

INSPECTION REPORT

ACTON HIGH SCHOOL

Acton, London

LEA area: Ealing

Unique reference number: 101932

Headteacher: Ms L Hall

Reporting inspector: Mr D Cox
10297

Dates of inspection: 29th April – 2nd May 2002

Inspection number: 196192

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Type of school: | Comprehensive |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of students: | 11 - 16 |
| Gender of students: | Mixed |
| School address: | Gunnersbury Lane Acton London |
| Postcode: | W3 8EY |
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| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mr G Fiegehen |
| Date of previous inspection: | 28 th April 1997 |

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| 10297 | D Cox | Registered Inspector | | The characteristics and effectiveness of the school. The school's results and students' achievements. Teaching and learning Leadership and management. Issues for action. |
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Acton High School is a larger than average comprehensive school educating boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16. The school is situated in the London Borough of Ealing. There are 1122 students on roll with more boys than girls; 697 compared to 425. The school now has twenty per cent of students who are refugees or asylum seekers. Many of the students come from families that are particularly disadvantaged; socio-economic data shows that the area is very low in national terms with the proportion of students entitled to free school meals being high at 50.3 per cent.

The school has a very high proportion of students with English as an additional language. Twenty two per cent of students enter the school speaking little or no English, which is very high. The proportion of ethnic minority students is 62 per cent. The minority ethnic groups are mainly of Black African, Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani and Bengali heritage and a further 150 students are Afghani. Students at the school use over 40 different languages.

The attainment of students on entry is well below average and is lower than that noted in the previous inspection report. The demographic changes since the previous report have resulted in the school having many more students with behavioural difficulties and parents who condone poor attendance. There are 471 students on the Special Educational Needs register; this is 42 per cent of the school population, which is well above the national average, and slightly lower than that noted in the previous report. There are 25 (2.2 per cent) students with Statements of Special Educational Need, which is broadly average and similar to that noted in the previous report.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is providing a satisfactory education for its students. The good leadership and management provided since the previous inspection report has been successful in bringing about a commitment to ensuring that students' attitudes towards education are improved. The good quality teaching in Years 10 and 11 ensures that students make good progress in lessons. This is a school that embraces the local community fully. The school is providing satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Higher attaining students achieve well at the school because of the good quality teaching they receive, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- The very good management of students results in their attitudes being much improved during their time at the school and many leave school as mature and responsible young adults.
- The very good curriculum meets the diverse needs of the students well.
- The school makes very good provision for the social development of its students. There are many opportunities in subjects, and in the excellent provision for extra-curricular activities, for students to co-operate and work with each other.
- The standard of pastoral care is high. The school's pastoral system helps to raise students' self-esteem and in doing so improves their behaviour and standards of attainment.
- The quality of leadership and management of the school is good, so the school is continuing to improve the quality of education provided.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching in science is currently unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The situation in science has just changed and three teachers, including the head of department, have recently left for promotion.
- There are not enough support staff to meet the particular needs of those students who are at an early stage of learning English and this reduces their progress.
- Attendance is well below the national average, and poor attendance has an adverse effect on learning and progress.
- Teachers do not always match the work closely enough to meet the diverse needs of the students, particularly for those students at an early stage of learning English.
- The marking of students' work is unsatisfactory because there is not enough evaluation of the content and too little emphasis on helping students improve the accuracy of their work.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in April 1997. There have been improvements in the quality of teaching; attendance has gone up and the number of exclusions has fallen. The school has made a significant number of successful bids for new projects and these initiatives are having a positive impact on students' progress. Examination results are improving but at a slower rate than that seen nationally because the attainment of students joining the school is falling. The progress made by the school is a result of the determination of the headteacher, the governing body and the senior staff to overcome weaknesses and to promote the school's inclusion policy. The school's response to the key issues identified in the previous report has been good although the school must ensure that plans to provide enough computers are now implemented.

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 | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|
| | all schools | | | similar schools |
| | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2001 |
| GCSE examinations | E | D | E | B |

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

Results in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2001 were well below the national average in English and mathematics when compared with all schools and very low in science. The results in science place the school in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally. When compared to similar schools, English and science are average but mathematics is above average. Over the past five years results have been improving but at a slower rate than that seen nationally. Boys and girls do equally well. By the end of Year 9 standards are average in art and design, French and German; below average in mathematics, history, music, physical education and religious education and well below average in all other subjects. In Years 7 to 9, students achieve well in modern foreign languages and music and satisfactorily in all other subjects. The achievement of students is satisfactory overall.

Results in the GCSE examinations in 2001 were well below the national average. When compared with similar schools, results were above average overall and the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at A* to C was well above average. Over the past five years results have been improving but at a slower rate than that seen nationally. The school has set appropriate targets for its performance and has achieved its targets. The standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are well above average in German; average in French and art and design; below average in mathematics, history, physical education and religious education and well below average in all other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, students make good progress in many lessons because of the good quality of teaching they receive. However, for many students, poor attendance and unfinished work limit the standards they attain and achievement over time is only satisfactory.

Standards of literacy and numeracy are well below the national expectation. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls or of students from different ethnic groups. In the learning support area and the Launch Pad, the unit for a small group of students with challenging behaviour, students make good progress. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Overall, the majority of students with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. However, students who are early stage of learning English make unsatisfactory progress because there is insufficient support in the classroom to meet their specific needs.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Overall, students have satisfactory attitudes to the school. Most of them are willing to work and they respond positively in class. They are not particularly well motivated when they first come to the school, nor are they spontaneously keen to learn. Students generally have positive attitudes in the classroom. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Students are generally good-natured, and are not unduly boisterous or noisy when out of the classroom and around the site. |
| Personal development and relationships | The quality of personal development and relationships is good. The school is also successful in helping the majority of students to become mature and responsible young adults. |
| Attendance | Attendance has improved since the last inspection but is still well below the national average for secondary schools. The rate of unauthorised absence is correspondingly above the national average. Overall, poor attendance has an adverse effect on learning and progress. |

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching has improved since the school was last inspected. As at the time of the last inspection, teaching is noticeably more successful in Years 10 and 11 than Years 7 to 9. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and music; teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects except science where it is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The situation in science has just changed and three teachers, including the head of department, have recently left to take up promoted posts. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good in mathematics, art and design, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and religious education; teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects.

The main reason for the quality of teaching improving is the significant amount of in-service training that teachers have received on teaching and learning techniques and behaviour management. The latter of these has had a major impact on how teachers deal with some very challenging students and the management of students is now a real strength of the teaching. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. In many subjects, especially in Years 7 to 9, the teachers have difficulty meeting the needs of all their students, particularly of those students who find language difficult.

One reason why teaching is better in Year 10 and 11 is that teachers plan their lessons to include a wider variety of teaching methods and have higher expectations of the older students. In Years 7 to 9 teachers are reluctant to use methods that involve a great deal of student participation because students can be rather immature and many younger students have not yet learnt to enter into a debate in an orderly manner. Teachers tend to increase the pace of learning in Years 10 and 11, safe in the knowledge that most students will respond positively to the challenges provided. The marking of students' work is unsatisfactory because there is not enough evaluation of the content and too little emphasis on helping students improve accuracy. Inspectors support the view of parents who think that the provision of homework is unsatisfactory.

Satisfactory use is made of the available in-class support staff. However, where support staff are deployed to work in subject specialisms to support students at an early stage of learning English they tend to work in isolation within the class and there are not enough opportunities for them to work in partnership with the teaching staff. This is hampering the progress of students at an early stage of learning English.

The quality of teaching of students with learning and behavioural difficulties is good and provides good guidance to students in their learning and in their welfare. Teaching within the Accessing Language Achieving Potential (ALAP) department is a mixture of one to one, and group work; this is good practice. However, insufficient attention is paid to matching work specifically to meet individual needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | The school provides a very good curriculum that meets the very wide ranging needs of its students particularly well. The school provides an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. |
| Provision for students with special educational needs | Curricular provision for students with special educational needs is good across the school and very good in specialist areas. However, the tasks provided in lessons do not always meet the needs of these students. |
| Provision for students with English as an additional language | Curricular provision for the majority of students with English as an additional language is satisfactory. |
| Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | The school makes: very good provision for students' social development; good provision for students' moral and cultural development and satisfactory provision for students' spiritual development. |
| How well the school cares for its students | The standard of pastoral care is high. The school's pastoral system helps to raise students' self-esteem and in doing so improves their behaviour and standards of attainment. |

Partnership with parents and carers is a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. The school is well aware of the benefits of strong parental support for students' learning and therefore works hard to encourage parents' involvement. It has satisfactory policies and procedures for developing home/school links, but gets a limited response. Only a minority of parents is actively supportive. Relatively few have a major involvement in their children's learning and progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The quality of leadership and management provided by the headteacher, the senior management team and many middle managers is good. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | Good. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. All statutory requirements are fulfilled with the exception of the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Good. The school has good monitoring systems, although there are inconsistencies at middle management level. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good. Good use is made of grants available to the school and the finance manager is skilful in obtaining the best possible deals. |

The school has enough accommodation and resources although currently there are insufficient computers. There are insufficient learning support assistants to meet the diverse needs of the students, particularly those at an early stage of learning English.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way that the school provides for students' personal development. • The leadership and management of the school. • The support for students with special educational needs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of some students. • The school setting a more appropriate amount of work to be done at home. • Parents being kept better informed about how their child is progressing. |

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. The support for students with special educational needs is good. The school is well managed and the support provided for students helps them to become mature and responsible young adults.

The inspection team found that the annual reports do not give parents a sufficiently detailed picture of students' learning and of targets for further progress. Inspectors support the view of parents who think that the provision of homework is unsatisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Students are generally good-natured, and are not unduly boisterous or noisy when out of the classroom and around the site.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. The students who took their GCSE examinations last year entered the school with levels of attainment that were well below average and left the school with well below average levels of attainment. This indicates a satisfactory level of achievement. Students make good progress in lessons in Years 10 and 11 because of the good teaching they receive. For many students, however, poor attendance and unfinished work limits the standards they attain, so achievement in the long-term is only satisfactory.
2. Results in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2001 were well below the national average in English and mathematics when compared to all schools and very low in science. The results in science place the school in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally. When compared to similar schools, English and science are average but mathematics is above average. When all three subjects are taken together, results are well below average when compared with all schools and average when compared with similar schools. Over the past five years results have been improving but at a slower rate than that seen nationally. Boys and girls do equally well.
3. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2001 were well below the national average. When compared with similar schools, results were above average. The proportion of students gaining five or more passes at grades A* to C was well below average as was the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at A* to G. These results represent satisfactory achievement given students' results in the national tests at the end of Year 9. When compared with similar schools, the proportion of students gaining five or more passes at A* to C was well above average and the proportion gaining five or more passes at A* to G was above average. Over the past five years results have been improving but at a slower rate than that seen nationally. This can be explained because students are now joining the school with lower standards of attainment than in previous years. The demographic changes to the student population have also had a dramatic affect on the attainment of students on entry to the school, with a far greater proportion of students joining the school that are at a very early stage of learning English and a significant proportion of students who are joining the school from other countries, some of whom have never attended a primary school.
4. The GCSE results in 2001 were well above average in German; average in art and design and French; below average in mathematics and religious education; well below average in all other subjects with the exception of single science where they were very low. The well below average results in design and technology overall do not tell the full story however, as results showed considerable variation between different material areas. Results in resistant materials and textiles were broadly average while those in food technology and graphics were very low.
5. The headteacher and the governing body have set challenging targets for improvement and the school has been successful in meeting these targets. However, setting targets is extremely difficult because many students join or leave the school between Years 7 and 11 so the school population is constantly changing.
6. Standards of literacy are well below the national expectation. In all year groups there are students that are fluent and confident speakers, who communicate well in writing and who have developed a good range of skills in reading. However, the majority of students are much more restricted in their skills. In some instances this reflects their earlier attainment. In other cases it is because students are in the process of learning to use English. Many students tend to speak briefly, cannot explain themselves more fully when questioned, write in simple sentences, possess a limited vocabulary and inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar mar their written work. However, it is notable that as students move up the school their language skills improve and they become better able to gain access to the National Curriculum.

7. Standards of numeracy are well below the national expectation. Although the liaison between departments is developing, the opportunities for students to apply their numeracy skills in subjects vary. In lessons, there were some good examples in art and design where students were preparing their work by measuring page size to draw borders of equal length and dividing page size into equal parts. In science, however, the work did not give students sufficient opportunities to practise with graphs or carry out other calculations.
8. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are average in art and design, French and German; below average in mathematics, history, music, physical education and religious education and well below average in all other subjects. In Years 7 to 9, students achieve well in modern foreign languages and music and satisfactorily in all other subjects.
9. In the work seen, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are well above average in German; average in French and art and design; below average in mathematics, history, physical education and religious education and well below average in all other subjects. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 in mathematics. Achievement is satisfactory in French by the end of Year 11; for those students who follow the full GCSE course, achievement is good. For those doing the short course or the Certificate of Achievement, achievement is only satisfactory because students do not have enough time during the week to complete the work necessary to reach the higher levels and a significant minority of the students does not attend lessons regularly. Students achieve very well in German by the end of Year 11 as they continue to build on what they have achieved by the end of Year 9. Achievement is satisfactory in all other subjects.
10. In Years 10 and 11, students make good progress in many lessons because of the good quality of teaching they receive. However, for many students, poor attendance and unfinished work limits the standards they attain and achievement over time is only satisfactory.
11. The rate at which students make progress is usually a result of the quality of teaching that they receive, so that where teaching is good, the standards reached by students are higher than expected.
12. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. Higher attaining students reach standards that are above average for their age, particularly in Years 10 and 11, because teachers set more challenging and demanding work. However, there is a difference in the progress made by different groups of students in design and technology. Black-Caribbean and Black-African boys in particular do not do as well as others and this is reflected in the GCSE results. The main reason for this is their dislike for writing, partly because they do not want to lose face in front of other students, so that their written work is often shorter than that of other students. The school has recognised the underachievement of these students and a number of extra initiatives such as the Ealing Raising Achievement of African and Caribbean Students and the Black Mentoring Scheme, have been set up and all contribute to ensuring students have extensive care and support as individuals.
13. In the learning support area and the Launch Pad, the unit for a small group of students with challenging behaviour, students make good progress. From a very low base, students who are supported achieve well by the end of Year 9. They rapidly improve literacy and numeracy skills, and gain in self-confidence. By the end of Year 11, the achievement of students who are supported is good. Although standards of literacy and numeracy are well below average, students are more independent learners and improve sufficiently in basic skills to take a number of GCSE and other external examinations, in which they do well in relation to their previous attainment. Students with poor attendance and with extreme social difficulties underachieve, but those who come to school regularly, particularly those who have been at the school since Year 7, make good gains in learning.

14. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. When supported in class they make good progress. However, when in mainstream lessons, teachers do not always match the work closely enough to meet the specific needs of these students. Overall, the majority of students with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. However, there has been a rapid rise in the number of students joining the school who are at an early stage of learning English. The school is beginning to develop strategies to deal with this influx of students but currently the progress of these students is unsatisfactory because there is insufficient support in the classroom to meet their specific needs.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory, and the school is an orderly community. The quality of personal development and relationships is good. Attendance, on the other hand, is poor. In general, attitudes, behaviour and relationships make a positive contribution to learning, thanks to the school's very effective routines for managing students. These prevent the problems and tensions of the outside world from intruding into school life, and enable members of staff to cope with some potentially disruptive individuals. The school is also successful in helping the majority of students to become mature and responsible young adults. Standards of behaviour are higher in older year groups as a result.
16. Overall, students have satisfactory attitudes to the school. Most of them are willing to work and they respond positively in class. They are not particularly well motivated when they first come to the school, nor are they spontaneously keen to learn. They find prolonged concentration difficult and do not like having to listen to teachers for lengthy periods. Their attitudes correlate closely with the quality of teaching. Where lessons are uninspiring and inadequately planned, students are unenthusiastic about learning. They are slow to settle and have difficulty in sustaining concentration. In extreme cases a hard core of very difficult students has negative attitudes and becomes disruptive. This obstructive minority sometimes undermines the learning and progress of the whole class. This was the case in a Year 8 geography lesson, where some boys were unco-operative and badly behaved. On the other hand, students of all ages and ethnic groups respond well when motivated by good teaching. When they are very well taught, they settle down quickly, listen attentively and work constructively. For example, very good teaching in a Year 8 mathematics lesson inspired very good attitudes and behaviour. The teacher set tasks that challenged all attainment levels, and as a result students thought hard about their work, sustained their concentration well and made very good progress.
17. Attitudes to learning are reasonably consistent across the school and do not vary significantly between students of different ethnic groups or levels of attainment. Attitudes were good and enhanced attainment and progress in more than half the lessons observed during the inspection. However there are noticeable differences in the responses of different age groups. Older students show more interest in learning and concentrate better than younger ones. Attitudes were good or better in more than six out of every ten lessons observed in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9 the figure was four out of ten. The difference is due in part to the amount of good teaching in Years 10 and 11. It is also due to the positive impact over time of the school's system of discipline and pastoral care. Many students enter Acton High School with low self-esteem and immature attitudes. They become more mature and willing to work as they grow accustomed to the school's routines and respond to its ethos. The school refers to the process of changing students' attitudes as being 'Actonised'.
18. Although students generally have positive attitudes in the classroom, they do not show enthusiasm for school. A significant number has poor records of attendance and punctuality. There are students in every year group who are regularly late for registration in the mornings. The majority has little sense of urgency about getting to classes on time, and lessons often begin five or more minutes late as a result. In contrast, students take a keen interest in extra-curricular activities and the level of participation in them is good. Students appreciate the opportunity to take part in a wide range of clubs and trips. They give this as one of the reasons why they chose to come to Acton High School. Nearly all of them take part in at least one

extra-curricular activity. Social inclusion is good. Students of different ages, levels of attainment and ethnic background are equally interested and involved.

19. Attendance has improved since the last inspection but is still well below the national average for secondary schools. The rate of unauthorised absence is correspondingly above the national average. Overall, poor attendance has an adverse effect on learning and progress. There were many absentees during the week of inspection. Attendance was extremely low in design and technology lessons in Years 10 and 11, for example. Class registers show that poor attendance is the norm for some groups taking this subject at GCSE. This has a severe impact on attainment and on students' prospects of success in examinations. In the current academic year the attendance rate for the whole school is 88.4 per cent. Only a few tutor groups exceed 90 per cent, and several have attendance rates below 85 per cent. There is no clear pattern. There is no evidence to suggest that different ethnic groups have different rates of attendance. Nor is there any evidence that students attend school less regularly as they grow older. At present Year 11 has a better attendance rate than Year 7.
20. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Students are generally good-natured, and are not unduly boisterous or noisy when out of the classroom and around the site. During the inspection, students behaved well in the lunch hours, even when confined to the buildings for "wet breaks". They were very friendly and welcoming to visitors. The standard of behaviour in lessons is in line with attitudes to learning. It is high where teaching is good, but falls off when the teaching lacks pace and tasks fail to engage students' interest. In general teachers manage behaviour very effectively. This, together with the school's support strategies, conceals the presence of some difficult and emotionally disturbed students, whose behaviour causes occasional problems. There is some bullying and fighting in school, and some instances of theft. Students and parents say that bullying is not a widespread problem because members of staff quickly deal with it. The rate of exclusion has fallen since the last inspection. The school permanently excluded only one student last year which is well below the national average. The number of permanent exclusions has risen to seven this year, largely as a result of two serious incidents.
21. Relationships are good throughout the school. Relations between the many and varied ethnic groups are harmonious and inclusive. Students from different ethnic backgrounds sit next to one another in class and mix well during the lunch hour. Relations between students and adults are good overall, and in the majority of lessons are based on mutual respect and courtesy. These qualities are sometimes lacking in students' dealings with each other. On occasions younger students refuse to listen to their peers or to consider any views other than their own, as was the case in an information and communication technology lesson where Year 7 students were excessively argumentative. In general, collaborative skills are good, especially in older year groups. Students are mutually supportive and are able to work well co-operatively. For example, boys and girls and different ethnic groups work successfully together in music lessons.
22. Other aspects of personal development are satisfactory. When necessary students take responsibility for their own learning. They say that they enjoy the chance to use their initiative in research projects and when organising their coursework. On the other hand, a significant number of students are over-dependent on teachers for support. This was evident in a Year 11 history lesson, where the boys in the class needed much guidance from their teacher and showed little initiative. Out of class, students get very good opportunities to exercise responsibility and to broaden their horizons, and they make the most of them. They speak enthusiastically of the events that the school council organises and of the influence that it has in the running of the school. They also think highly of the new student mentor scheme. They see it as a means by which students can share problems and give one another effective support. Students generally show adequate respect for other people's beliefs. Their understanding of other cultures deepens as they progress up the school. Students in Year 11 regard the diverse ethnic mix of the school as one of its strengths and a good reason for coming to it. This is a good example of the progress that students make in their personal development. Many of them come to Acton High School with limited social and personal skills, but leave at the end of Year 11 as mature and sensible young adults.

23. Inspectors' judgements are broadly in line with parents' views on attitudes and behaviour. The majority of those who completed the questionnaire and attended the meeting with the registered inspector said that their children liked school and wanted to learn. Most parents thought that behaviour was good, but nearly three in ten disagreed. Inspectors agree that there is a small hard core of students who are potentially disruptive and can hinder learning and progress in some lessons.
24. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Behaviour has improved and the number of exclusions has fallen. Attendance has risen from around 83 per cent to just over 88 per cent.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

25. The quality of teaching has improved since the school was last inspected. At the time of the last inspection, only four out of five lessons were taught to a satisfactory standard; currently, only one lesson in twenty is less than satisfactory. As at the time of the last inspection, teaching is noticeably more successful in Years 10 and 11 than Years 7 to 9.
26. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good in design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and music; teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects except science where it is unsatisfactory. The situation in science has just changed and three teachers, including the head of department, have recently left for promotion. A third of the teaching posts in science are filled by temporary teachers, all of whom are very new to the school and are either not science specialists or are inexperienced in teaching in this country. The temporary teachers themselves are keen to provide good lessons for students. However, there are problems, mostly because some classes have been unsettled by a succession of different temporary teachers who were required to cover for long-term illness, jury service and five staff in total who have left for promotion during last year. When teaching is unsatisfactory in science, students do not learn enough in the course of the lesson. Usually this is because the teacher does not manage students effectively and the unsatisfactory behaviour of some students slows the pace of their own learning and that of many others in the class.
27. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good in mathematics, art and design, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and religious education; teaching is satisfactory in all other subjects.
28. The main reason for the quality of teaching improving is the significant amount of in-service training that teachers have received and the good monitoring systems that are in place. In-service training has been provided on teaching and learning techniques and behaviour management. The latter of these has had a major impact on how teachers deal with some very challenging students and the management of students is now a real strength of the teaching. All teachers are very firm, but also polite and courteous; they avoid confrontation exceptionally well and never leave students feeling aggrieved. In one lesson, for example, a student started talking while the teacher was addressing the class. The teacher immediately stopped and politely asked the student what the first rule of the classroom was. When the student refused to answer, the teacher asked other students to help the student, and when the student agreed that they were in the wrong the teacher immediately asked the student if they would read the next passage to the class. Throughout the incident, the teacher was exceptionally polite and reinforced the ideal of having respect for others. This last point has a considerable impact on the attitudes of students, which improve considerably during their time in school. When necessary teachers do intervene to tell students off, but most teachers have refined this to such a point by Year 10 that they do not need to raise their voice to reprimand a student, a stare or a pointed finger are enough to diffuse the situation. Teachers rarely have to wait long for silence to descend and, because their instructions are clear, students get on quickly with the work that they have been set.
29. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects. For example, in design and technology, teachers know their subject well and their enthusiasm and commitment raise

interest and motivation. Good use is made of teachers' experience in preparing students for examinations and in the best ways for students to score good marks and to show what they know.

30. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory. For example, in art and design, literacy skills are generally good and frequently addressed in lessons through the introduction and explanation of new terms or specialist vocabulary. However, in modern foreign languages, opportunities for students to read materials such as magazines, books or articles are rare as resources for this are scarce. Students are heavily dependent on the teacher for help although they will use the dictionaries available in each class if reminded to do so. In many subjects, especially in Years 7 to 9, the teachers have difficulty meeting the needs of all their students, particularly of those students who find the language difficult.
31. The opportunity for students to apply their numeracy skills in subjects varies. Good opportunities are provided in art and design where students were preparing their work by measuring page size to draw borders of equal length and dividing page size into equal parts. In science, however, the work did not give students sufficient opportunities to practise with graphs or carry out other calculations.
32. One reason why teaching is better in Year 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 is that teachers plan their lessons using a wider variety of teaching methods and have higher expectations of the older students. In Years 7 to 9 work is not always matched well enough to specific individual needs. This applies particularly to students who are at an early stage of learning English. Overall, there is insufficient classroom support for teachers to be fully effective in meeting the challenge of the recent large influx of students at an early stage of learning English. By the time students reach Year 10, the school has been successful in helping the majority of students to change their attitudes to education and teachers begin to provide greater challenge in the work, particularly for higher attaining students who achieve well at the school.
33. One weakness in the teaching in Years 7 to 9 is the restricted range of teaching methods used. Teaching was seen to be less effective when the task was over-prescribed and failed to provide opportunities for exploration and extension, and subsequently work produced was too similar and lacking originality. Teachers are reluctant to use methods that involve a great deal of student participation because students can be rather immature and many younger students have not yet learnt to enter into a debate in an orderly manner. On the other hand, in Years 10 and 11, in the best lessons, teachers enabled students to discover for themselves, using students' own experiences to aid development of understanding. For example, in a Year 10 business studies lesson, a wide variety of techniques were used that enabled students to put forward their own interpretation of the needs of various stakeholders in a company. In this lesson students displayed mature attitudes and there was a sense of enjoyment and achievement.
34. Teachers tend to increase the pace of learning in Years 10 and 11, safe in the knowledge that most students will respond positively to the challenges provided. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics class, a brisk pace was set, students were well motivated and a large amount of work was completed. Satisfactory use is made of the available in-class support staff. However, where support staff are deployed to work in subject specialisms to support students at an early stage of learning English they tend to work in isolation within the class and there are not enough opportunities for them to work in partnership with the teaching staff. This is hampering the progress of students at an early stage of learning English. Teachers make satisfactory use of the resources available to them. Currently some information and communication technology is used in lesson time for tasks such as reading materials on the Internet but this is an area that is currently underdeveloped because there are not enough computers.
35. The marking of students' work is unsatisfactory because there is not enough evaluation of the content and too little support to help students improve accuracy. In a small proportion of students' books, which were seen, the teacher's marking was unsatisfactory or had simply not been done. This meant that students did not have the benefit of feedback from the teacher and

were uncertain how to correct mistakes. The quality and presentation of the students' work also deteriorated.

36. Inspectors support the view of parents who think that the provision of homework is unsatisfactory. The homework diaries certainly indicate that homework is set erratically and, throughout the inspection, opportunities for teachers to set homework were missed. In design and technology, teachers always set homework, even to the extent of setting the tasks for the entire term in the first week. However, homework is not always set on a regular basis and students have not got into the habit of doing their homework, so often the response is poor with only a small proportion of students completing it. This means that teachers are forced to use strategies that take account of the high proportion of students in each lesson that will not have done their homework in preparation for the lesson.
37. The quality of teaching of students with learning and behavioural difficulties is good and provides good guidance to students in their learning and in their welfare. Teachers are very supportive of students and sensitive to their needs. Procedures for assessment and its use in planning are good. Students are regularly assessed in lessons and, in the longer term, through individual education plans whose targets are precise. Specialist staff and some subject teachers use these targets very well in planning work for students, but other subject teachers give insufficient attention to the targets and therefore students do not make the progress they should in that subject.
38. Teaching within the Accessing Language Achieving Potential (ALAP) department is a mixture of one to one, and group work. There is a six-week induction programme for all new arrivals. This is good practice. However, although a framework has been written, the programme lacks rigour and emphasis on the systematic development of language and results in unsatisfactory progress being made by students who are at an early stage of learning English.

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

39. The school provides a very good curriculum that meets the very wide range of needs of its students particularly well.
40. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good. Providing separate drama lessons enhances the basic curriculum for all students, while higher attainers can study two languages in Year 9. The most significant strength, however, is the way that the school has planned a course for those students who are at risk of being excluded from school altogether. These students are taken off their usual timetable for a period of six weeks when they receive specific support aimed at changing their attitudes to school. This support takes several different forms, including working with individual mentors and attending courses outside of the school. The course is proving to be a great success at keeping students in education who otherwise may well drop out of the system altogether. After the six weeks, the students return to their usual classes, but their progress is closely monitored to ensure that they do not slip back into their old ways.
41. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good. A great deal of careful thought has gone into planning courses that are relevant to the students and that meet their needs particularly well. The school offers three main choices of curriculum 'packages' as well as a course specifically designed for students from all over the borough who have recently arrived in the country and another for students who have been persistent truants or lost interest in education. One of the three packages offers a wide range of GCSE subjects aimed at middle and higher attainers, while a second package offers more vocational options for these students. The third package is for lower attaining students and offers a combination of GCSE and vocational courses as well as specific elements aimed at improving the basic skills, such as how to read a roadmap, which they will need in later life. The great strength of the curriculum is the way that it has been planned to meet the very diverse range of needs of the many different groups of students present in the school and to maximise their potential for success.

42. Most students study all the required subjects of the National Curriculum throughout the school. However, the school makes good use of the facility to disapply some students from some subjects so that they can either receive extra support in basic skills or so that they can study a particular subject in more depth, most commonly the expressive arts. So it is that the school meets statutory requirements in all subjects, although not enough use is made of computers in lessons other than information and communication technology. Some subjects are offered to GCSE level on an occasional basis, so that if numbers wishing to study the subject in one year are small, the students can be combined with another year group to provide a viable number, for example, in music. Other subjects, such as GCSE statistics, are offered to the very highest attainers when appropriate.
43. The strategy for teaching literacy is satisfactory. The school has a literacy co-ordinator, a policy has been agreed and appropriate training for the whole staff has taken place. However, there are significant variations across departments.
44. In English, reading and writing is satisfactory. In particular, students are given good opportunities to write in a variety of styles in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 they understand the value of redrafting their work. The school is implementing the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for literacy. This has meant, for example, that the lower attaining students in Year 7 are being taught progress units in special catch-up groups. However, because of the large number of students requiring these progress units, instead of all students being taught the progress units early on in the academic year, some students have to be taught them later on in the year.
45. In most subjects, students are introduced to “key words” and this helps to provide them with a sound technical vocabulary. Whilst some opportunities are provided for wider reading and research, for example in design and technology, generally such opportunities are more limited than might be expected. Overall, few opportunities are provided for students to read aloud to their teachers. This is a particular disadvantage when such a high proportion of students are lower attainers or still learning to speak English and need help in basic techniques to improve word recognition, such as the use of phonics. In English students learn to write in a variety of styles. In design and technology good opportunities are provided to develop annotating skills and students are taught the appropriate terms to use when evaluating products. In science and history some opportunities are provided for extended writing. However, more opportunities in the full range of subjects could be created for students to use and extend their skills. There is inconsistency over the extent to which inaccuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar is being addressed.
46. The contribution that subjects make to developing students’ competence and skills in understanding and using numbers and data is generally satisfactory. Although the liaison between departments is developing, the opportunities for students to apply their mathematical skills in subjects vary.
47. The provision for personal, social and health education, including careers, is satisfactory. The course includes all the required elements of drugs and sex education and these are taught to an appropriate depth, with a good stress on the moral aspects of sex education in particular. The course is one area that benefits from the very good links that the school has with the local community and many visitors to the school provide very important contributions to lessons. The local education and business partnership is responsible for much of the work in setting up courses for students who persistently truant and parents, too, play a significant role in these courses. The partnership also supplies booklets and helps arrange placements for students on their works experience. The school has satisfactory links with local primary schools, but many students at the school have not attended a primary school in this country so the school does not have information about the standards reached previously by a significant proportion of the students. Links with local colleges are good and are used to provide more appropriate courses for a small number of students.

48. Curricular provision for students with special educational needs is good across the school and very good in specialist areas. In subjects such as design technology and maths, provision helps students to learn well. In other lessons, the progress of students with learning difficulties is similar to that of other students. A weakness is there are not enough different tasks to help these students to learn. In specialist areas, strong emphasis is placed on improving literacy and numeracy skills so that students can make progress in all subjects. In Years 10 and 11, the Youth Award Scheme gives students good opportunities to develop these basic skills, as well as social skills.
49. The school provides an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. Clubs start before school with breakfast club and continue during the lunchtime with a truly remarkable range of activities. The opportunities include clubs for specific subjects such as food and drama, sporting activities ranging from the traditional such as cricket to more unusual like kickboxing. There are also general interest clubs such as culture club and video club as well as highly specialised activities such as French music and 'street jazz dance'. Those who fall behind with their work are catered for with activities such as catch-up club and the mathematics clinic. On one day a week alone there are 22 different activities offered for students, planned to target different groups of students so that all have some activity that should be of interest. Special events are also organised, such as 'DJ club computer music mixing' and 'build your own robot' as well as trips to areas such as Snowdonia and Bristol so that students can gain experience of other environments.
50. The curriculum is of a better standard than that at the time of the previous inspection. The good work previously evident in matching the curriculum to the needs of students has been extended still further and the major weakness in information and communication technology has been addressed. The one area of weakness that remains is the use of computers in lessons other than information and communication technology. However, the school has already put plans into place to increase the number of computers so that there will be enough for more teachers to make use of them in their everyday lessons.
51. The overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
52. Provision for the spiritual development of students is satisfactory. The various assemblies deal with a wide range of topical issues and moral themes and often allow students to reflect on their own and other's experiences. However, the school does not provide an act of worship each day for every student and therefore does not fulfil statutory requirements in this respect. Students help to organise a Muslim prayer room during the month of Ramadan. Subjects that promote spiritual development include religious education where students examine the religious beliefs of the main faiths represented in Britain, and history where, for example, students considered a Bob Marley song to illustrate religious tensions in Northern Ireland. Generally, however, opportunities to develop spiritual awareness within subjects of the curriculum arise spontaneously or as the result of individual initiative; mostly they are missed.
53. The provision for students' moral development is good. Teachers and other adults in the school continually reinforce basic moral principles throughout the daily life of the school. Adults provide good role models for students. They treat students with respect and kindness, discuss issues of right and wrong and try to explain why one course of action is more acceptable than another. Students feel safe in school and believe that staff know them well. Support for refugee students is effective and helps recent arrivals settle quickly. This was evident in a Year 10 religious education lesson where every student was a recently arrived refugee. In history students discuss the morality of carpet-bombing Germany during the Second World War while in religious education they examine the concept of a just war. Following the recent visit of Stephen Lawrence's father to the school, students explored a variety of racial issues and the mural in the school foyer, entitled 'Unity and Respect' reflects some of this work. Students are encouraged to maintain the rules of fair play when engaged in sporting activities.
54. The school makes very good provision for the social development of its students. There are many opportunities in subjects and in the excellent provision for extra-curricular activities for students to co-operate and work with each other. There are opportunities for students to

exercise responsibility through, for example, the school council, the Year 11 Yearbook and Prom, and the “buddy” system for recent arrivals to the school. Students are consulted on the school improvement plan, raise money for a variety of charitable causes, and organise a prayer room for Muslim students during Ramadan. They regularly take part in assemblies. Good attention is paid to developing students’ social skills in the Launch Pad project.

55. The provision for students’ cultural development is good overall. Regular visits take place in history and French, for example. There have been regular artists and writers in residence. The school makes very good provision for its students to live in a multi-cultural and multi-faith Britain. This was very evident, for example, during the week of the inspection where students showed very good levels of tolerance and respect for other people’s values and beliefs. The school has worked very hard to achieve this level of racial and religious harmony. A special assembly, for example, was held to uphold the school’s values following the tragic events of September 11th. Black History Month is celebrated annually in the school. The school clearly values the wide range of cultures represented by its students and staff: it is one of very few schools locally where Traveller students continue on into Years 10 and 11, for example.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

56. The standard of pastoral care is high. Arrangements to ensure students’ health, safety and general welfare are effective, and they receive good educational and personal support. Members of staff monitor students’ academic performance and personal development satisfactorily, and follow this up with appropriate guidance on progress. The school’s pastoral system helps to raise students’ self-esteem and in doing so improves their behaviour and standards of attainment.
57. All students receive good support and guidance at crucial times in their school career. There are good procedures for introducing the new Year 7 to the school and briefing them on school routines. As a result they cope well with the transfer to secondary education. The Year 7 residential visit plays a valuable part in helping students to get to know one another and to make friends. The school also makes effective arrangements to deal with the large number of students who arrive at different times during the year. Students who enrol after the start of the academic year or join older year groups receive good pastoral support, including their own “buddy” to befriend and guide them. The school’s programme of personal, social and health education gives students sound guidance on coping with personal problems, such as how to deal with bullying, and making decisions. Year 9 receive good information and advice before making their choice of GCSE and vocational courses. The quality of careers education and guidance is satisfactory overall and prepares students adequately for life outside school. The whole of Year 11 receives two weeks’ work experience. Older students also benefit from individual interviews with advisers from the local careers service.
58. Personal support is good and students appreciate what the school does for them. They know that, if they have problems, they can turn for help to many members of staff, including form tutors, year team leaders, learning mentors, the education social workers, and the school counsellor. The current year team leaders are relatively inexperienced, but are dedicated and enthusiastic and have already acquired a good understanding of their role. Form tutors generally make adequate use of tutor periods to support the students in their group. They also see them for one-to-one interviews during the school’s review days. They use this time effectively to discuss students’ progress towards individual targets. Students who feel uncomfortable talking to members of staff have easy access to alternative sources of advice. They can discuss their concerns about bullying with peer mentors, for example. The school’s good links with the local community make a valuable contribution to support and guidance and to social inclusion. The Ealing Education Business Partnership provides professional and volunteer mentors, and the school’s African-Caribbean students have access to a local mentoring scheme which seeks to raise the achievement of black students. The school also works closely with agencies and community workers, such as Somali Youth Workers, the Travellers’ Service, and workers with ‘looked-after’ children.

59. The school's procedures for promoting good behaviour are one of its strengths. They are thorough and very effective. There is a clear code of conduct, which is prominently displayed throughout the school. As a result students know what is expected of them. They also understand the system of sanctions and rewards and in general respond positively to it. This is shown in the improvement in students' behaviour as they progress up the school. Formal policies on behaviour and discipline are well thought out and give members of staff helpful guidelines on managing behaviour, recording and referring incidents, and applying sanctions and rewards. Teachers have received very good training in behaviour management, and they put this to good use in lessons. They use their skills to deal successfully with some very difficult and potentially disruptive students. Occasionally, inexperienced teachers fail to cope with poor behaviour. When this happens there are well-established routines for referring students to the head of department, and in extreme cases, removing them from the classroom. The school makes every effort to avoid excluding students. Individuals who persist in behaving badly and are in danger of being excluded receive special help and guidance from members of staff, mentors and the staff of outside agencies. These support programmes have been successful in reducing the number of exclusions. They have kept problem students in education without disrupting the learning of others. If the school has to use exclusion as a sanction, it does so as a last resort, following proper procedures, and for justifiable reasons, such as the safety of students and staff.
60. Procedures for monitoring and recording attendance are good. Form tutors register students at the beginning of school sessions in accordance with legal requirements. Teachers also take registers regularly in lessons, and there are occasional spot checks to discourage internal truancy. The school is aware that its absence rates are unacceptably high, and has therefore introduced measures to promote good attendance. It provides a special work related curriculum for disaffected students who would otherwise drop out of education altogether. It employs two education social workers to deal with absenteeism. They target students with unsatisfactory rates of attendance and work closely with their families in an effort to get them back into lessons. The school analyses attendance by tutor and year groups, but not by ethnic group. It is aware that it needs to do this and has made a recent appointment, to undertake this task. As far as possible, the school makes first day contact with the homes of students who are absent without explanation. It is conscious that its measures have not yet achieved satisfactory rates of attendance, and is therefore looking at ways of strengthening them. Its proposals include the use of electronic registration and employing an agency to make first day contact with home.
61. Arrangements for child protection are good. Members of staff are well briefed on the subject and know the procedures that they must follow in the event of a disclosure. Appropriate procedures are in place to secure a safe environment for students, staff and visitors. The school has sufficient first aiders and all necessary risk assessments and checks of equipment have been carried out.
62. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. Good standards of care have been maintained and procedures for promoting good attendance and behaviour have been strengthened.
63. The school's procedures for assessing students' academic progress are satisfactory, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Students come from a wide variety of schools, including from other countries, and therefore information on prior achievements is not always available. On arrival, students are tested to establish what they know and can do and the scores reflect the fact that a significant number of students have English as an additional language, many being at the early stages of learning English. The information is also used to place students in the appropriate groups for subjects such as mathematics. GCSE results are analysed centrally and the data is used to indicate areas for further development such as the need to improve the performance of African-Caribbean students. This has led to the introduction of a local scheme that includes objectives such as adapting teaching styles and materials and addressing poor behaviour.
64. The school has review days when tutors check on individual students' academic progress and set targets with them but this is not always reinforced by students talking to their subject

teachers and planning specific things they need to do to improve. In mathematics and music, however, where assessment procedures are good, students' progress is clearly tracked.

65. The school makes satisfactory use of assessment data to influence curriculum planning. Results of National Curriculum tests and other data are usually taken into account when planning the options available in Year 10 so that students have access to a range of course and accreditation suited to their needs, including the Certificate of Achievement and full or short course GCSE's.
66. Annual reviews are well organised and documented, and meet the statutory requirements of students with Statements of Special Education Need. The school receives good support from outside agencies such as the educational psychologist and counsellor, the education welfare officer and Ealing Business Partnership. They help in assessing students' needs and contribute well to their progress. Teachers work hard to keep parents informed of students' progress and to foster close links with primary schools sending students to Acton High School.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

67. The response to the survey of parents' views was very low. Most parents who replied, or attended the meeting with the registered inspector, are satisfied with the school. They say that they find staff approachable and helpful, and they are pleased with the progress that their children make. They approve of the way that students are encouraged to work hard and to do their best, and they say that their children like school. However, four out of ten parents are unhappy with the amount of homework, and more than one in five are dissatisfied with standards of behaviour, the quality of teaching and information on their children's progress. In general, inspectors agree with the parents who approve of the work of the school, but accept that those who are unhappy with behaviour and information on progress have some grounds for their concern even though the behaviour management of students is a strength of the school. Inspectors support the view of parents who think that the provision of homework is unsatisfactory.
68. Partnership with parents and carers is a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. The school is well aware of the benefits of strong parental support for students' learning and therefore works hard to encourage parents' involvement. It has satisfactory policies and procedures for developing home/school links, but gets a limited response. Only a minority of parents is actively supportive. Relatively few have a major involvement to their children's learning and progress.
69. Information for parents is satisfactory overall. The school's arrangements have several strengths. The prospectus provides parents of new students with much useful information on the curriculum, code of conduct and school routines. The "Welcome" evening for Year 7 in the autumn term gives them the opportunity to establish good relationships with the Year Team Leader and form tutors. The system of year teams who remain with the same students from Year 7 to Year 11 enhances home/school links. Pastoral staff get to know students' families well, keep them informed of any problems, and wherever possible co-operate closely with them. Parents are aware of this and feel free to approach members of staff with queries and concerns, as the responses to the questionnaire show. Student planners provide a day-to-day line of communication between parents and form tutors. When properly used, they give parents a good indication of what children are learning and what teachers expect of them. They also contain information on the school's aims, values and procedures. Relatively few parents and carers write comments or questions in their children's planners, although the majority signs them each week. The school provides a good flow of information on matters such as forthcoming events and students' achievements. In addition to the regular school newsletter, parents receive many letters from subject departments and pastoral staff, and they are always consulted about the children's future, for example when students in Year 9 decide on GCSE options. The school also has adequate arrangements for sampling parents' opinions on proposed changes in policies.

70. The formal system for reporting on students' progress is satisfactory. The school aims to make formal contact with parents at least three times a year through annual written reports, interim progress checks and consultation evenings. The annual reports are the weakest element. They do not give parents a sufficiently detailed picture of students' learning and of targets for further progress. Teachers make too many comments about attitudes and behaviour and too few about the student's progress in the subject. There are no specific targets for improvement or any guidance on how parents can help their children to make progress. Consultation evenings, progress checks and review days compensate for the deficiencies in the annual written reports. They give parents good opportunities to obtain information on their children's progress and to discuss it with teachers.
71. The majority of parents and carers support the school. A minority is very difficult and hostile, but they are untypical. Most parents want their children to do well, even if they are not active partners in their learning. They sign the home/school agreement, check homework diaries and co-operate with members of staff when there are problems with their child's attendance, attitudes to work or behaviour. They attend consultation evenings in good numbers and are interested discussing their children's progress with teachers. However, they show little interest in curriculum evenings. Relatively few parents are involved in students' learning and the life of the school. Many are unable to help their children with homework because of their own limited English language skills or their economic circumstances. For instance, they do not have a quiet area for study at home, nor can they provide books and computers. A small but dedicated number of parents actively support the school. They run the Acton High School Association and organise successful social and fund raising events. Parents also run an e-mail network, known as the "E-group". This performs a valuable service by circulating information about school activities.
72. The school's partnership with parents is inclusive. There are good arrangements for engaging the support of parents and carers from the ethnic minorities, and from socially disadvantaged families. The school makes good use of outside agencies for this purpose, such as Somali Youth Workers and members of the Acton Parent/Student Partnership. It also has satisfactory procedures for informing parents who do not speak English of their children's progress. An appropriate person is always available to act as an interpreter at consultation evenings.
73. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. It has continued its efforts to develop strong home/school links, but many parents still have little involvement with their children's learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

74. The quality of leadership and management of the school is good. The newly appointed headteacher is providing good leadership. As acting headteacher for the past 18 months she has steered the school through difficult times during which the illness and eventual death of the previous headteacher had a dramatic impact on the school. She has now firmly established her leadership. There is a clear sense of direction and a purposeful atmosphere in which all students are encouraged to give of their best. A very good inclusion philosophy permeates the school and there is a strong emphasis placed on raising students' self-esteem at the same time as promoting academic success.
75. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have been instrumental in bringing about a large number of initiatives for coping with challenging students and an ever changing student population. The result of these initiatives is an inclusive approach, which helps to bring about the significant change in students' attitudes to education as they move through the school.
76. The headteacher has the confidence of the staff and is supported fully by a good senior management team. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a good capacity to succeed. New systems and structures have been introduced that provide a good framework for the work of the school. The role of the senior management team is being redesigned in order to create discrete leadership areas for the school's strategic development and also to create a

robust programme of school improvement. This fundamental change of focus has created an effective team, each of whom now takes line management responsibility for subject areas. This realignment of roles and responsibilities is working well and has resulted in good monitoring procedures being established although these are as yet not applied consistently at middle management level. The senior managers that are responsible for the development of teaching and learning, staff development, social inclusion, Years 7 to 9 and the learning support unit carry out their roles very well.

77. The school has been successfully steered through a number of major initiatives since the previous inspection. The school is now part of an Excellence in Cities project, the impact of which is wide ranging. The school has made good use of specific grants associated with this project. For example, the funding for the new learning support area and the Launch Pad has been used very effectively. The new City Learning Centre is soon to open, which will provide students with access to a wide range of modern facilities including information and communication technology.
78. The school's aims are relevant to the needs of the students and permeate much of the work of the school. This is a school that embraces the local community fully. The school works hard to recognise the many problems that students bring to school and the difficulties those students who may be refugees or asylum seekers have.
79. The leadership and management that is provided by many middle managers is good. The school has made many good appointments. There are examples of good leadership and management at this level. For instance, the management of mathematics since the last inspection has been good and continues to be so under the leadership of the current head of department, which has led to an improvement in the standards attained by students. However, the monitoring of the work of subjects is not sufficiently rigorous by some heads of department. This has resulted in the wealth of data that the school has been using inconsistently across subjects to set targets. Also, the inconsistency in the quality of marking and homework is not always picked up by heads of department. The current year team leaders are relatively inexperienced, but are dedicated and enthusiastic and have already acquired a good understanding of their role.
80. The learning support department is well managed and co-ordinated. There is a clear commitment by all teachers to help students improve. A very good team spirit prevails amongst the staff. The co-ordinator, an assistant headteacher, is ably supported by a deputy co-ordinator and by dedicated teachers and learning support assistants. The management of support for English as an additional language is satisfactory. The head of department is currently well supported by an external consultant who is helping her to review current organisation and establish more rigorous procedures for managing and monitoring provision.
81. The governors have a good understanding of the school's work and they have identified many of the strengths and weaknesses noted in this report. The governing body is effective and has established close links with the school. This has enabled governors to gain expertise and an understanding of the work of the school, and a good insight into the school's strengths. The committee structure is effective in supporting both short-term and long-term planning, and scrutinising the work of the school and the standards being attained. The governing body fulfils its statutory duties with the exception of ensuring the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
82. The system and cycle of school development planning are satisfactory and have resulted in a school improvement plan that is of sound quality, focuses on raising attainment and sets a clear agenda for improvement. The school's priorities are appropriate and many of the issues noted in this report are highlighted in the school improvement plan.
83. The school applies the principles of best value well and continues the good work noted in the previous report. The headteacher and the governing body have set challenging targets for improvement. The school compares its performance with similar attaining schools in the

authority and nationally. The school actively seeks the views of its parent body. External bureaucracy does not unduly affect the school.

84. The school makes satisfactory use of new technology. The school makes use of computers within its administrative systems. Currently, however, there is no system of registering students' attendance electronically at the start of each lesson although the school has recently bid for such a system. The school does not yet have the information and communication technology to support students who wish to work on their own.
85. The financial planning in the school is good and the school makes good use of its available resources and specific grants. The school has clearly defined systems for tendering and ordering. The last auditor's report noted few minor areas for improvement and these have been implemented. The school receives a budget that is above the national average although this does include a significant amount of funding for being part of the Excellence in Cities project. A tight rein is kept on spending by the administrative staff and the senior management team. The school currently has significant surplus reserves although most of this is earmarked for new computers and the ongoing redecoration of the school. The school is providing satisfactory value for money.
86. Although there are sufficient number of suitably qualified teaching staff available to fulfil the requirements of the curriculum in most subjects the current provision is unsatisfactory because the school has acute difficulties in meeting its needs in science. This has adversely affected the continuity of teaching and contributed to unsatisfactory learning of students in Years 7 to 9 in the subject. The school is working hard to fill the vacancies. There are insufficient numbers of educational support staff to meet the particular needs of the large number of recently arrived students who are at an early stage of learning English and this reduces progress and quality of learning experience. The school has tried to recruit but there have been a limited number of applicants with the appropriate skills.
87. Arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school are good. There is a full programme of training for newly qualified teachers and the quality of teaching is carefully monitored and supported by senior staff through lesson observations. The school is very successful in training future teachers and has well-established systems in place to meet training needs. Many young, successful trainees have been appointed to the school and have subsequently proved to be effective teachers.
88. The school's procedures for performance management and professional development of staff are good. The school's priorities are identified through the development planning process and leads to teachers planning subject and individual needs. Teachers are well supported through training at local and national level and the outcomes are shared with others in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. There are good arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching by senior managers although at middle management level these observations need to be more sharply focused on whether marking and the setting of homework are being carried out in line with school policy.
89. Overall, the resources available in the school are satisfactory. Improvements have been made to the library since the last inspection and the newly replaced stock of reference materials is of a high quality. Students can also access the Internet for research; the library and resource area are well used by students both during lessons and in the lunch hour but the stock of books is low. In departments students do not always have a textbook to take home but there are sufficient for class work. There are currently insufficient computers for students to use during lessons but the upgrading of the school network to allow the use of wireless laptops in all classrooms and a new building project which is currently underway will resolve this problem as it will house new computer suites. The current lack of computers is particularly affecting the teaching of information and communication technology as students often have to wait to get access to a computer during lessons and so do not complete as much work. The lack is also affecting the types of research that can be carried out in science and in music the keyboards are outdated. The school already has plans to spend a significant proportion of its budget

surplus on providing more computers. Provision of resources has improved since the previous inspection report; fewer subjects are affected by a lack of book-based resources but the issue of lack access to information and communication technology resources remains.

90. The adequacy of the accommodation to meet the needs of the curriculum is satisfactory. The school occupies a large site and has sufficient accommodation for requirements of the curriculum. Amongst the various accommodation is separate provision for learning/behaviour support and the significant number of students, new to the school, who require specific induction, language support and mentoring. The distances between buildings mean that students are sometimes late to lessons and although there is a 'five minute rule', the problem persists.
91. The school is close to the limit of its capacity for the number of students on roll and has recently secured significant funding for the newly re-furbished City Learning Centre 'CLC'. Provision for subjects is broadly appropriate and sufficient with the exception of physical education. In physical education some indoor facilities, the gymnasium and changing rooms, are in poor condition. The condition of accommodation varies according to the time since it was decorated, however, the re-decoration programme can now proceed as the extensive roof and window replacement project is complete.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

92. To raise further the standards of work and the quality of education provided, the governors and senior management team should:
- *Improve the quality of teaching in science in Years 7 to 9 by replacing those teachers who have recently left the school with experienced or well qualified teachers (see paragraphs 26, 86 and 135).
 - *Ensure there are enough support staff and that they, along with all teachers, are trained to meet the specific needs of those students who are at an early stage of learning English (see paragraphs 14, 34, 38, 109, 101, 107, 112 and 130).
 - *Improve attendance by implementing the proposed systems for electronic registration at the start of lessons and improving systems for make first day contact with home (see paragraphs 1, 10, 19, 60, 84, 120, 144 and 157).
 - Ensure teachers match the work more closely to the needs of all students (see paragraphs 32).
 - *Improve the quality of marking by introducing a more systematic approach to monitoring the quality of marking by middle managers (see paragraphs 35, 160, 169, 186 and 199).

Minor weaknesses

*Ensure homework is set appropriately and in line with the school's homework policy (see paragraphs 36, 191 and 154).

Improve the quality of the written reports to parents by providing an adequate summary of their child's attainment and progress (see paragraph 70).

Areas noted for improvement noted with an asterisk are already identified in the School Improvement Plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | 162 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students | 65 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 1 | 28 | 59 | 65 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 1 | 17 | 36 | 40 | 6 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's students

| Students on the school's roll | Y7– Y11 |
|---|---------|
| Number of students on the school's roll | 1122 |
| Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals | 567 |

| Special educational needs | Y7– Y11 |
|---|---------|
| Number of students with statements of special educational needs | 25 |
| Number of students on the school's special educational needs register | 471 |

| English as an additional language | No of students |
|---|----------------|
| Number of students with English as an additional language | 454 |

| Student mobility in the last school year | No of students |
|--|----------------|
| Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 103 |
| Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 85 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|------|
| School data | 10.4 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|-----|
| School data | 1.9 |

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| National comparative data | 8.1 |
|---------------------------|-----|

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| 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 (Year 9)

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2001 | 136 | 82 | 218 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 39 | 61 | 42 |
| | Girls | 41 | 34 | 32 |
| | Total | 80 | 95 | 74 |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | School | 37(49) | 44(39) | 34(25) |
| | National | 64 (63) | 66 (65) | 66 (59) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | School | 6(15) | 19(19) | 9(9) |
| | National | 31 (28) | 43 (42) | 34 (30) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above | Boys | 40 | 65 | 37 |
| | Girls | 40 | 38 | 27 |
| | Total | 80 | 103 | 64 |
| Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above | School | 37(64) | 48(51) | 29(n/a) |
| | National | 65 (64) | 68 (66) | 64 (33) |
| Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above | School | 9(9) | 16(18) | 4(n/a) |
| | National | 31 (31) | 42 (39) | 33 (29) |

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

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

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2001 | 138 | 82 | 220 |

| 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 | 35 | 108 | 126 |
| | Girls | 29 | 70 | 80 |
| | Total | 64 | 178 | 206 |
| Percentage of students achieving the standard specified | School | 29(36) | 81(84) | 93(89) |
| | 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 | 29.0(31.9) |
| | 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 | 121 |
| Black – African heritage | 130 |
| Black – other | 43 |
| Indian | 55 |
| Pakistani | 49 |
| Bangladeshi | 7 |
| Chinese | 2 |
| White | 492 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 223 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 38 | 1 |
| Black – African heritage | 16 | |
| Black – other | 17 | |
| Indian | 2 | |
| Pakistani | 1 | |
| Bangladeshi | | |
| Chinese | | |
| White | 29 | |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 22 | |

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 - Y 11

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 69.6 |
| Number of students per qualified teacher | 16.1 |

Education support staff: Y7 - Y 11

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 6 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 226 |

Deployment of teachers: Y7 - Y 11

| | |
|---|----|
| Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes | 78 |
|---|----|

Average teaching group size: Y7 - Y 11

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Key Stage 3 | 25.2 |
| Key Stage 4 | 16.7 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 28 |
|--|----|

Financial information

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

| | £ |
|--|-----------|
| Total income | 3,763,307 |
| Total expenditure | 3,460,314 |
| Expenditure per student | 2,989 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 61,824 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 364,817 |

| | |
|--|------|
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 33.2 |
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 5 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 1 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 4 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 1122 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 64 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 47 | 38 | 8 | 6 | 2 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 48 | 34 | 8 | 6 | 3 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 42 | 22 | 19 | 9 | 8 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 25 | 33 | 23 | 17 | 2 |
| The teaching is good. | 38 | 34 | 13 | 8 | 8 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 39 | 34 | 13 | 8 | 6 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 52 | 31 | 6 | 3 | 8 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 56 | 31 | 2 | 8 | 3 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 30 | 47 | 6 | 9 | 8 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 34 | 34 | 6 | 8 | 17 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 38 | 33 | 14 | 6 | 9 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 36 | 31 | 16 | 3 | 14 |

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

- Teachers maintain good discipline and this creates an orderly environment for learning.
- The subject is well lead and managed; the subject leader has coped well with difficulties arising from vacancies of permanent staff and has ensured students are taught as effectively as possible. Teachers work well together as a team.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers' planning does not sufficiently take into account the needs of all students in lessons, particularly those that are at an early stage of learning English.
- Students' skills in using information and communication technology are below the level that is expected nationally.

93. In the 2001 National Tests for 14-year-olds, results were well below the national average for all schools and were in line with the average for similar schools. The performance of boys and girls was similar. Results dipped a little from 2000 to 2001, though over the past five years they have been improving but at a slower rate than they have improved nationally. Results in English were similar to those attained in mathematics when compared with all schools and above those in science. When compared with similar schools, results in English were similar to those in science but below those attained in mathematics.
94. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations in English and in English literature were well below the national average. Boys performed better than girls in English, though their performance was similar in English literature. Results have been consistent over the last three years.
95. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicate that attainment by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11 is consistent with examination results obtained in 2001 and so is well below the national average. When students' prior attainment is taken into account, achievement from Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make progress at the same rate as other students.
96. In all year groups there are higher attaining students who are confident speakers and who contribute well to whole-class and group discussions. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, such students were able to provide clear and full explanations of the techniques used in a pamphlet recommending cycling to people for the benefit of their health. Middle and lower attainers, who are in the majority, express themselves briefly and have difficulty in explaining themselves further when questioned. However, even though they may not always be able to make a full response to what they hear, the majority of students are attentive and are respectful of the views of others. Students rarely challenge the views of other students or question their teachers. Students benefit from the opportunity to participate in drama lessons, where they can explore new social situations and this improves their self-confidence.
97. By the end of Year 9 students have read a range of literature that is appropriate for their age. Higher attainers read aloud with good expression, make use of libraries and are able to name favourite authors. They are able to appreciate the deeper significance of characters created in fiction, as was seen in a Year 8 lesson on Doris Lessing's "Through the Tunnel". By the end of Year 11 students go on to read more demanding texts. Higher attainers develop a good understanding of techniques used by writers. They are also able to compare how these techniques are used and some perceptive and well structured work was seen on how John Steinbeck and Charles Dickens present the theme of isolation in "Of Mice and Men" and "Great Expectations". Lower and middle attaining students are hesitant when reading aloud and tend

only to understand the gist of what they read. The lowest attainers are easily discouraged by unfamiliar words and are not able to read independently.

98. By the end of Year 9 students are able to write in a variety of styles, including narratives, descriptions, letters and reports. By the end of Year 11 students go on to extend their range. Good, imaginative work was seen on media topics, including, for example, an explanation of why "Blind Date" has been a successful television programme. Many higher attaining students become more painstaking in the way they improve their work by redrafting it. However, inaccuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar, together with a limited vocabulary, mars the work of middle and lower attainers.
99. Students' skills in using information and communication technology are below the level that is expected nationally. Even so, information and communication technology is introduced into some lessons. For example, a good lesson was seen in which Year 7 students found out about the Globe Theatre by using the Internet.
100. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory. When teaching is most effective, a number of features are in evidence. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers exercise effective discipline and this creates an orderly environment in which students feel secure and can concentrate upon learning. Different teachers achieve this atmosphere in different ways and in response to different challenges. In a Year 9 lesson on the National Curriculum tests, which were scheduled to take place within a few days, the teacher explored with students what was required for each level. The work was relevant to the students' needs, the lesson was conducted at a brisk pace and the teacher's excellent questioning ensured all students were kept involved. In a Year 10 class a student used unacceptable language. The teacher reacted in a firm, calm and dignified manner, required the student to stand outside the door for a time, and so ensured that his behaviour did not disrupt the learning of other students. In many lessons seen, teachers showed that they possessed a good knowledge of the subject, particularly when teaching Shakespeare and topics on the media. When students feel their teacher is knowledgeable and enthusiastic, they are inspired to read more widely, ask questions and to share their own new findings with the teacher. Teachers also display considerable initiative in using whatever resources are available to help students to learn or to motivate them. This was seen, for example, in a Year 10 lesson where a student who spoke limited English was being helped by another student who spoke his mother tongue as well as good English. Additionally, when these students were comparing articles in newspapers, the teacher provided them with translations of Arabic newspapers as well as British newspapers. This meant the students felt respected and valued. They made good progress and were keen to work closely with their teacher. Most of the teachers' marking is good and gives students clear guidance on what they need to do to improve. This motivates students and leads them to take a pride in their work.
101. When teaching is less effective, teachers' planning does not sufficiently take into account students' prior attainment. This applies particularly to the significant number of students who have recently joined the school who are at an early stage of learning English. The department does not have sufficient information on what these students can and cannot do and therefore cannot produce action plans stating precisely what students need to do in the short or longer term. Overall, there is also insufficient classroom support for teachers to be fully effective in meeting this challenge. However, at present, in some lessons teachers do not make the most productive use of the existing support staff.
102. In a small proportion of students' books seen, the teacher's marking was unsatisfactory or had simply not been done. This meant that students did not have the benefit of feedback from the teacher. The quality and presentation of the students' work also deteriorated.
103. Whilst the school has introduced the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for Literacy, consideration might be given to arrangements that would enable all the lower attaining students in Year 7 to start covering the progress units as early as possible in the academic year. Leadership and management are good. Teachers work well together as a team and share ideas on how to improve the quality of teaching. Some difficulties have arisen over providing continuity in

teaching for some classes, and the school has needed to employ temporary teachers. However, the head of department has risen well to this challenge and has ensured that students are taught efficiently and effectively.

104. Progress since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Attainment at all levels in the school and the quality of teaching have remained broadly similar. The use of information and communication technology has remained a weakness, however.

Literacy across the school

105. Standards of literacy are well below the national expectation. In all year groups there are students that are fluent and confident speakers, who communicate well in writing and who have developed a good range of skills in reading. However, the majority of students are much more restricted in their skills. In some instances this reflects their earlier attainment. In other cases it is because students are in the process of learning to use English. Many students tend to speak briefly, cannot explain themselves more fully when questioned, write in simple sentences, possess a limited vocabulary and their written work is marred by inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Such students are hesitant readers and the lowest attainers are not able to read independently. However, it is notable that as students move up the school their language skills improve and they become better able to gain access to the National Curriculum.

English as an additional language

Overall the quality of provision for English as an additional language is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- There is a good induction framework to support new arrivals with English as an Additional Language.
- The department collects a significant amount of data about student attainment and progress.

Areas for Improvement

- The programme to teach literacy skills to new arrivals who have English as an additional language is not sufficient to meet the specific needs of this group of students.
- The department does not make enough use of its assessment information to set language development targets for students and to identify those who are underachieving.

106. At the time of the inspection 40.5 per cent of students throughout the school use English as an additional language. Twenty two per cent of students enter the school speaking little or no English. Sixty-three per cent of students are from ethnic minorities speaking over forty different languages. The predominant languages are Somali, Arabic, Farsi, Urdu and Panjabi. Twenty per cent of students are refugees or asylum seekers, a significant number of whom have recently arrived in the country.
107. Students generally make satisfactory progress. However, many students with little or no English do not start their schooling at the age of 11. Students who are at an early stage of learning English make unsatisfactory progress because there is insufficient support in the classroom to meet their specific needs; this group of students does not reach the standards expected for their ages.
108. By the end of Year 9, school data indicates that a quarter of students with English as an additional language are reaching the national average in English, a third in mathematics and a quarter in science. By the end of Year 11 half of the students from the Indian subcontinent and a third of those from other ethnic minority groups achieve five or more passes at A* to C GCSE grades. However, students of Black African and African Caribbean origins do less well.
109. There are some students with English as an additional language, in all age groups, who speak and write fluent English in most subjects of the curriculum. Where students are at the early stages of learning English many practise their speaking, attempt new words and phrases readily, and are not afraid to make mistakes. Students are confident in asking for help from their

teachers. Most students acquire reasonable handwriting skills quickly and most present their work neatly. In subject lessons students are frustrated in making progress by their lack of basic language skills, especially in reading and writing. The school has implemented a rolling programme of staff training with each curriculum area; some teachers who have not had this training lack the skills and understanding about language development to provide appropriate work and activities to help students make progress. This also applies to some students who have gone beyond the early stages of language acquisition and may have been in the school some time. Students' understanding outstrips their ability to express themselves coherently.

110. The Accessing Language Achieving Potential (ALAP) department has established a sound database to track and monitor student progress. Students are assessed on entry to the school and students' profiles indicate attainment levels in relation to National Curriculum standards. Progress is recorded termly in relation to improvements. The information about language levels is provided to all departments in the school. However, it has been recently introduced to class teachers to help them plan to meet the specific needs of those students at an early stage of learning English and is part of the school action plan.
111. Teaching within the ALAP department is a mixture of one to one, and group work. There is a six-week induction programme for all new arrivals. This is good practice. However, although a framework has been written, the programme lacks rigour and emphasis on the systematic development of language acquisition. In group work insufficient attention is paid to matching work specifically to meet individual needs. Some whole class teaching, for withdrawn groups, is effective when it is planned to meet clear language learning objectives linked to the specific subject lesson. The department does not yet identify sufficiently clearly the point at which students are able to work independently and access the full National Curriculum. No targets are set, although the department plans to do this.
112. The management of support for English as an additional language is satisfactory. The head of department has been well supported by an external consultant for two terms who is helping her to review current organisation and establish more rigorous procedures for managing and monitoring provision. However, where support staff are deployed to work in subject specialisms to support students at an early stage of learning English they tend to work in isolation within the class and there are not enough opportunities for them to work in partnership with the teaching staff. This is hampering the progress of students at an early stage of learning English. There are insufficient teaching assistants trained in literacy skills, placed in classes throughout the school; there is insufficient targeted support.
113. A number of extra initiatives such as the Ealing Raising Achievement of African and Caribbean Students, the Black Mentoring Scheme, the Somali Home School Liaison project and Refugee Support all contribute to ensuring students have extensive care and support as individuals. These projects are commendable and should be continued. However, care must be taken to ensure they do not distract the ALAP department from its core activity of improving the English language skills of the students.
114. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory in that the school is taking responsibility for identifying and meeting the needs of different groups of students, instead of using an external project. However, the current approach relies too much on withdrawal, and has not enabled all staff in the school to take responsibility for the teaching and learning of students with English as an additional language.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to students achieving well; higher attaining students achieve very well.
- Teachers manage students well and students' behaviour is good in lessons.
- The good quality of leadership and management results in students reaching standards that are better than the level expected by the end of Year 11.

Areas for development

- Students in Years 7 to 9 do not make progress as quickly as those in Years 10 and 11.
- Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology in order to support learning.
- There is a need to further develop a whole school strategy for developing numeracy skills across all subjects.

115. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds were well below the national average for all schools but above average for similar schools. Girls and boys gained similar results in mathematics. Results in mathematics were broadly in line with those in English but above science when compared with all schools. Results were above English and science when compared with similar schools. This attainment represents a satisfactory level of achievement for all students, whose levels of attainment were well below average in numeracy when they joined the school. Results have remained static since the previous inspection and improvement in test results is at a slower rate than that found nationally.
116. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations in mathematics were below the national average. However, the proportions of students who achieved the grades A* to C were broadly in line with the national average. Although the overall achievement of students was good, the achievement of the higher attainers was very good given their attainment by the end of Year 9. Since the previous inspection, there has been an improving trend greater than the national trend.
117. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards students attain by the end of Year 9 are below average. This is better than recent examination results indicate and is partly due to improvements in teaching but it is also due to the improvements in the way that the department groups students in Year 9. This improvement means that the teachers can plan work at a level appropriate for the students' capabilities and ensure that there are high levels of effort and concentration. Students with special educational needs and the students with English as an additional language also achieve at a satisfactory level. The school has developed strategies to improve attainment. It is developing the National Numeracy Strategy in planning lessons and has adapted the resources available to improve the delivery of the curriculum and pace of learning in the early years. This has had a positive effect on learning, but it is too early to have an overall effect on attainment. All groups of students achieve at a similar level. Higher attaining students possess good techniques for solving simultaneous equations. They find the solution of the two unknowns by eliminating one variable. In one lesson, middle attaining students learn how to solve linear equations. They understand the need to use inverse operations and transform both sides in the same way. Although the mental numeracy skills of the lower attaining students are sound, they have difficulty in applying those skills when adding and subtracting decimals. When learning about data handling there is a wide range of competencies. Higher attaining students use tree diagrams to represent outcomes of combined events, calculating the probabilities of these events occurring. The middle attaining students interpret pie charts accurately and lower attaining students carry out practical activities to calculate the probabilities of the sum of two dice. They can construct the distribution grid with guidance, but have difficulty interpreting the results.
118. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are below average. Overall, this represents a good level of achievement given that this group of students had well below average levels of attainment on entry to the school. An analysis of how

well students attained at the end of Year 9 compared with GCSE results also indicates that the achievement of higher attaining students is very good. The achievement of lower attaining students and those with special educational needs has been adversely affected by poor attendance. In algebra and number work, higher attaining students can solve quadratic equations by factorising them and by using the quadratic formula. Middle attaining students demonstrate a sound understanding of how to simplify expressions. They manipulate algebraic expressions by collecting like terms. When multiplying out brackets, a minority has difficulty in applying rules of arithmetic. For example there are errors in multiplying directed numbers. Lower attaining students can plot coordinates in the first quadrant but do not go on to plotting them in all four quadrants. Good work is seen where higher attaining students are developing a good understanding of vectors; they understand and use vector notation accurately. This prepares them well for future work. When solving simple problems in two dimensions with right-angled triangles, middle attaining students use the correct trigonometrical ratios to calculate angles and sides. Although they apply Pythagoras theorem appropriately to problems they do not always follow the solution through, leaving the answer as a square numbers. Lower attaining students have a good grasp of how to plot scatter graphs but their understanding of correlation is weaker. They do not understand of the association between the two variables.

119. Overall standards of presentation vary. Where they are good, students set their work out clearly, spell mathematical terms correctly and structure answers well. However, not all work is carried out to this standard. A minority of students do not show how they work out answers and this impedes their learning. Students generally contribute well in class discussions while the rest of the class listens attentively. When given the opportunity, students work well together in pairs and groups. They discuss their work with each other usefully and report their findings coherently to the rest of the class.
120. Students with special educational needs and those students who are at an early stage of learning English make progress broadly in line with the rest of the students in Years 7 to 9. They receive a good level of support from learning support assistants who work well with their teachers. In Years 10 and 11, however, their progress is satisfactory indicating lower levels of achievement than other students. The achievement of these students has been adversely affected by poor attendance.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 11. In the good and very good lessons there is a brisk pace, students are well motivated and a large amount of work is completed. The department has reviewed the method of teaching students in the lower years. Teachers are beginning to plan and use resources more effectively to support the learning of those groups of students where there is a diverse range of abilities in each group. Instead of individual learning with a wide variety of topics in each lesson, teachers focus on one module and plan the resources to consolidate that focus at different levels. For example, in one lesson, the teacher introduced the concept of probability to the whole class, involving students very well in demonstrations so that they quickly learnt the language and fractions associated with probability. Individual work was then planned at three levels to consolidate the new learning for all students.
122. Teachers generally prepare lessons well and the school is developing the National Numeracy Strategy in planning lessons. There are clear learning objectives and effective structures to lessons so that students are well prepared for what they are to learn. In the best lessons teachers ask questions like "How did you work it out?" This encourages students to explain what they are doing and contributes well to the intellectual effort they make. Overall teachers' knowledge and understanding is good and in the better lessons, there is an enthusiasm for the subject that motivates students to want to learn. Generally, teachers give clear demonstrations and explain new concepts clearly. Resources are planned and used effectively to enhance teaching. There is efficient use of individual whiteboards and, in the better lessons, teachers involve students actively in demonstrations, which hold the attention of the whole class.
123. The management of students is generally good in all years and students respond accordingly. There is a positive atmosphere for learning in those classrooms, behaviour is good and students

work well with each other. There are generally good relationships in the classrooms both between students and students and teachers. Students generally listen attentively to their teachers and respond well to questions, they explain their answers clearly and this contributes well to their learning. However, in a minority of lessons, students are not always fully concentrating either in whole class discussions or on individual work and this lack of concentration slows down the overall learning for those students. This is especially true when students are working on individual work cards. In the better lessons there is effective management of potentially challenging students. Lessons are organised well so that tasks are broken down into small units of work. This allows students to consolidate one stage before going on to the next, more difficult task. This was evident when low attaining students were revising for their examination. The teacher introduced simplifying ratios, checked that the students understood the work before extending the task to calculating ratios of amounts. The setting of homework fluctuates and depends on the teacher. The quality of marking varies between teachers and is inconsistently carried out. There is some good quality marking where teachers indicate where students have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve. In a minority of books, this does not take place and there is no indication to students about how well they are progressing. In other books, where students tend to mark their own work, there are mistakes in the answers and these are not always identified.

124. The leadership and management of mathematics are good and the capacity for improvement is good. The staff work well together and regularly take part in professional development, particularly to improve the delivery of the National Numeracy Strategy. They are keen to raise achievement in mathematics. Although schemes of work are being developed, there is insufficient planning of how information and communication technology can be used more effectively in the development of mathematics. There are good procedures for assessing students' performance and tracking their progress through the school. The information from assessments is analysed and used effectively to set students according to ability in Years 9 to 11. It ensures that all students in those years are given the best opportunity by planning work that is appropriate for them.
125. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Although the results for 14-year-olds have remained steady, the GCSE results have improved and are now only a little below the average nationally. There has been an improvement in teaching. There is no unsatisfactory teaching; teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good and there are examples of very good teaching.

Numeracy across the school

126. Standards of numeracy are well below the national expectation. The contribution that subjects make to developing students' competence and skills in understanding and using numbers and data is generally satisfactory. Although the liaison between departments is developing, the opportunities for students to apply their mathematical skills in subjects vary. However, there is a need to further develop the whole school policy so students are provided with greater opportunities to link mathematics to work in other subjects. In lessons, there were some good examples in art and design where students were preparing their work by measuring page size to draw borders of equal length and dividing page size into equal parts. In science, however, the work did not give students sufficient opportunities to practise drawing graphs or carry out other calculations. Students carry out work in plotting and reading coordinates to locate places on maps in their geography lessons. This consolidates their learning and gives them opportunities to apply work they have learnt in their mathematics lessons. In their history lessons, students apply their understanding of data handling effectively when they draw graphs to identify employment and growth of towns. In later years, they use statistics to identify election results when studying Hitler.

SCIENCE

Overall, the provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

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|-----------|
| Strengths |
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- Higher attainers, including those who are gifted and talented, achieve well in science.
- The acting head of department provides good leadership and teachers are working hard to maintain standards in the present, difficult circumstances.
- The department makes good use of test and examination results to identify where improvements can be made and then takes appropriate action.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching and learning are currently unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because there are too many lessons in which students do not make enough progress.
- Many students, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, do not express themselves clearly and precisely when giving descriptions and explanations.
- Students do not get enough practice in doing investigations in Years 7 to 9.
- The department does not make enough use of information and communication technology to support learning in science.

127. In the 2001 National Tests for 14-year-olds, results were very low compared with the national average and in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally. Results were average when compared with similar schools. Results in science were below mathematics and English when compared with all schools. However, when compared with similar schools, results in science were similar to those in English but not as good as those in mathematics. Girls and boys gained similar results in science. Results fell between 1997 and 2000 but there was a significant improvement in 2001.
128. The 2001 GCSE examination results in science were below the national average for double award science but far below average for single award science. These results indicate that standards overall were well below average. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in GCSE science was below average for all schools but above average compared with similar schools. Boys and girls gained similar results in science. Results have remained fairly constant over the last few years.
129. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are well below the national average at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. These standards are similar to those indicated by recent GCSE results but better than those indicated by the 2001 test results. The improving trend in standards at the end of Year 9 that began between 2000 and 2001 is being maintained.
130. There is a wide range of attainment within and across the different teaching groups. Students generally have at least satisfactory basic knowledge of the topics they are studying and can express their understanding adequately in very broad terms. However, when they answer unfamiliar examination and test questions, many students, particularly those who speak English as an additional language, find it very difficult to express their understanding clearly and precisely in writing. They often use 'everyday' words incorrectly and so lose the meaning of their answers.
131. Higher attaining students achieve standards that are above average for their age. For example, some students in Year 11 have good understanding of how an electric motor works and how to alter its speed and direction of rotation. Higher attaining students in Year 9 know the functions of the major organs in the digestive system and those in Year 7 understand the pattern in word equations for reactions between metals and dilute acids.
132. Students' skills in investigation work are well below those expected for their age and last year's GCSE results showed that students' marks for investigations were not as good as they should have been. The department is now providing additional opportunities for students to improve their investigations in Year 11. However, students still do not get enough experience of carrying out investigations in Years 7 to 9. The department is also aware of the need to provide these students with more instructions and support when writing both investigation reports and examination answers so that they can overcome difficulties in using the language.
133. Students' overall achievement in science by the end of Year 9 and 11 is satisfactory. They enter the school with attainment that is well below the national average. By the end of Year 11 they

gain GCSE results that are similarly well below the national average; these are the GCSE results that might be expected in relation to students' attainment on entry to the school. However, higher attainers, and those who are gifted and talented, do particularly well in science. Their progress in Years 7 and 8 is better than that of others in their mixed ability groups. Teachers usually provide them with additional activities and these students work steadily and independently, often using the textbook. Their progress accelerates in Years 9, 10 and 11 when they are taught in ability-related 'sets' and the whole lesson is specifically planned to meet their needs. However, some students, mostly lower and some middle attainers, are not achieving as well as they should because of poor attendance. Their exercise books show gaps in their written work that reflect similar gaps in their knowledge and understanding. The current unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9 has not had a significant impact on students' achievement as the present staffing problems are recent.

134. Students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. Both groups make good progress when they receive additional support in lessons. When they do not receive such support, there are times when they find it difficult to keep up with the others in the group and their written work is incomplete. Some students in Year 10, who have arrived fairly recently in this country, are taught particularly successfully. The teacher's expectations of them are high and he provides challenging and interesting activities including, for example, investigating the heating effect of an electric current. They receive clear explanations and very effective support, both from class teacher and support teacher, and make rapid progress in both their understanding of electricity and their use of the language.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 but unsatisfactory at present in Years 7 to 9. Teaching in the majority of lessons in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory or better but there are, nevertheless, too many lessons in which students do not learn enough. Teachers' knowledge is good and they use their knowledge to plan carefully so that activities are generally appropriate for the group. Most teachers manage students well and keep them learning, often contrary to students' natural inclination. Teachers only speak to the whole class for short periods because they are aware that many students find it difficult to listen. However, in some lessons, teachers do not ensure that they have the full attention of the class when they are speaking and students do not then learn as effectively as they should.
136. There is a shortage of variety of activity in lessons overall. Many lessons consist of a 'question and answer' session, a short explanation from the teacher and then extended worksheet and/or textbook activities which, while appropriate in themselves, continue for too long so that students lose concentration and the pace of learning drops. In the sample of lessons seen, there was some practical work but little use of, for example, group discussion, extracts from videos, students reading aloud or students giving presentations. Students' books show that they are taught the numerical aspects of the various topics but do not get enough practice in doing calculations or drawing and using graphs. The department does not make enough use of information and communication technology in lessons, mainly because it does not have access to suitable computers at present. The school is in the process of installing new equipment.
137. There are some lessons in which teaching is good or, occasionally, very good. Features of these lessons are well organised questioning, to involve as many students as possible, and very clear explanations and instructions so that students know exactly what they need to understand and what they have to do. In these lessons, teachers are sensitive to any loss of pace in the lesson and flexible in adjusting their plans to meet students' needs. For example, in a Year 11 group's last science lesson before their study leave, students were fully involved in a summary of the major points about 'stopping distances' for cars. They then used their knowledge in answering examination questions but were rapidly re-grouped around the teacher when their attention started to flag.
138. Several aspects of teaching in the department are covered well in some lessons but are not as good in others. For example, some teachers mark books carefully and give students clear indications of how the work could be improved; a few do not follow up students' incorrect

answers sufficiently and miss opportunities to correct their misunderstandings. Useful homework tasks are set regularly for some groups, notably higher attainers, but other students' books show little homework or only limited, easy tasks.

139. When teaching is unsatisfactory, students do not learn enough in the course of the lesson. Usually this is because the teacher does not manage students effectively and the unsatisfactory behaviour of some students slows the pace of their own learning and that of many others in the class. A further weakness is the use of some activities that enable students to spend too much time on, for example, routine 'cutting and sticking', and to avoid any real learning.
140. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The department conducts a detailed analysis of test and examination results and uses the findings to decide on appropriate action to raise standards. Such action produced an improvement in the test results for 14-year-olds between 2000 and 2001. There is detailed monitoring of teaching within the department and support and guidance for teachers who have difficulties. However, the situation in the department has just changed and three teachers, including the head of department, have recently left to take up promoted posts. An acting head of department is now leading the department. A third of the teaching posts are filled by temporary teachers, all of whom are very new to the school and are either not science specialists or are inexperienced in teaching in this country. The acting head of department is handling this situation well, and receiving good support from other members of her team in her efforts to maintain standards within the department. For example, all temporary teachers are being helped with lesson planning and are using the department's pattern for lessons. The temporary teachers themselves are keen to provide good lessons for students. However, the problems are great, mostly because students have been unsettled by a succession of different temporary teachers. Although the acting head of department has not ultimately succeeded in maintaining satisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9, she has led her constantly changing team with determination and skill and worked hard to manage the situation and minimise the impact on students' achievement.
141. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. GCSE results are similar to those at that time, despite a fall in the attainment of students entering the school. Schemes of work have been improved and much, though not all, of the marking is now more helpful. Teaching is currently unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 but evidence suggests this weakness has only arisen recently and mainly as a result of staffing difficulties due to late resignations in the spring term and lack of time to recruit replacements.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The proportion of GCSE grades at A* to C is consistently above the national average.
- The good quality teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to students making good progress in lessons.
- Teachers manage students well and help to change students' attitudes towards others and towards education.

Areas for improvement

- Curriculum planning does not include details of the main strands of activity to ensure access and continuity for all students.
- The assessment of work is not matched to clear criteria that are shared with students; promoting their understanding of the demands of the curriculum.
- There is not enough use of information and communication technology because of the limited access to computers and this is restricting students' research work.

142. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were close to the national average. The proportion of students attaining grades A* to C was well above the national average and has been above the national average over recent years. Students have consistently performed better in art and design than in their other subjects over recent years. Differences in the performance of boys and girls vary year by year but generally girls significantly out-perform boys; boys seldom achieve the highest grades.
143. In work seen during the inspection the standard of work for Year 9 students is average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Students develop good practical skills in a range of media. From Year 7, the regular 'exercises' around drawing and the use of graphic techniques helps build their understanding and use of practical skills. For example, the lessons about portraits and letter-forms in Years 8 and 9 give students useful frameworks to guide them through quite demanding tasks. Most projects ensure students re-visit and build on their knowledge and skills and the well structured projects support lower attaining students and those with special educational needs. However, too few opportunities to work from direct observation and experiment with materials and ideas limit the responses from middle and higher attaining students. This has an impact on the preparation of students for Years 10 and 11 generally, but may in part account for the gap in performance between boys and girls. Schemes of work too often only provide reference to Western European art or the art of ancient cultures and are not reflective of the diversity of contemporary cultural influences relevant to students. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make similar progress to other students.
144. In work seen during the inspection the standards the students reach by the end of Year 11 are average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Students make good progress in lessons because of the good teaching they receive. However, for many students, poor attendance and unfinished work limits the standards they attain and achievement over time is only satisfactory. Work seen in Year 11 demonstrates a satisfactory range of experiences including mixed media, painting, graphics and some three-dimensional work and many students build successfully on the practical skills gained in previous years. However, students' experience of working from observation is seldom central to the development of their ideas. For example, students preparing for their GCSE examination rely heavily on photographs and pictures and where 'first-hand' research is used it is often peripheral to the development of their ideas. This is less often the case in Year 10 work where standards are noticeably higher and skills in recording from direct observation are good. In Year 10 there is no significant gap between the achievement and attainment of boys and girls although in Year 11 boys have less evidence of research or experiments with materials and media and are less likely to attain the higher grades. In both Years 10 and 11 very few students are clear about how their work is assessed and this limits their ability to address areas of weakness and build upon strengths. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make similar progress to other students but their achievement is also limited by poor attendance.
145. Literacy skills are generally good and frequently addressed in lessons through the introduction and explanation of new terms or specialist vocabulary. Written work, however, is often brief, usually factual and related to a particular artist or style. Numeracy skills and knowledge are satisfactory and opportunities exist in some projects, for example the letter-forms and portrait projects in Years 7 to 9, that deal with scale and proportion and enable students to develop and apply skills.

146. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The best teaching is the result of well-pitched tasks that challenge all students in the group. For example, in some Year 7 lessons the teacher provided structured yet demanding work based on the self-portrait. The teacher ensured that understanding of the difficult concept of proportion was demonstrated and frequently checked students' understanding. The thoroughness of the preparation and teaching and the knowledge of the needs of different students ensured that all students made as much progress as they could. In all lessons teachers use their knowledge and skills effectively to demonstrate technique. The varied teaching methods – whole group, individual tuition and frequent questioning - constantly support and challenge all students to do well. Expectation of students' capability is high, and the pace and quality of learning are good. Teaching is often supported with good resources and teachers use informative displays to help students understand and learn about influences in art and design. The display of students' work is also used effectively to exemplify key learning outcomes. As a result students often have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Teachers manage students well and help to change students' attitudes towards others and towards education. However, teachers should more frequently question the extent of their expectations and ask whether projects provide sufficient opportunities for students to explore the qualities of objects, materials and media. Whilst feedback to students is usually good and provides encouragement, discussion about how work relates to assessment objectives is rare. In most lessons assessment is not sufficiently integrated into teaching and therefore students are largely unaware of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the criteria by which their work is to be judged.
147. The subject is well managed on a day-to-day basis and the head of department provides sound leadership to staff and students. Subject documentation to support teaching and learning, however, requires review and development. There is a need to refine the course content, thus ensuring coverage, continuity and progression for all students. In particular the planning for the course in Years 7 to 9 needs to indicate how the key strands of the curriculum – recording, investigating/research, use of different media and techniques and evaluation of students' own and others work is delivered through projects. There is not enough use of information and communication technology because of the limited access to computers and this is restricting students' research work. Consideration should also be given to the balance of opportunities for expressive, explorative and experimental work available to all students, but especially the higher attaining students and boys in particular. In addition the assessment procedures require further definition and clarity of criteria for teachers and students.
148. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The quality of teaching has been improved and standards in Years 10 and 11 have been maintained. Improvement in the management of students has also been good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers are very good at controlling behaviour and improving students' attitudes to work.
- Students' standards of practical work are above average by the end of Year 11.
- The good quality teaching ensures that high attainers make good progress because they attend more regularly than other students.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress because the teachers pay great attention to improving their reading and writing.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not make enough use of computers in their lessons because there are not enough available.
- Black-Caribbean and Black-African boys do not do as well as other students because they are embarrassed about their poor literacy skills so do not produce as much written work.

149. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well below the national average. Girls did better than the boys, but by no more than is seen nationally. There were significant differences

between the results in the different material areas, however. Results in resistant materials and textiles were broadly average while those in food technology and graphics were very low. Results have been well below average for the past few years because of severe staffing problems which impacted on these results.

150. Students join the school with levels of attainment that are well below average, with very significant weaknesses in reading and writing. By the end of Year 9, standards remain well below average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. There is little difference between the standards attained by boys and girls. Students' designing skills are particularly weak, mainly because their writing is so poor that they have great difficulty in expressing their ideas in writing. They can, however, produce simple sketches of what they want to produce and they then convert these designs into real products with a good degree of accuracy. So, for example, their cushions that they produce are an accurate reflection of their intentions. Practical skills are better than their designing skills, but are still below average. Students pay good attention to detail and work hard to improve the appearance of their products, however, they find delicate work difficult, so that the scones that they produce, for example, do not always match the shape that they wanted to produce.
151. Students' attainment is well below average by end of Year 11, but this reflects a satisfactory level of achievement. Practical skills are above average and some of the work on the resistant materials course is of a particularly good quality. Some students are making DVD containers, for example, that use a unique carousel mechanism based on marbles. The movements on these containers are very smooth because the grooves in which the marbles run are machined to a high degree of accuracy. There are some students who produce an above average standard of written and graphics work to support their practical, but for the great majority standards of written work are well below average because their literacy skills are very poor. This is particularly noticeable in their evaluations and descriptions where their inability to explain themselves using the correct technical terms leads to very general use of language often used to simply say what they like or dislike about their products.
152. There are significant differences in the progress made by different groups of students in the subject. Black-Caribbean and Black-African boys in particular do not do as well as others and this is reflected in the GCSE results. The main reason for this is their dislike for writing, partly because they do not want to lose face in front of other students, so that their written work is often shorter than other students'. Higher attaining students, on the other hand, do well and achieve better standards than expected because their attendance is better and they receive the full benefit of the good teaching. Students with special educational needs also make good progress because of the very good way that teachers manage their behaviour and consistently try to improve students' literacy skills. Students who speak and understand little English do not make enough progress because there is not enough support for them in lessons, so that they cannot keep up. All students, however, make good progress in improving their practical skills.
153. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. However, the very high rate of absence negates much of the positive aspects of the teaching so that, instead of achieving well, students only perform as expected. In one food GCSE group, for example, the average attendance rate is just 50 per cent and has never risen above 75 per cent this year. Their poor reading and writing in all years also hamper their rate of progress. Where computers are used, students' work is of a better standard and at present teachers do not make enough use of computers in their lessons, partly because there are not enough computers in the school. Nevertheless, there are several significant strengths in the teaching that are common across the department. One of the most significant strengths in the teaching is the way that teachers control students' behaviour and help to change their attitudes to others. All teachers are very firm, but also polite and courteous; they avoid confrontation exceptionally well and never leave students feeling aggrieved. In one lesson for example a student started talking while the teacher was addressing the class. The teacher immediately stopped and politely asked the student what the first rule of the classroom was. When the student refused to answer, the teacher asked other students to help, and when the student agreed that they were in the wrong the teacher immediately asked the student if they would read the next passage to the class. Throughout the incident, the

teacher was exceptionally polite and reinforced the ideal of having respect for others. This last point has a considerable impact on the attitudes of students, which improve considerably during their time in school. All teachers realise the difficulty that students have with writing, so pay good attention to improving this skill. They are assiduous in writing new words on the board and reinforcing spellings. Some teachers, such as in food, go further and encourage students to try, for example, different ways of starting paragraphs.

154. Lessons are consistently planned in detail to include a good range of activities that maintain students' concentration and keep them working hard. In the last lesson of the year for one GCSE group, the teacher revised materials, tools and techniques using video, worksheets, discussion and past examination questions. The short time that was allowed for each activity made the students work at speed with the words "remember; one mark every minute, that's what you aim for" ringing in their ears. Similar useful comments are made on students' coursework, which praise effort while pointing out areas where the standards could be improved. Teachers always set homework, even to the extent of setting the tasks for the entire term in the first week. However, design and technology teachers are some of the only teachers to do so on such a regular basis and students have not got into the habit of doing their homework, so sometimes the response is poor with only a small proportion of students completing it.
155. One of the keys to the success of the teaching is the way that the department is led and managed and, in particular, the support that new teachers receive from the head of department and other experienced staff. Because of this support, new teachers settle in quickly and are soon teaching to the same good standard as their more experienced colleagues. The head of department has a clear idea of where the department is going, but this is not supported by a clear development plan. Nevertheless, the department has made satisfactory progress in maintaining the good standard of teaching evident at the time of the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- The care and support that teachers give to students is leading to improved attitudes to learning.
- The higher attaining students achieve well because of good attendance and to improved teaching stability.
- New leadership of the subject is good and beginning to improve the image of geography among students.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment of students' achievement, including the day-to-day marking in order to monitor progress and improve standards of work.
- Extend the range of teaching strategies in Years 7 to 9 in order to meet the learning needs of lower attaining students and those who are at an early stage of learning English.
- Develop fieldwork for students in Years 7 to 9 in order to broaden their learning experience.

156. Results in the 2001 GCSE examination were well below the national average but were an improvement on the 2000 results. The results in both years however, were adversely affected by staff changes that interrupted the continuity of learning. This was particularly evident for lower attaining students who achieved below expectation. Girls achieved higher than boys, but both boys' and girls' results were below their respective national average.
157. In work seen during the inspection the standards the students reach by the end of Year 9 are well below average. This represents satisfactory achievement given their standards when they join the school. In lessons higher and average attaining students learn well but for many students, poor attendance and unfinished work limits the standards they reach. Many students possess a range of map and graphical skills and have knowledge of different countries. Students in Year 7, for example, know about the causes and effect of flooding in Bangladesh but many are unsure about its position and written answers are often weakly developed. Higher attaining

Year 9 students on the other hand, write detailed accounts about the effect of earthquakes on Japanese people and work is well supported by maps and charts. Many students, however, give insufficient attention to grammatical accuracy, particularly spelling and their work lacks care in presentation.

158. In work seen during the inspection students' standards at the end of Year 11 are well below average. This represents satisfactory achievement given the standards at the end of Year 9. In lessons many students learn well, particularly high attaining students and those who are at an early stage of learning English, because they show a good attitude to learning and attend regularly. However, the achievement of students over time is reduced by poor attendance and unfinished coursework. Students consolidate map skills and use number well to plot graphs and explain data, but standards of the significant minority are not high enough because poor presentation reduces accuracy. Students have knowledge about issues in a local, national and global context. They are aware of the effects of global warming on different countries; they understand why the use of fossil fuels produces acid rain and how it affects the environment. In oral work however, students do not develop answers enough and written work is generalised without reference to places. Students acquire a range of technical words such 'depressions' and 'anticyclones'. They know how these systems affect the weather but a minority does not complete work, particularly homework, and consequently standards are lower than expected.
159. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. The aims of lessons are carefully explained and teachers regularly begin lessons by consolidating earlier work which helps students remember what they have learnt previously. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of topics and structure lessons well to provide variety of activity. This leads to most students showing interest and engaging enthusiastically in practical work. Learning was good in a Year 9 lesson, for example, because students understood the purpose of the work and enjoyed constructing and interpreting graphs about carbon dioxide emissions in different countries. Occasionally learning is unsatisfactory because the poor attitudes of a minority of students disrupt the learning of others and teaching strategies to manage the disruption are not effective. Students with special educational needs make sound progress when provided with additional support, but on other occasions teachers do not always plan lessons to meet their specific needs, or for those students who are at an early stage of learning English. Consequently the progress they make is not always good enough. The marking of students work is not satisfactory because there is little evaluation of the content and not enough support is given to helping students improve grammatical accuracy.
160. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Teachers are experienced and have established positive relationships with students. They manage students very well. As a result behaviour is good, lessons proceed smoothly and most students make satisfactory progress, and occasionally they make very good progress in lessons. In a Year 10 lesson for example, students for whom English is an additional language made significant progress because of very good attitudes to learning, whilst the individual support given to them enabled them to extend their vocabulary and improve map skills. Teachers make good use of a range of resources in lessons, particularly books, maps and film and these are effective in helping students progress in topics, but insufficient use is made of computers for research and presentation purposes. Although many students take care with presenting work, teachers do not always expect high enough standards in books and marking gives insufficient guidance on how to improve standards.
161. The leadership and management of the subject is good overall. The new head of department is improving the profile of the subject among students and this is leading to improved behaviour. The priorities for development are appropriate and the day-to-day management is efficient. This is raising the morale of teachers. The assessment and monitoring of students' progress is unsatisfactory because procedures have not been fully developed and the assessment of attainment to National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 is insecure. Curriculum planning is sound but there are not enough opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9 to undertake fieldwork.

162. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The staffing weakness for teaching in Years 7 to 9 has been addressed and the continuity of learning is better with the change from a modular course structure. The shortage in books in Years 7 to 9 has been rectified but the use of information and communication technology in lessons continues to be a weakness.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The faculty system supports the development of teaching.
- Very good management of students supports their progress; very good relationships between staff and students promote mutual trust.
- The choice of topics enables students to develop interest and pride in their own history and culture.
- There is good support for students who would otherwise fail to achieve recognised certification in history.

Areas for development

- Assessment is not targeted at the key skills of history and is insufficient to monitor the progress of students, or to enable teachers to use it to plan for development. Marking does not support students' learning or the development of their literacy skills.
- The use of information and communication technology has not yet been developed to support students' understanding and those with weaker skills in writing.
- There is not enough support in lessons for students in the early stages of learning English.

163. Results in the GCSE examination in 2001 were well below the national average. Results have risen since the last report and a greater proportion of students is reaching the highest grades.

164. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 are below average, although a significant number reach higher standards. Students make good progress in lessons because of the good quality of teaching they receive. However, over time, achievement is only satisfactory because it is badly affected by the high rate of absence and by the weak literacy and language skills that reduce students' grasp of concepts. In lessons the oral work of students, supported by good questioning by teachers, is of a higher level. High quality responses and understanding were observed during a lesson based around the development of the slave trade, and students were clearly reflecting on its causes and conditions. Teachers support the development of understanding by the inclusion of modern day comparisons, which help students to visualise events, for example when considering trench warfare in the 1st World War. This does lead to inaccuracies however, as students include other elements of modern warfare. Students have a secure idea of life in the trenches and the changing attitudes towards the war, and higher attaining students recognise the part played by the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles in the outbreak of war in 1939. However, inaccuracies in written work indicate that their grasp of chronology is weak. An example is the inclusion of a reference to the Berlin wall in a piece about the assassination of the Archduke in 1914. Students' written responses are often neatly presented, but with little development and those of lower attaining students reflect a dependence on the information provided. In many cases students' responses are brief and lacking explanation or development that would demonstrate understanding. This indicates some knowledge of facts, without understanding that there have been changes in thinking over time. Where students are encouraged to write in character, for example as a factory worker in 18th century, higher attaining students become involved and demonstrate understanding, although characterisation is generally stereotypical.

165. The progress of students with special educational needs and those in the early stages of learning English is satisfactory although much time is spent by some students in copying out questions before answering them, often leaving insufficient time to complete their answers. Some appear to use this method to avoid completing their work. Many students do not complete their tasks fully and teachers do not always ensure that they do so. The high level of

absence results in an incomplete body of information and a lack of continuity that would otherwise aid development in history.

166. In work seen during the inspection the standard reached by students on the GCSE course is below average, although a significant number of students are reaching higher levels. Students make good progress in lessons but their overall achievement is reduced to only satisfactory because of their poor attendance. Higher attaining students achieve well because their progress is not hampered as much by poor attendance or poor literacy skills. Students have a good grasp of the divisions in 20th century Europe and recognise the hostility between the East and the West. They recognise the break-up of the Soviet Union and some make links with their own experiences. Teachers are good at using students' own experiences to support their understanding. Students are developing their understanding of the rise of Hitler and the events leading to the fall of the Weimar Government, however they do not evaluate the events they consider or demonstrate an understanding of different viewpoints. They use source material to gain information and higher attaining students can identify motive and bias. Most students, however, take sources at their face value and a lack of background knowledge and weaker language skills contribute to a limit on their understanding. In class the good questioning by teachers results in students developing their responses further, however re-call is weak and written responses lack evidence of this reflection.
167. A group of students in Year 10 who have recently joined the school are following a course leading to a Certificate of Achievement. They are making satisfactory progress in lessons. They demonstrate a desire to learn and a willingness to question. The early stage of their acquisition of English, and for some their lack of prior knowledge of history, results in reduced pace of learning, however their support for one another and the work of the teacher is enabling them to gain confidence in their work.
168. The attitudes and behaviour of the students are good. They display an interest in their work and most are willing to question what they do not understand. Most classes have more boys than girls, but relationships between them and their teachers are very good. Their written responses show less concern and work is often left unfinished and in some cases there is a lack of care over presentation. There is little evidence of independent study and the lack of a personal textbook, particularly on the GCSE course, reduces the opportunity to prepare for lessons and thus support understanding.
169. The quality of teaching is good in all years. Teachers plan well and their attitudes towards their students are positive and supportive. As a result students show respect for their teachers and are confident that they will progress. Teachers manage their lessons well and students remain on task and are encouraged to concentrate. Lessons are clearly structured and where the pace remains brisk and tasks are appropriate for the students, a good working partnership develops. Teachers are clearly concerned for the welfare of their students and a minority of students who might otherwise fail to achieve in history is well supported. The weakest area of teaching is in the marking and assessment of work. Teachers are encouraging, however in most classes the marking of books is superficial and offers no constructive advice to the student about how to improve. In only one area were targets set. Errors in writing and content were often overlooked. Students are not involved in their own assessment until their last year and so do not develop understanding of the criteria for success.
170. The leadership and management of the department are good. The faculty system in place is supporting the development of teaching and teachers share ideas and practices. The lack of a base in the humanities block for teachers to meet reduces these opportunities and time is lost as teachers travel to the main block between lessons. Schemes of work are being developed to ensure that topics and delivery are relevant to the students and there has been an increase in the resources available for them. There are still insufficient textbooks to support independent learning and although a video library is developing, access to video is limited. The department is developing opportunities for fieldwork and the visit to Porchester Castle in Year 7 and the opportunity for GCSE students to attend lectures with other school students are valuable experiences. The department has correctly identified the areas for development, including the

use of information and communication technology. There are insufficient opportunities for its use in the Humanities block.

171. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards of teaching have improved and as a result standards in the GCSE have also risen from very low to well below average and a greater proportion of students is reaching the highest grades. The behaviour of students is good and the management of students is secure. There is now sufficient time for the subject although this is reduced by the late arrival of students to some lessons. Monitoring of teaching is better and the inclusion of trainee teachers in the department has focused attention on teaching methods. Marking and assessment is still an area for development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students with special educational needs related to their literacy skills achieve well because teachers place a great emphasis on improving their reading and writing.
- Higher attaining students make good progress because they are confident users of information and communication technology.
- Black-African and Black-Caribbean boys do particularly well in Years 10 and 11 because they feel more confident about producing written work on a computer, rather than by hand.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not get enough opportunities to use computers in other subjects because the school does not have enough computers.
- Students who are just starting to learn the English language do not make enough progress because they are not getting enough support in lessons.
- Teachers are not making enough use of homework on a regular basis.

172. No students were entered for external examinations in 2001.

173. Students arrive at the school with well below average standards in the subject. By the end of Year 9, standards are well below average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Standards of presentation are generally below average; students are starting to combine text and pictures on the same page in a way that takes account of the audience at which it is aimed. Most other aspects of the students' work are well below average. Students can enter information into a spreadsheet, for example, but are not using spreadsheets to model situations. Many students lack confidence in their abilities to use a computer and are heavily reliant on the teacher, constantly checking that they are doing the correct thing. Higher attainers, on the other hand, are confident in their own abilities and make good progress in some particularly demanding aspects, such as producing a complex sequence of instructions to activate a burglar alarm. Higher attaining students are also much more likely to attend on a regular basis, while the frequent absences of other students have a significant effect on the progress that they make.

174. Standards by the end of Year 11 remain well below average and this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. Skills in the use of presentation techniques continue to be stronger than other aspects and by the time students leave the school these skills are above average. Students produce very impressive and professional looking advertisements that take full account of the audience, so the language used will be completely different on an advertisement for supporting the voyage of Helen McCarthy from that on one for a lost cat. Other aspects of their work remain well below average however. Students in handling data make little real progress, although students following the business studies courses do better than others in this respect. Students start to model situations with spreadsheets, but only to a very shallow depth, so they do not start to use models to answer questions such as "what will happen if the speed increases". The students' knowledge of technical terms is particularly poor as they have such great difficulties in remembering them from one lesson to the next.

175. There are significant differences between the achievement of different groups of students. Those students who have special educational needs because of poor literacy skills generally make good progress because teachers consistently try to improve their reading and writing. Black boys tend to produce better written work than many other students. This is because they do not like writing by hand as their handwriting will show them up and they will lose face in front of other students. When they use computers, they are able to produce something that appears, in their words, "professional looking" and which can be changed or corrected quickly on screen before they print it for others to see. Students who are just starting to learn the English language make unsatisfactory progress because they do not receive enough support in lessons to enable them to play a good enough part in lessons.
176. Little use is made of computers in other subjects and students are not getting enough opportunities to practise and develop their skills outside information and communication technology lessons. The situation has improved since the last inspection, in that subjects such as modern foreign languages, media studies and English now make some use of computers. However, the school does not have enough computers to allow teachers in subjects other than business studies and information and communication technology to use them as part of their everyday teaching.
177. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all years. There are some significant strengths in the teaching, such as the way that teachers mark work. In particular, the printouts of coursework are marked very well so that students are praised for their efforts while teachers still point out exactly how they can improve their grades. All teachers pay great attention to reinforcing students' skills in reading and writing, by, for example, ensuring that the most important words are written on the board and that new words are spelt and their meanings explained. This is significant in helping students with special educational needs in particular to make good progress. However, the range of attainment in lessons is extremely wide, often ranging from students with above average standards to those who cannot speak English. In such lessons many students are catered for well, but those who cannot speak English get left behind, as there is no one there to help them understand what they have to do. Lessons are generally planned well to ensure that the work gets increasingly more difficult as the lesson progresses, but insufficient emphasis is placed on homework so it is set infrequently and irregularly. This means that students are not getting into the habit of completing homework, so that teachers are forced to use strategies that take account of the high proportion of students in each lesson that will not have done their homework in preparation for the lesson.
178. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection as a result of the satisfactory leadership and management of the subject. New courses have been introduced in Years 10 and 11 that are leading to students receiving credit for their work in the form of a GNVQ unit. More use is being made of computers in other subjects, but there are still not enough computers in the school to allow teachers to use them on a regular basis. The school is fully aware of this deficiency and has well-advanced plans on improving the situation. Nevertheless, while the plans have clear objectives they lack the detail necessary to be able to monitor any improvement or make realistic judgements about their success.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Students behave well and listen carefully which allows them to make good progress in lessons.
- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and preparation for the examination.
- Students enjoy the lessons, which often have a quick pace and lively, interesting activities

Areas for improvement

- Many students have weak pronunciation and fluency when speaking.
- There is not enough opportunity for students to read extensively.

179. All students study French from Year 7 and two classes study German as well in Years 8 and 9. Most students continue with one language in Years 10 and 11.
180. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were close to the national average in French and well above average in German. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in French in the GCSE examination was around the national average but well above average in German where all students gained grades A* to C. Results have risen significantly over the past three years for both languages. In both languages the percentage of students who enter for the GCSE examination is well below the national figure; of those who entered almost all gained a pass. In the full course, more students gained the highest grades in both languages than would be expected nationally and a significant proportion of these was girls. Some students followed a short course and the results for this were well below the national figures. A few students did the Certificate of Achievement: attainment was average for this qualification overall because not all students had good attendance but for those that did, results were above average.
181. Standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 are average in both languages. This represents good achievement; students make good progress with the good teaching that they receive, especially in German where students have only studied the language for two years. By the end of Year 9 students make particular progress in their listening skills in both languages, they understand a range of topics such as describing their families, talking about the their clothes and their school and they understand at least two tenses. Students are able to hold short conversations although their pronunciation and fluency is not always good. Students also find it easy to listen to tapes and understand the teacher because they are made to pay attention in class. Higher attainers make especially good progress in listening and writing. They are often asked to work at a high level when listening to instructions given out by the teacher or to difficult conversations on tapes. For example, when asked to listen to a German tape and to note down which shops had been visited, the higher attainers could also understand what had been bought and how much it had cost. The support given to students with special needs to help them to organise their writing or to cope with listening tasks is well developed. Most writing is short but accurate and, for the higher attainers, is well presented. Students at the early stages of learning English are doing well, partly because of their good attitudes. They listen carefully and do homework diligently but also the teachers take care to teach the English as well as the French whenever necessary. Students from ethnic minority backgrounds are represented in all the ability groups and do as well as other students.
182. Students' attainment is average in French by the end of Year 11 and well above average in German. Achievement is satisfactory in French by the end of Year 11; for those students who follow the full course, achievement is good. For those doing the short course or the Certificate of Achievement, achievement is only satisfactory because students do not have enough time during the week to complete the work necessary to reach the higher levels and a significant minority of the students does not attend lessons regularly. Students achieve very well in German by the end of Year 11 as they continue to build on what they have achieved by the end of Year 9. The students studying German mostly come from the group who have been identified as making good progress in French, but even those who have never studied German before Year 10 make good progress because they are offered extra lessons during the lunch hour and after

school. Students cover a range of topics such as describing their daily life and their school. Many higher attaining students in Year 11 in both German and French can write at length for coursework, using some complex language to express some interesting opinions on, for example, how their school could be improved. Students with special educational needs do not have such well-developed writing skills but can write some simple sentences to describe their family and friends. Speaking skills are satisfactory but teachers are often reluctant to let students practise as they are likely to take the opportunity to talk in English. Also, students are not often taught how to ask the question as well as give the answer and they therefore find it difficult to have conversations in pairs to improve their fluency. Students from various ethnic minority backgrounds, who represent the largest groups in the classes, are making good progress, as are those at an early stage of learning English who are often given help with their English as well as their French. Most students with behavioural problems who were seen in class make good progress because teachers have very good strategies to make them pay attention.

183. The quality of the teaching and learning is good in all years. There are no significant differences between the teaching of French and German because almost all staff teach both languages. There is much consistency in the teaching across the department, teachers use similar methods and have a wide range of techniques to encourage good behaviour. This often involves careful use of praise and preventing unwanted behaviour from happening in the first place. Teachers know their students well and are careful about where they allow students to sit and ensure tasks are clearly explained and short so that there is little opportunity for students to become distracted. When necessary teachers do intervene to tell students off, but most teachers have refined this to such a point by Year 10 that they do not need to raise their voice to reprimand a student, a stare or a pointed finger are enough to diffuse the situation. Teachers rarely have to wait long for silence to descend and, because their instructions are clear, students get on quickly with the work that they have been set. In Year 7 teachers are still working hard to ensure that the students do listen and sometimes have to spend quite a lot of time insisting on having students' full attention before they can proceed with the lesson.
184. Tasks are carefully chosen to meet the needs of the class, especially the highest attainers, and resources are very well selected. Students practise language, which often involves taking part in games and lively activities such as chanting new language to rhythms, which they enjoy. Teachers move swiftly between a variety of activities which means that students are kept busy for the full length of the lesson although the pace does tend to slow towards the end of a full hour last lesson in the afternoon with all but the most dynamic of teachers.
185. Most teachers use French or German for the majority of the lesson and students understand a range of instructions. All students are encouraged to keep their work neatly but not all record grammar and vocabulary notes carefully enough to refer to when doing homework or revision. In Years 10 and 11 homework for students studying for the GCSE is consistently set using booklets, which have been prepared in advance, and all students are very well prepared for the demands of the examination. They are given plenty of support outside the lessons during breaks and lunch times to help them to prepare. The revision lessons seen concentrated well on revising language that had previously been taught and encouraged students to show the range of tenses and to give opinions. Students also respond well to doing coursework, which leads to some good writing.
186. Opportunities for students to read materials such as magazines, books or articles are rare and resources for this are scarce. Students are heavily dependent on the teacher for help although they will use the dictionaries available in each class if reminded to do so. In some lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9, the teachers have difficulty meeting the needs of all their students, particularly those who find languages difficult, because they are teaching very large classes of students who have a wide range of ability. Marking in books is satisfactory but does not always suggest how the work could have been improved. Students are given much more helpful feedback about their performance during tasks in lessons, although there was not enough focus on improving their pronunciation. Currently some information and communication technology is used in lesson time for tasks such as reading materials on the Internet about health and fitness

but this is an area which is currently underdeveloped because access to computer rooms is difficult.

187. The department is very well led and managed. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection, students are achieving well, behaviour has improved and results have risen significantly over the past two years. Most students are enthusiastic about learning languages and many students in Years 7 to 9 take part in trips and visits to France. All staff are committed to working hard to improve still further and there are plans to increase the opportunities for students to use more information and communication technology as soon as the computers are available.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Lessons are well planned, using well-devised materials and visual aids, resulting in students making good progress.
- Teachers set challenges that recognise the individual needs of the students.
- Teachers engage, manage and motivate the students and leads to good learning and attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Irregular homework does little to reinforce learning between lessons.
- Students lose ownership of their written work by not having exercise books or folders.
- Students do not have the opportunity to create, manipulate and refine sounds using information and communication technology.
- There are no learning support assistants in music lessons, which hampers the progress of some students at an early stage of learning English.

188. The school runs a one-year GCSE course for students as an extra-curricular activity every second year, drawing on students from both Years 10 and 11. Numbers taking this course are low. This, together with the unusual context, makes any comparison of results with either national norms or other subjects in the school unreliable. However, in 1999, when 11 students were entered, the results were broadly in line with the national average. In curricular time Year 10 and Year 11 students have the choice of taking music as an integrated component of GCSE Expressive Arts. In the past three years between 11 and 30 students have taken the examination. The results – a reflection of attainment in a number of artistic disciplines, not music alone – could be reliably judged to be well below the national average in 2000. Results also suggest this being the case in 2001 too, but in 1999 they were above average.

189. In Year 9, standards in work seen during the inspection are below average; standards at the end of Year 11 do not stand comparison nationally, as no discrete music lessons could be observed. During Years 7 to 9 students achieve well. Given that many enter in Year 7 with very low ability in the subject and the transient nature of much of the school population, they make good progress in music. In Years 7 to 9, most students succeed in playing simple melodies and chords on keyboards using appropriate fingering techniques. They have a good grasp of simple rhythmic notation, being able to perform rhythms from memory and sight and to invent their own patterns. While many also understand musical pitch on a simple level, their skills in co-ordinating this with rhythm are less developed. All students have the chance to play music on the steel pans and use tuned and non-tuned percussion instruments creatively. Students understand technical vocabulary appropriate to the project in hand. Increasingly, they are able to evaluate their work and that of their peers using such vocabulary. They sing in unison enthusiastically, but with underdeveloped technique. When creating group compositions from musical and non-musical starting points, they work together responsibly towards commonly agreed goals. Students with special educational needs make good progress. The gifted and talented are often given supplementary tasks in lessons and progress well too. Students with English as an additional language make good progress, being able to take an active part in

practical music making from example. There are no learning support assistants in music lessons, which hampers the progress of some students at an early stage of learning English.

190. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9. The stable and experienced teaching staff comprise able musicians, who use their subject skills judiciously to motivate, support and challenge students of all ability levels and backgrounds. Lessons are well planned, frequently using systematically thought-out worksheets and making reference to good displays of key words and visual aids. For example, in lessons introducing students to keyboard playing, students know that they can always refer to a large wall display showing precisely which keys the teacher expects them to use in any one lesson. Teachers take great care to be aware of the individual needs of their students and plan accordingly, often simplifying and extending tasks for groups of students with prescribed learning projects. Activities are well timed, enabling students to feel that they must concentrate and work at a good pace to meet deadlines. Yet they are also confident that help and explanation are always at hand. Most lessons finish with an opportunity for students to perform, which, while cultivating a sense of achievement, also encourages students to listen and to appraise their work.
191. Students never start or finish a lesson unless there is order. Students behave well and develop positive attitudes to the subject. Learning is impeded at times by excessive ambient sound. In the case of that produced when a whole class is playing keyboards at the same time, the teachers keep this well under control by throwing a special mains switch to stop the whole class together, if necessary. However, there is a good argument for considering the use of headphones or separate acoustic spaces. Teaching refers to key words well. Words are not only explained in the few minutes at the beginning of lessons devoted to literacy, but also their derivations are considered. However, they are seldom written down by the students and the policy of students not having exercise books or folders for music does little to encourage the on-going development of writing skills. This also weakens the process of assessment, which, otherwise, is good. As well as giving regular feedback on students' progress, assessment gauges students' opinions on how they understand and enjoy their work. Issues of numeracy are well reinforced where this is appropriate. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on rhythm reading, students were encouraged in a largely practical lesson to add in fractions, multiply, use graphic symbols and write in standard notation. Students found practical aspects of this lesson difficult, demanding greater rigour in the teaching methods used. Students too seldom receive homework and an opportunity for them to reinforce their learning from class is therefore lost. Where possible, teachers try to engage students in the moral as well as social and cultural dimensions of the subject. Students are encouraged to identify right from wrong and reflect on why, say, a performance is good. In a Year 10 expressive arts lesson developing an extended project on the seven deadly sins, students debated with interest the social and religious legitimacy of everyday transgressions, such as gluttony, laziness and so forth. Because teaching sets high expectations in both behaviour and learning, the students' attitude to the subject improves markedly during the Years 7 to 9. They work well together in groups of mixed race and gender and treat instruments, as well as people, with due respect.
192. The subject is well led and the teachers share a very strong commitment for the subject to succeed. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 embraces many projects appropriate to the ethnic mix of the school: music from India, the Caribbean, Middle America, China; the Blues; European classical and popular traditions. The Year 10 and 11 curriculum is complex. There are two expressive arts courses – one GCSE, the other a vocational course – in which music plays an important role. The discrete arts are also offered at GCSE, but in the case of music the course is an extra-curricular one lasting one year, intended primarily for those who already have high attainment levels. Opportunities for extra-curricular music making are limited. Three instrumental teachers visit each week, teaching piano, violin, saxophone, keyboard and rock instruments to about 60 students. There is also a small steel band. Regular annual musical productions were staged until 2000, but, due to teachers' commitments, it has not been possible to devote sufficient time to maintaining this tradition in recent years. The department is aware that its information and communication technology provision is currently unsatisfactory and is actively taking steps to address this. However, to ensure opportunity for aurally reinforced research, the computers in the library need to be able to access audio and video files from respected Internet

sites. The lack of learning support assistants restricts the quality of learning for those with difficulties.

193. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the last inspection. The bulk of Year 9 students have made good progress throughout their first three years. The few criticisms of teaching style have been attended to. Addressing the issue of information and communication technology resources raised in the last report is well in hand, although not yet implemented. The issues of noise distraction from neighbouring rooms still has to be addressed and the integration of learning support staff would ensure a better quality of learning for all.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good management of students supports their progress; good relationships between staff and students promote mutual trust.
- Students' attitudes to learning are usually positive. Most are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject.
- All teachers are good role models, are committed and many give generously of their time in the department.

Areas for development

- Assessment procedures do not set clear targets for students in all activities.
- Schemes of work do not support teaching and learning and do not focus on student progress.
- Clear targets and strategies for the future development of the department are not identified.
- Accommodation in the department is unsatisfactory and limits the range of activities for students.

194. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well below the national average. There was no significant difference in the results of boys and girls.
195. In work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are below average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement. By Year 9, most students have a degree of competence in a range of games' skills. Higher attainers demonstrate good techniques in a range of sports. However, middle and lower attaining students are unable to apply appropriate techniques, skills and competition rules to athletics and tennis. Basic skills in these activities are below average for a majority of the students. In tennis, although students have sound co-ordination and mobility, basic racquet skills and other specific tennis skills are below average and students have a very limited range of strokes. In athletics, running technique is significantly below average and most students lack stamina. The ability of students by the end of Year 9 to observe and analyse performance is below average. The majority of students can perform individual skills with some control and precision in practice, but they experience difficulty when their skills are tested against competition. Boys and girls, including those with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds, are making satisfactory progress in acquiring and developing games skills.
196. In work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are average. This represents a good level of achievement. In a Year 11 GCSE theory lesson students had a good understanding of basic physiology and anatomy and of some of the factors affecting the acquisition of skill in sport. GCSE coursework reflects a range of knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. In a Year 10 trampoline lesson most of the students were able to execute a simple routine of movements with good control and appropriate tension and extension. Although warm up activities preceded many lessons students did not display appropriate knowledge and understanding of how different types of activity affect specific aspects of their fitness.
197. Extra-curricular sport is good. About a quarter of the students in the school participate in an extensive programme of clubs, inter-form and inter-school competitions. These provide good

opportunities for all students to excel. For example, many Year 10 boys take advantage of the opportunity to practise their cricket skills after school. The school teams have a creditable record of success in competition with local schools.

198. Students' attitudes to learning are usually positive. Most are enthusiastic, well behaved, and co-operative, demonstrating a real enjoyment of the subject. They are often attentive and able to sustain concentration, although in some lessons the behaviour of a minority of students did affect the pace of the lesson. Relationships between students and between students and teachers are good.
199. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In the good lessons a secure knowledge of the subject is regularly conveyed to students through perceptive observation of performance, appropriate intervention and good teacher directed question and answer sessions. This was illustrated in a very good Year 7 lesson. Sprinting technique in athletics was being taught and all students experienced a great deal of success in improving their technique because intervention by the class teacher and very good demonstration linked to perceptive question and answer with students motivated the students and clarified precisely how they could adapt their own style to improve their performance. In a Year 10 trampoline lesson students successfully developed their routines on the trampoline because they had very clear targets and because intervention by the teacher focused on clear and perceptive analysis of areas for improvement for individual students. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning, is also a feature of the good and very good lessons. In a Year 11 GCSE theory lesson where students consolidated their understanding of physiology and anatomy a very good teacher led question and answer session resulted in a high level of discussion with the whole group and a productive learning environment for students. In this lesson students were able to help each other in such a way that their learning was consistently reinforced. In those lessons that were not so good, planning lacks sufficient detail and what students were to learn was unclear. Teacher expectations of what students could achieve are often too low and many are not appropriately challenged. Only very rarely were students set clear targets for improvement. Marking of GCSE theory work does not identify clearly enough how students can improve and much of their work was unfinished. Discipline and class management is good in most lessons ensuring that the pace of these lessons is brisk, although in many lessons considerable time has to be spent ensuring a calm and orderly start. Information and communication technology is not yet being used effectively.
200. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. However, schemes of work are not offering clear guidance for teaching and do not comply with latest guidance relating to the National Curriculum. Day-to-day organisation and communication within the department is satisfactory and there is an informative departmental handbook, which identifies policies and procedures. All teachers are good role models, are committed and many give generously of their time in the department although for some with significant other responsibilities in the school this is becoming increasingly difficult. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection although there are several areas for development. Assessment procedures are not having an impact on teaching and learning. Formal observation of teaching in the department is developing but is not yet being used consistently to assist in monitoring the effectiveness of the department or in sharing good practice. Accommodation in the department is unsatisfactory and limits the range of activities for students. The gymnasium is in a very poor state of repair and the attached changing rooms are unusable.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The department makes a very good contribution to the social harmony of the school.
- Although the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, there is evidence of good teaching in several instances. In all lessons, teachers work hard to raise students' self-confidence and help them to see the subject as relevant.

Areas for improvement

- Marking of students' work provides insufficient guidance on how and what to improve. The department does not set detailed targets against which students' progress can be identified and monitored.
- Students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop and improve their writing skills.
- Students receive little opportunity to develop their information and communication technology skills.

201. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were below the national average; results at grades A* to C were below average in comparison with the national average and well below the national average for grades A* to G.
202. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 9 are below expectations in relation to the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement given that most students join the school with levels of attainment that are at least below the level expected in the Ealing syllabus. However, the standard of attainment by the end of Year 9 is close to average in oral work in lessons seen. The students' written work does not usually meet this level. Most original written responses tend to be brief and contain simple explanations. Students have a basic knowledge of world religions and understand some of the ways in which religious symbolism is used. However, they do not generally use religious words or language with confidence. Teachers make effective links between everyday experiences and religious values so that students generally make sense of what they study and are beginning to relate it to their own lives. This was evident in a Year 8 lesson, for example, where some students were able to verbally compare the symbolism of a Sikh *kangha* with practices in their own religion.
203. Achievement is satisfactory in all year groups. For a small minority of students, however, the lack of continuity in their work that is due to absence reduces the progress that they make. Although students with English as an additional language receive very little additional support in religious education, their progress is generally satisfactory. The same is true for students with special educational needs. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls, or between different ethnic groups.
204. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards that students attain by the end of Year 11 are below average. This represents a satisfactory level of achievement given students' prior levels of attainment. Many students make good progress in lessons because of the good teaching they receive. However, the progress of students is reduced by erratic attendance and by high levels of student mobility and achievement over time is only satisfactory. Topics are covered in sufficient depth to enable students to build on the knowledge, understanding and skills gained in Year 9. Students' oral work continues to achieve a higher standard than their written work that for many is dependent on the text. Many students continue to struggle with the use of specialist words. However, higher-attaining students develop their ideas in writing, supporting their beliefs with sensitivity and reason. A good example was in work that required students to consider their own thoughts about the concept of religious martyrdom. Students are led to realise that religious education has a practical application to everyday life and are enabled to consider their own values and beliefs about a wide range of moral and ethical issues. This was evident, for example, in a Year 10 lesson where students have recently examined the concept of a just war. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or between different ethnic groups. The department needs to review some of its strategies for

helping lower attaining students practise their writing skills and examination technique in order to increase the percentage of students achieving GCSE A* to G grades.

205. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers manage students well, being firm but friendly. They encourage and praise students and this helps to raise students' self-esteem. Teachers work hard to make religious education interesting and relevant to students' lives. As a result students show tolerance and respect for each other's beliefs and values: the subject makes a very good contribution to the social harmony of the school. Students are being taught to think for themselves and to consider a wide range of moral and ethical issues. As a result, they work diligently and enjoy their lessons. Lesson introductions are used well to recap work from previous lessons and so enable students to consolidate their understanding. Although students' work is marked regularly, comment provide them with insufficient guidance on what they must do in order to raise the standard of the work. In a minority of lessons teachers do not involve students actively enough in discussions or ask them sufficiently searching questions. As a consequence, although amenable and well behaved, they do not always show high levels of motivation in their work. In lessons where teachers worked hard to ask students a full range of questions, on the other hand, they responded with enthusiasm and interest. This was evident in a Year 10 lesson where students examined a range of environmental issues and voted on the most important. The ensuing debate was lively and knowledgeable and students drew on knowledge from other subjects, particularly geography, to illustrate their views.
206. The department is managed and led well. The subject has made good progress since the previous report. The GCSE full course has been successfully introduced and is now taught side-by-side with a short course GCSE. The department is now fully staffed and statutory requirements to provide religious education for all students are met fully. Resources have improved significantly since the last inspection and this enables teachers to provide a wider range of experiences for students. However, there is still insufficient use made of information and communication technology.

Special educational needs

Overall, the provision for students with special educational needs is good.

Strengths

- From a very low base, students who are supported achieve well by the end of Year 9. They rapidly improve literacy and numeracy skills, and gain in self-confidence.
- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of how students with special educational needs learn. They present work in small steps, varying tasks and actively involving students.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Learning support is well managed and co-ordinated. There is a clear commitment by all teachers to help students improve.
- The Launch Pad offers very good provision for students with challenging behaviour.

Areas for improvement

- Students with poor attendance and with extreme social difficulties underachieve, but those who come to school regularly, particularly those who have been at the school since Year 7, make good gains in learning.
- A weakness in the teaching across the school is that the tasks provided in lessons do not always meet the needs of these students.

207. In the learning support area and the Launch Pad, the unit for a small group of students with challenging behaviour, provision is very good. From a very low base, students who are supported achieve well by the end of Year 9. They rapidly improve literacy and numeracy skills, and gain in self-confidence. By the end of Year 11, the achievement of students who are supported is good. Although standards of literacy and numeracy are well below average, students are more independent learners and improve sufficiently in basic skills to take a number of GCSE and other external examinations, in which they do well in relation to their capabilities. Students with

poor attendance and with extreme social difficulties underachieve, but those who come to school regularly, particularly those who have been at the school since Year 7, make good gains in learning.

208. Teaching and learning in small groups or in one-to-one sessions are good. In no lessons were they less than good. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of how students with special educational needs learn. They present work in small steps, varying tasks and actively involving students. For example, in a Year 7 literacy group, the teacher gave students plenty of opportunities to read aloud – from a playscript and from a worksheet – asked them to identify words with apostrophes and to note the full version of the contraction (for example, ‘that’s’ – ‘that is’) on the whiteboard. All students worked well because they knew what they had to do, and so learning was good. Relationships between teachers and students are very good. This is particularly effective in one-to-one lessons, where the mutual trust between student and teacher is a major factor in the good progress made. Teachers give students time to voice their concerns. Students say they know their teachers will listen to them. Because students have confidence in their teachers, learning is rapid. Teachers use questions well to assess how students are getting on and to make them think about their work. For example, in a numeracy lesson for a Year 10 student, the teacher’s careful questioning helped the student to notice patterns in the results of multiplying by 10. He improved his understanding of number, and by the end of the lesson, was able to work out more difficult multiplications. Teachers work very hard to give students a sense of self-worth and this increases the motivation to learn. In a very good lesson in the Launch Pad, the teachers led students to learn more about themselves in discussing bullies and victims. Such was the rapport between teacher and student that students felt free to discuss their behaviour openly and listened politely to each other’s views. All teachers know their students very well and match the work closely to individual needs. There are high expectations of how students should behave and what they can achieve. Learning support assistants make a good contribution to students’ progress in lessons. Progress is quicker when the subject teacher has liaised with the assistant, who can then prepare for the lesson in advance. In lessons where support is lacking and where tasks are too difficult for students with learning difficulties, progress is slow.
209. Curricular provision for students with special educational needs is good across the school and very good in specialist areas. In subjects such as design and technology and mathematics, provision helps students to learn well. In other lessons, the progress of students with learning difficulties is similar to that of other students. A weakness is the lack of different tasks to enable these students to learn. In specialist areas, strong emphasis is placed on improving literacy and numeracy skills so that students can make progress in all subjects. In Years 10 and 11, the Youth Award Scheme gives students good opportunities to develop these basic skills, as well as social skills. For example, in a Year 10 class on the environment, students compiled a poster on recycling in preparation for a visit to the dump. Previous work on constructing a traffic survey and on a visit to the fire station showed students enjoyed the tasks and were progressing well.
210. The use of information and communication technology is satisfactory. For example, students redraft work on screen and use the computer calculator in numeracy. The learning support area has only recently received a set of computers for its own use. It is appropriate that a priority in the development plan is to increase the contribution computers make to students’ learning. The special educational needs co-ordinator intends to introduce a well-known commercial scheme to raise standards of literacy and numeracy. The Launch Pad offers very good provision for students with challenging behaviour. At the time of the inspection, six Year 8 students were making very good progress, not only in basic skills, but also in anger management and in social skills. In this unit and the learning support area, provision for students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. High standards of behaviour are expected and achieved; students learn to work together, to respect others’ views and reflect on their behaviour.
211. Teachers of students with learning and behavioural difficulties provide good guidance to students in their learning and in their welfare. They are very supportive of students and sensitive to their needs. Procedures for assessment and its use in future planning are good. Students are

regularly assessed in lessons and in the longer term through individual education plans whose targets are precise. Specialist staff and some subject teachers use these targets very well in planning work for students, but other subject teachers give insufficient attention to the targets and this has a negative impact on students' learning. Annual reviews are well organised and documented, and meet the statutory requirements of students with Statements of Special Education Need. The school receives good support from outside agencies such as the educational psychologist and counsellor, the education welfare officer and Ealing Business Partnership. They help in assessing students' needs and contribute well to their progress. Teachers work hard to keep parents informed of students' progress and to foster close links with primary schools sending students to Acton High School.

212. Learning support is well managed and co-ordinated. There is a clear commitment by all teachers to help students improve. A very good team spirit prevails amongst the staff. The co-ordinator, an assistant headteacher, is ably supported by a deputy co-ordinator and by dedicated teachers and learning support assistants. Accommodation is good. It provides a calm learning environment for students and this helps them progress well.
213. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. It has been good since the appointment of the present co-ordinator two years ago. Staff have received training in teaching students with learning difficulties and how to involve learning support assistants in lessons. Links with subject areas have been strengthened by the nomination of one teacher in each area to link with the learning support department, and plans exist to link support assistants to specific subject areas. The use of individual education plans is still inconsistent across the school. The literacy programme is now more intensive and helps students to improve their reading and writing.