdu in Years 10 and 11. Students being entered for a GCSE in Bengali attain standards that are in line with expectations for this stage of the course although over half of the students who originally started the course are not being entered for the examination.

154. Teaching and learning for all students, including those with special educational needs, are satisfactory overall. Strengths include good classroom management and good linguistic knowledge. Some teachers use a good range of resources and most teachers outline the learning objectives clearly at the start of the lesson and review work done at the end. Weaknesses relate to consistent ongoing assessment of work done. Too much English is used in the classroom, which means that students do not have enough opportunity to listen to the foreign language and not enough opportunities to practise the language being taught. Although students learning English as an additional language are identified in the planning for most lessons, little specific provision is made for them. The exception to this is Spanish speakers, who are well supported in lessons and used effectively to help their English counterparts. The main strength of the learning is the positive attitudes and behaviour of students, which means that they make the best use of the opportunities provided. This is particularly noticeable in Year 8 French and in Years 8 and 10 Spanish. There are however, some classes where students are docile rather than enthused, as in the Year 11 Bengali lesson where students became restless and lost interest because not enough work was provided to keep them fully occupied for the whole of the lesson.

155. Although the teaching and learning was judged to be satisfactory in the French and Spanish lessons seen during the week of the inspection, the achievement of students is unsatisfactory

throughout the school, in relation to their prior attainment. Problems with the organisation of the department mean that the team is not working closely or consistently and as a result students are not being guided or managed in a systematic way. Not all teachers make regular use of National Curriculum levels or the GCSE grading system, which means that students do not know enough about how well they are doing. Some teachers give good feedback but this is not consistent throughout the department, which means that many students do not know where they are going wrong and what to do to improve.

156. The curriculum is broad and balanced with good subject-specific support, particularly for Year 11 students and useful trips to Spain and France. There is good provision for gifted and talented students in Year 8 French. Analysis of results and performance has resulted in a change of examination to include the coursework option. Resources and accommodation are adequate although the classroom used by the head of department is isolated from rest of department. Year 7 students learn both French and Spanish with no extra time allowance, which means that they are not getting the best of starts in their first year of learning a language. Some students use computers, such as the Year 8 group who used them in the CLC to word-process their work on negatives, but not all students are guaranteed access to them at present and provision is unsatisfactory overall. Some teachers develop students' literacy skills well but not all teachers are doing so. Use of library resources to extend students' reading skills is limited. There is some reference to number work in language lessons but more remains to be done.

157. The management of the department is unsatisfactory overall, as a consequence of the inconsistencies outlined above. The new head of department has made an adequate start in identifying issues such as the need to become more familiar with the National Curriculum, and a satisfactory development plan has been produced. Some teaching has been monitored and useful feedback given. As a result, there has been some improvement in establishing consistency in areas such as the identification of aims for most lessons and reviews of work done. Much however remains to be done, in developing a team of teachers with a consistent approach and commitment to implementing new policies.

158. Improvement since the last inspection is also unsatisfactory. The school has made some moves to improve the provision in languages, such as the introduction of Spanish as an equal first language. Community languages now form an integral part of the language faculty and are introduced in Year 9, not in Year 10. Standards however have not risen, particularly in French. Too little progress has been made on extending students' writing skills and in enabling them to produce longer pieces of work. The quality of teaching is now not as good as reported by the last inspection. A significant number of students, particularly those taking the community languages, begin the course in Year 10 but are not then entered for the examination and end up with no qualification. Issues identified in the last report such as the need for community language teachers to have further training and support are only now being dealt with.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Above-average GCSE examination results.
- A rich inclusive musical experience for students.
- Students enjoy the subject and are keen to learn.
- A good range of musical opportunities, including music technology, which enhance students

personal development within the community.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.
- Updating of schemes of work, to ensure they fully reflect the most recent National Curriculum requirements.
- Implementation of assessment procedures that directly relate to the National Curriculum levels and analysis of results to guide future planning.

159. In 2001, the results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were in line with those reported nationally. In GCSE examinations for 2001 the proportion of students attaining the higher grades A* to C was above average, with a very high number of students entered for the examination. The music department has a good record of examination results, which have been above the national average for the last three years. Students achieve higher standards in music than most other subjects in school.

160. The observation of lessons and of other work during the inspection confirmed that standards are average by the end of Year 9 and above average by the end of Year 11. There are no significant variations in the standards attained by boys and girls and students from different ethnic groups including those learning English as an additional language. Musically-talented students are catered for effectively both in lessons and through a range of extension activities, and achieve well.

161. Students in Year 9 work co-operatively in small groups combining musical elements appropriately to compose descriptive music using electronic keyboards and a range of percussion instruments. They successfully incorporate dynamics, texture and structure into their keyboard compositions. Year 9 students have well developed music ICT skills through good access to electronic keyboards and computer equipment with dedicated music software and midi interfaces. This allows them to manipulate and develop sounds within their own simple compositions. Higher-attaining students can improvise melodic lines over simple harmonic chord structures incorporating some quite complex musical devices such as imitation, sequence and melodic ostinatos as was demonstrated by two boys who performed and recorded a Jazz style duet they had composed. Lower-attaining students have limited performance skills and cannot always maintain their own part within a group performance.

162. There is some variation in students' previous musical knowledge at the start of Year 7, with the majority attaining below-average standards. By the end of Year 9 they have achieved well because the scheme of work they are presented with is varied and well planned. Students with special educational needs are presented with appropriately challenging work and achieve well in relation to their previous levels of attainment. Key words and simple musical vocabulary have been recently implemented to reinforce literacy skills but numeracy skills have not yet been dealt with.

163. In Year 11, attainment is above the national average and students achieve well. The subject is increasing in popularity. The number of students currently studying music at GCSE is well above the national average. Students enjoy music lessons, and work very well independently and in small groups. Students in Years 10 and 11 are good independent learners. They are supportive of each other and work productively at a good pace. Some students reach high standards in performing and composing as was demonstrated, in an assembly when a complex piece was performed to a very high standard on the tabla. Higher-attaining students' performance and composing skills are well developed. They produce well structured compositions on the keyboards utilising a variety of styles and voices. However, their knowledge of the more theoretical aspects of the GCSE course is below that expected for this stage of the course. Less musical students create imaginative rhythmic compositions but lack

the more detailed musical knowledge to develop and refine their ideas. Musically-talented Year 11 students are targeted for additional instrumental lessons through funding from the gifted and talented strand of Excellence in Cities programme. This is having a positive effect on their standards.

164. Students learn well because the teaching is good overall and occasionally very good. Teachers are enthusiastic and have very good knowledge of their subject. Planning is satisfactory and learning outcomes are clear and appropriate ensuring the full range of abilities are catered for. There is a particular emphasis on non-western music, and many students excel at performing this particular genre. There is an appropriate practical focus in lessons and students are well supported in developing their musical skills and knowledge, with hard work and fun closely linked. Expectations are appropriate for the ability of the individual students. Relationships between teachers and students are good. Through their patience and understanding teachers bring out the best in students' attitudes and behaviour, which helps their learning. Students demonstrate interest and enthusiasm and enjoy the opportunities to be creative in their playing. In one very good Year 9 lesson the teacher maintained a breathtaking pace of learning by including a variety of sequential activities to challenge the students. The very well planned lesson included video resources, creating bass loops and the imaginative use of student demonstration of break dancing to a piece of medieval music. Homework is used effectively to enhance class work.

165. The leadership and management of music are satisfactory. The department is well organised which results in music provision being effective for all its students. The staff team work well together and have a shared vision for the future of the subject within the creative arts learning area. This ensures that the music department has a very positive impact on the ethos of the school. The department is well supported by a number of visiting instrumental teachers. There is no formal system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning within the department and the quality of the provision from the visiting instrumental teachers is also not monitored. The new National Curriculum orders for music have not yet been fully implemented. Results are not analysed and so do not guide future planning.

166. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. ICT resources have improved considerably, with the purchase of several computers with sequencing software and a selection of midi compatible keyboards. Examination results remain above average and the take up for the subject has increased significantly. Resources of non-western instruments are good, which encourages many students to study music in Years 10 and 11. Currently nearly 100 students are studying music in these years. Accommodation is generally satisfactory but none of the rooms are sound proof, which results in noise from other rooms occasionally hindering learning. Until very recently it has not been possible for students to use the library but there is a small range of up-to-date musical textbooks.

167. Music makes a significant contribution to the life of all students. There is a good range of high quality musical extra-curricular activities which even include DJ classes. The school drumming group is of a high standard. These activities are open to all students and enhance their personal development. The music department is committed to developing the social moral and cultural aspects of the students' education. There are regular concerts within the school and there are very strong links within the local community. The creative arts learning area is highly inclusive and recognises that the disciplines, challenges and rewards involved in music making can bring high level achievements to students irrespective of gender, ability and ethnicity.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Teaching methods and styles meet students' needs.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good.
- The Junior Sports Leadership Award (JSLA) course encourages students' personal development and independent learning skills.
- Extra-curricular activities enhance learning opportunities.
- The department is well led.

Areas for improvement

- Planning for the learning of non-participants.
- The development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Focus and concentration on concise objectives to consolidate students' learning.
- Accommodation.

168. Students enter the school with skills and understanding which are well below average in physical education. This judgement is based on the standard of Year 6 primary school pupils seen in JSLA sessions during the course of the inspection and on Year 7 performance in gymnastics. For example, in a Year 7 gymnastics lesson students lacked control in their movements and finish in their sequences. Some higher-attaining students chose lengthy sequences, which lacked fluidity because they could not remember the full content, and quality was sacrificed to quantity. Lower-attaining students had difficulty retaining a balance even on a wide base.

169. In 2001, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated standards that were below average compared with schools nationally. The work seen during the inspection reflected these results and students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Students gradually acquire the skills and understanding so that by the end of Year 9 most students have improved their performance. For example, in a Year 9 athletics lesson students were able to build on previous learning to improve jumping techniques. Students generally were able to suggest suitable exercises for the warm up of different groups of muscles.

170. In 2001, GCSE short course results were below average when compared with national results. These results are better than the results in 2000 and continue an upward trend. Girls perform significantly better in the theory element of the course, and boys do better in practical activities.

171. The standards attained by students in the lessons seen at the end of Year 11 in the GCSE short course reflect these results. The majority of students achieve satisfactorily when compared with their performance at the end of Year 9. For example, in a Year 10 GCSE, short course theory lesson, students' oral contributions were satisfactory but their writing skills were below average. In the two-year JSLA course, students' standards are average and they achieve well. Students' high expectations meet the challenge of the course and they respond very well showing a good understanding of the need for assessment, evaluation and planning. In Year 10 and Year 11 JSLA lessons students used their knowledge, and leadership skills, to organise appropriate activities to ensure the progress of primary school pupils. Standards in non-examination physical education lessons are similar and students achieve satisfactorily. Gifted and talented students' progress is good in most lessons. Teachers support improvements to their personal development and performance and extend their knowledge by giving more challenging work. Students with special educational needs and students learning English as an additional language achieve well in physical education because of the individual attention they receive. Teachers are clear in their explanations and conduct demonstrations for good

understanding through observation. Overhead projectors and ICT are used to help Year 10 and 11 students in the accuracy and presentation of their theory work. Work is well matched to students' needs in teaching groups and apparatus is adapted to the needs of individuals. This is useful for all students, but particularly benefits lower-attaining students, students learning English as an additional language and those with special needs.

172. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is particularly effective in Years 7 to 9 where teachers have a clear focus on improvement and building up students' skills and understanding. For example, in Year 7 teachers encourage students to extend their movement vocabulary in gymnastics and be more adventurous in their experimentation. In Year 9 students in athletics are challenged to meet targets by achievement of awards, for example the Amateur Athletics Association's (AAA) gold, silver and bronze awards. GCSE short course theory work is arranged to maximise students' chances in examinations and teachers offer extension work and revision time to embed learning. Good learning results from this good preparation. Teaching and learning is not as effective when students are not given all the necessary teaching points for success so that low-attaining students, in particular, lack the correct body position to swim on their back or underachieve when executing sprint technique in athletics. Non-participants do not learn effectively when they are not included in class teaching and they are insufficiently challenged. Literacy and numeracy, were included well in some lessons but this was not consistent across the teaching; there is little opportunity for students' access to computer facilities apart from in the GCSE short course lessons.

173. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Teachers insist on good behaviour and good relationships existed in the lessons seen. Students respond well to known teacher routines, for example giving times to complete tasks, and the secure expectations of this type of consistency. Opportunities for learning are enhanced by the good provision of extra-curricular activities. Students are offered a wide range of activities including team matches. Teachers check the balance of groups and sample students well for questioning so all students are included and have equal chances in activities. They ensure that students behave responsibly towards one another, have respect for their community and appreciate the achievement of others

174. Leadership of the department is good and teachers work well as a team. Provision of resources is satisfactory. The library provides a good support for the short course and improvements to the provision are being made in preparation for the introduction of the full GCSE course in September 2002. Access to the Internet enhances research possibilities for short course GCSE students. Accommodation remains unsatisfactory and some activities are restricted by the general provision. For example, there are no jumping pits or suitable crash mats to allow the full experience of jumping events. However, teachers make the best use of the facilities available. Good links have been made with the local community. For example, the school is part of the School Sports Co-ordination scheme where teachers from the physical education department teach in primary schools; this complements the JSLA with students assisting primary school pupils. Essex Cricket Club has made the department a Centre of Excellence.

175. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Many of the positive features in the previous report are mirrored in this report. Significant changes in planning, organisation, monitoring of teachers and evaluation of the quality of teaching have been made. Examination results are improving. A policy outlines procedures for the gifted and talented. Assessment processes monitor students' achievements and there is good liaison between primary schools and the physical education department. However, accommodation remains unsatisfactory. The department has a high profile because of its popularity, its extra-curricular provision and its central role locally in team matches and competition, for example the basketball league.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Improved results in GCSE short and full course examinations.
- Good relationships between experienced staff and students.
- Good subject knowledge of the head of department.

Areas for improvement

- The marking and assessment of students' work in Years 7 to 9.
- The use of ICT across the department to support students' learning.
- The introduction of some alternative form of accreditation to give a goal in Year 11 for those not to be entered for the GCSE examinations.

176. The results for the small group of students who sat the GCSE full course examination in 2001 were in line with the national average. The results for the larger group which sat the GCSE short course examination in 2001 were also in line with the national average. There has been a steady improvement in results for students in both courses in recent years. In the light of their prior attainment, these results represent good achievement for both groups of students.

177. Standards of work of current students in Year 9 are well below national expectations. For example, in a lesson seen on how Muslims prepare their dead for burial, the higher-attaining students in the class correctly identified the different stages gone through and were able to describe this process. However, the middle and lower-attaining students did not successfully meet the challenge of the follow-up writing exercise. Higher-attaining students did not proceed to any reflection of their own feelings about death, or draw on what they had learned of other religions' practices. This weakness was apparent also in many of the projects undertaken by the students at the end of their topics, for example on how different religions prepare people for marriage, or on the contribution to the world of 'special people'. However, great care and devotion is often given to these studies. By the end of Year 9 students demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the key traditions and beliefs of Christianity, as well as the other major religions, many of which are significantly represented in the school. This represents satisfactory achievement given their starting points in Year 7.

178. In Years 10 and 11, there is a combination of core provision for all students and a full option GCSE group. The Year 11 GCSE full-option class is working well to meet their anticipated grades. The standard of work seen during the inspection broadly reflected previous examination results. For example, in a revision lesson, the higher-attaining students were successful because their knowledge and understanding of the idea of prophethood was not only strong in Islam, but also drew on examples from other religions, including Christianity. Most students demonstrated awareness of the need to relate important questions, for example about abortion, to the teaching and beliefs of different religions. The majority of students having only the core provision follow a GCSE short-course syllabus. In a revision lesson on rites of passage for students predominantly entered for the short course examination, many showed awareness of the Christian ritual of baptism and some gave clear oral accounts of its symbolism. In the light of their prior attainment, the students in Year 11 taking GCSE examinations are achieving well. No significant differences were evident between the achievements of boys and girls. However, when taking into account the whole year group, including the large numbers not entered for examination, standards of work in Year 11 overall fall well below national expectations.

179. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and in a number of lessons observed it was good. Where teaching was good, so was learning. Teaching was good in a class of students in Year 11 taking the full course GCSE. The teacher's confidence and enthusiasm for his subject combined with an understanding of the background and needs of his students. For example, this allowed the structuring of learning activities and resources to develop students' knowledge and understanding of issues involved in decisions about abortion. Short tasks punctuated by whole class discussion reinforced both the key issues of the topic and the methodology of revision recommended. In a good Year 8 lesson on the meaning of the Living Guru, the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject, effective materials for all students to understand, and challenging questioning, drew the students on to understand its importance for Sikhs today. Students were able to make comparisons with Islam and Christianity. Where teaching was only satisfactory, so was the learning. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on how people of Islamic faith come to terms with death, some students remained off task and unmotivated for periods of time. The work set for the class involved some students spending too long cutting and preparing pictures. As a result, not all students achieved as much as they might have. Teachers' marking was inconsistent in the work seen in Years 7 to 9. Teachers do not provide clear targets for students to improve their work.

180. Students with special educational needs, English as an additional language, and those who are gifted are identified by teachers. However, activities are not always planned to meet their needs beyond the work of the whole class. The work of lower-attaining students often lacked evidence of systematic guidance for improvement of their basic communication skills. Although the head of department has plans to extend the use of ICT, there was little use made of either ICT or library resources during the inspection. This was especially evident in the work of students in Years 7 to 9. However, in a Year 10 lesson, students were observed making effective use of web sites provided by the teacher to research the beliefs and practices of different Christian denominations.

181. Since the last inspection, the head of department has introduced a short course GCSE programme for all students in Years 10 and 11, and provision now meets the requirements of the Newham Agreed Syllabus. The proportions of students sitting public examinations have increased, and recent results meet national expectations. Students' attitudes to religious education are good overall, and clearly reflected in the quality of presentation of students' project work, on display in the main teaching room.

182. The department is well lead and the head of department understands the demands of the local Agreed Syllabus and the examination syllabuses in Years 10 and 11. Introduction of the use of level descriptors in Years 7 to 9 is planned for the next academic year. Departmental planning identifies many opportunities to promote literacy and opportunities to support the promotion of numeracy. Good guidance is given to the many non-specialist teachers who teach religious education. At the time of the inspection, the new main teaching room for religious education had only been in use for a matter of weeks. It is well equipped with a multimedia projector and interactive whiteboard. This should assist the department's aim of enhancing students' learning through the planned use of opportunities afforded by ICT.