

INSPECTION REPORT

FORTISMERE SCHOOL

London

LEA area: Haringey

Unique reference number: 102156

Headteacher: Mr Andrew Nixon

Reporting inspector: Roderick Passant
2728

Dates of inspection: 01 - 05 October 2001

Inspection number: 197089

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 pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	South Wing Tetherdown Muswell Hill London
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Ann Janssen
Date of previous inspection:	16/09/1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a larger than average, popular mixed neighbourhood comprehensive with 1553 pupils. The school is over-subscribed and most families live within 1.5 miles of the school. The school was granted Technology College status in 1997 which extends until 2003. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is high although there are only a few who are at the early stages of language acquisition. The school is a diverse community and pupils come from a wide range of cultural, racial, religious and socio-economic backgrounds although the majority come from advantaged backgrounds. The largest ethnic groups are Black Caribbean (6.8 per cent) and African heritage pupils (3.4 per cent). The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is average as is the percentage of pupils on the register of special educational needs. The percentage of pupils who also have statements of special educational needs is average. The intake of the school shows a full range of attainment but is, overall, above average. Over the past three years the attainment of pupils when they join the Fortismere from primary schools, as indicated by National Curriculum tests taken in Year 6, has increased. The school is housed in three buildings on a large campus. A school for hearing-impaired pupils is currently being redeveloped on the campus. Work has also commenced on a major capital investment programme for Fortismere. The first phase is the refurbishment of the sixth form accommodation to provide centralised library, careers, study and teaching spaces.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fortismere School has many strengths. It is a vibrant community which develops very positive attitudes to learning and very good relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils are known, valued and supported very well. Overall, teaching is good and often very good. Pupils make good progress, achieve well and attain well above average standards at GCSE. The school is led very well and sets itself challenging targets. Overall, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The school encourages and supports pupils' growing independence, the quality of their thinking and develops very good attitudes to learning
- The good teaching which leads to pupils making good progress and achieving well.
- The rich range of learning opportunities within and outside the curriculum which give a vibrancy to the school.
- The school is led and managed very well and sets itself challenging targets.
- Pupils achieve high standards in public examinations

What could be improved

- The provision for basic information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the school and standards in ICT examinations at GCSE.
- The provision for modern languages, to ensure that standards continue to rise and the department is enabled to have a greater impact on the academic and cultural life of the school.
- The provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.
- The use of national comparative assessment and progress data at departmental level.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection in September 1996. Standards have risen and are above average in most departments. The quality of teaching has improved significantly as have pupils' attitudes. Leadership is now very good and assessment procedures have improved significantly. The school recognises that it has not done enough, though, to overcome weaknesses that were evident at the last inspection in ICT and religious education. The school cites staffing difficulties and recruitment issues and the number and range of curriculum initiatives as factors that have impeded progress in these areas. Overall, given the high quality of leadership in the school, it has the capacity to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	B	

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

Overall standards in GCSE are well above average. Standards in GCSE in mathematics are above the national average and in English and science are well above. Standards in art, history, geography design and technology music and drama are well above average. Standards in French and German, with much higher numbers taking the examination than nationally, are above average as they are in physical education. Standards are currently average in Spanish and below average in religious education and ICT. Overall, standards in GCSE are improving in the school at a faster rate than nationally. During Year 10 and 11 pupils achieve well and make good progress overall. Their progress is very good in history, geography, design and technology, art and music, and satisfactory in mathematics and Spanish. The majority of pupils take ten GCSE subjects. The school sets itself challenging targets and came very close to achieving its published target of 75 per cent of pupils achieving grades A to C in GCSE examinations in 2001.

By the end of Year 9 standards in mathematics are above average. They are well above average in English and science. When the results are combined and compared to similar schools¹, the school's performance was in the highest five percent. Standards in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 are improving at a higher rate than seen nationally. Pupils attain higher standards than might be expected in history, geography, design and technology art and music. Pupils attain the expected standards in modern languages, religious education, drama and physical education. Standards in ICT are below what might be expected and are a weakness. Pupils achieve good standards in dance. Pupils make satisfactory progress in modern languages and mathematics. Overall, pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and achieve well. Greater familiarity with primary school work would ensure a smoother transition between the phases in some subjects, for example in science and art.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their targets across the school and achieve well. There are strategies in place in place to provide support at GCSE.

Pupils who are capable of reaching high levels of attainment make good progress as do pupils for whom English as an additional language. Attainment of Black African and Caribbean heritage pupils (who make up approximately ten percent of the school population) is below average but the school has put a number of strategies in place to redress this. As a result, attainment of these pupils improved in 2001. Learning mentors are very effective in providing support to individual pupils. Girls outperform boys in many subjects but because the overall standards in the school are well above average, boys perform better than girls do nationally.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The attitudes of the pupils are very good. This is a strength of the school. The very positive work ethic in classes throws into relief the few instances where the same quality of rigour in the learning was not present. In mathematics, for example, there are a minority of the pupils, usually boys, who were easily distracted, because they are bored and disenchanted with the subject or because they are not involved enough in the lessons.

¹ Similar schools are defined by the percentage of free school meals rather than by type or organisation.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. There is a good level of supervision across the site at lunchtimes and breaks. Occasionally behaviour by the few, usually boys, can become boisterous, without much regard for others around them. Because of the nature of the site the school has to place a very high degree of personal responsibility on the pupils and the vast majority of pupils accept this responsibility well.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships within the school are very good and this is another strength. The school is a community that cares about the individual pupil and one within which pupils acknowledge that they can turn to their friends or a member of staff for support. The school is very aware that bullying takes place. It is vigilant and works hard to break down any 'code of silence.' The possibility of bullying is a recurrent theme in the personal, social and health education programme and within assemblies.
Attendance	Attendance is better than the national average for this type of school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

As a result of the good and often very good teaching, the quality of learning in the school is very good and pupils make good progress and achieve well. There has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. In English, the quality of teaching is very good and it is good in science. In mathematics, just under half the lessons seen were good and overall the quality of teaching was sound and improves with the older pupils. Other subjects support pupils learning in literacy well and satisfactorily in number work. A strength of the school is the way that almost all staff foster pupils' interest in the subject, their ability to concentrate and their independence of thought. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subjects they teach which motivates and engages pupils. Teachers also have very good knowledge of their subject. They are therefore very confident when questioning pupils, they often answer a question with a question, throwing the challenge back and encouraging the pupil to think and work it out for themselves. This consistent encouragement of independence across the school coupled with high expectations is a major strength. Overall, the setting of homework is good and sometimes outstanding in, for example, history.

Teachers are aware of the range of attainment in class and strive to match the work to the needs of the pupils. As a result pupils with additional needs, those who find learning difficult or for whom English is a second language make good progress. Nevertheless, some teachers find the range of attainment difficult to manage successfully; for example, in modern languages, particularly picking up on the needs of the lower attaining pupils. Most teachers have very good class management skills. Nevertheless, in a very few mathematics lessons the teachers were too easily satisfied with a small number of pupils' lower levels of attention and participation.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The overall provision is good. The school has a commitment to providing a very broad range of subjects to all pupils and avoiding early specialisation before the age of 16. There are weakness relating to ICT, the timing of the introduction of the second language and providing sufficient time for religious education with the older pupils to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is good provision. Most pupils with special educational needs follow the full school timetable and are taught in class. Some pupils receive curriculum support in place of one option at GCSE.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Pupils progress well. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are supported well and make good progress. Currently the number of pupils who are at an early stage of acquiring English is small.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for moral, social and cultural development is very good, and provision for spiritual development is good. The personal, social and health education programme is an integral element in the school's delivery of these aspects. It is co-ordinated well and delivered mainly by a team of specialist staff.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school looks after its pupils very well. All pupils are considered important as individuals and they are supported well through a good inter-relationship between the pastoral and academic teams. The quality of support allows pupils to learn and develop successfully within a very caring and positive ethos.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher leads the school very well. He is committed to ensuring that all pupils have a high quality provision. This, along with the emphasis on ensuring that all pupils are valued, and that equality of opportunity is reflected within the day- to-day life of the school, provides the underlying foundation upon which the school's ethos is built. It is a powerful ethos which permeates and unifies the school. Deputy headteachers and other members of senior management team and heads of department provide very good professional management skills. There is a clear sense of direction and a focus on standards.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Members of the governing body bring a range of considerable personal and professional expertise to the role. Many governors are at the beginning of their term of office and are developing in their role. There is a good understanding of governance and their non-executive functions and a developing but very good relationship with the senior management team of the school. The governing body is fulfilling its statutory obligations except those with regard to collective worship, and religious education in the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior management undertakes an excellent analysis of comparative data and national assessment and pupil progress information. The school is not complacent and challenges itself well through the use of this data. Heads of department are not analysing the data as effectively or systematically as they could.
The strategic use of resources	The use of specific grants is very effective. The library plays an important part in the cultural life of the school. Staff development and induction are very good. Resources are used well.

The school is well aware of the shortcomings of the accommodation and is seeking to address them through the capital programme and through its own initiatives. There are some shortcomings in resources. ICT resources are improving and are nearing the national pupil to computer average. However, some departments are finding access to ICT difficult. In the main school the match of teaching staff to the needs of the curriculum is good. There were some staff vacancies in a small number of departments during the inspection but the departments concerned had worked hard to ensure that this does not adversely affect the progress made by pupils.

The school applies the principles of best value to any expenditure very well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their child likes school• They feel comfortable about approaching the school• The school expects their child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of work to do at home• The partnership with the school• Behaviour

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views and disagrees with the minority view regarding homework and behaviour. Overall, the use of homework to extend the learning within the classroom is good. Overall, behaviour is good and often very good in class. There are pupils who are challenging but they are usually managed well. 28 per cent of parents replying to the questionnaire felt the school did not work closely with them, which is no doubt disappointing for the school and one it needs to reflect on. The school does seek to actively involve parents at critical stages in their child's education and through the regular reports and consultation evenings and through the regular information newsletters.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Fortismere has a well-established sixth form of 341 students, which is slightly less than in previous years. Nearly two-thirds of pupils from Year 11 remain in the sixth form, where they are joined by students from other schools, who make up around a quarter of the total. Students are expected to attain five grades A* to C at GCSE if they wish to study in the sixth form. Twenty-seven subjects are offered at advanced subsidiary (AS) level and almost all of these continue onto advanced (A) level.² No vocational courses are being taken this year, although the school has taught these in the past; provision is made at local Further Education Colleges. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is broadly the same as that found in the main school. The ratio of boys to girls is greater in the sixth form than it is in the main school. Over three-quarters of the students went on to higher education in 2000 when they left the sixth form.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is effective and provides good value for money. Standards are above average in most subjects and students achieve well. The students respond well to the teaching, much of which is very good. The sixth form is well led and there have been many recent improvements, particularly to the pastoral support for students and enrichment of the curriculum, since the appointment of the new head of sixth. The school offers a very broad range of AS and A level subjects, but not enough opportunities for students who fail to meet the entry requirement or who would prefer a more vocational curriculum. Relationships between students and between students and staff are a strength of the sixth form.

Strengths

- Standards in external examinations, which are above average in most subjects
- The constructive relationships between students and staff
- The good quality of the teaching
- The breadth of the subjects offered at AS and A level
- The opportunities offered to students to be self-reliant, use their initiative and to take responsibility for their learning
- The high quality of much of the independent work produced by students
- The high percentage of students who go onto higher education

What could be improved

- Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory, both as a sixth form subject and in enabling all sixth formers to extend their knowledge and skills
- The curriculum options for students who fail to meet, or only just achieve, the entry requirement
- The systems for recording and transferring data about the sixth form and for monitoring students' progress, which are not robust enough and are not compatible with those used in the main school
- The quality of the sixth form accommodation (although this will soon be rectified), in particular the lack of spaces for private study and research

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Provision is good. Results are consistently above the national average. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching. Teachers do not, though, assess students' understanding regularly or rigorously

² Advanced level work is composed of two elements AS level followed by a second year A2. Throughout the report, because people are more familiar with the term, A level is used to describe and compare advanced level work.

	enough.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Biology	Provision is satisfactory. Results in 2000 were above the national average, but have declined over the last three years, partly due to discontinuity in staffing. Teaching is satisfactory but lacks variety in approach.
Physics	Provision is good. Results in 2000 were well above average. Teaching is good and students respond well to the interesting and up-to-date course, which makes good use of ICT. Resources are not always adequate.
Design and technology	Provision is very good. Attainment is above average and the quality of work from gifted and talented students is outstanding. Teaching is very good and results in very good development of personal and learning skills.
Economics	Provision is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress as a result of effective teaching, though assessment could be improved and there is a need for more resources.
Computing	Provision is unsatisfactory. There is a very wide variation in ICT knowledge and skills among students in the sixth form. There is no provision for all students to improve their skills and knowledge. As a result, overall standards in ICT are unsatisfactory. Standards in AS and A level computing are below average
Art and design	Provision is very good. Standards in art and design are well above average in both practical and written work. Students' work is ambitious and imaginative as a result of the good, challenging teaching and excellent relationships.
Music	Provision is very good. Results in 2000 were above average. The teaching is always at least good and leads to students having a secure understanding of examination requirements
Drama	Provision is very good. Standards are consistently above average. Students are achieving well because of the good teaching, in particular teachers' good subject knowledge, planning and classroom management.
Geography	Provision is very good. Standards have risen to above the national average and students achieve very well. Teaching is very good and students develop research and independent skills well.
History	Provision is very good. Results in 2000 were well above average. Most teaching is very good and students acquire a good depth of knowledge and achieve well. The accommodation is poor.
Sociology	Provision is very good. Teaching and assessment are very good and ensure that students make good progress and achieve well.
English	Provision is very good. Standards in AS and A level courses in literature and combined language and literature are well above average. Teaching is consistently very good.
French	Provision is good. Results in 2000 were slightly above the national average, though not as good as other subjects. Teaching is good and students' progress monitored well. The accommodation is poor.
Spanish	Provision is good. Current standards of work in Years 12 and 13 are above average overall. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. Numbers taking Spanish A level over the past four years have been

	small and results in general have been below national averages.
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In other subjects work was sampled. Teaching was nearly always good and sometimes excellent. An excellent lesson was seen in personal, social and health education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Support for individual students is good; staff give time to help meet their needs. The pastoral programme is much improved and offers a good grounding in study skills and preparation for life after the sixth form. Good help is provided to help students apply to higher education (over three quarters of the students go onto HE). Careers guidance is satisfactory.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The school is committed to its sixth form and it is led and managed well. There have been many good recent developments such as improvements to the enrichment programme, greater and clearer involvement of the tutors, and systems for setting targets for sixth formers. The accommodation is being improved and there will soon be much better facilities for private study and research. Systems for monitoring the attendance of individuals are improving. Not enough use is made about performance data on sixth formers to set targets and track progress in a systematic way. The sixth form systems for recording data are not compatible with those of the main school.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The choice of AS and A level courses • Accessibility of teachers to help with difficulties • Being able to rely on strong sensitive support with personal problems • They enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise other students to join 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on what to study in the sixth form • Being kept informed about their progress • Being well advised about what to do after they leave school • The range of activities outside of their main subjects • The accommodation, for example the common room and spaces for private study

The response to the students' questionnaire was markedly more positive from the Year 12 students than from Year 13. The latter had concerns about the introduction of AS level- the workload and examination pressures- most of which are beyond the control of the school. In discussion with many of them, they were more positive and were particularly enthusiastic about recent changes introduced by the new head of sixth, such as the enrichment programme and opportunities to have more of a say in decisions (for example through the sixth form committee). Most students feel that they are treated as responsible young adults.

The team agrees with what the students like about the school, although considers that the curriculum could be broadened further by the addition of vocational courses. Advice on what to study post-16 is satisfactory and each Year 11 student is interviewed by a senior member of staff. Information on vocational options could be more detailed. Advice on what to do after they leave school is satisfactory overall and good for higher education. The range of activities outside of the main subjects has improved considerably this year, with, for example, further clubs and a good personal, social and health education programme. The accommodation is poor, although is in the process of being upgraded, and students are involved in ideas for improving their common room.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. By the end of Year 9 standards in the National Curriculum tests in the core subjects of English mathematics and science when combined are well above average³ and in the highest five per cent of schools when compared to similar schools.⁴
2. By the age of 16, in 2000, pupils achieved an average total points score which is well above schools nationally and when compared to similar schools, and overall pupils⁵ made above average progress when their results in GCSE are compared to their results at the age of 14.
3. In the National Curriculum tests and in GCSE average points score, results improved at a faster rate than seen nationally.
4. The school accepts pupils at the age of eleven from the full range of ability. Nevertheless, there is a high proportion of pupils entering the school with above average levels of attainment, as measured by National Curriculum tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Furthermore the profile of pupils entering the school is also changing. When the data for the current Year 11 when they entered the school are compared to the current Year 7 when they entered, there are very noticeable differences in the proportions that achieved above average, average, and below average results in the National Curriculum tests at the age of eleven. The data for the current Year 11, for example, show a more even distribution of the proportions whereas the current Year 7's data shows a greater polarisation, with more pupils attaining above average results and far fewer pupils achieving broadly in the middle. The proportion with below average levels of attainment at the age of eleven is roughly the same in both years.
5. The school is very aware of the implications of the changing nature of the cohort because its analysis of national comparative assessment and progress data is excellent. The impact and use of this analysis in the setting of targets for departments is very good at senior management level. Heads of department need further professional development and support in using the data and seeing the implications for the way their subject is presented and how work is to be matched to provide appropriate challenge and support to pupils. Nevertheless challenging targets are being set for, and by, each department.
6. There are subjects where National Curriculum levels of attainment on entry are appropriate to their age and sometimes below expectations. For example, a high proportion of girls enter the school with a more limited experience in some aspects of physical education. In subjects such as this the good progress they make in Years 7 to 9 enables them to reach 'average' standards, that is, to reach National Curriculum levels appropriate to their age.
7. Whilst 87 per cent of the parents who responded to the questionnaire tended to agree or agreed strongly that their child was making good progress, there were some parents who were concerned that the school, because it was popular and achieved good academic results, was, nevertheless, complacent because it had a good intake. This was a theme consistently tested by the inspection team and there is no evidence to support such a view. Indeed, in all departments, including those few areas which require improvement, and in the school as a whole there is a very good commitment to further improvement and capacity to succeed in that process.
8. The school sees itself as a neighbourhood comprehensive school serving the local community and in terms of ethnic diversity and the range of attainment on entry this is clearly evident. The 16 percent of pupils with special educational needs is broadly in line with national average and the school also provides the education for pupils attending the special school for the hearing impaired that is also located on the large campus. A further 16 percent of pupils speak English

³ Throughout the report comparisons with national averages are made using 2000 data which at the time of writing is the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

⁴ Similar schools are defined by the fact that they are within the same free school meals banding rather than by size or organisation.

⁵ Throughout the report the term 'pupils' is used to describe those attending the school aged 11 to 16. The term 'students' is used to describe those attending the school post-16, in the sixth form.

as an additional language though most are well developed in terms of language acquisition. Although there is a significant number of pupils needing additional learning support, a high proportion of the Year 7 intake consists of able pupils and, across the whole school, around 20 percent are identified as gifted and talented.

9. By the end of Year 9 pupils performed well above national average for similar schools in the Year 2000 assessments, particularly in English and science. Standards in mathematics in terms of those reaching level 5 were lower but still above national average. However, when comparing the proportion reaching levels 6 and above, standards in mathematics were well above national average reflecting the significant numbers of very able pupils in the school. Although the differences in performance between girls and boys broadly reflected those nationally, both compared equally well against national levels.
10. Standards over the last three years up to Year 2000 showed a steady improvement in the core subjects and most foundation subjects and have been above the national trends. In 2001, pupil performance in the end of Year 9 assessments fell back in all three core subjects although were still above national average compared with those for similar schools⁶. In part this reflects a higher proportion of boys in that year and the fact that, on average, boys perform less well than girls at that stage. School analyses indicate that most pupils performed in line or better than expectation with girls better than boys in a number of subjects. In the 2001 teacher assessments, history and geography pupils continue to perform well above national average reflecting their strong writing and speaking skills. Although there are no national averages yet established, most pupils attain higher levels in art and music and to a lesser extent in physical education.
11. In modern foreign languages, while higher attaining pupils do well, the overall standard is closer to national average. An area of significant weakness is ICT where fewer pupils reach or exceed national average.
12. Evidence from lessons and work seen in the inspection broadly reflects the end of Key Stage 3 standards reported at the end of Year 9. Attainment in most subjects was above average and well above average in English. Standards were in line with national averages for modern foreign languages, religious education, drama and physical education and below average for ICT.
13. Pupils make good progress in most subjects in Years 7 to 9 and by the end of Year 9 achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Much of this is the result of effective teaching that provides good opportunities to develop a range of strong literacy skills, clearly evident in English as well as history and geography. The often very good teaching in design and technology and art helps most pupils to develop their creative and graphical skills, particularly in art, where they make very good progress. In some subjects, such as physical education, dance and drama, pupils come to the school with less developed skills and make good progress in reaching appropriate standards.
14. There are, however, a few subject areas where pupils' progress is satisfactory. In mathematics, progress is satisfactory because the teaching is sometimes less effective in establishing a rigorous work ethic in some classes, not ensuring pupils are focused on their learning and working at pace. The satisfactory progress made in modern foreign languages is related more to ensuring that the full range of ability is challenged by the class teaching in all three years, and the introduction of a second language in Year 9 that makes it difficult for pupils to develop sufficient competence by the end of the key stage. Progress in ICT is unsatisfactory in spite of the clear improvements in teaching because of the lack of structured and progressive curriculum opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and skills.
15. Results in GCSE in 2000 were well above national average for all schools and similar schools in terms of the proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A*-C. Girls performed better than boys although the boys performed better than the national average for girls. Outcomes improved further in 2001 when 71 percent of pupils gained grades A*-C compared with the 2000 figure of 65 percent. The latest figures also showed some narrowing in the difference in performance between White UK and Black African and Black Afro-Caribbean heritage pupils. The 2000 results for those pupils gaining five or more grades A* to G are in contrast, below national average when compared with similar schools but improved slightly in 2001.

⁶ Compared to 2000 data

16. When taking into account pupils' prior attainment at the end of Year 9, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A* to G is below the national average. In part this indicates that while the school has a large proportion of able pupils it also has a smaller number of lower attaining and less well-motivated pupils.
17. GCSE results in 2001 were for most subjects broadly in line with or better than those for 2000. The three core subjects of English, mathematics and science all showed improved pupil performances. Pupils achieved very high outcomes in art, media studies, sociology, music, drama, food technology, textiles technology and French. In these subjects, most pupils performed well in relation to their achievements in other GCSE courses. Subjects that did less well were Spanish and ICT where results were well below and below national average⁷ respectively. It is important to stress that in the 'compulsory' subjects a very high proportion of the cohort is entered. For example, 95 per cent of the year group take a modern language.
18. Inspection evidence confirmed that at age 16, overall standards are well above national average. Particularly strong subjects include English, science, art, history, geography, design and technology, music, sociology and drama. Standards are currently average in Spanish and below average in religious education and ICT.
19. Pupils continue their good progress in the school and by the end of their GCSE courses are achieving well in relation to their target grades. Again, in some subjects the challenging teaching is helping pupils make very good progress. These include history, geography, design and technology, art and music. Pupils make good progress in French and German. Religious education and ICT share a similar position in the curriculum in that, while the minority who opt for courses in those subjects are achieving well, the large majority of pupils have insufficient curriculum time to, in the case of religious education, meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus, and so make unsatisfactory progress.
20. Differences in attainment between boys and girls were no greater than that found nationally showing that in each of the key stages girls perform better than boys. However, because of the higher levels of achievement in the school generally, boys exceed the average attainment of girls found nationally.
21. The school also evaluates the differences in attainment between pupils of different ethnic and cultural heritage, although not by gender. More recently those differences in attainment have narrowed in the school compared with those found nationally as a result of the work the school has carried out and the inspection found no evidence in curriculum organisation or teaching and learning that might contribute to those differences. There are two learning mentors appointed who work with individual pupils, helping them to manage and organise themselves and their work and their impact on the pupils they are supporting is clear.
22. Though the school does ethnic minority achievement analysis, the numbers are not broken down by gender or into English language learners. Statistically the overall numbers are small. Most of the current early stage learners are refugees of varied linguistic background. All teachers are aware of those pupils for whom English is an additional language. Where direct support is given in lessons, it is effective. For example, through the teacher's skills and encouragement, pupils extended their comprehension and vocabulary skills in an English lesson and knowledge of earthquakes in a geography lesson. In a sixth form Spanish lesson, the presence of students from South America enriches the lesson because the teacher is able to use their regional accents and vocabulary to illustrate the wide diversity of Spanish. There is no evidence that the attainment of these pupils is suffering for lack of support and they progress well.
23. The attainment of many pupils on the special educational needs register is well below the national average. They make good or better progress in relation to their targets across most subjects. In some, such as design and technology, they make very good progress. This year 14 out of 26 pupils on the special educational needs register gained at least 1 GCSE grade at A* to C. One pupil gained nine passes, and one gained eight; seven pupils gained over three A* to C passes. Examination success often represents considerable personal achievement for the individual pupils.

⁷ compared to 2000 data

24. Gifted and talented pupils⁸ are very successful in public examinations and the school carefully monitors and records their success. In 2001 all the identified pupils gained A* to C passes at GCSE. In science, 100 per cent of passes for those assessed as gifted were at A* or A grade with 93 per cent A*. In both English and science, 87 per cent of passes were at A* or A. Gifted pupils are making good progress and examination results suggest that initial assessment is accurate.
25. The school curriculum provides for pupils to take GCSE examinations in ten subjects. The number of examinations and the implicit demands on pupils in terms of organisation of course work is challenging. The school is sensitive to this and adjusts the curriculum to suit the needs of individual pupils; for example, establishing a college link course for a pupil who was finding the school curriculum difficult or reducing the number of examinations and providing a support option. At the parents' meeting, one parent had found some difficulties in setting this up but another had found the school very responsive; it is unclear why there should have been this difference because the school is committed to supporting individual pupils. The school provides a very broad curriculum at GCSE with a significant core of compulsory subjects and subjects determined by guided choice. Within that framework, it tries to be sensitive to the needs of individual pupils.
26. The school has invested substantially in setting up a potentially excellent system of academic monitoring co-ordinated by an assistant headteacher. This is still being fully implemented in each of the subject departments and provides a very effective means of identifying the needs of specific pupils needing support as well as those considered gifted and talented for additional enhancement. The school is in the process of improving the existing system in the sixth form.

Sixth form

27. Standards in the sixth form are good with students taking two or more A levels obtaining an average point score above the national average when compared to all maintained schools.⁹ Standards are also above average when compared to all post-16 providers.¹⁰ Standards of pupils taking less than two A levels are well above average when compared to maintained schools and above average compared to all post-16 providers. The results in 2000 showed improvement over 1999. Overall, students make good progress.
28. Female students perform better than male students by approximately three points, whereas nationally the difference has largely evened out. From observation of classes and discussion with students there is no obvious reason why this should be so, except that subjects such as English, history, art and design, mathematics and sciences attract large numbers and achieve well and some of these are particularly popular with female students.
29. Of the subjects inspected, the provision was satisfactory or better in all subjects except ICT. Standards and provision are satisfactory in economics and biology and good in French, Spanish, mathematics and physics. Standards and provision are very good in design and technology, art and design, music, drama, geography, history, sociology and English.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

30. The attitudes of the pupils at the school are very good. This is a strength of the school and shows an improvement compared to the previous inspection.
31. The enthusiasm that the pupils portray during lessons and around the school is very good. They like their school and are proud of its good name. They usually show great interest in and concentration on all activities and become very involved. In addition to academic achievements, within which enthusiasm is usually high, pupils become involved in the many extra-curricular activities provided by the school. Parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed or strongly agreed that their child liked school in 92 per cent of the responses.

⁸ 'Gifted and talented pupils' is a phrase used and specifically defined within the 'Excellence in the Cities' funding initiative. It is not a description generally used within Fortismere. The school does seek to provide those pupils who are capable of attaining very high standards with the appropriate extension and challenge.

⁹ This covers comprehensives with sixth forms, City Technology Colleges, other secondary, Grammar and modern schools. Using 2000 data

¹⁰ In addition to 6 this includes FE Colleges, Sixth Form colleges and Independent Schools.

32. Behaviour in the school is, overall, good. It is a large dispersed campus and at lesson change a large number of pupils and students are moving around the campus. At such times behaviour by the few, usually boys, can be very boisterous, it is not organised or malicious. Members of staff are around at such times and generally there is a good level of supervision across the site at lunchtimes and breaks. Nevertheless the long trek from one building to another is a vulnerable time and the school has to place a very high degree of personal responsibility on the pupils, which the vast majority of pupils accept well.
33. Behaviour in class is good. In three-quarters of the lessons in the main school the attitudes and behaviour of pupils were judged to be good or better. In a third of lessons at Key Stage 3 and a half of lessons at Key Stage 4 it was very good and sometimes better. Generally, there is a very positive work ethic in classes, commented on by parents at the pre-inspection meeting.
34. The fact that there is such a positive and rigorous work ethic throws into relief the very few instances of unsatisfactory behaviour or those few occasions the same quality of rigour in the learning was not present. In mathematics, for example, there are a minority of the pupils, usually boys, who are easily distracted, because they are bored and disenchanted with the subject or because they are not involved enough in the lessons.
35. Those pupils who work in the special educational needs centre behave well. They show a good attitude to work and relate well to their teachers. Pupils accept advice, stay on task and work at a reasonable pace. They are happy to discuss their work in class. In the special educational needs centre especially, but also in the classroom, pupils have confidence in their teachers and this leads to increased involvement in lessons and continued progress. Gifted pupils often take the opportunity to show great personal skills and initiative.
36. No instances of oppressive behaviour were witnessed during the inspection. There is a logbook which records instances of poor behaviour and another which records any incidents which offend the school's very strong equal opportunities policy. Racist comments, or indeed any slur, are taken seriously, recorded and followed up appropriately. There was no evidence in class of higher attaining pupils holding back answering a question for fear of ridicule; the so-called 'boffin' culture. Pupils spoken to, including Black African heritage pupils, said that there was some bullying in the school but that it was isolated incidents. They also suggested that it was sometimes difficult to break into and become part of some groups. 'There are cliques, but not to do with colour or race-it doesn't matter if you are black or white.'
37. At the parents meeting there was a mixed view about how well the school managed the issue of bullying. One parent was clearly pleased in the way a particular incident had been managed very sensitively and tactfully whilst another felt that it had been left to the victim to prove that bullying had occurred and felt that the school did not face up to the issue. It is impossible to comment on individual incidents and cases. The school is very aware that bullying can take place. It is vigilant and publishes a written commitment in every classroom which states that the school takes the issue of bullying seriously. It promotes the concept that Fortismere is a school where bullying is reported, that 'Fortismere is a telling school' and that onlookers of bullying are as involved as the perpetrators. It works hard to break down any 'code of silence.' The possibility of bullying is a recurrent theme in the personal, social and health education programme and within assemblies.
38. The school is very clear about how it uses exclusions. Any threatening, menacing or violent behaviour results in immediate exclusion until the parents or carers of the pupil are able to visit the school and contribute to discussions on what would be the best course of action. Although the school has had a significant number of incidents of exclusions during the past year there have not been any of a permanent nature for many years. Several incidents have been by the same perpetrators. The school works hard to keep these pupils in school by working closely with the parents or carers and by adjusting and matching the curriculum to their particular needs. The school monitors exclusions carefully, including by ethnicity. The proportion of fixed-term exclusions from non-white pupils was disproportionately high (albeit it with very small numbers) but more recent statistics show that fixed term exclusions are representative of the school population.
39. Relationships within the school between pupils and between pupils and staff are once again very good and this is another school strength. Teachers know the pupils they are teaching. In most cases there is evident mutual respect between pupils and teachers. The atmosphere in the main is non-coercive and teachers listen to pupils. Independence and independent thinking are stimulated positively. The school is not threatened by, or defensive about, a pupil's

divergent thinking or the way the pupil expresses their personality, for example, in the way they dress. Various different nationalities within the school get on together very well, indeed as do boys and girls and any pupils with additional needs. The school is a community which cares about the individual and one within which pupils acknowledge that they can turn to their friends or a member of staff and receive a sympathetic and understanding ear.

40. The initiative that pupils show and the personal responsibility that they take on are very good and yet another definite strength of the school. Each pupil becomes a school monitor for at least one day a year. Years 8, 9 and 10 pupils are trained as counsellors and the students union and school council are very proactive. There are many captains for the numerous competitive sports teams and, within the school, inter-class competitions are arranged by the pupils themselves. Year 10 also run young enterprise groups whereby pupils can bank money. From Year 10 onwards the pupils also arrange an annual party for children from a local special school.
41. The attendance figures at the school for the most recent reporting year are good. They are above the national average for this type of school. Unauthorised absence is below the national average. Such figures compare well with those witnessed at the previous inspection. The majority of pupils arrive at school and into classes on time and most lessons commence promptly. There are a small minority of pupils who take advantage of the considerable distance between one site and another and arrive late but this is followed up effectively by the members of staff.
42. The way the school encourages, supports and develops pupils' and students' growing independence, quality of thinking and very good attitudes to learning is a major factor in the academic achievement and progress they make.

Sixth form

43. Most Fortismere sixth formers have a positive attitude to the school and to their studies. Many students are confident and articulate, and they respond extremely well to stimulating and challenging teaching. Most adapt quickly to life in the sixth form and to the high expectations that teachers have of them. They appreciate the way that they are treated as young responsible adults and welcome the recent opportunity to have more of a say in decisions concerning the sixth form. For example, a group of students is involved in looking at ways to improve the common room and a sixth form committee will be represented on the Student Union. Students are critical about some aspects of school life, but on the whole are loyal to the school and glad that they made the choice to study in Fortismere.
44. Students' attendance is good but a few are too casual about punctuality and arrive late for lessons.
45. Relationships between students are excellent. Male and female students and students of different ethnic backgrounds get on extremely well. Students are sensitive to the needs of others and help to ensure that new students from other schools are made to feel welcome.
46. Sixth formers are given opportunities to get involved in the life of the main school. Good numbers take part in paired reading with younger pupils and sixth form musicians are involved with the school orchestra and bands. Some students have been trained as counsellors for younger pupils. Sixth formers do not, though, have any regular duties in the main school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

47. The quality of teaching in the main school has many significant strengths and very few weaknesses. As a result pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and very good progress in Years 10 and 11. Overall, as a result of the good and often very good teaching, the quality of learning in the school is very good. There has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. At that time 17 per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory and there was considerable variation in the quality of learning taking place as a result.
48. Overall, the quality of teaching in the main school and sixth form is good and often very good. It is very good in Years 10 and 11. Across the main school, well over a quarter of lessons seen were very good and occasionally excellent, just under a half were good and just under quarter

satisfactory. Only three lessons out of the 151 seen in the main school were less than satisfactory.

49. Pupils make good and often very good progress in the school as a result of the good quality teaching which they are challenged by consistently across the school. It is this level of consistency which establishes the rigour of the work ethic seen in so many areas.
50. A key feature and strength of the school is the way that almost all staff foster pupils' interest in the subject, their ability to concentrate and their independence of thought. Teachers are enthusiastic about the subjects they teach. They are fascinated by Tudor Monarchs or the stereotypes in television soaps or how the pendulum will behave. Their subject is important to them and communicating the excitement they get from the subject is important to the staff. This in turn motivates and engages pupils. They catch the enthusiasm and the excitement. The 'creative buzz' referred to in the report on art happens in classrooms across the school often accompanied by a demanding work ethic.
51. Teachers also have very good knowledge of their subject. They are therefore very confident when questioning pupils, they often answer a question with a question, throwing the challenge back and encouraging the pupil to think and work it out for themselves. This consistent encouragement of independence across the school is a major strength. Teachers also have high expectations. They expect the pupils to do well and this means that the work is implicitly challenging and pupils are expected to make good use of the time, and to work against a deadline. There are high expectations, not only on what pupils can achieve but also in terms of personal organisation and coping with varying, often multiple, demands. Pupils have found the course work calendar and the revision booklets particularly helpful in organising their time. The implicit demands of taking up to ten GCSE examinations are recognised and acknowledged and pupils are supported from early in their school experience.
52. The pace of learning is also maintained by the good use of assessment in most departments. Pupils know what it is they have to do to improve and marking usually sets targets for improvement. As a result pupils have a good knowledge of their own learning and take significant responsibility for it. They develop a mature approach, recognising that they are responsible for bringing something to the process. The learning process is also helped because teachers plan well to ensure that units of work build on previous learning.
53. A concern was expressed at the parents meeting about the length of time it took the school to recognise the pupils' achievement in the primary school, although as they stressed, the outcome was fine in the end but the process was initially demotivating. The current work on analysis of pupil data on intake is helping in that process but greater awareness of the work in primary schools would help a number of departments. There is, however, effective liaison with primary schools to ensure that individual pupils additional needs are known in advance.
54. Homework was a parental concern, although, when discussing the improvements which had taken place in the school, homework was specifically mentioned as an aspect where there had been improvements. Overall the setting of homework is good and sometimes outstanding, for example, in history where it is inbuilt into schemes of work. In the main, homework extends the learning that has taken place in class. The inspection took place early in the academic year and routines had barely been established so it is more difficult to comment on the regularity and consistency of expectations within departments. The newly re-designed school diary should make the monitoring of homework easier for both the school and parents. Given the overall levels of achievement in the school, homework is not an issue.
55. Teachers are aware of the range of attainment in class and work hard to match the work to the needs of the pupils. As a result pupils with additional needs, those who find learning difficult or for whom English is a second language, make good progress. Nevertheless some teachers find the range of attainment difficult to manage successfully in some classes, particularly picking up on the needs of the lower attaining pupils, for example in modern foreign languages. Overall, gifted and talented pupils make good progress because of the very high expectations and the extension opportunities, often extra-curricular. A further challenge for the school, particularly as a result of the further improved performance of pupils when they leave primary school, is how departments build into the course structures the extension work for gifted and talented pupils.
56. The classroom management of pupils is usually very good and teachers are skilled at managing pupils to ensure that the demanding work ethic referred to above is established in class. There are, however, a very few occasions when teachers have more difficulties in

engaging pupils' interest. In a few mathematics lessons, for example, where a minority of pupils were disenchanted by the subject and where some teachers were too easily satisfied with lower levels of attention and participation, the quality of learning was diluted.

57. Pupils' individual special needs are assessed on entry to school and detailed individual educational plans are generated giving clear details of needs, targets and strategies. Subject departments have varying success in using individual education plans. In design and technology they are used well, in most departments their use is satisfactory. Although individual education plans' targets are clear, there are no subject-specific targets and in future these may have to be generated by the departments in separate individual education plans. All pupils being supported have good programmes of work and individual departments are able to support pupils through matching the work to the pupils.
58. Teaching is good and very good within the special educational needs department and pupils make good progress. Support within the classroom is more variable. Special educational needs teachers are better prepared than some recently employed learning support assistants who are still familiarising themselves with the system. The department is still not up to full strength and in some cases there is insufficient liaison before the lesson begins and sometimes there is insufficient attention paid to individual education plans by subject teachers. These are not major drawbacks and are being dealt with. Learning support assistants are becoming more efficient and the acting special educational needs co-ordinator has some good ideas on how to improve the liaison between special needs and subject departments. Teaching techniques are appropriate and effective. Teachers are infinitely patient and friendly; they constantly reinforce the messages being given and they maintain a steady pace. They expect pupils to make an effort and to make progress. Subject knowledge and planning are both good. Good relationships are formed and exploited for the benefit of the pupils. This is seen particularly well in sixth form lessons where a dyslexic pupil is given excellent sympathetic assistance.
59. The teaching of literacy skills is good in departments and most support numeracy skills satisfactorily. There are good examples where ICT is used to support learning and many staff have had, or are receiving, specific training in it. The level of ICT 'literacy' amongst staff has risen significantly since the previous inspection and staff are beginning to use it more effectively. Nevertheless, ICT remains a development area.
60. Teaching in personal, social and health education is very good. Teachers use a range of skills that enable pupils to reflect upon the topics as well as learning about them. The team as a whole has developed a very good expertise. They are secure in their knowledge and approach topics with confidence. Staff and pupil relationships are very good and this enables pupils to develop their own opinions and attitudes in an atmosphere of trust. The assessment of pupils in personal, social and health education is recognised by the department to be an area for development. It needs to be more formal in order to provide evidence of the progress and achievement of pupils.
61. Teachers work hard to make what they teach interesting. They also enjoy working with young people and want to see them succeed. As a result, relationships across the school are very good. Teachers listen to pupils. They recognise their individual strengths and support them in their growing maturity. Parents at the meeting said how impressed they were by the care, knowledge and support teachers gave their children. Pupils are confident in their teachers and because they trust them they are prepared to 'make the attempt' and thus, in the process, develop their confidence and self-esteem by their resultant success.

Sixth form

62. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall and is often very good.
63. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise and have introduced the new AS courses effectively. They plan their work extremely well and have high expectations of their students. As a result students' learning is good. Students are encouraged to use their initiative and to take responsibility for their own learning, which they generally do well. Some of the independent work produced by students is excellent, for example in design and technology.
64. Teachers are very often enthusiastic about their subjects and help to inspire students, who are often highly motivated. A high percentage of students go on to study degree courses.
65. Relationships with students are a strength. Teachers treat students with respect and create a purposeful relaxed atmosphere for learning, in which students feel secure and valued.

66. Teachers generally involve students well in discussions and their questioning is challenging and encourages students to think. However, many of the Year 12 groups are large and some teachers do not always manage to include all students in these whole class discussions. Teachers do not always adapt their teaching sufficiently to cater for the large numbers or the students' wide range of prior attainment.

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

67. There are significant strengths in the overall curriculum provision and few weaknesses. Overall the provision is good.
68. The school makes good provision for a broad and varied curriculum in Years 7-9. As a designated Technology College, the school promotes design and technology and these strengths are shared with most subject areas in what is a well-balanced curriculum that includes the sciences, languages and the visual arts. Drama and dance are highly valued and all pupils are actively involved. Most subjects have developed good schemes of work that are coherent, stimulating and enable pupils to make progression. However, a desire to further broaden the curriculum by introducing a second language in Year 9 results in pupils not achieving as well as they should by the end of the key stage, or in subsequent GCSE courses, because they lack sufficient grounding in the subject. A further concern, also highlighted in the last inspection, is that in the school's desire to mainly develop ICT across different subjects, it has neglected providing a planned and progressive programme of study and in that respect is not meeting statutory requirements. Nonetheless, there are examples of departments increasingly using ICT to support teaching and learning in their subject.
69. Overall, the Key Stage 4 curriculum is good with pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefiting from a broad and balanced curriculum that includes a compulsory core of English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, design and technology, physical education and personal, social and health education. Additionally pupils have three further options from which they are required to choose a creative arts and a humanities subject. The range of choice is considerable including, as it does, National Curriculum and other subjects. These include further languages, ICT, art and design, drama, music, geography, religious education and history, as well as media studies, expressive arts, sociology and economics and business studies. The school provides a wide range of curriculum choice that enables pupils to achieve up to ten GCSE qualifications.
70. There is however a weakness with regard to the provision for religious education and ICT. The previous inspection report highlighted the inadequate provision for religious education and this remains the case with insufficient time to cover the programme of study of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Furthermore, while individual subjects continue to develop their use of ICT, the lack of whole school mapping and tracking of provision means that the school cannot demonstrate that it is sufficiently covering the programme of study. In terms of curriculum entitlement, the school strongly believes in all pupils having access to a common curriculum and, although a small number of pupils have some access to work experience and a college link course, no pupil is withdrawn from the compulsory core. While wanting to uphold the principle of entitlement, the school is reviewing its provision for the small minority that achieve less well in GCSE courses.
71. The great majority of special educational needs pupils follow the full school timetable and are taught in mainstream classes. Where necessary, at Key Stage 3, pupils are withdrawn and given small group tuition to improve standards of literacy and numeracy. At Key Stage 4, some pupils receive curriculum support in place of one option and are able to improve learning skills and give extra time to preparing coursework in a number of other subjects. This is good provision.
72. Pupils with special education needs are fully involved in the activities of the school and the success of integration is initially due to the very good liaison with feeder schools, which helps to guarantee continuity. The special educational needs department does not arrange many activities specifically for special educational needs pupils but does encourage them to take part in the school visits and activities. Special educational needs pupils have access to and use ICT to advantage in Year 10 research work. Gifted and talented pupils are well catered for, with extra lessons organised by subject area coordinators and a large number of cultural visits and school journeys, for example, a Year 9 visit to a film on the holocaust and music workshops on jazz and composing, and visits to Beijing, Prague and Paris.

73. Overall, there are good strategies for teaching literacy skills across the school although there are inconsistencies between subjects. Very good work is going on in some areas, notably that which arises from the initiatives of the literacy co-ordinator, the English and special educational needs staff, working in conjunction with the librarian. But there are also examples of good practice in other subjects, such as drama, history, science, art, modern foreign languages and design technology. Here teachers ensure that pupils tackle a variety of writing tasks and support their reading activities. In other cases teachers focus on key subject words and encourage good spelling. A literacy co-ordinator works with representatives from all subject areas to implement the school literacy policy, which is currently being revised, but meetings are infrequent and the focus is often on extra-curricular events, such as 'Book Week'. This high profile event makes a significant contribution to the cultural life of the school and the encouragement of reading. However, there is not yet clear evidence in subject areas of a whole school policy at work. Plans for monitoring the teaching of literacy across different subject areas have still to be implemented, although departments have already reviewed their own literacy policies. The school literacy policy is still in the process of being further developed.
74. Strategies for teaching numeracy skills in subjects across the school are satisfactory except in ICT. Pupils apply their numerical skills satisfactorily in other subjects, when required. For example, in science, pupils manipulate numbers, in history pupils of all ages use graphs and statistics as evidence, interpreting them and drawing conclusions and in geography pupils use statistical tests in their fieldwork research. However, numeracy is yet to be specifically programmed into the work schemes in most subjects and it lacks co-ordination, monitoring or evaluation reflecting the higher priority currently given to developing literacy skills across subjects in the curriculum.
75. The school provides a rich and varied programme of activities outside the usual school day which contribute significantly to pupils' enjoyment and the high standards achieved in many areas. These activities include a range of sporting and cultural clubs as well as visits. For example, pupils and students of all ages successfully compete against other schools in several sports. There is a high take-up rate for the different activities and the overall extra-curricular provision is a strength of the school. Opportunities for students to get involved in activities such as helping younger children in local primary schools and working for charities, not only enrich the curriculum but help to develop a strong sense of social and moral responsibility.
76. Equal opportunities underpin the work of the school, in its ethos and practical organisation. There are many strengths. All pupils have access to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Most departments cater well for all identified groups of pupils so that little difference was seen in the progress of identified pupils and it monitors the progress of all pupils carefully. The school is aware of the difference in attainment between Black African and Black Caribbean pupils and is reducing this gap in performance. For the small number of pupils not taking examinations, there is good provision and there are proposed further developments to provide alternative provision and alternative accreditation who currently take the examinations but find them a struggle. Stereotypes are challenged. Many boys find success in dance and girls in ICT.
77. Personal and social education is seen by the school to be a vital resource in the delivery of pupils' personal development. It is seen as a very important pastoral tool in enabling pupils to develop skills, attitudes, values and independence of thought, feelings and actions. It is a whole school resource that enables pupils to develop in a fuller rounded manner.
78. The personal, social and health education curriculum in both key stages is well planned, broad and balanced and meets the needs of all pupils. The development plan and course objectives and the relationship with the school's curriculum are well structured and appropriate. Pupils are provided with a rich and varied diet throughout Years 7 to 11. The programme has, recently, been extended into Years 12 and 13. The school is also developing the citizenship programme in advance of its inclusion into the curriculum in 2002. The department has the advantage of excellent resources.
79. Personal, social and health education makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Topics such as attitudes to bullying, sex and drugs education, ethical issues, human rights, democracy, and survival skills provide opportunities for pupils to develop attitudes and values towards an understanding of how they and others view the world and what values are important to them.
80. Careers education is a well-planned feature of the personal and social education programme in Years 8 to 11 and includes an interesting range of activities including role-play. The local

careers service provides valuable support, especially for those pupils who are likely to seek employment and training at age 16. The school maintains a good range of careers resources as part of its well-managed school library. Until now the great majority of pupils have not benefited from work experience in Years 10 and 11 though the school is now reviewing this provision. A small number of pupils in those years follow a college link course in vocational studies as one of their options and work placements are also arranged for a similar number of pupils who the school feels will gain from the experience.

81. The manner in which the school uses the community to contribute towards the learning of its pupils is very good. This aspect compares well with the previous inspection and contributes significantly towards the pupils' learning.
82. Although the school has no allegiance to any one particular church in the area, various representatives do come in and talk to pupils. Pupils also visit local mosques and synagogues. At lunchtime many pupils utilise the local church's youth club. There are various business and industry links of which the school is part. Many charities are supported by the student's union – for example the National Lifeboat Appeal. At Christmas pupils deliver food parcels to the local old people. For several years the school has had very close links with an African village school to which the pupils send very much needed textbooks and various essential resources. The school itself is used, on most nights, by the local community for sports training and choir practice.
83. The school has satisfactory relationships with partner institutions and these links help towards both the pupils' academic and social development. A considerable number of hearing impaired pupils from the school based on the campus are integrated well into all classes. Fortismere regards these links as being an important expression of its social and academic inclusion policy but acknowledges that there is currently more work to be done to develop the relationship. Transfer of primary pupils from approximately forty local schools is carried out with care. However, curriculum links to ensure a smooth transfer could be enhanced in some departments. The school also has very useful links with two neighbouring colleges for certain pupils who do not always wish to follow the purely academic courses offered by Fortismere School. There is a very positive relationship with the University of London Institute of Education. Sporting links with other schools are many and varied
84. Overall, the school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for moral, social and cultural development is very good, and provision for spiritual development is good. There are many references to these aspects of pupils' personal development in the school's documentation, especially with regard to behaviour, equal opportunities and bullying. The personal, social and health education programme is an integral element in the school's delivery of these aspects. It is co-ordinated, and delivered mainly by a team of specialist staff. The religious education syllabus provides many good opportunities in these areas. The co-ordination of this aspect is clear and there are plans for the production of an audit of spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision across the curriculum focussed on departments and the personal, social and health education programme. This will provide a valuable starting point for a planned and coordinated approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the school in terms of a shared policy for the planning, delivery and monitoring of this aspect of the curriculum. There are plans for the development of a programme of assembly themes for the year and this should make a significant contribution to these aspects of pupil development.
85. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good overall. Assemblies take place twice each week in Years 7 to 10, and once each week for Years 11 to 13. Assemblies do provide opportunities for reflection, and emphasis is placed on the collective aspect of this provision. There is a deliberate policy for assemblies not to be used as worship. The school believes that it is more important to emphasise the collective aspect of these occasions as part of its commitment to a community dimension and an inclusive approach to this aspect. As a consequence, the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met. There are plans for tutor time to operate a *thought for the day* programme that is linked to assembly themes. There is some evidence of planning in departments for spiritual development, and the personal, social and health education programme makes a significant contribution in this area. For example, topics such as feeling good about ones self and aspects of justice allow pupils to express their values and beliefs openly and honestly. They are also able to tackle fundamental questions of meaning about life. In some subjects, opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils were observed. For example, the religious education curriculum makes a very good contribution. In art, the schemes of work include themes that allow pupils to reflect on values, feelings and beliefs. In history, opportunities to gain insights into personal experience were

observed. In English, poetry work has a strong spiritual dimension, and this is also reflected in lesson planning and teacher enthusiasm. Reflective opportunities are also evident in music, geography and drama.

86. Provision for moral development is very good. This is a strength in the school. Opportunities are targeted largely through the personal, social and health education programme and in religious education. Topics, such as attitudes to bullying, sex education, drugs awareness, alcohol abuse and vandalism, and ethical issues, such as human rights, provide a sound curriculum for discussion and development. The school has clear expectations of pupils knowing right from wrong and pupils respond well when they are corrected. The headteacher and staff are good role models for pupils. Assemblies make a good contribution to this area. Within the curriculum some subjects contribute well in providing opportunities for moral development. In religious education, pupils are able to respond to aspects of morality using their knowledge of religious and ethical issues. In English and drama, moral dilemmas provide the main sources for powerful drama and detailed examination of texts, such as *'Blood Wedding'*, and *'Macbeth'*, provide good opportunities to examine motives and moral dilemmas. In history, discussions about the native North American Plains Indians challenge pupils' stereotypes and enable pupils to develop more mature insights. In science, respect for living things, genetic engineering and cloning all provide good opportunities for moral discussion. In geography, the moral arguments relating to, for example, sustainable developments, genetically modified foods and factory farming, the use of fossil fuels and relationships between rich and developing nations provide many good opportunities to reflect on global aspects of morality.
87. Provision for social development is very good. The school provides opportunities to take responsibility and develop social understanding. The personal, social and health education programme provides many opportunities in this area, in terms of specific curriculum provision such as rights and responsibilities, healthy environment, sex and love, citizenship, democracy and survival skills all provide a powerful contribution to developing attitudes and fostering independent thinking. The paired reading scheme has now been extended all the way to Year 13. The development of a student union, run by students for students, provides valuable opportunities to exercise social responsibility and develop communication skills. Students organise several charity events, recently raising over £750 for Kosovan refugees, together with contributions to comic relief. Other examples include involvement in local primary schools and running parties to raise money for leukaemia research. A number of pupils and students in Years 10, 11 and 12 train as peer counsellors. All pupils in Years 8 and 9 act as monitors, and this includes greeting visitors, showing them around the school and assisting with general office administration. Assemblies do make a significant contribution to social development. Pupil participation was a feature of one assembly on theft. Many subjects contribute well towards social development. For example, in geography, decision-making, group work and fieldwork enable pupils to collaborate with each other. Practical sessions in information and communications technology encourage both pair and group work, and many opportunities of this nature were also observed in science, history, English, music, religious education and art. In drama, texts such as *'Too much Punch for Judy'* and the school production of *'Alfie'* centre on social issues.
88. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. There are several opportunities for pupils to be involved in activities that extend their cultural development. The school's curriculum in personal, social and health education provides planned opportunities for pupils to develop an awareness of the variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country. For example, topics such as multi-cultural Britain, UK relationships with the commonwealth, asylum seekers and divided societies all contribute towards the development of attitudes and values. There are aspects of religious education that make a significant contribution, especially in terms of the study of different religions and the cultures that support them so assisting pupils to prepare for life in a multi-cultural and multi-faith society.
89. Some subjects make a significant contribution to the cultural development of pupils. For example, in drama, theatre visits, visits from theatre groups and school productions enable pupils to develop cultural awareness. Texts provide a rich source of cultural material and much of the material used in the sixth form, such as Greek melodrama, derives from other cultures. In music, many concerts, workshops, choirs, bands and recitals are well supported and contribute very well. The multi-cultural dimension is particularly strong and is seen in the use and celebration of Indian music, samba workshops, jazz improvisation and Brazilian Music. Over seventy pupils took part in the centrally organised Khutazo African festival of music, song and dance. In ICT, the Internet provides access to information about different cultures and traditions and in science the significant contribution of Asian and Indian scientists is stressed.

90. However, whilst there are many good examples, the perception of a small group of Black pupils was that this aspect could be developed to a greater extent. They quoted for example the fact that there was little on African history and that the food available in the canteen did not reflect the school's diverse cultures. Clearly these are sensitive issues to do with how individuals view themselves recognised and supported in their learning and the relevance to them as learners of what is taught. These are important factors in these pupils' attainment.
91. The school has in many areas looked carefully at the curriculum content from the point of view of gender and the development of engaging with different cultures within the curriculum is an aspect for further consideration.
92. Since the last inspection, the provision for the moral development of pupils has continued to be a strength in the school. The provisions for spiritual, social and cultural development have improved significantly. The statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils is still not met although some improvements have been made.

Sixth form

93. The school offers a very good range of AS and A levels. Most students study four AS subjects, and experience a good mix of arts, sciences and humanities. As well as more traditional subjects, the school offers AS courses, such as photography, philosophy, psychology, media studies and government and politics, all of which are popular. These subjects continue as A2 courses in Year 13, where most students study three A levels. A small number of students are retaking the Year 12, whilst others are simply retaking some AS examinations in order to improve their grades.
94. There are no vocational courses this year, as the uptake was too small; courses are available in local Further Education Colleges. The school has taught GNVQ in the past- for example, four students studied Intermediate leisure and tourism last year. The school's documents about sixth form courses do not promote vocational subjects very strongly. To get into Fortismere sixth form to study A level, students generally require at least five GCSEs at grades A*- C, which excludes around 30 per cent of Fortismere's own pupils. Results in last summer's AS examinations were good, on the whole, but 11 per cent were ungraded¹¹; in computing, nearly one third of students were ungraded. This suggests that for some students the demands of the AS course were too great and that a different sort of course, for example, a GNVQ, might be more appropriate.
95. Students choose their AS subjects in Year 12 from four option blocks and due to the popularity of some subjects, groups are often large, typically over 16 students. These option blocks have been continued into Year 13, where numbers sometimes fall significantly. So, for example, there are two physics groups in Year 13 with nine and four students, two drama groups of six and seven, two parallel geography groups of seven and seven, one large chemistry group of sixteen alongside two groups of eleven and five students. Clearly having small groups does not make the most efficient use of staff and reduces opportunities for students to interact with others. To be fair to the school, under the new sixth form arrangements students are encouraged to take four AS levels in Year 12 and to drop one of these subjects in their second year of the A2 course. This does create the management difficulties outlined, particularly as it is important to maintain the possible combinations of option choice. Patterns of choice may emerge which will allow more accurate forecasting of option choice and more effective management of student numbers and group sizes.
96. The school does not offer religious education in the sixth form and neither is there a daily act of collective worship. Students do have a weekly assembly, which cover issues of a spiritual, moral and cultural nature and these are promoted well through the personal, social and health education course.
97. The accreditation of key skills in the sixth form has been postponed. The deputy head of the sixth form had made a good start with, for example, training for staff and tracking where skills are taught in subjects. Their plans have, not inappropriately, been put on hold until the future of key skills accreditation is clearer. The school has not, though, communicated its decision clearly enough to students and parents, who are not sure what is happening. In addition, students entering the sixth form have not always had a good grounding in ICT and there is

¹¹ Unconfirmed national data indicates that the pass rate at AS level was 85 per cent in 2001.

insufficient planned provision to ensure that their skills and knowledge are improved in the sixth form.

98. There is an appropriate programme of enrichment activities beyond the taught subjects. This programme has improved significantly this term, which has been commented upon positively by students. As well as a weekly personal, social and health education lesson, there are sports activities and various trips. There is a debating club, film club and newspaper edited by students. Those who take advantage of the physical education activities on a Wednesday afternoon, achieve well. Unfortunately, not all students are free at this time as some subject lessons are timetabled during that session. Students are able to take part in work shadowing. This happens at the beginning of Year 13 and the school is considering changing this to the end of Year 12 so that more students can participate.
99. The personal, social and health education programme is very good. It supports students' learning skills (for example, making notes and library research) and prepares them well for life after school. An excellent lesson was seen in which students learned in a practical and interesting way about the value of listening carefully, taking notes and the importance of body language in interviews.
100. Careers education and guidance in the sixth form is satisfactory overall with real strengths in Higher Education advice and application. The local careers service now has a more active role in advising students, but careers education is in the process of being improved as part of efforts to provide a progressive and coherent careers education programme throughout the school. All students in the sixth form have work placements in areas related to future study and employment.
101. Other enrichment activities include music, where sixth form students take an active role in the orchestra, band, choir, shows, group practices and independent music making. Many students have instrumental and vocal lessons. There is a successful Engineering Education Scheme, which gives students the opportunity to work in an engineering environment. The school has a history of gaining awards in the Creativity in Science and Technology (CREST) scheme. There is also a good range of visits to museums, galleries, theatre and overseas trips and visits from, for example the local Member of Parliament, to support and enrich subject courses.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

102. Child protection procedures and those for ensuring the welfare of the pupils and students are very good. These are a significant strength of the school and compare very well with the judgement given at the previous inspection.
103. The school's very experienced and well-trained child protection officer has ensured that all members of staff are very well briefed on their relevant responsibilities. Certain other key-staff are fully trained in the correct procedures. The school follows the local authority guidelines and works very closely with the latter's child protection team and also that of the local police authority. Incident books and reports are very well maintained and all relevant documentation, within the school, is very securely locked away. The school currently has three 'looked after pupils', who are monitored separately.
104. All pupils are given very good support both, physically and emotionally. The school has very good health and safety procedures on what is currently an extremely difficult, split site, to monitor. There is an experienced and trained health and safety representative for each site. Very regular checks are made, on each site, by the head teacher, site representatives and maintenance managers and detailed risk assessments are produced. Currently, due to huge building alterations at the school, many of these procedures are now being co-ordinated with the relevant contractor. The school has regular, well recorded, fire and emergency exercises and all portable electrical, fire fighting and physical educational equipment is date tested. All escape routes from the school are accessible and well marked.
105. The school has efficient and caring procedures for dealing with and recording accidents. Medical rooms at both sites are comfortable and well positioned. There are two fully trained first aid personnel, one on each site. A mentoring service of two staff is very well utilised by the school and much appreciated by several pupils. There are constructive links with outside professional help which are used well by the school. For example the school nurse makes regular visits to the school and the educational psychologist attends pupil reviews. The former often acts as counsellor on any health issues. During the inspection, as part of the personal,

social and health education provision, the local community policeman was talking to Year 7 pupils, also on the theme of bullying. Links with the local police are particularly good.

106. There are very good procedures in the school for monitoring and improving attendance. Registers are very well maintained for each class and returned to the school office both morning and afternoon, for checking by the school's specially appointed attendance officer. Regular checks are also made, at individual lessons and at assemblies, to monitor internal absences. Recently the local authority has completed a survey in order to make comparisons of attendance by pupils of ethnic minority groups but has not, as yet, released its findings. However, on the evidence available, the school would not currently appear to have any relevant problems. The school does not have a disproportionate number of absences for pupils with special educational needs. Very good use is made of the educational welfare officer.
107. The school also has very good procedures for both monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating that of an oppressive nature. A very extensive, overall pastoral policy details realistic procedures and rewards and sanctions. The school rules are displayed in various strategic spots around the buildings and all pupils are very well aware of their contents. A member of the senior staff, all of whom have been specifically trained, is regularly on duty to deal with individual class, or otherwise, disruptions, for referred persons, who are immediately counselled. Where necessary, individuals are put on report or a pastoral support plan which is then monitored closely on a twice-daily basis. Pupils are encouraged to have the confidence to report all acts of attempted aggression against them, whether racial, sexual or physical. How to recognise and deal with bullying is an integral part of the school's personal, social and health education. All bullying incidents are recorded and investigated in great detail and, where necessary, parents become fully involved. All members of staff are well briefed on seeking out such incidents and reporting them.
108. Procedures within the school for the monitoring and supporting of pupils' academic performance and personal development as a whole are very good. Those procedures for academic progress are very good. All pupils have very detailed written learning reviews every term plus an end of year report, copies of which all go to parents. Regular, basic departmental tests depend on the subject being taught and the particular department. All pupils receive end of year exams. Records of achievement are set up for all individual pupils and presented to them at the end of May in Year 11 and again in Year 13. These contain: certificates of personal achievement, work experience records and a final record of achievement from each teacher. If a pupil is assumed to be not capable of achieving academic success in any exam, they, with their parents, are advised early on and either extra support is given or an alternative course suggested; for example, transfer to one of the linked, neighbouring colleges, for vocational courses.
109. The personal, social and health education, course includes citizenship and makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal, emotional and social development as well as making a very good contribution to moral, social and spiritual development of pupils.
110. The personal, social and health education department is very well managed with a strong vision and a clear sense of purpose and direction. A strong and committed team supports the coordinator very well. Since the last inspection, personal and social education has made very good progress in terms of the development of a structures curriculum that is well delivered and received.
111. Details of progress are also covered succinctly in termly and end of year reports.
112. Statutory requirements for the provision for special educational needs pupils are met. Pupils are identified early and they are thoroughly assessed with the help, where appropriate, of local authority expertise. Proper procedures are followed in order to gain maximum support. A proper register of special educational needs pupils is kept. Assessment of pupils' progress is carefully monitored. The special educational needs centre is well appointed and forms a comfortable, non-threatening workplace, which allows special educational needs pupils to settle easily and concentrate. Levels of personal support are high and good guidance is given to special educational needs pupils. The school makes a considerable effort with special arrangements for them, such as arranging extra time for a particular pupil's GCSE examinations.
113. All departments are required to have an inclusion policy to cater for the needs of special needs pupils. These policies are monitored by the special educational needs department. There is also a link person from each department, though this may change as the increased special

educational needs staff take on subject responsibilities; an idea which should help improve the liaison at classroom level and help them become part of more formal arrangements for consultation and monitoring. Pupils with additional needs, including gifted and talented, are carefully monitored. Tracking is based on data on entry and special educational needs pupils are tested throughout Key Stage 3, using reading and spelling scores. There is good analysis of test and exam results at all levels, including for gifted pupils. There is very regular review of individual education plans and statements.

114. Overall, the school looks after its pupils very well and this aspect can be said to have improved even over the favourable standards witnessed at the previous inspection. Such very good care and support allows the pupils to learn and develop successfully within a very caring and positive ethos.

Sixth form

Assessment

115. Students are assessed regularly in most subjects and they have a good idea of their progress and strengths and weaknesses. Students suggested that some subjects were very good at keeping them informed about their progress, for example the sciences, whereas others were less good.
116. There have been some recent improvements in the way the school monitors students' academic and personal progress. Tutors are expected to take greater responsibility for monitoring progress and to complete progress reports every half term in Year 12 and every term in Year 13. Students have just been asked to identify three areas where they believe they need to improve. Parents are informed by letter when students are behind with their work or when their attendance is poor.
117. Systems for checking the attendance of individual students have been tightened up to enable tutors to spot patterns of absence. The system used does not, though, provide overall data on attendance in the sixth form, though attendance appears to be good overall. Apparently a new system has been introduced which has had teething problems which prevented access to data.
118. The school makes use of 'ALIS¹²' to analyse examination results in terms of the value added by the school. The data arrives a little late, after heads of department have undertaken their own analysis of results. The school is not exploiting ALIS as well as it could to set targets for students and thereby monitor progress. Some departments are already monitoring progress effectively and setting targets, but this is not systematic throughout the sixth form.
119. Systems used for recording data about the sixth form are not compatible with those used for the main school. This means that it is not easy to transfer GCSE results, for example, automatically to the sixth. The software used in the sixth form is cumbersome and slow.

Advice, support and guidance

120. The sixth form caters well for student's individual needs, in many respects. Teachers are always willing to offer extra support to students, though this is not always taken up. Tutors give help with the completion of UCAS forms and the head and deputy head of sixth have given a great deal of time to help students prepare their personal statements for their applications. During the inspection, this was seen happening throughout the week at every available opportunity. Extra help is available for students with special educational needs and these students are monitored carefully. The school goes out of its way to ensure that those students who need it are given every support during public examinations, for example extra time. Students commented very positively in the questionnaires about the help that is available when personal problems arise. They also have access to a counsellor.
121. The personal, social and health education programme is good and helps students with study skills and preparation for work and Higher Education, for example interview skills. Careers guidance is satisfactory.

¹² ALIS is a detailed value added analysis undertaken on behalf of the school which tracks student progress in their advanced courses against their GCSE score when they started the course. It therefore indicates the value that the course has added to the student's progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

122. From opinions received at the pre-inspection parent meeting and written questionnaires returned from parents, the vast majority consider that this is a good school. More specifically a high percentage said that: their child liked the school; they feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems; the teaching is good, their child is expected to work hard and achieve of their best and is making good progress and the school is helping their child to become mature and responsible. The inspection supports the positive views that parents have of the school.
123. A slightly lesser percentage, although still quite high, thought that the school was well led. However, quite a significant minority considered that; their child was not getting the right amount of work to do at home; the school did not work closely with parents; behaviour was not good in the school; they were not kept well informed about how their child was getting on and the school did not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons.
124. The inspection team felt that the school was very well led and managed. Overall, the use of homework to extend the learning within the classroom is good. In some departments, such as history, it is outstanding but it is part of the regular routines of many departments including, for example, English, ICT, religious education and mathematics. The issues relating to homework are perhaps more related to the consistent setting of work and the establishment of routines. The school has introduced a new homework diary which should allow for regular monitoring by both school and parents. Overall behaviour is good and often very good in class. There are pupils who are challenging but these are usually managed well. The school does have to place significant responsibility on pupils at times such as lesson changes. The standard of supervision is good. There is a very good range of extracurricular activities.
125. The question why 28 per cent of parents returning the questionnaire felt the school did not work closely with parents is a difficult one to answer and no doubt disappointing for the school and one it needs to reflect on. The school does seek to actively involve parents at critical stages in their child's education and through the regular reports and consultation evenings and through the regular information newsletters. Parents of older pupils seemed to welcome the course outlines and revision booklets published by departments for GCSE pupils. Perhaps part of the problem for parents stems from the transition from the often high degree of parental involvement which occurs at primary school to being less aware of what their child is studying in the secondary phase.
126. The school is currently revising its public image through being one of seven schools nationwide involved in the 'Joinedupdesign for Schools Project'. In that process too, it perhaps needs to examine how it presents itself to parents in the details of the many daily encounters it has with parents.
127. Equally those parents who feel that they could make a more significant contribution and that their expertise could be tapped to a greater extent need to reflect on how this is brought to the school's attention.
128. The quality of information provided by the school for its parents, particularly about their child's progress, is good. Each parent receives a copy of the school prospectus and an annual Governors' report. Both of these documents comply fully with statutory requirements. Parents also receive, every term, pupil reviews and an end-of-year academic report on their child's progress. These are well written, cover all subjects of the curriculum, are easy for parents to understand, clearly show what pupils can do, have achievable targets and also comply otherwise with all statutory requirements. In addition, parents receive a weekly newsletter, home/school agreements, a copy of the homework policy and liaison via homework diaries, in which is also a copy of the behaviour policy. There have been educational evenings for parents, for Home/School Agreements (2000) and Literacy (2001), and every year each year group holds a 'meet the teacher evening' where attendance normally averages at least 90 per cent. The school is open and accessible. Parents are involved in special educational needs reviews and individual educational plans.
129. Special educational needs teachers attend reviews of statements held for pupils in Year 6 of primary school, at which parents are present. In Year 7 draft individual education plans are shared with parents at the beginning of the year and subsequently contact is regular and fruitful. Parents send written responses to, and reports on, individual education plans and attendance at review meetings is good, and the department tries hard to accommodate all parents. Although a small percentage of parents complain about special educational needs

provision, the reputation of the department is growing and already primary school parents of special educational needs pupils are seeking places at Fortismere. The school gives recognition to special educational needs in the school prospectus.

130. It is school policy that parents are not informed if their child is identified as gifted as defined by the 'Excellence in the Cities' initiative.
131. Overall, parents seem to make a good contribution to their children's learning particularly at home. A high percentage of parents are very keen to involve themselves in research into topics and projects via computer work. Within school, several parents help in the library, refereeing sports events and aiding special educational needs pupils' visits out of school. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school, overall, is good. The energetic Fortismere School Association is well supported and very much appreciated by the school. They arrange a variety of social and other events and have recently managed to fund two school minibuses to the obvious advantage of the pupils.
132. The effectiveness of the school's links with its parents overall is at least satisfactory and contributes effectively towards the learning of its pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

133. There are many significant strengths in the leadership and management of the school and very few weaknesses. Overall the leadership and management are very good. There have been very good improvements in this aspect since the last inspection, particularly with regard to the clarity and delegation of responsibilities and the school development plan.
134. The difficulties of managing a large school on such a large and split site campus are not to be under-estimated and for Fortismere to be efficient as it requires a larger than normal senior management team, clear lines of formal communication and some inevitable duplication of resources. The fact that one gains the strong impression of there being one school which happens to be on three sites says a great deal about the unifying school's ethos. Over some issues parents mentioned a lack of consistency. Ensuring consistency, when of necessity there has to be greater delegation to managers and teaching staff, is more difficult. Whilst there are opportunities for the informal, ad hoc events to take place within departments and within buildings, whole school events have to be planned for in detail and formalised.
135. In a significant number of areas there has been very good improvement since the last inspection which more than outweighs the aspects where there has been less development. Overall progress since the last inspection has been good.
136. Standards have improved and are above average in most departments and they are improving at a rate which is above the national rate of improvement. The quality of teaching has improved very significantly. There has been very good improvement in aspects of leadership and management and in the analysis and use of assessment data. The school has managed capital programmes which have led to physical improvements in design and technology and science accommodation. The school has also been highly involved in the setting up and managing the private finance initiative and the resultant capital programme.
137. Parents' perceptions of the improvements which have taken place include;
 - o raised expectations,
 - o a better environment,
 - o the fact that school has tried to address some pastoral issues
 - o the quality of homework has improved.
138. The school identifies a number of factors which have aided development including: the promotion to specialist status with a significant injection of funding and the funding associated with 'Excellence in the Cities' and the private finance initiative.
139. Although there have been aspects which have improved there are weaknesses relating to the improvements of ICT, religious education and the statutory requirement for worship. There have been difficulties regarding staffing which have slowed developments in ICT and religious education.

140. The school identifies a number of issues which have handicapped improvement, namely:
- the number and range of initiatives that the school has had to manage and the fact that the curriculum across the school is changing,
 - the management of accommodation issues which have absorbed a great deal of time
 - and important issues relating to teacher supply, recruitment and retention. There are several areas where it has not been possible to appoint permanent staff for the beginning of the academic year.
141. The headteacher leads the school very well. He takes genuine pride in the fact that Fortismere is a neighbourhood comprehensive. He is deeply committed to comprehensive education and ensuring that all pupils have a high quality provision. This, plus the deeply felt commitment to ensuring that all pupils are valued and that the school's commitment to equal opportunities is reflected within its day-to-day life, provides the underlying foundation upon which the school's ethos is built. It is a powerful ethos which permeates and unifies the school. He brings many strengths to the role. He is fiercely loyal to his staff, generous about their success but equally determined that the school will provide high quality provision. Thus, whilst there is strong support to individual members of staff, there is also a strong sense of their accountability within the collegiate atmosphere. In the press for high standards there is also integrity and concern for the individual pupil; for example, finding ways to keep the challenging, disaffected pupil within the school and education system. The fact that the school works hard to be inclusive stems from his leadership. He does bring to the role a long-term view of the development of the school and a broad vision of what Fortismere is about, essentially providing a good deal to all pupils. The school's commitment to a very broad curriculum also stems from his view that the school should provide multiple opportunities for success across a broad sweep of subjects up to the age of 16.
142. Delegation to key staff is very effective. All are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and the deputies work well together providing very good professional leadership and support, managerially and as teaching practitioners. Whilst the senior management team have key areas, responsibilities are overlapped to provide mutual support and a unifying force against pressures, because of the site, to fragment and tackle problems in isolation. A particularly strong feature of the school is the inter-relationship and reciprocity which exists between the pastoral supportive structures of the school and the academic to support the individual pupil. They are not separate structures but inter-relate well.
143. Leadership and management at departmental level are overall very good. There are clear departmental development plans with a sustained focus on improving standards. Within departments and across the school members of staff show very good shared commitment to improvement and capacity to take the school further forward.
144. The school has clear aims and there is a strong sense of direction reflected in the school development planning. Monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school within departments and by members of the senior management team is, overall, very good, particularly in regard to monitoring of teaching. This monitoring and sharing of good practice has led to the overall improvement in teaching. As a result of the monitoring the school has a very good understanding of its strengths and those aspects which require further improvement and support.
145. Part of this monitoring process is by comparing the school's performance with others and making effective use of the various forms of data now available which indicate the value that the school is adding to pupils' education as reflected in test scores. The analysis of comparative assessment data is excellent and the use of it within the senior management team is very good. Heads of department, however, need more support in how they make use of such information. The school is setting itself challenging targets based on detailed knowledge of the intake coming into Year 7. The school is not complacent.
146. Given that there has been a significant change of staff, through entirely natural reasons, including relative new appointments to the senior management team and the fact that a number of governors are at an early stage of their tenure of office, the school should consider whether the process of formulating a school development plan which establishes the school's priorities over a longer term useful. There does exist within the school an optimism and an energy which a longer-term plan could harness. The arguments against such a plan question the effectiveness of a longer-term plan given the range of initiatives which are likely to impinge upon it. Nevertheless establishing the trajectory of what the school wants to do and where it wants to be in three to four years time may allow it to prioritise initiatives realistically and reduce

pressure on managers rather than add to it. It may also ensure that priorities for development are held in sharp focus, seen through and completed.

147. The use of specific grants is very effective. The school has several sources of grant covering support work for the ethnic minorities, enhancement of the school's work in the field of technology, raising standards through the Standards Fund and for pupils with special education needs. Each is very well managed through the school's finance officer, under the guidance of a senior member of staff.
148. The cost per pupil at the school is high but, taking into account the expenditure incurred because of the nature of the site and buildings, educational priorities are very well supported through the school's financial planning. The school places high priority on reducing class sizes and in providing staff with marking and preparation time. The headteacher and governors make very good use of available funds to improve the school buildings and resources. A deputy head who has overall financial responsibility liaises very closely with the headteacher and other senior curriculum managers, the governors and the head of finance and administration. The school has considerable experience in managing major contracts and establishing very effective provision to the benefit of the pupils. This expertise is used to advantage in providing support to all curriculum areas, an excellent example being the school's reprographic facilities.
149. The school development plan provides a clear focus of educational priorities for the current year but could be more explicit about a longer-term perspective. Detailed evaluation of the school's performance is appropriately used to direct funding to the educational priorities identified. Currently these include the ongoing major development of information and communications technology provision and shorter-term objectives such as the improvement of the quality of attainment in Spanish. There is, however, some unevenness in provision such as the lack of dedicated computer facilities for science. Individual subjects are well supported by the financial provision; heads of departments taking responsibility for educational review and financial planning in their own areas. Overall, given the high standards, the good quality of teaching and the particular difficulties associated with the site, the school provides good value for money.
150. The school's income for the current year is reduced by £64,361 to repay unanticipated costs from the 2000-2001 financial year. In addition, an underestimate by the Local Education Authority of the number of sixth-form students to join the school in September 2001, has resulted in further overspending being planned by the school. The result is a projected deficit of £161,027. When the adjustments are made at the end of the financial year for the actual numbers in the sixth-form, the governors anticipate that these will contribute to a balanced budget for 2002-2003.
151. Staff induction and the effectiveness of the support to newly qualified teachers is very good. The staff handbook is detailed and helpful and gives a clear explanation of school systems. Arrangements for staff development are also very good. Staff new to the school and new to the profession feel very well supported.
152. Members of the governing body bring a range of considerable personal and professional expertise to their role. There has been a significant change in the governing body and many of the governors are at the beginning of their term of office and are developing in their role. There is a good understanding of governance and their non-executive functions and a developing but very good relationship with the senior management team of the school. The governing body has a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and those aspects requiring improvement through reports, presentations and their own visits. They help shape the school development plan and thus contribute to the school's strategic direction and monitor its progress. They are involved in performance management and setting targets for the headteacher. The governing body are fulfilling their statutory obligations except with regard to collective worship, religious education in the sixth form, and in Years 10 and 11, although there have been some improvements in this latter respect. The question regarding whether to provide a daily act of worship has been formally considered. Much of their time in the last year has been taken up with the details of the private funding initiative. An issue for the governing body is finding the time within the prescribed formal agenda to reflect on the school and its development.
153. The library provides a very valuable learning resource and makes a significant contribution to the school's cultural life. It is integrated well into the academic life of the school because the professional librarian is regarded as a head of department and is on the curriculum committee

and attends steering groups and various subject meetings. Departments have, in the main, a library representative and there are good relations with teachers as a result. The library, split between two sites, is professionally run and organised and despite low funding has a good range of stock. Currently rooms are somewhat cramped which limits the private study accommodation. This is being addressed by the current building programme. It is highly involved in the school's work on literacy through the annual book week which is a major event in the life of the school, involving all departments and has developed good links with local authors and journalists. It also operates library lessons and provides book boxes for Years 7 and 9. Members of the library staff give up considerable personal time to work with the pupils. The library closes for 30 minutes at lunchtime which seems a pity given its popularity amongst pupils. The current issues system does not allow for analysis of the issues but the librarian feels that there is not a gender difference in the use of the library. Within the south library there are six networked computers and one computer which is not on the network. On the north site there are two networked machines and one stand alone along with two older Apples. The ICT facilities are improving and are used well. The librarian has had ICT training through her professional association and provides good support to pupils by putting information packs together, for example guidance on the use of the Internet. The school has access to Guardian on line

154. The school is well aware of the shortcomings of the accommodation and is seeking to address them through the capital programme and through its own initiatives. Parts of the school are currently scruffy and uninviting or in some areas make learning more difficult. There are some shortcomings in resourcing. ICT resources are improving and are nearing the national pupil-to-computer average. However, some departments are finding access to ICT difficult.
155. In the Sixth Form the match of teaching staff to the needs of the curriculum is very good. In the main school it is good. In three departments teachers are teaching subjects for which they have no qualification but they are teaching effectively. In three departments, music, design technology and religious education there were staff vacancies during the inspection but the departments have worked hard to ensure that this does not affect the progress made by pupils.
156. The school meets legal requirements for pupils with special educational needs. Appropriate levels of staffing have been allocated and extra learning support assistants have been appointed from the delegated budget. Although not all new staff are in place, they soon will be and the scope of the department will be widened. Provision overall for special needs is being improved also by the appointment of learning mentors and gifted pupil subject coordinators. Special educational needs teaching staff are well trained and attend appropriate courses in a variety of topics, such as Accelerated learning and literacy. There is a named governor who has visited regularly and is very supportive.
157. New technology is in use in the department. Individual education plans are on disc, as are test and exam results. The acting special educational needs co-ordinator is energetic and keen to improve an already good department. In order to do this she is looking to improve deployment of support staff in the classroom, increase coverage of support for non-statemented pupils and improve levels of pre-lesson liaison. In addition, the monitoring of subject departments' use of individual education plans and provision of differentiated materials should be put on a more formal basis.
158. The provision for gifted pupils is good, but needs to be fully in place. In addition, the present relationship between coordinators and the assistant head should be more structured. The school currently adopts the strategy of providing extra classes in some subjects to provide extension work and challenge gifted pupils. Further consideration needs to be given to how this extension work can be structured within the curriculum.
159. Since the last report special educational needs has continued to provide a good service to pupils and parents. An important new dimension is the good provision now being made for gifted and talented pupils. Staffing has improved and the school has maintained its links with the school for hearing-impaired pupils which is sited on the school's campus.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

160. The school is committed to its sixth form, which is well led and managed. The new head of the sixth form has in a very short space of time introduced a number of good improvements, such as a more rigorous procedure for monitoring attendance, a better enrichment programme and greater involvement of the students. He is well supported by the deputy head of sixth and together they are very accessible to students and provide a great deal of individual support and advice.
161. Most departments are very well managed and teachers have taken on board the new AS requirements extremely effectively. Nationally there have been teething problems with the new examinations and this is likely to have contributed to some of the disquiet expressed in the questionnaires by many students in Year 13. The students feel under a great deal of pressure with the prospect of examinations coming upon them a few months after the start of the course, though they welcome the greater breadth of the subjects they can study.
162. Accommodation is poor at present although in the process of changing; a new library and resource and careers centres are being completed. The sixth form block is currently bleak, although it has 'a lot of character' according to one sixth former. Some of the AS groups are very large and tutor bases are too small to accommodate them. Spaces for private study are very limited at present. The common room is not a very inviting environment, though there are plans to improve it. Major refurbishment of the accommodation had started immediately prior to the inspection.
163. The overall management and financial planning for educational priorities in the sixth form are very good. However, timetable planning has not taken into account the reduced numbers in Year 13 for certain subjects, compared with the number who began the subject in Year 12. Consequently, the cost of teaching a number of relatively small groups, for example in mathematics, is unnecessarily high. Some students also find the occasional very long triple sessions timetabled for subjects difficult to manage.

Resources

164. Resources are generally good for most sixth form subjects. Students have reasonable access to computers, although the rooms are not always available. The large group sizes create problems in the resourcing of some subjects; for example, in physics and A level art.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

165. In order to build further on the school's many strengths, the headteacher and governing body should:
- (1) Improve the provision for ICT by:
 - ensuring that ICT is used to enhance learning across the subjects of the curriculum in a planned and co-ordinated manner
 - improving the provision for basic ICT skills in Years 7 to 9
 - ensuring that pupils in Years 10 and 11 have clearly identified and assessed opportunities to develop their information and communication technology skills
 - raising standards in information and communication technology at GCSE (paragraphs: 14, 19, 59, 68, 69, 243)
 - (2) Review and improve aspects of provision for modern foreign languages to enable the department to continue to raise standards and have a greater impact on the academic and cultural life of the school. The review should include;
 - timing of the introduction of the second language
 - ensuring that there is more guided choice for pupils at GCSE regarding which language to pursue;
 - ensuring that the needs of both the most and least able pupils in broad band and mixed ability classes are addressed more carefully
 - aspects of timetabling;

- resources;
 - departmental responsibilities.
(paragraphs:17, 55, 68, 252)
- (3) Develop Heads of Departments' understanding of national comparative progress and assessment data so that the information can be used in the examination and review of schemes of work and the target setting process.
(paragraph: 145)
- (4) Review the provision for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form to provide sufficient time so that the subject meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
(paragraphs: 19, 70, 96)

In addition, as a minor Key Issue:

- Develop an understanding of the work carried out in the primary school in subjects such as science to smooth the transition from the primary phase.
(paragraphs: 53, 190, 199)

Sixth form

- (1) Improve the provision for ICT by
- improving students' access to computers and other resources in computing lessons
 - ensuring that all students are enabled to extend their ICT skills in the sixth form
(paragraphs: 328, 333)
- (2) Broaden the curriculum options in the sixth form so as to:
- make them appropriate for a wider range of students
 - include vocational subjects and other programmes that might be more appropriate for the interests and capabilities of some students
(paragraphs: 93)
- (3) Improve the systems for recording and transferring data by:
- ensuring that systems used in the sixth form are compatible with those used in the main school so that data can be transferred more easily, for example examination results
 - exploiting the potential offered by ALIS to set targets for students at beginning of Year 12
 - monitoring the academic progress of sixth forms more systematically in all subjects
(paragraphs: 115, 116,118,119)
- (4) Improve the quality of the accommodation by:
- implementing the planned programme of improvement
 - ensuring that there are enough spaces for students to study privately and to undertake research
 - ensuring that rooms used for tutor groups are large enough
 - improving the appearance and comfort of the sixth form block generally and the common room in particular.
(paragraphs:162)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	148
	Sixth form	78
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		71

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 to 11							
Number	5	41	65	35	2	1	0
Percentage	3	27	43	23	1	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	5	33	25	15	0	0	0
Percentage	6	42	32	19	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for the sixth form as each lesson represents more than one percentage points. Table may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1216	336
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	131	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	27	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	238	15

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	250

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	34
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	49

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	7.7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	113	128	241

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	89	84	90
	Girls	112	93	97
	Total	201	177	187
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	83 (83)	74 (83)	78 (72)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	60 (59)	52 (57)	51 (43)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	91	82	79
	Girls	114	97	93
	Total	205	179	172
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (83)	75 (86)	72 (73)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	60 (54)	47 (60)	47 (44)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	28 (28)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	104	111	215

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	66	99	103
	Girls	73	98	103
	Total	139	197	206
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	65 (74)	92 (94)	96 (97)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	46
	National	38.4

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	67	73	140

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	17.1	20.3	18.8	2.3	6.7	4.1
National	17.7	18.6	18.2	2.6	2.9	2.7

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	105
Black – African heritage	53
Black – other	0
Indian	34
Pakistani	9
Bangladeshi	10
Chinese	9
White	1151
Any other minority ethnic group	129

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	97.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.9

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	627

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71.6
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	23.9
Key Stage 4	20.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	34.0
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	39.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	6.9
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	11	0
Black – African heritage	8	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	17	0
Other minority ethnic groups	17	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	5334701
Total expenditure	5337446
Expenditure per pupil	3429
Balance brought forward from previous year	-61616
Balance carried forward to next year	-2745

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1550
Number of questionnaires returned	277

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	47	7	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	34	53	7	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	53	18	4	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	46	21	10	3
The teaching is good.	24	62	8	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	22	49	15	6	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	45	6	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	42	11	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	19	46	21	7	7
The school is well led and managed.	29	49	10	5	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	34	49	6	3	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	44	14	4	8

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their enthusiasm for English is often passed on to pupils, for whom they have very high expectations.
- Pupils learn quickly in English lessons that are usually enjoyable and often challenging.
- The head of department provides very effective leadership for a strong team of teachers who work hard to raise standards.
- Imaginative new schemes of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 provide a very good framework for pupils' learning.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not have clear procedures for identifying under-achieving pupils and providing them with additional support.

166. Attainment in English for 2000 was well above national averages in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examination results. Test results at the end of Year 9 were also well above those of schools with a similar background. They were in line with those achieved in science and a little better than those in mathematics. Boys and girls did equally well against national figures.
167. In 2001 the number of pupils achieving Levels 5 and 6 dropped but remained comfortably above national averages for 2000. Results rose more steeply over the four years from 1996 than they did nationally. In GCSE examination results for 2000 the numbers of pupils achieving A* to C grades was well above national averages in both English and English literature. These grades were also above average compared with similar schools, as were those in science, but comparative results in mathematics were better. Results for 2001 showed a significant improvement in English. Results in English compared against those in other subjects were slightly less good than is the case in national comparisons.
168. Work seen during the inspection was consistently well above average. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11 is very good, even taking into account their well above average skill levels on entering the school or when beginning Year 10. Teaching and learning are very good and better than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils in all years talk confidently using appropriate language and many are assured and effective communicators. Pupils always work well together in small groups and the quality of oral feedbacks to the rest of the class are well above average. By the time they are in Years 10 and 11 pupils can modify the way they talk to suit the situation and to take account of their audience.
169. Work on words and sentences in short sessions at the beginning of each lesson in Years 7 to 9 have a positive impact on pupils' literacy skills in English. Additional lessons are given to those pupils in Year 7 whose reading skills are less well developed when they come to the school. Pupils generally read aloud very well, conveying the meaning clearly and confidently, and when looking for information they are able to scan a passage quickly to find what they need. By the time they are in Year 9 all pupils are able to analyse demanding literature, as seen when a class was working on John Keats' poem, 'The Eve of St Agnes'. Most pupils were able not only to understand the meaning of the poem but also to see how the poet was using language to create particular effects. In Years 10 and 11 pupils continue to refine these reading skills so that they are able to detect themes which lie beneath the surface of a text. In comparative studies, such as their essays on Stevenson's 'Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde', higher attaining Year 11 pupils pursue their arguments with confidence because they read widely and research topics thoroughly.
170. In Years 7 to 9 pupils write fluently and accurately, re-drafting their work effectively, and frequently use ICT to produce final pieces. Standards of presentation in books and folders are very high. The imaginative writing of all pupils is particularly good in their own short stories. Higher attaining pupils show, when writing as though one of the characters in Shakespeare's 'The Tempest', how well they understand the strong links between character portrayal and language. The written work of some lower attaining pupils, though fluent, lacks accuracy and is

less well organised and this is particularly evident in the work of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The writing of pupils in Years 10 and 11 often shows great assurance, as seen in some of the well argued and persuasive letters written about the case of Derek Bentley, following pupils' study of the background to his trial and conviction. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress in mixed ability teaching groups. They usually share the general enthusiasm for lesson activities that helps most other pupils to learn quickly, but teachers do not always check their progress to see if additional support is required.

171. Teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their enthusiasm for English encourages the positive attitudes that pupils show in lessons. More than half the teaching observed was very good or excellent, almost all was at least good and none was unsatisfactory. Relationships between teachers and pupils are mutually respectful and this helps to explain why pupils make such good progress. New schemes of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 provide a balanced framework for learning on which teachers build challenging and engaging lessons. One excellent example was a Year 10 lesson where pupils analysed football commentaries. The class teacher kept all pupils fully involved and interested by choosing appealing activities and materials, which challenged all pupils but gave sufficient support to enable slower learners to make very good progress. She managed pupils very skilfully, insisting on high standards of behaviour and making very good use of the excellent relationships she had with them to ensure that they were fully committed to the work. In the best lessons all pupils are actively involved, for example, working in small groups and sharing the reading aloud.
172. The head of department gives strong leadership. A committed team of well-qualified teachers provides very good support. They share common goals and are very receptive to change. There is good delegation of responsibilities across the department and everyone works hard for continued improvement. Very good marking lets pupils know the levels at which they are working and encourages them to set targets for improvement. New schemes of work, a new departmental handbook and revised procedures for assessing pupils' progress are all helping to raise standards. A lively programme of extra-curricular activities, of which Book Week is an outstanding example, helps to raise pupils' achievement in English. Teachers have successfully implemented recent government initiatives to raise standards of literacy for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Since the last inspection the department has made very good progress. Improved teaching and learning have led to better examination results. Pupils use ICT more in their English work and pupils with special educational needs now make faster progress. However, teachers do not yet provide enough structured support for lower attaining pupils and their use of assessment data remains an important area for development.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards are consistently above national averages in National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations.
- An above average proportion of pupils gain A* or A grade at GCSE
- Almost all pupils gain a grade in the A* to G range at GCSE
- There are strengths in teaching, especially of the higher attaining pupils.
- Most pupils behave well.

Areas for improvement

- Some pupils, of all levels of attainment, are disinterested in the subject and teachers need to find ways of addressing this.
- Developing consistent expectations across the department with regard to the quality of learning a class management and some teachers' behaviour management skills.

173. The standards of attainment on entry to the school are above the national average and remain so when measured by the Key Stage 3 national tests, taken when pupils are aged 14. In both 2000 and 2001, the proportion reaching the expected level was above average, and for those achieving beyond that level, it was also above the national figures. Girls as well as boys do better than average. Pupils' overall performance in mathematics is broadly in line with English and science. Results are above the expected averages for similar schools. At the time of the last inspection standards for pupils aged 14 were above the national averages. These high standards have been maintained.

174. Pupils make satisfactory progress between the ages of 11 and 16, and the GCSE results are consistently above the national average. The 2000 results are broadly comparable to those reported at the time of the last inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining A*-C grades in 2000 was 13 per cent above the average for all schools and is comparable with similar schools. This improved further in 2001. Pupils' performance in mathematics was not significantly different to the average of the other subjects they entered. Girls as well as boys performed above the national averages. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades of A* and A is above average. Almost all pupils gained a grade within the A* to G range.
175. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are usually satisfactory and often good. There is, however, a minority of pupils, who have become disenchanted with the subject. Some lessons, including in Year 7, are not characterised by an atmosphere of purposeful activity with the result that, during the inspection, the standard of work seen in some lessons was not as high as it should be. Too many pupils of all prior attainments are wasting too much time because some teachers are not managing behaviour effectively. A minority of the pupils, especially, but not always the boys, are easily distracted, usually because they are bored and disenchanted or because they are not involved enough in the lessons. Some teachers are too easily satisfied with low levels of attention and participation which, although very seldom developing into unsatisfactory behaviour, nevertheless diluted the quality of learning taking place. On other occasions, teachers involve the pupils and manage the classroom effectively. In these lessons, most pupils, including the higher attaining pupils, achieve as they should and lessons have a pace and rigour in the quality of learning taking place. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress as a result of the provision made for them, as do those identified by the school as the ablest. In Year 7, pupils are taught in mixed ability form groups. From Year 8 onwards they are taught in classes organised by prior attainment.
176. Pupils in Year 7 consolidate their knowledge of the points of the compass through use of a software programme, and further develop their familiarity with calculators. They are beginning to use spreadsheets in practical situations. The higher attaining pupils know the prime numbers to 100, and the meaning of key words such as 'multiples' and 'factors'. Average attaining pupils are not secure about these key words yet, and the lower attaining pupils do not know the multiples of five. In Year 8, the higher attaining pupils use calculators to work out the square roots of four digit numbers. Lower attaining pupils use shapes to investigate reflections, but some do not know the times tables beyond five. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 measure the circumferences and diameters of a number of round objects and go on to discover that pi is 3.14. Average attaining pupils in the same year know the mathematical language of circles such as 'diameter', 'radius', and 'circumference'.
177. Average attaining pupils in Year 10 use their knowledge of exterior angles to calculate the size of interior angles in regular polygons. They cannot divide 360 by 8 without a calculator. They solve simple linear equations by using the balancing method. Lower attaining pupils in Year 11 know that the perimeter of a circle is a circumference, but many do not know how to find the diameter of a circle when given the radius. They understand some of the ways to use opposite and alternate angles. Some cannot subtract 120 from 180. Average attaining pupils multiply out brackets and simplify them. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 factorise quadratic equations, including those that need re-arranging before factorising.
178. Nearly a half of all the mathematics lessons observed were good, and the teaching of mathematics is sound overall. The overall quality is about the same as was reported at the last inspection, but some of the shortcomings relating to pace and using lesson time to best effect identified then, remain. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of the way pupils develop basic skills are good. Lesson planning is sound but many lessons do not routinely fully involve the pupils. Teachers usually enjoy satisfactory relationships with pupils, and when they engage the pupils in purposeful, clear and interesting tasks, they respond well, as Year 8 were when exploring the principles of 'transformation'. Planning for investigative work is now satisfactory, an improvement since the findings last time. Appropriate use is made of information technology, another improvement since the last inspection. Standards of literacy are generally satisfactory, though teachers' expectations in this are inconsistent, especially regarding the presentation of written work. There are too few planned opportunities to develop pupils' oral skills and few opportunities for collaborative work with the result that many pupils are over-reliant on the teacher.
179. Formal assessment, including for those with special educational needs, is sound. Marking is satisfactory and usually informs pupils of what they need to do to improve. Teachers respect pupils' efforts, though there is some lavish praise for some indifferent work. Reports on progress over the year are good. Pupils value homework, and this is regularly set, making a

positive contribution to the good progress made by some individuals. The organisation of classrooms, so that all pupils are able to work well, is often unsatisfactory, with pupils deciding where and with whom they will sit, with the consequence that they talk through the lesson, often in spite of teacher's repeated exhortations not to do so. The subject benefits from much improved access to information technology. The effective aspects of assessment are countered by some teachers' lack of awareness of pupils' prior attainment.

180. The department continues its tradition of making very good provision for pupils to catch up on work they have missed or are finding difficult, as well as for providing extra sessions for the higher attaining pupils.
181. The leadership and management of the subject are sound. Standards are improving, and pupils are making more consistent steady progress than identified in the previous report where progress was sound or better in three-quarters of lessons. Since the last inspection, not enough progress has been made in addressing some of the shortcomings then identified. Particularly, the overall quality of teaching has not improved enough.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Results of GCSE examinations are well above the national average.
- Pupils make good progress.
- Teachers expect pupils to think for themselves in explaining their work.
- Pupils behave well and are eager to learn.
- The department is very well led and teachers work well together as a team.

Areas for improvement

- Use assessment more effectively to identify and support under-achieving pupils.
- Make greater use of sharply focused learning targets in marking and in supporting lower attaining pupils in the laboratory.
- Use information and communications technology more effectively to promote learning.

182. In 2001 the results of National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average (for 2000) and also above the average for similar schools. The results were lower than in the previous year, with fewer pupils reaching the higher levels, mainly because unavoidable staff changes affected Year 9 groups.
183. The proportion of Year 11 pupils gaining the higher (A* to C) grades in 2001 was well above the national average (for 2000) and also well above the average for similar schools. The results exceeded those in the previous year at all levels; a quarter of pupils in the year gained the highest A* and A grades and almost all gained grades in the A* to G range. This represents good progress for these pupils, bearing in mind their National Curriculum test results two years earlier. Girls did better than boys.
184. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 their attainment is in line with that expected for their age. They achieve well and by Year 9 their attainment is above average, reflecting recent results in the National Curriculum tests. In one of the lessons observed pupils learnt very quickly because they used an analogy to help explain the refraction of light as it passes from air into water; pupils' attainment in this lesson was above average because almost all could use the analogy to explain what they had observed. About a fifth of pupils show very high attainment for this stage, for example when using correct scientific terminology to explain respiration in terms of gas exchange in the lungs.
185. Pupils continue to achieve well through Years 10 and 11. By this stage their attainment is well above the average nationally, reflecting the results of recent GCSE examinations. Almost all can carry out reasonably accurate investigations, for example into how the concentration of an acid affects the rate at which it reacts. About a quarter show high levels of understanding when they explain their results in terms of collisions between particles, and identify and explain why some results do not fit the general pattern. Some of these pupils demonstrate in their lessons an eagerness to take their learning well beyond that needed for GCSE, for example asking for explanation of the addition reactions of alkenes.

186. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those learning to speak English is similar to that of other pupils, but could be improved if teachers and support staff focused more clearly on specific learning objectives for each lesson, for example 'know the sequence of the rock cycle' in Year 11. No evidence was seen during the inspection that the progress of different groups of pupils is any different from that of the majority.
187. Teachers encourage pupils to develop their writing skills, for example by giving them opportunities to write imaginatively, as in 'the life of a rock' in Year 11; their spelling, punctuation and grammar are usually corrected during marking. Their numerical skills are developed as they are needed, for example in Year 7 tabulating numerical results of experiments and in Year 9 interpreting simple graphs to determine the optimum conditions for enzyme activity. However, pupils' skills in using information and communications technology in science are not well developed because there is insufficient suitable equipment located in the department.
188. Teaching and learning are good. Almost all the lessons seen during the inspection were at least good and about a third were very good. Key features in good teaching that help pupils make good progress are consolidation of earlier learning before building upon it, using everyday examples to capture interest, and insistence that pupils think for themselves rather than wait for the teacher to provide answers. In one of the lessons seen the teacher first reviewed previous learning, referring to reflections that they had all observed in mirrors and spoons, before moving on to refraction. Teachers often develop pupils' thinking by answering a question with another question. In Year 9 all pupils made good progress because the teacher planned a range of research activities in the library, in which pupils were supported in their learning by library staff as well as by the teacher. Higher attaining pupils were encouraged to move beyond the basic lesson content and speculate about whether any of the planets might be capable of supporting human life. In a few lessons, there is insufficient challenge for some pupils, particularly those in Year 10 whose attainment places them near the boundary for gaining the higher GCSE grades. The quality of teachers' day to day marking varies but often does not focus clearly enough on learning targets to help pupils improve their work.
189. Pupils behave very well in science lessons and are eager to learn; they quickly ask for help when they have not understood the work. Their exercise books are well presented and work is well organised, another key feature in their good learning, because it allows them to review their work before tests.
190. The department is very well led and a number of initiatives, such as the 'science plus' course in Years 10 and 11, have been successfully implemented resulting in higher attainment. Pupils' scientific horizons are widened by opportunities to participate in events outside school, such as the 'sleepover' at the Science Museum. Teachers work well together as a team, committed to further raising attainment without losing the sense of enjoyment in their work shown by the great majority of pupils. Monitoring of teaching is not yet well enough developed to ensure that pupils across the full range of ability are consistently challenged in all their lessons. The department has a good system for recording attainment and tracking pupils' progress but is not yet using it effectively to identify and support under-achieving pupils. Insufficient liaison with local primary schools results in unnecessary repetition of some work in Year 7. The older laboratories are in urgent need of refurbishment because they do not provide a stimulating learning environment for pupils. This refurbishment is scheduled for 2002. The technicians provide a very good service to support pupils' learning, but they have insufficient time to manage the department's resources efficiently, particularly in view of the need to transfer equipment between different buildings; teachers are sometimes unable to start their lessons promptly because equipment has not arrived.
191. Since the last inspection, National Curriculum and GCSE results have been consistently above or well above average. Teaching then was sound with some unsatisfactory lessons; now it is good and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. At the last inspection pupils' response was unsatisfactory or poor in a significant number of lessons, but that is no longer the case.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Well above average examination results at GCSE A* to C.
- Very good and often excellent teaching, providing high levels of challenge for all pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning, their enthusiasm for the subject and their knowledge of styles and ideas in art.
- The quality of departmental leadership and the teamwork amongst staff.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for pupils to use information technology for research and, most importantly, as a creative tool, are at the moment severely limited.
- The analysis and use of Key Stage 2 attainment data and links with feeder schools in order to develop a greater awareness of what pupils can do on entry to the school and to ensure appropriate teaching strategies.
- Aspects of accommodation - lighting in some rooms is poor and this affects the judgements pupils need to make about their own work and the exemplars they are shown by teachers. Also space for larger scale work is limited so that pupils often have to work flat rather than at easels. Examination coursework is also at risk because of the lack of safe storage areas.
- There is no department technician. This means that teachers spend time on mundane tasks which might otherwise be used more profitably on those which more directly meet the needs of pupils.

192. Overall standards are very good. The last three years' GCSE results have been above average at grades A* to G and well above average for the proportion of pupils awarded grades A* to C. The results for 2001, however, showed a significant drop when compared to previous years but the school is appealing these and has applied for a re-moderation of the work. In work seen during the inspection, early in the academic year, standards of attainment by the end of Year 9 are above average and the attainment of pupils in Year 11 is above average in relation to GCSE course requirements.

193. Pupils' achievement overall, in both Key Stages 3 and 4 is very good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, those who are gifted or talented and those from ethnic minorities make very good progress in lessons. The support they receive from teachers contributes to this as does the teachers' very good planning which ensures that there is an effective use of target setting for individual pupils. There is also a very good emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills and techniques in Key Stage 3 and this is reinforced at the beginning of Key Stage 4. This means that pupils learn to work confidently with a wide range of two and three-dimensional media on a variety of scales and to use materials effectively and expressively. A very good example of this was in a Year 8 lesson where pupils were drawing with soft pencils, pen and ink and charcoal, selecting as necessary according to the pattern, shapes and textures of the natural forms they were investigating. This firm grounding in the subject's basic skills also means that in Years 10 and 11 pupils are able to call on their learning and to make independent judgements about the selection and use of appropriate materials and processes.

194. Pupils' standards of achievement in their writing and discussion about artists' works and styles from different periods and cultures is well above average, for example in a Year 8 lesson where pupils were able to recall and explain the work of Rachel Whiteread which they had looked at in a previous lesson. Pupils make excellent use of critical vocabulary, for example, the Year 9 dissertations which were reported on as 'stunning' at the time of the previous inspection are of a standard often associated with more advanced work. They provide pupils with an opportunity to demonstrate skills of independent research, to write analytically and to present their studies creatively and with pride. The achievements of Year 9 pupils in this aspect of their work make a significant contribution to the overall high standards at the end of Key Stage 3. It provides them with an understanding about art that they are then able to carry forward into Key Stage 4, integrating it with GCSE work that is innovative and sometimes challenging to the viewer and which reflects pupils' awareness of contemporary art practices. The contribution of this aspect of the subject to the pupils' learning is a major strength in the department. However, in their use of information technology for research and as a tool for creative work, pupils' achievements are below average. The recent allocation of a post of responsibility to a teacher to oversee the targets identified in the department's improvement plan relating to ICT, although an

encouraging recognition of the department's weakness in this aspect of its provision, is yet to have an impact on pupils' work.

195. The quality of teaching overall is very good and often it is excellent. It is a major strength in the subject and contributes to the high standard of learning and progress throughout both key stages. Significant features of the teaching are that teachers have an excellent rapport with pupils, set challenging tasks, they encourage pupils to take risks and to aim high and they expect and achieve high standards of behaviour in their lessons. They also provide excellent guidance to individual pupils, taking the time that is needed in order to explain and demonstrate processes, suggesting possible approaches to explore that the pupil may not have considered, and they give excellent support to pupils who may be in difficulty by using individually monitored targets for learning.
196. Throughout both key stages the importance of first-hand observation work is reinforced by lesson tasks and by the setting of homework to be done in sketchbooks. These enable pupils to learn the importance of visual research and to understand the significance of their sketchbooks as sources of information. This was evidenced by a Year 11 girl who referred back to some work she had done in her Year 9 sketchbook on the human figure so that she was able to use some of this for her current work involving dancers. The enthusiasm for art that teachers have is transmitted to the pupils and as a team they have worked to create a departmental area that has an infectious 'buzz' of creativity. The effect of this is that pupils come to lessons eager to learn; they are engaged in their work and excited by the opportunities available to them. For example, in a Year 10 lesson pupils were exploring ways of extending the prints they had made in a previous lesson by overlaying more colour in order to create a sense of movement in their designs. The atmosphere in this lesson and in other lessons where Year 11 pupils were working on individual assignments was one of enthusiastic involvement in the work.
197. Teachers also create very good opportunities for pupils to explore personal ideas and to deal with wider moral issues, for example, the Year 8 project which dealt with issues to do with hunting with dogs, as a result of which pupils worked in groups to create an installation of life-size hounds and foxes. The display of this installation in the area outside of the department helps to raise awareness of the issues and stimulates discussion amongst many pupils and it makes an excellent contribution to the moral and social education of pupils. The many gallery visits which are arranged by teachers and the use of visiting artists also make an excellent contribution to the cultural awareness of pupils and to the excellent understanding of styles in art which is a significant feature of the high standards at Key Stages 3 and 4.
198. The assessment procedures that the department now has in place are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning are very good and teachers observe each others lessons in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and to share good practice. This is another improvement since the previous inspection.
199. The leadership of the department is excellent and enables teachers to work effectively as a team. They have a shared ethos and vision for the growth of the department. Teachers' subject expertise is excellent and they plan and monitor schemes of work to ensure effectiveness, progression and equality of opportunity. However, there is a need for the department to consider ways of making more effective use of the analysis of Key Stage 2 attainment data in order to ensure that curriculum planning decisions and teaching strategies are always the best match to the needs of pupils when they enter the school.
200. Although the accommodation overall is adequate, some rooms are poorly lit and space is limited for pupils to work to their best. Storage space is also limited and this means that pupils' work is vulnerable. There is no departmental technician and teachers therefore waste time on necessary but menial mundane tasks that might be more profitably used on those which more directly affect pupils' learning.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average by the end of Key Stage 4 because pupils are encouraged to develop their creativity and imagination. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection.
- In placing a high priority on design, pupils are given very good opportunities to improve the quality of work with relevance to social, cultural and commercial situations.
- At its best this results in inspirational work by pupils.
- Most pupils are highly motivated and learn to take commendable responsibility for their work.
- Excellent leadership has resulted in significant improvement in standards.

Areas for improvement

- Refine opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 3 to pursue their creative abilities by using language, literature and mathematics to foster even more understanding of design.
- Extend the use of ICT within the scheme in Key Stage 3.
- Improve the use of assessment in Key Stage 3, making clearer links between National Curriculum standards and setting clear targets for what they need to do next in order to improve, using information to monitor improvement in performance across key stages and to analyse any differences in levels of improvement between groups of pupils.

201. Attainment is above average by Year 9 and has improved since the last inspection. This represents good achievement because standards are average on entry to school, with wide variation between pupils' understanding of the design process. Project work shows that design ideas sometimes exceed the skills pupils have to make products of equally high quality, but involvement in good projects results in very rapid progress during the key stage. Recent annual variations in standards at the end of Year 9 have resulted from staffing problems. Teacher assessments do not give a true reflection of attainment because some assessments made early in Year 9 contribute to the overall results, depressing the standards reported.
202. Attainment is well above average by the age of 16 and has improved since the last inspection. Project work shows very good evidence of research into history, life styles and the impact of technology on social change. A significant number of projects are of high quality because pupils are inspired by their work and spend a lot of time developing and realising ideas. The work of some pupils in graphics is outstanding, as illustrated by the display of perfume sales and marketing. Work of similar quality was seen in textiles and food technology.
203. Achievement is good in Key Stage 3 and accelerates in Years 10 and 11 because teachers promote high standards, motivating most pupils to give of their best. Boys and girls are very interested in the subject because the department leads them to make interesting choices in project design. However some boys underachieve because they do not sustain concentration and effort. The department continues to work effectively on strategies to reduce differences in performance between boys and girls.
204. Pupils from all cultures work well together and achieve equally in lessons. They value each other's languages and work is enriched by different cultural traditions and preferences. A notable illustration was seen during the inspection when Year 8 prepared pizza toppings of great variety, easily talking about home preferences for taste and texture. Folders are rich in cultural preferences such as fashion design, packaging ideas and products made such as toys in Year 8. Pupils with English as a second language make good progress. They are very well supported in lessons, with good opportunities to speak about their ideas and opinions. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated in lessons. Those with hearing difficulties are supported very well by learning assistants using sign language. When pupils are experiencing personal difficulties, teachers are highly sensitive, making it easier for them to settle to work.
205. Teaching is very good overall. An excellent lesson was seen in Year 11 with many very good lessons. Teachers promote personal development of pupils at every opportunity. Achievements are prized and on display for all to see. Rewards are used very well to motivate pupils and letters of praise are sent home to parents. Conversations are rich with encouragement, resulting in work of the highest quality from many pupils. Pupils are trusted to work independently and gain a strong sense of personal responsibility. They are confident and mature, seeking advice of teachers as their work proceeds. Even when individuals are rightly

reprimanded, they settle to work readily. The skills of teachers in motivating pupils and achieving very good behaviour and attitudes are amongst the best seen.

206. Very effective planning has resulted in schemes of high quality. They are a tribute to excellent leadership and collegiate work by the team. They illustrate common features of design that are clearly visible in all modules. ICT, language and mathematical opportunities are identified and underpinned by very good references to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Work in Year 7 is well designed to build on the differences in experience from primary schools, but pupils would benefit from tasks that show more variation in difficulty. They would particularly enjoy challenges to extend their creative and imaginative abilities further.
207. Teachers give good attention to the language needs of pupils and have good strategies to help them improve their work. Key words are in evidence and used well in Key Stage 3. Year 8 engaged in good group work with competent readers in most groups. Even more might be done in suggesting pupils read aloud to further support bilingual pupils. A project inspired by Harry Potter promotes an interesting range of designs. More could be done in using literature to inspire pupils' creativity further. Pupils take very good care of presentation and are proud of their projects as a result of constant efforts by teachers. Project folders are very well organised in Year 10 and 11. Teachers speak with individuals and small groups all the time, using technical language well and influencing the quality of speaking and writing. Pupils need even more opportunities to speak formally about their work, arguing cases for choices they have made. Teachers use good applications of measurement and calculation, but pupils need more regular use of computer facilities in order to improve standards further in Key Stage 3.
208. Teachers use time very effectively. The pace of teaching is always high and stimulates pupils to work productively. Just occasionally topics are too long in Key Stage 3 and pupils spend too long writing out the design brief. High expectations motivate pupils to aspire to a good standard of subject knowledge and practical competence. Teachers take care to monitor progress whilst pupils are working in groups, taking time to explain terminology further and support pupils very well. Assessment is good, with very good marking of projects. Teachers need to refine their use of assessment in Key Stage 3, by giving pupils much more knowledge of their current standards so that they have a very clear view of how to improve. Capable and supportive technicians help pupils and teachers, ensuring appropriate health and safety.
209. Excellent qualities of leadership continue to improve the effectiveness of the team. High commitment to pupils' achievements reflects the aims and ethos of the school in their expectations of pupils. The head of department is deeply committed to providing every pupil with experience of design technology until the age of 16. Some pupils do not take the GCSE examination as a result of parental requests. Very good management results in effective monitoring of standards pupils achieve. The team is very well placed to use such skills in making Key Stage 3 assessments more refined. The department needs to make better use of performance information in analysing more accurately the progress pupils make each year. More refined target setting will follow. The quality of accommodation has been transformed since the last inspection as a result of funding from received from Technology College Status. The department remains on split sites, reducing the impact of unifying efforts by the team and affecting the department's progress towards becoming a Centre of Excellence.

EXPRESSIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS

210. The work of the drama and music departments was inspected. In addition work in dance and an expressive arts GCSE was sampled. Within the expressive arts pupils use a range of medium as part of developing their skills in the arts. The subject is team-taught by members of the arts staff. The focus of the observation was a group who were devising a performance piece for a primary audience.

Expressive Arts –GCSE

211. Attainment of the small number of pupils observed making music was in line with national expectations. They worked hard and cooperated well together in devising a pantomime song for an audience of primary school children. Pupils showed an understanding of communication with a very young audience by deciding that short, repetitious lines in the style of a limerick would be easily understood. They also made a reasonable attempt at setting words to music by composing a short, simple tune based on a scale-like pattern of three notes. Because pupils

are well-motivated, much learning takes place in coordinating words, tune and dance. Another group was working on a similar topic that was still in the planning stage.

212. The quality of teaching and learning is good with the teacher acting as a facilitator giving critical advice about singing style and encouraging good diction and voice production. By working well together as a team, pupils have confidence in each other and expectations rise.

DANCE

213. Standards in dance are above what might be expected because the subject is taught as a discreet discipline in Year 7 and Year 8 which is unusual. At GCSE dance is included within an Expressive Arts course which provides an alternative accreditation to drama and music GCSEs. Dance is an established subject in the school and makes a significant contribution to its cultural life within the curriculum and through the various clubs and extra curricular activities. A small number of lessons were seen and the quality of teaching showed a range from very good to satisfactory. Overall the teaching is good and pupils make good progress. Teachers have considerable professional and personal expertise and teach with high energy, enthusiasm and stamina!
214. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They clearly enjoy the work and the sense of success they gain from the subject, particularly for example in the complicated warm up routines. Because it is so well established there is little if any stereotypical reactions by the boys in doing the subject. Indeed the subject makes a significant contribution to reinforcing the strong equal opportunities policy in the school. Pupils show particular skills in picking up new moves quickly and evaluate each others performance and rehearse and refine their work. In the particular units of work seen pupils were working within a prescribed routine but in other units they are given opportunities to create and compose their own work. They work with a partner well. In the main pupils work with maturity and are developing a sense of the rigour and discipline of the medium. In one lesson there was a small group of boys who were being somewhat disruptive. They had managed to get to the back of the class and become a 'critical mass' but settled once the routine started. The work is structured well and provides a good range of dance experience. The head of department is ambitious for her subject and has a clear development plan.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- The team is led and managed well.
- The recent revision of schemes of work for Years 7 to 9.
- The strong support given to pupils' literacy development.

Areas for improvement

- Using national comparative assessment information to measure pupils' progress and the added value of the department.
- Linking schemes of work in the lower school more explicitly to GCSE skills, particularly the requirements for writing.
- Publishing assessment criteria in pupil-friendly language so that they know how well they are achieving.
- Enhancing schemes of work to provide additional challenge for gifted and talented pupils.

215. Standards in drama at GCSE are well above the national average, at both grades A* to C and A* to B. There is no regular pattern in the relative attainments of boys and girls, as these have fluctuated year by year. Both, however, regularly exceed national comparisons. There is no discernible difference in attainment between pupils of differing ethnicity. Results for 2001 mark a significant improvement on the preceding year. Pupils' standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9 are about average, as many in Years 7 and 8 take a long time to acquire more advanced drama skills and the necessary degree of maturity, but they make considerable advances thereafter. Levels of achievement in Year 9 and subsequently are above national expectations.
216. The department has made very good improvement since the previous inspection. The revision of schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 has resulted in documentation which is both clearer and

more detailed than formerly, and which highlights skills and objectives. The development of strategies to improve pupils' standards of literacy has created a systematic pattern for introducing specialist terms to pupils, has raised awareness of the importance of reading and written tasks, and emphasised the value of storytelling. Examination results at GCSE have shown steady improvement for at least the last three years. There have also been improvements in accommodation for drama. Staging has been obtained, and with the establishment of a drama room in the Sixth Form Centre, there are now three areas in use. The drama room in the South Wing has been also been refurbished.

217. Pupils are taught well in all years. Members of staff have very good subject knowledge, which they use effectively to promote learning. This was evident in a very good Year 11 lesson on improvising a piece on the subject of isolation. Here, the teacher used her knowledge of the skills of expression and interpretation to evaluate, explain and illustrate how main ideas could be conveyed. An episode with the teacher in role provoked very successfully reactions which then needed analysis. Year 8 pupils, developing characterisation and spatial awareness in a piece of role-play, were learning successfully how to use movement, grouping, posture and gesture to convey emotion and meaning. The very good relationships that teachers create in lessons are particularly significant in drama, since so much of the work depends on the trust and the confidence pupils necessarily develop to express themselves without undue self-consciousness.
218. As well as being encouraged to work in different forms and styles, pupils also learn how to change roles rapidly in order to achieve dramatic impact. Year 11 pupils, working on roles, found such a switch very challenging, but their teacher's skill and tactfulness in introducing and handling this challenge gradually built their confidence and so increased their capability. Lessons are always planned well and managed very efficiently. Skilful handling of a variety of activities, seen with a Year 10 class, helped to keep pupils interested and well-motivated. Here, the teacher's evaluations also pinpointed how body-language could bring a text to life, and the increased degree of 'ownership' which this bestowed on pupils helped them to work with increased commitment. Good learning combining intellectual and imaginative growth with enjoyment was seen in a Year 11 lesson where small groups had been working on the social values of a community prior to the arrival of a 'misfit'. In the evaluation session which rounded off the work, one pupil asked, 'How do I act what I feel?'
219. Pupils have acquired the skills of speaking in role and of improvising economical and effective dialogue by Year 9, and these increase in sophistication in the GCSE years. By Year 11 pupils can evaluate their peers' work constructively and pertinently. They generally listen well to one another and their teacher from Year 9 onwards. The most able pupils in all years write well and fluently. In Years 10 and 11 they also show good insight and understanding. All pupils take care with presentation and some use word-processing effectively to produce interesting and striking presentations. Those with special educational needs make commendable efforts and their ideas are always sensible, even when expression and handwriting are poor. Girls generally display more care and interest in writing than boys. Teachers' marking of work in Years 7 to 9 concentrates more on content and ideas than on technical accuracy, but it later indicates high expectations, making discriminating and helpful comments.
220. In lessons, teachers provide well for a wide range of pupils' abilities. They also provide plenty of opportunity for pupils' increasing independence in learning through group work. In groups, pupils with differing learning needs worked at a practical level on a par with their 'mainstream' peers. Their ideas and suggestions were valued equally with those of any others by the group. Where, occasionally, pupils' learning is less successful, this is the result of pupils' lack of commitment and concentration. On at least one occasion this was caused by events preceding a lesson.
221. The drama team is very well led and managed. It shares a good team ethos and a commitment to raising pupils' standards of attainment. Pupils' attitudes towards their teachers and to learning are generally more positive in Years 10 and 11 than earlier. This partly reflects their growing maturity and their acceptance of drama as being more than 'play'. The new schemes of work encourage the growth of this attitude, as they provide for a clear sequence of skills and techniques. Teachers' use of informal assessment also contributes well to the quality of learning, for their comments are objective, discerning and tactful, and provide good models for pupils to follow in making their own assessments of peers' work. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory. Drama spaces are an asset, though they are somewhat sparsely equipped.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Music is a very popular subject throughout the school
- Examination results are well above average
- Pupils get a rich variety of musical experiences.

Areas for improvement

- Development of ICT in Years 7 - 9

222. Teacher assessments of pupils' attainment at the age of 14 are in line with the nationally expected levels although inspection evidence suggests that standards are above this. GCSE results have been above average for the past three years but with a falling trend which has been reversed with the 2001 results. Girls perform better than boys and obtain higher grades. The gender balance is about equal. Boys and girls, ethnic minorities, those with English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs all achieve well.
223. By the time pupils are 14 standards seen during the inspection are above average. This represents good achievement for all abilities. In the work observed there was no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls and all have equal opportunity to develop their musical skills. All programmes of study are covered but very little has been done to develop composing using computer technology.
224. Attainment of pupils aged 16 is well above average and very good progress is made due to the inspirational teaching taking place. Almost all pupils have good ICT skills and use computer programmes for composing and editing their work. Progress is so good that the department increased the number of pupils gaining A* - C grades in 2001. Considering that pupils' musical attainment on entry to the school is considered to be about average, this represents very good progress over time.
225. Since the last inspection standards in Years 7 – 9 have risen to above average due to the strong commitment to monitoring and evaluation by the head of department and her staff. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are very high and large numbers of boys and girls now choose music as one of their options. There is a vibrant and diverse curriculum in place and music is one of the strengths of the school. Almost 300 pupils and students have instrumental and vocal lessons and there is a rich variety of extra-curricular activities taking place.
226. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all lessons in Years 7 – 9. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their clear appreciation of teaching requirements impacts well on pupils' musical thinking and skills. For example, a Year 7 lesson explored musical elements by focusing on timbre, texture and dynamics to develop pupils' practical skills and understanding of cooperation with others. Leadership was encouraged and pupils took turns in directing the classroom orchestra for this project. Good counting of beats and careful watching of the conductor ensure many good and contrasting performances. A Year 9 class built on previous knowledge of the Aeolian mode by working out striking improvisations that demonstrated good learning through experimenting with creative ideas. Good listening skills were obvious when pupils listened to three contrasting arrangements of Pachelbel's Canon as a basis for discussing with the teacher differences of instrumentation, changes of harmony and rhythmic contrasts. The use of parts of speech, particularly adjectives, was emphasised. Pupils showed further understanding by quickly working out from memory the ground bass on keyboards that they had just heard.
227. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching and learning observed was very good overall. This is due to teachers' enthusiasm and high expectations which lead to sustained learning for most pupils. Pupils talk knowledgeably about mood, instrumentation and harmonic changes in Debussy's music and spot changes in musical conventions when listening to taped examples. This is a positive effect of the teacher's good subject knowledge. It also ensures that pupils receive a wide breadth of study across the musical skills of performing, composing, appraisal and listening and effectively prepares them for examinations in music. There is a great commitment to independent learning as demonstrated by a performance of Bach's Toccata in D minor played on the electric guitar at a brisk tempo. Many pupils have developed their playing skills since joining the course whilst others have been playing instruments for a number of years.

Teachers carefully monitor and mark coursework. As a result, pupils' understanding improves and they are able to focus their learning where it is needed most.

228. A register of gifted and talented pupils is in place and all have very good instrumental and vocal skills: many have passed associated board examinations. There is a wide range of musical activities available including choirs, the orchestra and concert band and there is a yearly concert tour abroad specifically arranged for gifted and talented pupils.
229. The music department is led and managed well. Thorough planning and effective assessment means that work is well matched to the learning needs of individual pupils, and this enables good progress to be made. In addition to the head of department there is a newly qualified teacher, a long-term supply teacher and seventeen visiting teachers. The scheme of work is very thorough and a realistic development plan is in place. Cross-curricular work is being developed with drama and dance within the area of expressive arts. Very good records are kept and pupils' work is monitored carefully and targets are set. Although the accommodation is in need of some repair, the rooms are large and well-equipped with resources.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are very good.
- Pupils achieve well. They show good enquiry skills developed through fieldwork and practical activities.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan activities that pupils enjoy and so they work hard.
- The subject is led well and managed with a clear sense of purpose

Areas for improvement

- Developing the use of assessment at Key Stage 3

230. Since the last inspection, GCSE examination results have improved, remaining above the national average for all schools, and well above for comprehensives. In 2000, although girls outperformed boys nationally, the boys did better in their performance in other subjects. No pupils achieved A* grades. This year as a result of successful planning and committed teaching, the results were outstanding, with 94% pupils achieving A-C grades and more than a quarter achieving A* grades. They performed better in geography than in almost every other subject. In addition, two refugee pupils at an early stage of learning English passed the Certificate of Achievement and the department was commended on their performance. Geography is a popular subject taken by about one third of the year group.
231. Pupils make good progress since most who start at the school are only average in the subject with many having limited map skills. By the end of Year 9 standards are above average confirming the results of the teacher-assessed tests. They have acquired a good range of skills developed through research and fieldwork. Most follow structured enquiries well. However there are insufficient opportunities, particularly for above average pupils, to devise their own questions and follow them through logically to a conclusion. Their numerical skills effectively underpin practical work. They are beginning to use information and communications technology well, not only to present their work but also for research purposes. Most show good understanding of geographical patterns and processes in the context of places. Average and above average attaining pupils, for example, give good explanations for the formation of Hurst Spit. Accounts by below average attaining pupils are shorter and less explanatory. Teachers' good attention to literacy helps pupils to use geographical terms correctly, to extend their vocabulary and organise their ideas. They write well at length for a variety of purposes. Higher attaining pupils, in particular, produced some thoughtful writing about sustainable development in Brazil.
232. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average and pupils make very good progress. They benefit from focused teaching building effectively on earlier work, such as climate, and from their own positive attitudes. They remember information well and use technical terms correctly. They extend their practical skills well through fieldwork. The resultant coursework is of very high quality. It enables pupils to apply what they know and improves their analytical skills. They use their numerical skill well to test their results for significance. Information and

communications technology is used purposefully to tabulate and interpret data and to present their work. In lessons about South Wales, most pupils demonstrate good in-depth understanding of the reasons for changes in industry and are aware of the growing impact of the economic interdependence of countries. Lower attaining pupils show gaps in their understanding in work about urban micro-climates. The library is well used for research purposes.

233. Pupils with special educational needs and those at early stages of learning English make very good progress against their individual targets. Teachers and support staff work closely together to provide suitable work. In the lessons seen there was no difference in the progress of different ethnic groups. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress. They are identified and a humanities' teacher is involved in planning activities to suit their particular needs.
234. Overall, attitudes are very good. Most pupils are enthusiastic and want to succeed. Behaviour is good. Very occasionally, a small number of pupils behave badly with an inexperienced teacher. Most show initiative in practical tasks. They demonstrate commitment and pride in well-presented homework and projects, often word-processed.
235. Overall, teaching is good and very often very good. It is better in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form where it is more consistent. Very good subject knowledge helps teachers to determine what pupils know and prepare them for coping with examinations. They explain ideas clearly and by asking pertinent questions build on pupils' answers to extend their knowledge and understanding. They are well organised and plan lessons very well with variety of interesting activities. Consequently, pupils enjoy geography and work hard. Lessons begin with clear aims so that they are aware of what they have to do. Most tasks are interactive, challenging and encourage pupils to develop enquiring minds. Occasionally questioning only requiring short answers dampens discussion. Teachers generally manage pupils very well because of their enthusiasm for their subject and pupils ask questions and volunteer answers with confidence. Debriefing or summing up at the end of lessons is often too short. Not enough use is made of checking the progress against the aims and involving pupils in this process. Most lessons have good pace and good use is made of resources. Homework is set and marked regularly. It is especially helpful for older pupils but incomplete work is not always followed up and prevents pupils from making the progress that they should.
236. The subject is well led and managed. Teachers work well together. The head of department knows what needs to be done and has clear ideas for improvement. Very good support is given to teachers new to the profession. Good progress has been made in addressing the issues in the last report. Very good work plans have been adapted to meet different learning needs and encourage independence in thinking. Fieldwork is a real strength. Teaching methods have improved as a result of staff training. Consequently there has been good improvement in pupils' results and progress. Most procedures for assessing pupils' work are in place although methods of standardising work in Key Stage 3 need refining. Assessment is not used sufficiently at this stage to inform planning and to improve individual performance. This is recognised as an area for attention.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- GCSE results have improved steadily over three years and are now very high.
- Pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9; very good progress in Years 10 and 11.
- Almost all teaching is good or very good, consistently so in GCSE lessons.
- Pupils work hard and often independently.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils have limited access to computers and suitable software, so have a limited understanding of how effectively ICT can be used

237. At the end of Year 9, teacher assessments indicate attainment to be above average. In 2000, more girls than boys achieved the higher National Curriculum levels. No consistent differences in standards were noted in the lessons seen. There is variation in the attainment of Year 9

classes. Not all teachers knew their pupils well so early in the term. Pupils worked harder and learnt more in classes with familiar teachers.

238. In their study of agricultural changes, pupils had built up detailed knowledge of the improvements. The ablest pupils linked these to the needs of an expanding population. All pupils confidently extract information from sources. Pupils of average attainment grasp the squalor of the slums during the Industrial Revolution and the horrors of conditions. When exercise books, mainly from last year, were scrutinised, high standards were obvious. Almost all were well laid out, and contained carefully written answers with accurate detail. Low attaining pupils used historical vocabulary well and some, though not all, of their work was average.
239. The proportion of A* to C grades obtained in the GCSE examinations is very high. Over half the entry obtained A* to A grades in 2000 and 2001. Girls have gained higher grades but the difference is much less than the case generally. All pupils obtained better results than in almost all their other subjects. Standards have improved significantly since the last inspection. Standards in Year 11 lessons seen were consistently well above average. Pupils have a good depth of knowledge and they understand how to apply it effectively. When they explain their observations from a source, they use their own knowledge to place it in context. They also consider how reliable the source might be. Their good writing skills and wide vocabulary enable them to express their ideas well. Pupils understand very well what is required in examination answers. An important factor in the high standards achieved and very good progress made is the concentration and urgency that all Year 11 show in lessons.
240. Pupils enjoy history and numbers opting for it have steadily risen. In most lessons, teachers and pupils have a common interest and purpose.
241. Almost all the teaching is good or very good. There are no significant weaknesses. Teachers have a very good specialist knowledge and good questioning skills. In lessons, they skilfully question so that pupils' knowledge and understanding is expanded. This is often combined with note-taking in Years 10 and 11, which they make a very active process. Questions and the ensuing answers and discussion provided the basis for the notes which have become a class effort. Activities and questions are directed towards making pupils think about the nature of the evidence and thus offer a supported judgement. In all lessons, teachers encourage pupils to think and find out the answer themselves, often through research tasks. In Year 7, teachers introduce pupils to the library and retrieval skills. Homework is an integral part of lessons. Teachers plan it carefully and often incorporate it into the following lesson. Written work is marked in detail, good work praised and points for improvement explained. Pupils respond by completing homework well. Because materials are well selected to suit a range of abilities, and teachers and learning support assistants offer extra help, pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as others. The emphasis on language is helpful to pupils at an early stage of learning English. In a Year 9 lesson, the teacher checked understanding and spelling of 'cellar' used in the passage, and then brought in the word 'attic' with the implications it might carry. When teaching is less effective, it is usually because the pace slackens and pupils relax their concentration. Teaching remains a strength of the department as described in the last inspection report.
242. Pupils benefit from a head of department who is committed to high standards and has successfully built a dedicated team of specialist teachers with a wide range of experience. The department produces many of the materials it uses. Particularly helpful is the GCSE revision booklet which, together with the availability of teachers at lunchtime, gives all pupils an opportunity for assistance. Schemes of work have been well revised, but ICT provision needs to be improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- A detailed development plan is now in place and the management of ICT has been re-organised
- The new Key Stage 3 co-ordinator has produced a challenging scheme of work for the Year 8 course and is implementing a thorough assessment procedure.
- Teaching on the GCSE ICT course is mostly good or very good.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the provision for basic ICT skills in Years 7 to 9.
- Ensure that pupils in Years 10 and 11 have opportunities to develop their ICT skills.
- Ensure that ICT is used to enhance learning across the subjects of the curriculum in a planned and co-ordinated manner.

243. Provision for, and standards in, ICT are unsatisfactory. Pupils do not develop their ICT skills and knowledge to an appropriate level and many subjects of the curriculum do not make adequate use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.
244. In order to bring standards in ICT nearer to the national and school average in both key stages the school needs to address a number of issues. The provision for basic ICT skills teaching at Key Stage 3 needs to be improved. Requirements need to be met at Key Stage 4 by ensuring that all pupils have opportunities to develop their ICT skills and knowledge in all the required aspects. The school needs to ensure that ICT is used to enhance learning across the subjects of the curriculum, at both key stages, in a planned, co-ordinated manner.
245. Standards at Key Stage 3 are unsatisfactory. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their ICT skills and knowledge. At Key Stage 4 attainment in GCSE ICT has been below the national average and below the school average. The percentage of A* to C grades improved significantly in 2000 but remained static in 2001. The performance of girls has been better than that of boys in recent years.
246. Pupils in Year 7 and to a large extent in Year 9 rely upon the subject being taught across the range of subjects but the specific contribution of different subjects has not been mapped, planned or co-ordinated in a systematic way. Basic skills in all aspects of ICT are inadequate when pupils begin their taught ICT course in Year 8. In the past this course has not enabled the majority of pupils to make enough progress to reach a satisfactory standard. Many pupils in a Year 8 lesson were having difficulty switching between programs to copy a picture they had created into a word-processed document. In all lessons observed at Key Stage 3 there was a lack of knowledge about toolbars and the basic functions of software which was used; almost all pupils relied upon the space bar to position text on a page. However, staffing changes on the Year 8 course since September have resulted in teaching which was never less than satisfactory and often good, with imaginative use made of appropriate Internet sites. Pupils are beginning to make progress on this course and making up for time lost in Year 7. Good support was provided for hearing impaired pupils in a Year 8 lesson.
247. At Key Stage 4 staffing is now more stable and the new ICT examination course co-ordinator has changed the choice of syllabus and rewritten schemes of work. In lessons observed, teaching on the GCSE ICT course was mostly good or very good. Attainment in these lessons and in samples of GCSE coursework indicate that pupils are now often making good progress from Year 10 to Year 11. Examples of coursework demonstrated an ability to plan and to use a range of software for communicating and handling information. About one quarter of each year group at Key Stage 4 can follow a GCSE course in ICT. However, the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not make satisfactory progress in developing their ICT skills. The cross-curricular approach does not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to develop their ICT capability in a coherent and systematic way. While pupils on the GCSE course were able to use presentational software and were learning to write in 'HTML' many others at this key stage were uncertain about how to transfer words and pictures from the Internet into a word processor. As there is no assessment of the ICT performance for those pupils who do not take the GCSE course it is difficult for the school to plan for their needs.
248. While there are some opportunities to use computers in many subjects and some good work was seen, the approach is not systematic and many teachers do not yet have the personal ICT

skills necessary to move pupils on to higher levels. The New Opportunities Fund ICT staff training is underway but some departments have yet to begin their training.

249. Improvement since the last inspection in 1996 is unsatisfactory with regard to raising attainment and cross-curricular use. However, the school is now making better progress in addressing some of the shortcomings highlighted in the last inspection report. A detailed development plan is now in place and the management of ICT has been reorganised. The new Key Stage 3 ICT co-ordinator has produced a challenging scheme of work for the Year 8 course and is implementing a thorough assessment procedure. New software guides are now available to help improve skills. However, pupils have much lost ground to make up from Year 7 before overall attainment can be satisfactory. Future provision in Year 9 needs to build upon the progress which is beginning to be made in Year 8.
250. The provision of computers continues to improve since the last inspection, and the pupil computer ratio is moving closer to the national average. The computer network has a full time manager and technician. Resources are reliable and well managed. Accommodation for ICT resources is far from ideal. Rooms do not have benching and most do not have adequate blinds resulting in glare from the sun and reflection on monitor screens.
251. As a result of the significant changes which have been made in the management and teaching of ICT in recent months, some improvements in provision and attainment are beginning to show but there is still much work to do in order to match national standards.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Good and improving GCSE results in French and German.
- The high entry rate of pupils for the GCSE examination shows that pupils of all abilities achieve success.
- Teachers use the language they are teaching very well.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department, particularly the quality of teaching needs to be more effective.
- Assessment needs to be more effective in raising standards at Key Stage 3.
- The needs of both the most and least able pupils in broad-band and mixed ability classes need to be addressed more carefully.
- Aspects of timetabling.
- Reviewing the arrangements for the second language and ensuring that there is more guided choice for pupils at GCSE regarding which language to pursue.

252. By the end of Year 9 National Curriculum levels of attainment in modern foreign languages are in line with national expectations. In 2000, 62% of pupils gained level 4 or better in the teacher assessments. This compares with the national average of 64%.
253. By the end of Year 11 pupils in French have attainment levels that are well above the national average. In 2000, 80.3% of pupils gained A*-C compared with the national average of 46.1%. 100% of pupils gained A*-G. This represents an improving trend which has continued in 2001 when 86% of pupils gained A*-C. Girls performed better than boys in 2000 but the difference in performance was less than is the case nationally.
254. By the end of Year 11 pupils have attainment levels in German that are well above the national average. In 2000, 81% of pupils gained A*-C compared with the national average of 51.9%, though this was based on a small entry. 100% of pupils gained A*-G. Results in 2001 show a fall in the percentage of pupils gaining A*-C to 73.2%, but these results were based on a much larger entry. Overall this represents an improving trend.
255. GCSE results in Spanish over the last 3 years have been overall below national averages and well below in the 2001 examinations.

256. If the combined results at GCSE for French, German and Spanish are taken into account there has been a rise in the total percentage of pupils who gained A*-C in a Modern Foreign Language from 44% in 1998 to 76% in 2001. It is also important to stress that this is based on a much higher entry rate than is the case nationally.
257. Standards of work seen at Key Stage 3 are in line with expectations nationally in French and German. Pupils of higher ability in Year 9 have a good range of vocabulary and use it well to produce imaginative written work. Lower attaining pupils, and particularly pupils with special educational needs, demonstrate good oral skills. There is, however, little evidence that reading skills are being developed.
258. In Spanish standards are also attain appropriate standards by the end of Key Stage 3. By Year 9 most pupils can identify key information in short written and spoken texts in a familiar context and they have memorised a useful range of vocabulary. In closely guided situations they give short answers in role-plays and dialogues. They are, however, much less able to cope in spontaneous situations and need to be encouraged to use the language more for their own purposes. In some classes pupils need to gain more exposure to the language to feel confident when listening and responding to recorded texts. The higher attaining pupils produce guided fairly accurate accounts mainly in the present tense, whilst for the lowest attaining pupils copying correctly, noting details such as accents, is a good achievement. Sometimes presentation is unsatisfactory.
259. Standards of work at Key Stage 4 in French and German are above expectations. Higher attaining pupils have further developed their writing skills to produce longer pieces of extended writing using complex sentence structures. Lower attaining pupils in German groups in Year 11 speak with confidence and good pronunciation.
260. Overall, standards in Spanish at Key Stage 4 are more average, in line with the expectations for their age, although there is some underachievement by lower attaining pupils. By Year 11 pupils capable of attaining high standards are producing longer, guided written texts using a wider range of tenses such as descriptions of a visit to a restaurant, accounts of lost objects, or a dialogue with the doctor. Even these pupils do not use language flexibly when speaking. Some average attaining pupils simply lack a solid foundation for further study. Although they are developing their vocabulary, they do not have sufficient understanding of language patterns. Some lower attaining pupils find it hard to retain vocabulary. Extended listening and reading skills require further development across both key stages in Spanish.
261. In all three languages progress made by pupils by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils with English as an additional language are coping well learning a new language. Progress during Key Stage 4 is now good as a result of the good teaching, although in Spanish the lack of a firm foundation in the language is still apparent.
262. The teaching of French is never less than satisfactory and often good. There is a wide variety in the quality of the teaching of German across the department which ranges from excellent to poor. Overall, however, it is satisfactory. It is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 but good at Key Stage 4. Most teachers use the language they are teaching, the 'target language', effectively. There are several native speakers in the department and the others have very good command of their main language. Pupils are used to the majority of the lesson being conducted in the language but teachers are also careful to check regularly for understanding.
263. Teaching in Spanish is never less than satisfactory and often good. Lessons are well planned and structured so that, in Spanish, learners know what is expected of them in lessons. Teachers are usually competent practitioners and lessons are well sequenced with a suitable variety of activities which engages the attention of pupils. Some teachers model and speak Spanish well and use it extensively. However, teachers teaching outside their main foreign language feel less secure and often resort to unnecessary use of English, thus limiting opportunities for learning. Pupils in Year 9 enjoy practising Spanish through games such as 'battleships', but sometimes further consolidation of language is required before pupils can work confidently in groups and pairs. Teachers co-operate well with the foreign language assistant who motivates pupils to speak Spanish.
264. The department in recent years has undergone a period of discontinuity in staffing which has had a negative impact on the continuity of teaching and learning in Spanish. The situation is now more stable and morale in the department is consequently higher.

265. Most teachers plan French and German lessons well. They ensure that pupils have a firm basis of vocabulary before using this to develop skills in speaking listening and writing. Most teachers do the key part of the lesson, introducing and revising vocabulary in a lively and imaginative manner.
266. There is, however, considerable inconsistency in teaching of French and German. Some teachers, for example, are careful to point out to pupils the lesson objectives at the start of the lesson so pupils have a clear idea about what they are expected to achieve. Some, who do not point out objectives at the start, will review progress at the end. Others do neither of these.
267. The best French and German lessons, in which teachers have high expectations of pupils, are conducted at good pace and pupils of all abilities are challenged. In one Year 11 mixed ability group the teacher introduced the topic using the language being taught throughout. All pupils were actively involved in the vocabulary practice and the teacher ensured complete concentration by good pace and humour. Follow-up work was differentiated according to the ability of the pupils so that all pupils were suitably challenged. In this lesson all pupils participated well and made very good progress.
268. In other lessons, however, expectations both in terms of pupil behaviour and what they are expected to achieve in lessons are low. Pupils react badly in these lessons and make little progress. In many lessons, across all languages, particularly those in which there is a wide range of ability, the work does not meet the needs of the higher and lower attaining pupils. Teachers are finding it difficult to meet the needs of the higher and lower attaining pupils in the mixed ability classes at Key Stage 3 and in the broad ability bands at Key Stage 4.
269. Assessment is not yet effective in helping raise standards at Key Stage 3. Most teachers record assessments conscientiously; National Curriculum levels are accessible to pupils and are written in language they can easily understand; teachers set target levels for pupils. Pupils are not yet, however, actively involved in the assessment process. They have little understanding of what the levels mean and are not aware of their strengths and weaknesses so they do not know what they have to do to improve their performance. Assessment in Spanish is now regularly carried out at Key Stages 3 and 4, but the department is aware of the necessity both to standardise assessments in Spanish and carry out more structured monitoring of teaching and marking.
270. Teachers are not following the marking policy consistently. One teacher has a poor understanding of National Curriculum levels. National Curriculum levels are not recorded consistently at the end of pieces of work. Errors are often not corrected. Pupils are rarely given guidance on how to improve their performance.
271. Arrangements for the start of the second foreign language, which was identified as an issue at the last inspection, have not changed. The fact that the second foreign language is introduced in Year 9 is problematic in two ways; firstly it is only generating a very small number of pupils who wish to study two foreign languages at GCSE; secondly, because a considerable number of pupils are being allowed to choose their second language as their main language at GCSE standards are being adversely affected because these pupils have not had a good enough grounding in the subject to be successful at GCSE.
272. The construction of the timetable in Year 10 and Year 11 also results in long gaps, sometimes days, between lessons which further hampers continuity in learning. Although resources have improved since the last inspection, there are still insufficient textbooks and appropriate Spanish readers. The department lacks office and storage space.
273. The departmental management structure needs review to ensure that new and part-time staff are supported in the production of new detailed schemes of work in Spanish which need to be matched more closely to the age and maturity of the pupils as well as indicating how the different needs of pupils will be met.
274. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting expressed concerns about modern languages provision and standards in Spanish in particular. It is clear that the department has been through difficult times recently. It is addressing its one remaining major problem area, poor results in Spanish, through an action plan and is being well supported in this by the Senior Management Team. The inspection of the sixth form languages show that the provision for Spanish is now good which, coupled with the improvements in exam results, suggest that it is beginning to emerge from these difficulties. A clear priority for the department is to develop more effective systems of monitoring and evaluating the work of the department. Currently this aspect is weak.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- A high proportion of good teaching which results in good learning by pupils.
- A good range of extracurricular sports activities, which have a high level of take-up by pupils.
- Above average, good results in the GCSE examination, taken for the first time in 2001.
- Strong leadership of the department, which is committed to further raising attainment and developing new courses.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the attainment of girls, particularly at Key Stage 3.

275. Standards of pupils at an early stage of the current Year 9 course, doing basketball, netball and football, are in line with the expectations of similarly-aged pupils nationally in performance, knowledge and understanding, with, overall, boys attaining a higher level than girls. The teacher assessments for 2001 suggested that many pupils achieved standards above national expectations in swimming and athletics, although these sports were not taught during the inspection. Whilst the teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2001 showed that the proportion of boys achieving Level 5 or above was above the national average there was a substantial proportion of girls who did not achieve the expectations for their age. There were no formal assessments made in the previous year. During the inspection only games were timetabled in physical education.
276. It was only possible during the inspection to observe the examination option in physical education, and not pupils following the core course between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. The proportion of both boys and girls gaining an A*-C grade in the 2001 GCSE examination was above the national average. It was the first year in which the school had entered pupils for the examination. The inspection confirmed that standards of pupils on the GCSE course are above national expectations both in theory and practical ability, with good levels of knowledge and understanding and a good standard of physical performance.
277. Many pupils, particularly girls, enter the school at the age of eleven below national expectations in their command of basic ball skills. Achievement of pupils of all levels of ability is good. By the age of fourteen the great majority of pupils of all levels of ability and ethnic background, and including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress in developing these skills. In basketball, both girls and boys improve their passing, shooting and their ability to carry out an effective lay up shot, although lower-achievers find it more difficult to sustain these skills in a game situation. In netball, average and higher achievers in particular make good progress in developing long and short passing skills, with correct footwork, and they also considerably increase their tactical awareness. In football, boys learn to use space more effectively when practising their passing skills, in addition to improving their basic skills of dribbling and shooting.
278. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen many pupils opt for the GCSE course. These pupils, of all levels of ability and including those with special educational needs, achieve well in developing their practical skills and understanding of theory. In theory lessons the great majority of pupils quickly develop a good level of knowledge and understanding of the importance of factors such as exercise and diet in influencing fitness. They also increase their awareness of moral and social issues such as the relationship between drugs and sport, and they learn the rules and conventions of various sports. Although pupils with special educational needs make good gains in understanding, some lower-achieving pupils are restricted in communicating what they have learned because of limited writing skills. In their practical fitness work, all pupils translate theory into action effectively, for example by learning to analyse and evaluate their own physical reaction to vigorous exertion.
279. The overall quality of teaching in physical education is good. The teaching of pupils by the end of Year 9 is never less than satisfactory and is good or very good in six out of seven lessons. The teaching of pupils by the end of Year 11 is never less than satisfactory and is good in four out of five lessons. The good teaching of pupils of all ages is characterised above all by the high expectations which teachers have both of pupils' capabilities and of their behaviour. Most pupils respond positively to these expectations, and the result is very focused lessons in which pupils make good progress in developing the various skills.

280. Teachers manage sometimes-large classes effectively, and complement this management with good explanations and questioning. For example, in different sports activities teachers frequently question pupils about the purpose and impact of warm-up routines, testing their knowledge of muscle groups. Skills practices are appropriately challenging: in a Year 9 girls basketball lesson, the teacher introduced progressively more demanding routines in order to improve footwork. At the same time the teacher gave a higher-achieving pupil the responsibility to assist with coaching and evaluating performance, thereby developing the pupil's own knowledge and understanding appropriately.
281. Teachers give effective feedback to enable pupils to improve on their performance, both during lessons and before the end when they review progress towards meeting the lesson objectives. This was seen for example in a Year 8 basketball lesson in which the teacher used several opportunities to demonstrate to pupils how they could improve a lay-up shot, whilst getting pupils to evaluate each other's technique and thereby increase their knowledge and understanding. In some of the best lessons the level of challenge is carefully matched to pupils' abilities, ensuring that good progress is made. For example, in GCSE practical lessons teachers carefully build on theoretical work done on the relationship between fitness and the human body to carry out demanding fitness tests in the gymnasium, using an imaginatively designed circuit. In these and other lessons, teachers emphasise key vocabulary well. Another example of an effective strategy was the use of grids in football to encourage pupils to pass and improve their awareness of space in a controlled game situation.
282. Where aspects of teaching in otherwise satisfactory lessons are less effective, there are limited strategies for keeping a minority of less motivated pupils on task, and their learning is restricted by the low-level disruption which occurs. This was seen in a netball lesson involving Year 9 girls. Occasionally, although the crisp pace of lessons is a strong feature of the teaching, teachers do not spend enough time consolidating technique or knowledge of rules, for example what constitutes a foul or 'travelling' in basketball, so that some pupils develop bad playing habits.
283. The leadership of the physical education department is good. The department is committed to the range of activities offered. There are planned improvements to the facilities. A new system of assessment has recently been introduced to give more detailed feedback on pupils' performance, and this information is used for example to provide challenging opportunities for those pupils identified as being gifted or talented in sport. The department makes a positive contribution to improving literacy by emphasising the importance of key vocabulary in lessons, and by promoting initiatives such as the sports journalist competition.
284. In 1996, standards were identified as being in line with expectations for pupils by the age of fourteen, and above expectations for those by the age of sixteen; whilst progress in learning was good, teaching and management were good, and there was a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The physical education department has maintained these high standards and therefore there has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is always satisfactory and mostly good.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is good
- Pupil management is good
- The subject's contribution towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment data to inform the planning of new work The setting of detailed targets against which pupil progress can be identified and sharing these with pupils
- The statutory requirement to teach religious education to all pupils at Key Stage 4 to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and in the sixth form is not met

285. Attainment in Years 7 to 9 is in line with expectations for 14 year olds, and there are occasional examples where this is exceeded. This provides a very sound basis for improvement. In Year 10, attainment in GCSE is above average.
286. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 7 to 9 is consistent with the standards expected for pupils of that age. There are many good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts such as the importance of worship, customs and symbols. Pupils make sense of what they study and can relate it to their experiences of life. There are many examples of pupils achieving well and making good progress. For example, in Year 7, pupils developed a good knowledge of the important keywords in major world religions. This provided a valuable beginning to the course. In Year 8, pupils were able to demonstrate a good knowledge of Jewish customs and worship and their importance. They were able to provide useful links with everyday experiences. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work were useful aids to improve literacy and oral competency. In Year 9, pupils were enabled to explore their feelings and judgement about religious and moral issues. One lesson looked at the concept of enlightenment in Buddhism and related this to different attitudes towards happiness and material possessions. Overall, learning is good.
287. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment at GCSE in Year 10 reaches expectations and is often better. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Their ability to interpret religious concepts, and express their own opinions about religious and moral issues is a particular feature of this age range. For example, in Year 10, pupils demonstrate a developing understanding of religious principles. They were able to link these principles with everyday life. A good example was the way in which the events in the USA were explored in relation to the Christian and Muslim perspectives on human rights. Learning from religion is a key feature in this year group. Pupils displayed confidence in discussion work and there were many examples of good creative writing. In the lessons seen in Year 10, learning is good. However, not all pupils have the opportunity of studying religious education in sufficient depth and the school is not meeting its statutory requirements in this regard. Learning is, therefore, not satisfactory overall, in the upper school.
288. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by pupils of different gender or ethnic background. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and those who are gifted or talented achieve well.
289. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They behave very well, are generally well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupil behaviour makes a significant contribution to their achievement and progress.
290. Teaching is at least satisfactory and in many cases good in spite of the fact that there is a serious staffing issue. There is one qualified specialist in the department at present, supported by four non-specialist staff. Teachers are generally secure in their knowledge of the subject, and display confidence in the use of material and resources. As a consequence, pupils are well motivated and feel confident in discussing religious issues. Planning is good, and this assisted pupils to focus on information learnt in previous lessons. Lesson aims were shared with pupils in most cases. Teachers make good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles that enable pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion. This assists pupils to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Resources are well used, especially worksheets. These enable pupils with different needs to learn appropriately. Teachers manage pupil behaviour very well, contributing to a good climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and these contribute significantly to pupil achievement. Assessment of pupils' work is generally satisfactory and helpful comments are made in exercise books. These procedures provide a sound basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. However, assessment does not inform the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work and the department does not yet set detailed targets against which it can assess pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. This is recognised as an area for development.
291. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad, balanced and meets the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the Haringey LEA Agreed Syllabus. Schemes of work are well planned and appropriate. They are linked to the fundamental aims of the syllabus designed to assist pupils

both to learn about and learn from religion. Lesson plans are appropriate. They also provide sufficient flexibility to allow for staff initiative. This enables pupils to have the opportunity to reflect on the information they gain in lessons. Religious education makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, so providing opportunities for pupils to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. The content of the curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to respond to religious beliefs and practices, and several opportunities for reflection. In lessons, the teaching encourages pupils to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues, and work on the major world religions necessitates discussion about the cultures that support them, so preparing pupils for life in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society. In view of the fact that statutory requirements are not met at Key Stage 4, pupils do not receive their full entitlement to religious education. There is a small GCSE group following a new course in philosophical and moral aspects of religious education. In addition, the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all sixth form pupils is not met.

292. The department is under temporary management. There are plans to appoint a full time specialist for January 2002. Staffing is a real issue in the department. However, the department as a whole does have a clear sense of purpose and direction. Pupils are provided with a satisfactory diet of religious education, especially in Years 7 to 9. The acting head of the department approaches the task with commitment. There is good support from other departmental staff. Planning is good. Support and in-service training for all departmental staff is part of departmental planning for the future. This will further enhance pupil attainment. The departmental development plan does address some priorities but needs updating to take account of current issues. This should form a good basis for future action. Documentation is very good. There are regular formal meetings of the department. They form the basis for the discussion of important issues relating to pupil attainment and progress. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. One room did have good displays that celebrate pupil achievement. Curriculum resources are generally poor. Opportunities for private study and research at Key Stage 4 should further enhance pupil achievement.
293. Since the last inspection, attainment at Key Stage 3 has improved. Improvements have been made in planning and in the schemes of work. The assessment procedures have improved, although the use of assessment to inform curriculum planning and the provision of targets for pupils need to be tackled. There has been a significant improvement in the contribution religious education now makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Overall, the improvements since the last inspection have had a satisfactory impact on standards, pupil achievement and progress, although the lack of progress in addressing the statutory requirements at Key Stage 4 is a matter of serious concern.

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

In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000 which is the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	1	-	6	-	53	-	0.97
French	1	100	78	-	17	3.00	1.81
Mathematics	2	50	63	-	17	1.00	1.56

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	31	100	89	74	45	8.58	5.99
Biology	19	95	88	42	34	5.79	5.28
Physics	13	92	88	62	41	7.54	5.72
Chemistry	8	100	89	88	42	8.75	5.87
Design and Technology	16	100	92	19	29	6.13	5.37
Economics	22	82	88	14	36	4.27	5.41
Computing	25	52	85	-	23	1.60	4.57
Art	53	98	96	77	45	8.53	6.42
Communication Studies	1	100	93	100	30	10.0	5.42
Drama and Theatre Studies	11	100	99	55	36	7.64	6.49
Music	10	100	93	20	35	5.80	5.72
Geography	14	100	92	64	37	7.86	5.73
History	54	98	89	56	34	7.19	5.43
Sociology	3	100	88	-	37	4.00	5.46
Other social studies	20	95	88	35	35	5.50	5.34
English	68	96	96	47	36	6.32	5.90
French	1	100	78	-	17	3.00	1.81
Spanish	7	100	90	43	40	6.00	5.75
Other languages	3	100	88	-	37	4.00	5.46

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection covered the four mathematics and further mathematics A level courses offered by the school. Each course consists of pure mathematics together with a different combination selected from decision mathematics, mechanics and statistics. In addition the re-sit GCSE course, for those who did not gain a grade C in Year 11, was inspected.

In science, the focus of the inspection was on biology and physics, but chemistry was also sampled.

In chemistry, GCE A level results in 2001 were well above the average nationally (for 2000) and students did better than expected based on their GCSE results two years earlier. The results were a little lower than in the previous year, where standards were very high, mainly because a smaller proportion of students gained the highest A and B grades. Students taking the AS level examination in 2001 did well and better than expected from their GCSE results. Two lessons were observed during the inspection and both were good. In one, students gained good understanding of the relationship between enthalpy and bond strength because the teacher explained clearly and then provided individual help for those students who had not fully understood.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- A level results are well above national averages.
- The courses are well planned, building on students' experience and using their knowledge of pure mathematics to underpin their learning in the applications.
- Teaching is good overall; the relations between teachers and students ensure that the students are motivated to work hard and enjoy many aspects of their study of mathematics.
- There is a generous provision of support and enrichment available to students beyond the timetabled lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Students' progress and understanding is not monitored with sufficient rigour or frequency.
- Higher attaining students in Year 12 would benefit from the stimulation of more challenging mathematical problems requiring analytical investigation in order to find a solution

294. Sixth form students do particularly well in mathematics. They gain results which are very well above the national average. The results in 2000 in mathematics were in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Virtually all students who enter for A level are successful; overall they do even better than is predicted by their very good GCSE results. In the last two years more than half of the examination entries have resulted in the highest standard – an A grade. Fewer female students take up mathematics than males but their overall results are of a similar profile.

295. The standard of Year 13 students' work, seen in lessons and in their folders, is good. However, compared with previous years, a slightly lower proportion of students is attaining the highest standard. Students use their thorough knowledge of pure mathematics in applications such as the study of projectiles and a systematic approach using algorithms leads to critical path analysis. Currently standards at the beginning of the first year of the A level course are in line with national expectations.

296. Teaching is good overall. Students' learning develops well as a result of teaching which builds systematically on their knowledge and skills. This is illustrated by the way in which an understanding of quadratic functions is a starting point for the use of the Factor Theorem leading to the study of higher order polynomials. Students follow their teachers' careful use of correct methodology, mathematical terminology and notation. Students are encouraged to think for themselves by judiciously chosen questions from teachers, for example: 'On what do you base your judgement?' In Year 12, particularly, the higher attaining students need to be extended from the outset of the course. The opportunity was not taken to challenge these students in statistics to use their algebraic skills to compare two formulae used to find the standard deviation of statistical data. In another lesson, students' competence in the solution of quadratic equations was not directed to the solution of more complex problems. Learning is, however, underpinned by teaching which is well planned to draw on knowledge and skills for use in the applications.

297. Although very good relations between students and teachers are typical, a small number of male students dominate some lessons. They do not readily respond to teachers' requests to work quietly, which would enable the majority to play a greater part in the lessons, enhancing their confidence and understanding.
298. The team of mathematics teachers is well led and sensitively provides for a wide range of sixth form students. Of particular note is the very good provision for GCSE re-sit candidates which takes into account the demands of their AS-level studies. Particularly talented students are enabled to progress at accelerated pace and aspiring Cambridge University applicants are well supported. In lessons the special learning needs of individuals are appropriately recognised and catered for. Perhaps the outstanding feature of the department is the mathematics workshop provided for the sixth form after school on four days a week. Teachers give generously of their time offering individual help to any student who requests it. This is very popular with capable students and could lead to excellence for others, if all students recognised its potential.
299. Priorities to extend students' experience using information communications technology in their learning of mathematics and to broaden the range of activities to enhance learning and understanding are well judged aspects of the departmental planning for the future.

Biology

There has been some discontinuity in the teaching team and at the time of the inspection the teacher in charge of the subject was on leave. Overall, the quality of provision in biology is **satisfactory**

Strengths

- Attainment in lessons is mostly above average.
- Students are attentive and have good attitudes towards their work.
- Teachers help students to learn by explaining the work clearly.
- Students are pleased with their choice of subject and find the course stimulating.

Areas for improvement

- Lessons lack variety in approach, resulting in too much note-taking
- Students are not given enough opportunity in lessons to play an active part in their own learning and some are not drawn fully into class discussions.

300. The results of AS level examinations in 2001 were good bearing in mind students' GCSE grades a year earlier.
301. Standards of work of current students in Year 13 are above average and a little higher than suggested by their AS-level results in 2001. This is because the teaching staff is now more stable and several students left the group when their results were not as good as expected. Observations during the inspection confirm that students are making sound progress. For example, in one lesson students quickly gained good understanding of the limitations of an experiment to compare rates of fermentation of different sugars by yeast.
302. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course. Their achievement at this stage is satisfactory. In one of the lessons seen they made satisfactory progress in learning how oxygen and carbon dioxide are transported through the blood, but could have made faster progress if challenged to find this out for themselves rather than receiving knowledge from their teacher.
303. Numerical aspects of biology present difficulties for some students, for example the use of standard form to describe very small quantities, and teachers deal effectively with these as they arise.
304. Teaching and learning are sound overall. Learning is helped by teachers' good subject knowledge; they transfer their own enthusiasm for the subject to their students. One student reported, 'biology is stimulating and fun'. Teachers engage students' interest because they make good use of background knowledge, for example referring to public health concerns in restaurants when teaching about pathogens and disease. In Year 12, teachers do not always cope well with the comparatively large numbers of students in AS level groups. Lessons sometimes lack variety, with too much note taking and too little active participation by students, partly because over-large groups limit opportunities for practical work. Discussion and question

and answer sessions are not always managed well enough to ensure that all students participate.

305. Students' learning is sound because they are attentive and work at a good pace. They respond well to teachers' questions and many ask questions of their own, though others are more passive and wait for the teacher to take the lead. In one lesson, two or three joined in discussion about the conditions that need to be kept constant before bacterial growth is investigated, while the majority was content to listen.
306. The independent work students undertake is of good quality. Those in Year 13 have carried out very good investigations into local ponds and woodland areas. Many of these are very well presented with excellent discussion of the limitations of their experimental technique and their findings, for example about the effects of industrial pollution on water quality. Students make good use of information and communications technology in presenting their work and use the library well to find information.
307. The subject is soundly led and managed. Students report that assessment is well used by teachers to give them a realistic view of their potential and to identify areas of weakness in their learning; teachers are then supportive in addressing these. There is insufficient focus in Year 12 on ensuring that teachers use a variety of approaches to enable all students to gain fully from lessons.
308. As at the time of the last inspection, A level results are similar to national averages and achievement is sound.

Physics

The quality of provision is **good**.

Strengths

- Examination results have improved significantly and were well above average in 2000.
- The teaching is good- lessons are well planned with a good blend of practical work, demonstrations and theory.
- Students are given good opportunities to be creative, use their initiative and carry out some interesting tasks through the newly introduced Advancing Physics course.
- The atmosphere in lessons is purposeful and good-humoured; students are respected and valued.

Areas for improvement

- Students' use of physics is sometimes careless in their coursework (which is otherwise good).
- The work is not always well targeted at students' different needs, for example, the highest and lowest attaining.
- Resources are limited- this sometimes restricts students' opportunities for individual practical work and there is not enough access to computers in the laboratories.

309. The GCE A level results in 2001 were very good, with half the students gaining grade A and all but one a pass grade. The AS results were good with half of the 24 students getting grade A or B and only four ungraded. A level results have improved over the last few years and in 2000 were well above the national average. The number of girls studying physics is relatively small and there is no obvious evidence of differences between the standards achieved by boys and girls.
310. Students in Year 12, who have only just stated their course, are achieving as expected. The teachers build well on work covered in the GCSE course and move students swiftly onto the AS material. Students make good progress in learning how to use measuring instruments accurately, for example, vernier calipers, and know how to find Young's Modulus for a copper wire. They are coping well with the demands of the course and make good use of work that they have covered in Key Stage 4 (for example, when linking 'stress' with 'pressure'). They tackle calculations reasonably well and are getting into good habits, such as recording measurements in tables, drawing 'best fit' curves and lines, and using correct units. Coursework from last year's AS students is of a good standard and includes a very good variety of imaginative solutions to tasks- for example, students devised and tested sensors, such as pressure pads, water level detectors and light-dependent resistors. They present their work extremely well, making good use of ICT (for example, PowerPoint) and graphical representations of results. Sometimes their explanations of the physics involved in the

coursework is careless, for example, in the way they explained the findings on the activity involving a falling object.

311. Year 13 students are achieving above average standards for the stage of the course and achieving well. They make good links with previous learning, for example, when comparing capacitor discharge with radioactive decay and measuring half-life. The mathematical demands of the subject are coped with well by most students.
312. The teaching of physics in the sixth form is good and ensures that students learn well. The features of much of the teaching are:
- Lessons are very well planned with clear objectives so that students know what they are expected to do.
 - Lessons are conducted at a good pace.
 - All three physics teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject- they insist on clear and accurate attention to detail, for example in the use of units and correct scientific terminology. As a result, students are careful in practical work and usually use correct scientific terms in their explanations.
 - Most lessons include a good range of activities, including demonstrations, practical work and discussions about theory. This was particularly effective in one lesson in which a teacher used demonstrations, and involved pupils well in learning about different types of circular motion and the origin of the centripetal forces. The demonstration with the puck rotating on a 'frictionless' surface was enjoyed by students and helped them to understand that the force acted towards the centre of the circle, whilst the speed remained constant.
 - All three teachers demonstrate an enthusiasm for the subject. This was particularly evident in the lesson described above and contributed to its success.
313. Although lessons are effective, they are not always targeted well enough at the highest and lowest attaining students. There is a tendency for students to be expected to work at the same pace, with the result that occasionally the higher attaining students could progress further and faster, whilst others just manage to keep up. Teachers' questioning of students is usually good, though it could be used more to explore students' ideas and challenge their thinking.
314. The new course chosen by the department provides good opportunities for students to work independently, research up-to-date science and technology and to be creative. Students respond well and make good use of the ICT associated with the course. Students enjoy their physics lessons, in the main, and contribute well. They are responsible and relate well to their peers and teachers. The atmosphere in lessons is pleasant and purposeful- with good use of humour. Relationships are constructive as they are between male and female students. The teacher quickly squashed inappropriate banter by a small group of male students. Female students are sometimes heavily outnumbered by males, but teachers go out of their way to involve them in discussions and practical work.
315. The subject is very well organised with an effective scheme of work and good clear guidance for students. There are mainly enough resources for the new topics, although the group sizes in Year 12 sometimes result in students working in threes rather than individually. Also, some of the equipment is old and unreliable, for example several of the travelling microscopes needed in one lesson seen were not working. There is not enough access to computers in the laboratory for work such as data-logging. Teachers are monitoring individual students' progress but not systematically collecting and analysing data about progress from Key Stage 4. The subject leader has not had the opportunity to observe colleagues teach so as to share best practice and ensure consistency. Overall, though, the subject is well led and provision is good.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design technology A and AS level subjects were inspected. Both courses have a strong emphasis on the design process.

Design Technology

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average, with outstanding performance from talented students.
- Students achieve very well as a result of very good management of their learning. Plenty of praise is balanced by honest appraisal of current progress.
- The quality of individual student guidance is outstanding, resulting in individual action plans for the next stage of project management.
- The course is enriched by excellent involvement with talented designers and engineers.
- The most committed students have outstanding attitudes to work.

Areas for improvement

- Punctuality to lessons is not always as good as it should be.
- Individual students need even more support in meeting deadlines. The head of subject has this in hand.

316. Standards are above average. Results have improved significantly in 2001. A very good proportion of students achieved high grades and every student achieved at least a creditable pass grade. Standards reached by the most able are high as a result of very good teaching, with rich opportunities to work with talented designers and capable engineers from well-known companies. Results of AS levels were very good. A number of students decided rather late to drop the AS level and did not complete the course after taking the first module, resulting in the publication of some low results. The difference between the highest results and others arises from the degree of difficulty in project design and construction. The school has sustained good examination performance since the last inspection.
317. The very good management of student learning results in high standards in lessons. The most committed students have outstanding attitudes to work, spending a lot of time in the department in good use of the Internet for research. Their work shows originality and they demonstrate very good progress indeed. In Year 12, all are new to the course, but each has already chosen a different designer and a different era to influence their work. Punctuality to lessons and more rigorous meeting of deadlines is an area for further improvement by individual students.
318. Achievement is very good. The most talented students produce work of outstanding quality, particularly in creating original designs. A number follow a new direction in the sixth form, making very good progress. A male student in Year 13 followed textiles in Year 10 and 11, but achieved very good results in a project involving construction in resistant materials at the end of Year 12. Those joining the sixth form from other institutions have not all followed courses with the same emphasis on design and make very rapid progress.
319. Teaching is very good. A high level of subject expertise provides students with opportunities to work in a wide choice of materials and produces varied responses to major and minor projects. Assessment of student progress is outstanding. Very effective work with individuals offers high quality student guidance as work progresses. In Year 13, students produce new individual action plans for the next stage of work. They are encouraged to learn from each other, gaining mutual benefit from each other's insights. Year 12 students are expected to deliver presentations to the group in order to improve communication skills and refine their development ideas from research through detailed analysis of each other's work.
320. Students receive considerable praise for good initiative, but honest appraisal of their current standards enables them to raise the profile of their design capability. The teacher communicated with clarity to Year 12 the importance of using the influences of other designers to create new ideas, rather than replicating the obvious. This had the effect of individuals becoming more innovative in creating clock designs.
321. Courses are very well planned and students have access to very good resources. Teachers are always available for consultation in non-teaching periods as well as at breaks and lunchtimes. Students appreciate the use of facilities and time given freely by staff. The

department makes outstanding provision for students to become involved with members of the community. They work with architects, designers and engineers in finding resolutions to real problems. Students take initiative to make arrangements to visit companies in order to develop projects further. The Engineering Education Scheme provides students with opportunities to work in an engineering environment, helping them decide if it is a profession they would like to pursue. It was a pleasure to join four students in Year 12 as they prepared to work with a construction industry and local authority specialists to design and construct a bus shelter to a very challenging brief. Students are actively involved with 'Neighbourhood Engineers' who have secured sponsorship from high status companies.

322. Students are very positive about the course. Some are conscious that they cannot aspire to be the most talented, but are analytical about each other's work and gain from good team spirit. The majority of last year's students have continued into further education in the design or engineering field.

BUSINESS

Business studies and Economics are offered in the sixth form. Economics was inspected.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Specialist staff who have a good rapport with students.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is being improved but resources are limited.
- Assessment practice does not reflect fully the very good school policy.
- The teaching sessions are too long and infrequent and the teaching is insufficiently varied to make best use of the long periods

323. Standards in the GCE A level have fluctuated considerably in recent years and in 2000 were below national average with students doing less well on average compared with their other subjects. In 2001, GCE A level results improved significantly with over 90 percent of students gaining passes and over half doing better in economics than in other courses. This contrasted with the new Advanced Subsidiary course where the pass rate was 69% with a number of students performing below expectations.
324. In work and lessons seen, standards in economics are in line with national average. In Year 13, most students have a sound understanding of the main economic terms and the higher attaining students are able to use graphical analysis in, for example, an explanation of different forms of competition. Lower attaining students experience greater problems in completing such work and in articulating particular economic relationships. This was evident in a lesson on economic development where such students were less able to evaluate the different theoretical models. AS level students are making sound gains in their understanding given that it is a new subject for most. This was well illustrated in a Year 12 lesson where most understood the different definitions and measurement of national income.
325. The economics students are generally positive about their studies and value the contribution the subject makes to their economic and social awareness. Year 13 students tend to be less active learners in terms of class participation, in part because of the more teacher centred approach to learning.
326. Teaching in economics is satisfactory overall with some good features. The teachers have good personal skills and use humour effectively to involve students in their learning. The specialist teachers apply their knowledge well, particularly in an introduction to the main economic concepts and theory and ensure that all students make progress in their understanding. However, at times the level of analysis is insufficiently challenging to enable the highest levels of achievement. Examples of good practice include worksheets that provide essential information with structured opportunities for students to develop their own note taking skills. Also good are the practical exercises in, for example, the study of investment, that enable students to better understand the concepts and practise higher level numerical skills.

Marking is usually sound although it lacks sufficient detail to properly inform students about the assessment criteria and so help them improve their work.

327. There is currently no head of department although the head of social science provides positive and constructive support for the newly qualified economics teacher. The school hopes to make an appointment for January 2002. The current refurbishment of the sixth form area has led to short term deterioration in the quality of accommodation and a lack of available learning resources. Understandably there are few policies supporting learning currently place and this will be a priority for the new head of subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

There is a wide variation in ICT knowledge and skills among students in the sixth form. There is limited provision for all students to improve their ICT skills and knowledge. As a result, overall standards in ICT are unsatisfactory. Attainment in A level computing examinations has been below average in recent years.

Information and communication technology

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**

Strengths

- Sixth form teaching in the reorganised and now fully staffed ICT department is mostly good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and the schemes of work have been rewritten this term
- Students on the examination courses have a positive attitude, they are enthusiastic and work well

Areas for improvement

- Examination results should be improved significantly and be brought nearer to the school average.
- Access to ICT computers and other resources is inadequate in some computing lessons.
- For students who do not take an AS level course in ICT, there is no provision for them to improve their ICT skills.

328. Attainment in A level computing has been below the national average and well below the school average for A level examinations. Attainment in the AS examination in 2001 was unsatisfactory. These recent results have included a significant percentage of 'U' grades. Sixth form computing courses were subject to serious staffing difficulties and a lack of continuity last year.

329. The work of students seen in lessons, in folders, and stored on computer confirms that there is a wide range of ability. Standards overall are about average although some good work was seen in Year 13. Students in a Year 13 advanced level lesson were working with confidence in planning a challenging relational database for their coursework. They had a good command of terminology and most were able to explain in detail the relationships involved and how they needed to be linked in order to provide the required data. In another lesson students were collaborating effectively in pairs to write programs to control a range machines and vehicles which they had constructed and linked together for the control aspect of the course. In Year 12 students often make good progress in lessons. Those who had taken the ICT course at GCSE were performing best in the early stages of their AS course in Year 12. Some of the remainder had to work hard to bring their ICT skills up to the standard necessary. No significant difference was seen in attainment by gender or ethnicity although boys tended to be more forthcoming in class question and answer sessions. Some of the verbal responses were extended and articulate, particularly in Year 13.

330. Attitudes on advanced level courses are very good. The majority of students show interest and enthusiasm for the subject. They usually work diligently and are able to co-operate well when planning work and using computers. Good mutual support was often provided and software knowledge exchanged. In some rooms computers had to be shared or used in rotation because numbers were insufficient. On several occasions this resulted in some students being limited to textbooks for research rather than being able to use a wider range of resources on the. Plans are now in place to remedy this problem in the rooms where sixth form ICT courses are taught. Although access to computers for most sixth form students is not a major issue, they sometimes have to visit different parts of the school to find vacant machines. The range of

textbooks for computing could profitably be increased to provide a better resource base for some of the theoretical aspects of the courses.

331. Overall teaching is now good. There have been some staffing difficulties and problems of continuity, particularly related to coursework. However, since September the department has been appropriately staffed. Teaching in three-quarters of the lessons seen on the computing courses was good, the remainder being satisfactory. Teachers have a good command of the subject are enthusiastic about their work. They provide good individual support when students are working at machines and produce effective prompts, support materials and appropriate Internet references. 'PowerPoint' presentations are frequently used setting a good example to students. A high priority is now being given to ensuring that students meet coursework requirements and deadlines.
332. The reorganisation of responsibilities within the ICT department within recent months is helping to focus attention upon issues related to the management of sixth form ICT courses. Schemes of work have been rewritten, assessment procedures are more stringent, coursework requirements have been reappraised and students' performance is being looked at in a more systematic way.
333. There are some sixth form ICT issues beyond the examination courses which need further attention. Although there is some cross-curricular use of computers there is much more scope in most subjects to use the power of ICT to enhance teaching and learning. Some students are competent autonomous users of ICT and good examples of coursework were seen in some subjects. However, overall levels of ICT competence are below expectations. Too many students have poorly developed ICT skills because they were not taught at Key Stage 4. There are no planned opportunities for the majority of students to improve their ICT skills and knowledge in the sixth form.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The school runs AS and A2 courses in Art and photography, drama, music and media studies. The inspection focused on Art, Music and drama courses. Media studies was sampled and two lessons or parts of lessons were seen with a Year 12 group. In these lessons the quality of teaching was very good and students were making good progress in their ability to analyse a brief video clip, and understanding how information is conveyed to the viewer and in examination of a photo image as part of an introduction to 'production.' Media studies is a relatively new course and in 2001 almost all students gained an A or B grade in the AS examinations.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Well above average examination results at A level in both art and design and photography courses.
- Very good and often excellent teaching providing high levels of challenge for all students.
- The quality of departmental leadership and teamwork amongst staff are excellent.
- Students' enthusiasm for the subject, their capacity for independent thought and study, their awareness of contemporary art practice and their readiness to explore personal and sometimes controversial themes are excellent.
- Students' relationships with each other and with teachers are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities for students to use ICT for research and, most importantly, as a creative tool, are at the moment severely limited.
- Aspects of accommodation and lack of a departmental technician.

334. Overall standards in the sixth form are very good. The last three years' results in both the art and design and photography courses have been well above average with an excellent proportion of grades at A to C. Results for 2001 and the work of Year 13 students seen during the inspection are also well above average. At the time of the inspection there were no national comparisons for results in the new Advanced Subsidiary examinations taken in Year 12, but the school's results and the work of students seen during the inspection are very good and in line with A level expectations.

335. Students' achievement in the sixth form is very good. In Year 12, students build on their learning from GCSE and they make rapid gains in their ability to explore independent lines of enquiry and to express personal and sometimes controversial themes and issues in a wide range of two and three dimensional media, installation work and a variety of photographic techniques. The knowledge and understanding they have gained from their earlier studies into styles and ideas in art, particularly contemporary art, form an excellent basis for their exploration of the more individual pieces, which characterise good A level practice and the work they will do later in the course. Students are technically confident and they make very good use of their sketchbooks and work journals to research and develop ideas and to record their investigations into sources for their practical and written work. The best of these books show a lively and meaningful exploration of ideas and media appropriate to the intended outcomes. The work journals of some Year 13 photography students, for example, contain exciting darkroom experiments, which are linked to investigations into well-known photographers who have explored similar, sometimes provocative, themes.
336. Both the art and design and the photography courses are open to students who have not studied the subjects to GCSE and these students also make very good progress and achieve above average standards. One Year 13 student spoke with enthusiasm and pride about what she had achieved in her photographic work, saying that she 'would not have been good enough to do an art course' and that she particularly enjoyed the creative approach to the course because this allowed her to 'think differently'. Her experiments with multi-exposure, overlays and solarised images showed a very good understanding of the scope and nature of creative photography and represented very good achievement. Students' achievements with the use of ICT, however, are well below average and are limited mostly to word processing of essays. Students are disadvantaged because of the obsolete equipment and the lack of opportunity to use, for example, a digital camera, a scanner and up to date software to design and to manipulate imagery. This means that they lack insight and experience of the creative application of information technology in the subject and how it affects related areas of employment. The recent allocation of a post of responsibility to a teacher to oversee the achievement of targets identified in the department's improvement plan, although a positive step, is yet to have an impact on students' work. Currently, this is a significant weakness in the department's provision.
337. Teaching in the sixth form is a significant strength in the subject. Overall it is very good and often it is excellent. Features which contribute to this are the teachers' expertise and enthusiasm for the subject, the way in which they transmit these to the students through tasks that are challenging and which cause students to think beyond the easy and obvious routes and the very good planning so that when two teachers share a class students are clear about what they should be doing. As one Year 13 student commented: 'the teachers work as a team and plan really well so that we don't get confused' and another: 'teachers really push us to do our best.'
338. The impact of the high standards of teaching on students' work and attitudes is fully apparent in lessons and in portfolios of work. Students arrive for lessons enthusiastically, they are highly motivated and appropriately self-reliant - visiting exhibitions and galleries in their own time, for example - and they flourish as confident young adults as a result of the opportunities which teachers make available to them. This confidence can be seen, for example, in the assured and bold, expressive life drawings done in an after-school class run by the teachers and the large scale paintings and installation work displayed in the dining area and in the areas outside of the art department. Students' readiness to explore personal themes and their ability to engage with the sometimes complex issues of contemporary art forms, result from the encouragement which teachers give them and are a response to the high expectations which teachers have of them.
339. Excellent opportunities exist for students to visit exhibitions and galleries and to make visits abroad, to Paris and Barcelona for example. They are also able to work with visiting artists, designers and craft workers. Members of staff from local colleges, with which the departmental links are very good, visit to talk about courses and career opportunities. Another excellent feature is the departmental 'Fusion' newsletter to which students are able to contribute and which provides information about developments in the subject, departmental news and key dates and articles about events that have taken place. These wider opportunities are another strength of the department's work in the sixth form and they make an excellent contribution to the students' personal development.
340. The assessment of students' work is good and procedures have improved since the previous inspection so that record keeping is no longer cumbersome. Students are clear about their

progress and what they need to do in order to improve. A particularly strong contribution to the students' understanding of their own performance comes through the dialogue which teachers have with them during lessons. There is a very good level of discussion about what needs to be done and the use of target setting is very good. Teachers also work very well together to monitor their own work and the progress of students. This is another feature of the teamwork which exists in the department and which results from the excellent leadership, contributing to the high standards in the subject.

341. The weaknesses identified in the main school report concerning accommodation and the lack of a department technician are particularly significant in the sixth form. There is a lack of space for the large-scale work, which is a feature of the best work at advanced level; students sometimes have to work at cramped table spaces rather than at easels, and the advice and technical support which can come from a well-qualified technician, and which can effectively support the work of a teacher, are lacking. Teachers also have to spend time on necessary but mundane tasks instead of on those that are of more direct benefit to the students' learning.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment remain above national averages
- Students show high levels of commitment to the work and to one another.
- Teachers make very good use of their extensive and detailed subject knowledge, create an excellent environment for learning and plan work very diligently.
- Recent production of an AS/A2 handbook to help smooth the transition to a new examination structure.

Areas for improvement

- None

342. Standards at A level are well above national averages in respect of the highest grades. Since only one male student completed the course in 2000, comparison of performance on grounds of gender is not possible. Results for 2001 remain above national comparisons while the number of students who entered increased by 60 per cent. The fact that the department has an 'open door' admissions policy to AS and A2 courses makes this level of success the more remarkable. From 1998 to 2000, students' average points scores were well above national comparisons. Levels of achievement in lessons are well above average. In a single Year 13 lesson, girls worked much more profitably than boys, but elsewhere no distinction between them could be made.

343. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. Teachers plan and manage lessons extremely well. An excellent Year 12 lesson on 'A Doll's House' showed the teacher using with great sensitivity Stanislavski's 'emotion memory' technique to explore a moment of students' personal experience as a means of tapping into emotion generated by the predicament of the character of Nora. Using such a technique with students requires a great measure of mutual trust. The depth of students' involvement in this activity was intense and their ability to empathise with Nora extremely convincing. Subsequent discussion showed that they had clearly learnt very well a valuable new approach to interpreting character. Students are able to create highly concentrated dialogue when in role and to discuss drama concepts and conventions with clarity and very good understanding.

344. Teachers lead discussions very skilfully, supporting and challenging students' opinions as appropriate and always encouraging them toward independent thought. They provide students with a framework within which to take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers' marking of written work is another aspect of this process. Comments are extensive, critical and developmental, frequently suggesting alternative lines of approach in order to deepen students' thinking. Written work is generally fluent, confident, well organised and covers a range of texts and tasks. It includes satisfactory analyses of the contributions made to productions by set and stage design, and detailed evaluations of their own work. At the start of Year 12, many have not yet acquired the objectivity required for an academic essay and still write quite colloquially. By the beginning of Year 13 many students have acquired a more mature and balanced style. Because teachers have high expectations of students' attitudes and standards of work, those with learning needs achieve well in practical work, though writing presents problems.

345. The teacher-produced handbook on the AS and A2 syllabuses is already proving its value, and a modified version of it will be produced for students. Where two staff teach parallel groups, especially at the start of the AS course, they plan strategies and compare outcomes diligently to ensure that equality of opportunity is achieved. The pacing of lessons is brisk, which encourages the interplay of ideas. Students in another Year 12 lesson on Stanislavski's techniques were challenged and interested by his method of approaching a text. They engaged in lively and thoughtful discussion because they were clear about the purpose of the activity, and by the end of the lesson were applying it with some success.
346. Students learn well. They are attentive and respond well to tasks and challenges set by teachers. They have a mature attitude to learning, and several of them have chosen to join the school at this stage. Although they have limited facilities for independent learning, they conduct research and write up their findings with care, frequently using word-processing to produce final drafts. Students in both years possess a wide range of drama and performance skills. Good relationships with teachers help students to develop confidence as learners. In group work they collaborate very well, whether in discussion or, as in a Year 13 lesson on a choreographed piece of mime, in synchronising and refining stylised movement. They were receptive of each other's ideas and generous with their own, so that joint ownership of learning and awareness of how well they were doing both increased.

MUSIC

The inspection looked in detail at the A level music course. Examination results were above average in 2000 as were the GCSE results of two years earlier.

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good overall: teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- Students are highly motivated and show commitment to the course and other musical activities.
- The department is well-organised and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to increase the number of students reaching the higher grades at A level.

347. Examination results have helped to give the music department a high profile over recent years. This has been due to very good teaching and a commitment from students to the subject. Evidence from work seen in lessons and students' files and tape recordings show that standards are very high, particularly for the most capable students. Standards are well above average overall and students reach their potential with the most capable among them doing well, including some from minority ethnic backgrounds. All perform confidently and develop a consistency bordering on the professional which comes through in their performances.
348. Attainment in Year 12 is above average. All students make very good progress and achieve standards above those expected for this stage of an advanced course. The most capable students achieve well in aural tests. Key chords sung in harmony and short, rhythmic exercises of varying complexity help to establish tonality and rhythm awareness for the least competent in this part of the course. Students enjoy composing and are willing to talk about their work and explain reasons for their musical interpretations. The standard of performance is very high amongst Year 13 students. They sing and play confidently with a sensitivity and feeling which comes to light in their performances. Good presentation and communication with the audience is an important feature and this was apparent in the A level recital of solos for piano, trombone, cello and voice. Students revealed a good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of music which established that effective learning had taken place. All students were intent on further study and a career in music and the singer, a countertenor, gained a choral scholarship at Cambridge. All students use ICT competently and some have music software which they use when composing at home.
349. Students are exposed to a rich and varied diet of music and they learn well because of teaching that is carefully matched to their needs and interests. In all lessons seen, teaching was at least good and in two thirds the teaching was very good and excellent. Students were challenged to experiment with their own creative ideas in all areas of study. Similarly, high expectations encouraged students to give of their best. There is a constant emphasis on improvement as in

an analysis of Bernstein's 'On the Waterfront' where subtle changes of mood, phrasing and dynamics were discussed in a clear and succinct way.

350. In talking to students in Years 12 and 13 it became obvious that many are keen to work in music-related professions. They are enthusiastic about the subject and feel that they are receiving a worthwhile musical education that will serve as a basis for future study. There is much enrichment of the curriculum and visiting professional musicians have taken workshops in jazz and in composing. Gifted and talented students have performed in Beijing, Prague and Paris in the last two years. They take the lead in the many extra-curricular activities that take place in school and support centrally organised bands, orchestras and choirs.
351. This is a well-run department with good documentation that is used to monitor and evaluate students' work. Challenging targets are worked out with the students and effective strategies are planned which moves learning forward. Monitoring of teaching on a formal basis also takes place and moderation of the music curriculum ensures that all three teachers are working to the same standards.

HUMANITIES

352. The school provides a wide range of humanities courses. In addition to history, geography, sociology, subjects inspected in detail, the school also offers government and politics, psychology and philosophy. In 2001 in government and politics, eight students took the A level, two students achieved grade A and the others achieved in the grade C to D range, most at C. In the AS level 16 students took the examination and results were spread across the grades, 3 students achieving A or B and the majority gaining C or D. In psychology, six students took the A level in 2001 and results were across the grades. In the AS, 17 students took the examination, half the group achieved grade B- and there was one student who gained an A- and a quarter of the group achieved grade C. In philosophy, 17 students took the subject at AS level and nine achieved grades in the B, C, D range.
353. Two government and politics and a philosophy lesson were sampled. Teaching was very good. The government and politics lesson was an introduction to the British constitution and the teacher introduced the topic with enthusiasm. The work set, which included an analysis of the Prime Minister's speech at the party conference in the light of world events, was particularly interesting. In the philosophy lesson the teacher's knowledge and skills contributed very well to the students' understanding of concepts of 'mind' with the teacher constantly challenging students' views about 'certainty' and 'doubt'. The teacher very effectively helped the students handle a range of concepts very well, helping them to make significant connections between them. The students demonstrated very good skills of critical analysis, logical thought and a clear philosophical perspective.

Geography

The department caters for 33 students following AS and A level (A2) courses. This year's A level groups are smaller than usual. Students are committed and regularly continue their education at universities, including Oxbridge. For example, three out of seven students in one group this year are proposing to take degrees in geography.

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

Strengths

- Since the previous inspection, standards at A level have risen from above to well above average. Students achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Teachers use their expertise well to develop research skills and independent thinking.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- None.

354. This year, for the first time, sixth formers took AS Level. Over half achieved A-C grades and four fifths obtained pass grades. The group included a number of Year 13 students, some of these had not taken geography before. The majority achieved in line with their anticipated

performance. This year, students have appropriate entry grades, and so in the lessons seen, teachers can teach at the right level.

355. A level results have improved since the last inspection, the result of careful examination analysis, forward planning and good teamwork. In the last few years, they have risen from 'above' to 'well above' the national average. All students passed, as they did this year. In 2000, half achieved A grades. An analysis of their performance for the last two years shows that both male and female students made very good progress in relation to their potential and performed well (male students in particular) in comparison with their other subjects.
356. In the lessons and the work seen, standards achieved by students at AS and A level are well above the national average and their achievement according to their potential is very good. Students, including those new to the school, feel that good advice, in the form of support booklets and the individual help from the head of department, has ensured a smooth transition from GCSE and from AS to A level and contributed to their progress. AS students make a good start and show good understanding of river flow patterns and farming in contrasting environments. As yet, they lack confidence in discussion in contrast to Year 13 students. They all show good understanding of geographical ideas and, in spite of problems caused by the outbreak of 'foot and mouth' disease, have been able to apply these ideas successfully in fieldwork. Their creativity is evident in their choice of individual studies. Supported by earlier fieldwork, they use a wide range of techniques and sampling methods effectively. They are able to identify a hypothesis and establish a line of enquiry. In investigations about coastal erosion in Norfolk, higher attaining students show very good understanding of theory, select and use relevant data and make good links between physical processes and environmental management. Their conclusions are very thorough. Average attaining students analyse their data well to reach justified conclusions but are less evaluative. Lower attaining students collect and analyse data well but their evidence is not so closely linked to the aims. They reach sound conclusions. In work on wilderness areas, students show that they can draw selectively on resources to discuss contemporary issues.
357. Overall, teaching is very good and students learn very well. In most lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is effectively communicated to the students who respond accordingly. Their expertise and knowledge of examination requirements helps them to plan thoroughly to support students in the understanding of increasingly difficult ideas and to develop their examination skills. Work is marked carefully with a strong emphasis on intellectual rigour. Draft essays on the Green Revolution, for example, are well annotated allowing students the opportunity to refine their ideas. As a result of good relationships, there is a climate of mutual trust in which students grow in confidence and become increasingly independent. They have good personal and learning skills and using the library and other sources well for research. Their mature and responsible attitudes are shown by the quality of their coursework and fieldwork.
358. By Year 13, students demonstrate that they can work not only independently but also in collaboration with the teacher. In one lesson the teacher used sensitive and focused questions to explore their perceptions about the environmental management of wilderness areas. With their help, the teacher built up the key ideas and everyone became involved in a reflective discussion about the spiritual need for these areas and 'the wilderness in the mind' in during which students justified their points well. Up-to-date resources, support staff and well-chosen tasks are effective in maintaining interest and pace. Good support is given to students with visual and hearing impairments.
359. The department is led and managed well. Teachers are working well together to develop and refine new work units thus ensuring good progression from AS to A level. Fieldwork is a strength and is closely linked to the requirements of the examination board. The department supports students well. Information is used effectively to help students to improve. Grades are predicted and targets set to help students to achieve these grades.

History

The department has more than 50 students following A level and AS courses. Numbers have increased steadily over the past three years. Students regularly continue their studies in history and related subjects such as law at universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.

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

Strengths

- The proportion of students gaining A/B grades in A level is well above average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Relationships are good.

Areas for improvement

- Timetabling of long sessions lessens students' enjoyment of the subject when it occurs.
- Opportunities for group discussion are reduced in the larger classes.

360. The proportion of students who gained A/B grades in the A level examinations was well above average in 2000. All candidates obtained an A to G grade. Results have steadily improved over the last three years and are now better than they were at the last inspection. This year's results are similar. When compared over a period, the relative performances of boys and girls have fluctuated, but in 2000 girls did obtain markedly better results. In the AS examinations, students' results reflect the A level pattern, but they were not quite so high. Generally, students do better in history than in their other subjects and often reach a higher standard than their previous attainment would suggest.
361. In lessons seen in Year 13, different groups attained standards that varied between average and very high. In one lesson, students were just beginning the topic, whilst in another lesson they had acquired a good foundation in the topic. This knowledge enabled them to begin the process of organising the material on the development of Negro civil rights and drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of various Federal laws. All students are able to take notes effectively in a form useful for revision. Students command a wide vocabulary, both historical and general. In one lesson, when students presented their findings on factors leading to The Great Northern War, Russia-Sweden 1695-1700, girls were able to synthesise more effectively, suggesting conclusions.
362. In Year 12 lessons, groups ranged in size from 12 to 22 and were studying different aspects of the same topic, the Huguenots and the Edict of Nantes. Attainment was above average. Students are beginning to apply their knowledge to the examination questions to be expected on the January module. Able students are adept at application, but average or lower attaining pupils are more hesitant. When preparing for the documents paper, an extract from Louis XIV's memoirs, students were able to analyse and evaluate why the King had chosen to ignore or include events. There was little opportunity in the larger class for extended discussion, partly because the lesson focused on examination technique. Generally students had a good vocabulary and confidently explained their ideas.
363. When the current work of AS students and coursework including the independent study of A level students, was scrutinised, the high standard of the written work was apparent. Essays were generally well planned and structured; their vocabulary was extensive. The folders which were well-organised, revealed extensive notes, both photocopied and their own. Moreover, annotations and diagrams showed that they had been actively built up, not simply copied. There was a considerable amount of written work. In the A level folders, there was impressive evidence of the depths of research. Having chosen their title, students contacted universities, checked library catalogues and searched the Internet for relevant materials. They methodically considered and evaluated their sources. There was very good cross-referencing. They showed understanding of the different viewpoints and approaches held by historians, and how this affected the interpretation of history. Finally, there was evidence of background reading, substantial in some cases, which considerably deepened their understanding, particularly of historiography.
364. The teaching in most lessons is very good. Teachers have specialist knowledge, used not only to deliver the content but also to develop evaluative skills. In the combined questions and note-taking sessions, students also reinforce their factual understanding as well as organise their ideas. Encouraged by the teachers, students were beginning to arrive at an overview, for example, of the probable consequences of invading Russia and comparing eighteenth century

Sweden's refusal to invade with nineteenth century France and twentieth century Germany's decisions to do so. The atmosphere in lessons was friendly but industrious.

365. Although relationships between teachers and students are good, Year 13 students explained that their enjoyment of history is lessened when they have three lessons on the same day. This had been the case for their group last year. One Year 12 class is timetabled similarly. The size of AS classes varied from 12 to 22. In the larger class, opportunities for oral work are inevitably reduced. The accommodation in the large classroom is unsatisfactory. Acoustics are poor, particularly when a large number are present. There are no blinds and the whiteboard is placed to reflect maximum light. It is not possible to use an overhead projector or make a PowerPoint presentation effectively. The department is anxious to raise the standards of AS examinations to that of A level. There is no coursework element in these examinations, which is a strength of the students' work. The schemes of work have been further revised and the timing altered so a module is taken in January. The head of department is constantly evaluating both individual and group progress and adjusting teaching provision accordingly. These are important factors in the good progress made.

SOCIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well in the subject in relation to their prior attainment.
- Teaching is very good in terms of its variety and learning support.
- Assessment is clear and helps students improve their performance
- Resources for learning are well utilised

Areas for improvement

- The long and less frequent lessons work against the progressive development of learning.

366. Until most recently, the small numbers taking GCE A level sociology have achieved at about the national average with a number of students doing better than expected. Numbers of students taking sociology have increased recently with standards rising in 2001. In that year all GCE A level students achieved passes while in the new Advanced Subsidiary course, 90 percent were successful with over half gaining grades A or B. For the majority of students on the two sociology courses this was their best Advanced or AS level result.
367. In work and lessons seen, standards in sociology are above national average. In the GCE A level, students have good levels of understanding evident in a Year 13 lesson, where students used concepts such as political de-alignment accurately in their analysis of voting behaviour. The Year 13 students have stronger than average writing and ICT skills that they use effectively in their personal research. Most students studying the subject achieve well in terms of the progress they make and are able to discuss and develop their ideas with growing confidence. This was reflected well in a Year 12 lesson where students showed understanding and maturity in their discussion about opinion polls with a visiting politician.
368. Students are generally positive about their studies and there are a significant number of very conscientious students in terms of work completion. The range of knowledge and activities in the subject make a positive contribution to students' social development with students developing a wider range of independent learning skills mainly because of the research work and the different class activities
369. Overall teaching is very good with well planned and varied lessons that use a mix of activities such as whole class teaching and discussion, individual and group work, student presentations and outside visitors. All of these activities develop student interest and sustain the pace of learning in what are often long teaching sessions. The content of lessons is consistently challenging and helps students quickly gain an understanding of the main sociological perspectives. This was evident in a well-constructed Year 12 lesson where the class activity developed an appreciation of the different approaches to the study of the family. The learning activities further enable students to develop greater independence in their research and presentation skills through a mix of group work and individual investigations. Students are given clear and regular guidance about examination and coursework assessment criteria. Marking is constructive and gives students clear guidance as to how they can improve their essay and project work.

370. The subject is managed as part of the larger social science department led by the sociology specialist. Subject management is very good in the way it has developed a range of resources and incorporated different initiatives that have improved the quality of teaching and learning. The head of department has established attractive and sufficiently well resourced teaching rooms and worked with the school library staff to ensure a range of ICT, books and other learning resources to support sociological investigation. Strategies to develop communication and ICT skills are clearly evident in the work schemes and student work and there is clear policy and practice to support different student learning needs including those of the gifted and talented.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

Around two hundred students take English in the sixth form. Courses include AS and A2 level English literature and AS level combined English literature and language.

English

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

Strengths

- Results in recent AS and A level examinations have been above the national average
- Teaching is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their lessons are stimulating and challenging.
- Students are very positive about their learning and achieve well.
- Sixth form teaching is very well organised by teachers who are keen to raise standards still further.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not always devise effective strategies for involving students in lessons, when classes are large.
- Procedures for monitoring students' progress are not clearly established

371. Standards achieved in AS and A level examinations are consistently high. In the last three years results have been well above the national average. In A level English literature results for 2000 and AS level English literature results for 2001 roughly half the students entered gained A or B grades. This is good achievement, given the students' standards of attainment when they enter the sixth form. English lessons are popular with students and the drop out levels for all courses are low.

372. In work seen during the inspection the high standard was in line with that indicated by examination results. Course work is consistently above average. All students are able to present clear arguments with good textual support. Standards of presentation are always high and most students make effective use of ICT in the preparation of assignments. Lower attaining students sometimes struggle for the right phrase or an appropriate tone in their writing and are inclined in essays to gloss over some more searching textual questions. However, whatever the limitations of their analysis, all students show sensitivity to language, as seen in the responses to poems by Sylvia Plath, which show good engagement with the text. The work of higher attaining students is often heartfelt and refreshingly personal. Writing on Scott Fitzgerald's 'The Great Gatsby' they handle the key themes of idealism and reality with great confidence and produce very persuasive essays that relate the illusory glamour of Gatsby's world to the Jazz Age.

373. The achievement of AS and A2 level students is good. All students respond well to the very good teaching and their levels of concentration and interest are above average. Male and female students perform equally well. They are creative and resourceful when faced with challenging assignments and they are able to sustain their concentration and apply themselves throughout lessons. The quality of classroom discussion is consistently impressive, although in some lessons quieter students are seldom involved.

374. Teaching throughout the AS and A2 level courses is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and students value the confident and enthusiastic way in which they teach. They plan lessons very carefully so as to make lessons interesting and enjoyable for students. Excellent examples were observed of teachers introducing complex ideas and difficult texts in imaginative and appealing ways. An AS language lesson on political discourse began with students looking at an episode of 'The Simpsons' and reflecting on the significance of names.

In another A2 literature lesson where the students were to begin study of Milton's 'Paradise Lost' the teacher skilfully paved the way by asking them to consider which of the paired words 'rebellion' and 'obedience', 'pride' and 'humility', and 'father' and 'son' had the more positive connotations. Through this the teacher was able to whet students' appetites by first introducing them to interesting and important underlying themes of the poem. Lessons are characterised by a brisk pace and intellectual challenge, as seen in a Year 13 lesson where students, having researched background topics, gave class presentations to prepare for their study of Jill Paton Walsh's novel, 'Knowledge of Angels'. Students value greatly these varied and stimulating ways of working. In both language and literature lessons students learn quickly, building up their skills and knowledge and showing good knowledge of appropriate terminology.

375. Teachers mark work very conscientiously, helping students to make good progress. They in turn appreciate the caring attitudes of teachers shown both in lessons and in additional out of class help. Although this extra support is always available to those who seek it, students' progress is not systematically monitored across the department which gives rise to the possibility of under-achievement not being addressed. Students have a clear picture of the levels at which they are working and the early parents' evening in Year 12 and the predicted grades they receive give further valuable indications of their progress.
376. Access to ICT is satisfactory. The department clearly supports and encourages independent study but the current provision of study space and library facilities is a limitation on this process.
377. The leadership and management of English are very good. Teachers work closely together and last year's changes to the choice of examination syllabuses and to the curriculum, with the addition of AS level English language and literature, are clear indications of their commitment to raising standards.

MODERN LANGUAGES

The focus of the inspection was French and Spanish. A sample German lesson was seen. In German the number of pupils being entered for the A level examination has been too small for a valid judgement and comparison of the results with national averages to be made.

French

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

Strengths

- Teachers' sensitive use of the language they are teaching in the course of the lesson.
- Standards of oral response by Year 12 students.

Areas for improvement

- Some lessons are too dominated by the teacher so that pupils' responses are limited.
- Year 13 students lack confidence orally and make basic grammatical errors.

378. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations, though the number of students involved is relatively small. In terms of average points score, A level results in 2000 in French were marginally above the national average. This was also the case in 1998 and 1999. This trend continued in 2001 for A and AS level. The proportion of students gaining grades A to C has been above average. However, average points score in French was below the average points score for other subjects in 2000 and this was also the case in the previous two years.
379. Numbers of students studying French have been low over the past few years but have increased considerably in 2001. This has, however created an imbalance in class sizes in Year 12. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in students' files shows that standards are now rising. Standards are above average in Year 12 and students are making good progress. All students have made a successful transition from GCSE work. All students are already able to express a point of view orally. Utterances by the least able are delivered in short sentences with a limited range of vocabulary but also good accuracy. The most able students are already able to defend their opinions. Students are also developing writing skills. One able student had produced a descriptive piece of writing that contained an impressive range of vocabulary and structures.
380. Students are making satisfactory progress in Year 13 based on below average results at AS level but aspects of the work are currently below average. Students lack confidence orally but

are able to express, and sometimes defend, opinions with support from the teacher. Students are able to cope reasonably well with A level-type listening and reading texts without the help of the teacher though they tend to work slowly because they have not yet acquired the skill of scanning texts for meaning. Written work still contains basic errors.

381. Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers use the target language (the language they are teaching) extensively in all lessons, even for the teaching of grammar. They are sensitive to pupils' needs and use a variety of strategies to convey meaning without using English. If English is used it is a last resort to ensure understanding. All teachers present a good model of the target language. As a result, even the weakest students are developing good listening skills. Lessons are well planned. Teachers develop all four skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing, in their lessons and ensure that pupils have a firm basis of vocabulary before moving on to skills practice.
382. Teachers have the skill to use questioning effectively to draw responses from students and demonstrate a good awareness of each student's level of attainment so that they ask questions which challenge the student but are not beyond his or her capabilities. This means that all students feel confident to respond orally and develop their speaking skills. These techniques are not, however, used often enough and there is a tendency for lessons to be too dominated by the teacher in which case students, particularly the least able, become too passive. Sometimes the tasks set by the teacher do not contain a sufficient level of challenge. Students' work is well monitored. The department carries out formal assessments more regularly than is required by school policy. Students confirm that they receive clear and regular feedback on their work and that the level of guidance and support is high.
383. At the time of the inspection, building work taking place in the sixth form caused accommodation problems for modern foreign language teaching.

Spanish

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

Strengths

- All of the teaching is good and some very good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and much enthusiasm.
- Students from very different backgrounds are making good progress and working together co-operatively.
- Current attainment overall is above average.

Areas for improvement

- Students should be encouraged to take the initiative more in discussion and give extended answers.
- Homework should be set taking into account the different needs of students.

384. Numbers taking Spanish A level over the past four years have been small and results in general have been below national averages. The five students taking AS Spanish in 2001 achieved grades ranging from A to E.
385. The present Year 12 and Year 13 are each small groups containing both students who are native speakers of Spanish and non-native speakers. Evidence from work seen in lessons indicates that standards are now in Year 13 above average overall. Pronunciation and intonation in Year 13 are good. Students are able to convey opinions on topics such as 'the legacy of Franco', but sometimes utterances are short. All students join in discussions dealing with topics such as the significance of Franco for young people, but sometimes they are hesitant and wait for the teacher to initiate discussion. Native speakers are extended by consideration of regional differences and register. Teachers are sensitive to the different levels in the class and ensure all students participate, insisting that they give answers in the target language referring to dictionaries where necessary. Weaker students are given more guidance and support in understanding recorded texts. Students are attentive and well motivated.
386. No written work was available for Year 13, but earlier work of a student of average attainment in the class showed an ability to put forward a viewpoint and construct a convincing argument on such topics as 'the youth of today have it easy' although there were errors of agreement and spelling. There were also examples of language of comparison in a fairly accurate account of the merits of the London underground and the Paris metro. The same student was able to hold a spirited conversation on wide-ranging topical issues and aspects of Spanish life, although

with some inaccuracies of vocabulary, tense and use of the subjunctive. Clearly the student had greatly gained in confidence and enthusiasm from exchange visits to Madrid organised by the department.

387. Attainment in Year 12 is, overall, above average. Listening comprehension skills are good and students are making good use of the Internet to research topics which they summarise and present to the class each week. At an early stage in their course students are learning to work on their own initiative. The contributions of South American native speakers are valued because of the cultural comparisons they generate.
388. Written work in Year 12 by native speakers shows errors of spelling and register. Non-native speakers are still making errors concerning tense, radical changing verbs and use of the subjunctive. Teachers provide encouraging comments as to how work might be improved. As part of a bridging course between GCSE and A level, teachers direct students to carry out grammar drills using the Internet. Such exercises may be performed as many times as necessary helping weaker students gain confidence. The teacher records results of final tests.
389. Sixth form teaching is generally good and sometimes very good. Teachers demonstrate high expectations in both Years 12 and 13. Students in Year 12 are given clear strategies for vocabulary development and are encouraged to make good use of dictionaries. In Year 13 the teacher, by a process of deduction, led the students to arrive at the meaning of a text. Teachers present a very good model of the target language, have good subject knowledge and show great enthusiasm which is conveyed to students. Teachers are aware of the very different backgrounds of the students and vary questions accordingly. Sometimes, however, it would also be appropriate to vary homework tasks to suit different needs.