

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **KINGSDALE SCHOOL**

Dulwich

LEA area: LB Southwark

Unique reference number: 100844

Headteacher: Mr S H Morrison

Reporting inspector: Michael Buckley  
30517

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> April - 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 199563

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 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Alleyn Park Dulwich London
Postcode:	SE21 8SQ
Telephone number:	020 8670 7575
Fax number:	020 8766 7051
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Cllr N Gibbes
Date of previous inspection:	22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2000

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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30517	Michael Buckley	Registered inspector		The school's results and pupils' achievements; Teaching; Leadership and management
9406	Roy Cottington	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its pupils? Partnership with parents
23588	Charanjit Ajitsingh	Team inspector	Equality of opportunity; English as an additional language	
19278	Robert Allan	Team inspector	Mathematics	
31218	Tom Allen	Team inspector	Geography	
8076	Terry Bendall	Team inspector	Design and technology	Resources
20629	John Bryson	Team inspector	English	
17987	Brian Coates	Team inspector	Physical education	Accommodation
22953	Peter Dacombe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
10448	Michael Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art	Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
25591	Jenny Hughes	Team inspector	Music	
31441	Margaret King	Team inspector	Science	
20877	David Pink	Team inspector	History	Staffing
1990	Graham Preston	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered?
3731	William Robson	Team inspector	Special educational needs	Assessment

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Kingsdale is a larger than average school for 11 to 16-year-olds. There are 1,150 pupils on roll, with boys outnumbering girls by about three to one. Over half of all the pupils are from minority ethnic groups and a similar proportion is learning English as an additional language, with a significant proportion at the early stages. These are very high proportions nationally, although about average for this area of London. About two thirds of the pupils are Black or Black British, with a Caribbean or African heritage, and about one pupil in every five is White or White British. The main home languages are Yoruba, Twi, French and Spanish. One in ten pupils is from a refugee or asylum-seeking family and this number is growing. An extremely high proportion of pupils enters or leaves in the course of the school year, requiring a great deal of additional care and educational provision. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (63 per cent) is well above the national average and increasing. Almost 500 pupils (43 per cent) have been identified as having special educational needs and this figure, too, is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils with statements identifying the additional external help they need is about average. Most of these have learning or behavioural difficulties. The attainment of most pupils entering the school is well below the levels expected for their ages. The school is benefiting from membership of a local Education Action Zone and from additional grants, particularly one of over £12,000,000, mainly from the Department for Education and Skills, to redevelop the school's buildings and campus.

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

The headteacher's excellent leadership and the very good management have created a rapidly improving school that is more than usually effective and provides good value for money. Although standards of attainment remain low, there have been some improvements, and pupils' achievements are good in Years 10 and 11. The school no longer has any serious weaknesses.

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

- Excellent leadership by the headteacher and very good management overall.
- A very strong contribution from the governors.
- A very clear capacity to succeed, underpinned by the very high levels of commitment shown by staff and governors alike to the school's continuing improvement.
- Very high standards in the GCSE examinations in drama and music, high standards in art and hard-won improvements in some other areas, notably reading in Years 7 and 8.
- Very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and for extra-curricular activities supports personal, as well as academic, achievements and learning.
- Very good policies and practices minimise all forms of oppressive behaviour, creating an inclusive, multi-cultural community, where equality of opportunity is a shared, achievable goal.

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

- Attendance figures.
- Standards of attainment, particularly in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology throughout the school.
- The quality and use of teachers' day-to-day assessments.
- Teachers' skills in managing groups containing wide ranges of ability, in managing pupils' behaviour and in planning and providing more opportunities for independent learning.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

Since its last inspection in May 2000, the school has made good progress overall in all the areas identified then, except for attendance. This is improving, but a small minority of parents and pupils still ignore their legal responsibilities, despite the school's best efforts. Particularly good progress has been made in teaching and in pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Very good progress has also been made in

provision for English, science and music, and progress has been good in mathematics, art, geography, history and religious education, and in the school's curricular provision.

## STANDARDS

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

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

Standards in the GCSE examinations have risen since 2000 but they are still well below the national average. In 2001, they were comfortably within the average band for schools with over 50 per cent of free school meals. When the 2001 point score is compared with that of other schools achieving similar results in the 1999 tests for Year 9, it is well above average and the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A\* to G is very high, indicating very good progress through Years 10 and 11. The percentages achieving A\* to C grades in English and mathematics were well above the averages for these schools and the percentage in science was above average. In 2001, GCSE results in music and drama were outstanding by national standards. Results in art were above the national average. For the past four years, the results in the standard tests at the end of Year 9 have been very low nationally and below those for schools with over 50 per cent of free school meals, but there has been some slow improvement. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are generally better in Years 10 and 11 than in the younger years. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Generally, African pupils do better than others and Caribbean pupils underachieve. Pupils learning English as an additional language achieve well and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. In the present Years 7 to 9, work is well above the expected levels in music and at the expected standards in art and physical education. Standards are below national expectations in English, design and technology and geography and well below them in the other subjects. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' work is outstanding in music and drama and above expectations in art. Standards are well below nationally expected levels in science, history and information and communication technology and below national expectations in the other subjects. The school monitors performance carefully and sets very challenging targets for each year group. Most pupils will need to work very hard and make very good progress to meet their targets.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils enjoy being at school, show positive attitudes and participate well in activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory throughout the school day. There is no evidence of oppressive behaviour or of sexism, racism or violence.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond well to opportunities for personal development. They show growing maturity in lessons. When given responsibility, they take it seriously.
Attendance	Attendance remains below the national average and too many pupils are late at starts of sessions and for lessons during the day.

Pupils treat visitors with courtesy and are eager to provide help. They treat one another with respect and are very aware of and sensitive to cultural differences and the values and beliefs of others. Exclusions



have fallen significantly but the number of permanent exclusions still remains very high compared with the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 10 and 11, where inspectors saw a high percentage of good, very good and excellent lessons, and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. This pattern is mirrored in English, where standards of teaching are very high in Years 10 and 11 and some outstanding lessons were seen. In mathematics and science, standards are satisfactory across the school. Teaching is very good in music and drama and good or better in English, art and geography and the GNVQ courses. In other subjects, teaching is satisfactory. Notable strengths are in teachers' knowledge of their subjects and their careful planning. They use particularly effective approaches in Years 10 and 11 and generally make good use of homework. In some lessons in Years 7 to 9, teachers do not always manage pupils' behaviour sufficiently well and they do not use assessment efficiently to match work to pupils' capabilities. Literacy is taught well and this has raised the standard of reading significantly. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Teaching is generally responsive to the needs of all pupils, particularly those learning English as an additional language, who learn well and make good progress. Learning is satisfactory overall. While the pace of learning is good in Years 10 and 11, the concentration span of many younger pupils is short and their capacity for sustained independent work is limited.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall, with successful introduction of GNVQ courses and options in Year 9. Good provision for teaching literacy and personal and social education. Very good equality of access. Very good extra-curricular programmes, particularly for the arts, with the Saturday School and homework and booster clubs.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good arrangements. Appropriate mix of in-class support and small group tuition. A lunchtime club provides valuable support for homework. Funding from the Excellence in Cities initiative provides effective extra support and counselling. Appropriate alternative accreditation for Years 10 and 11.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Full access to the whole curriculum with generally only brief withdrawal from mainstream classes. Opportunities to discuss issues of concern in pupils' own languages and cultural groupings. Good use of mother tongue support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Good provision for spiritual development extends into subjects such as English, science, art and music. Good social development with stress on living in a community. Very good arrangements for moral and cultural development pervade the life of the school.
How well the school cares	Good arrangements for the welfare, support and care of the pupils.

for its pupils	Individual needs are effectively assessed and appropriate support quickly provided. Good communication enables staff to identify and quickly deal with emerging problems. Good supervision throughout the day contributes to good behaviour and the absence of oppressive or violent behaviour.
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Pupils feel that systems for managing behaviour are consistently and fairly implemented and they contribute to creating a secure and friendly learning environment. The school is developing an effective partnership with parents. There is close consultation about pupils' performance and behaviour. Parents are well informed about the school's activities and about curricular issues. The monthly parents' forum discusses relevant issues and raises awareness about the curriculum.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff	Outstanding leadership by the headteacher is characterised by clarity of vision and enormous drive and determination. He is very well supported by a senior management team of very high quality and a dedicated staff.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are a very strong and very well informed group who provide very high levels of support, constructive challenge and direction.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good, detailed planning is based on the school's most important educational needs. This is followed up by very rigorous systems of monitoring to ensure that all targets are met. Very good systems for monitoring teaching are generally well implemented at all levels.
The strategic use of resources	The basic budget and the substantial additional funding are very carefully monitored to ensure that the school is making the best possible use of them for the benefit of its pupils. Teaching and support staff are well deployed.

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are very good. The very high levels of commitment shown by staff and governors ensure that the school's aims and values permeate all aspects of its work. There is a good match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum, and resources and accommodation are satisfactory overall. Provision for music is outstanding. The school is not yet making satisfactory use of new technology, although this position should be reversed once the technology suites are completed and further planned training has taken place. Financial management is extremely thorough and the principles of best value are very strictly applied.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's expectations for hard work and achievement.</li> <li>• The approachability of staff.</li> <li>• The monthly parents' forums.</li> <li>• Pupils like school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of homework.</li> <li>• Information about their children's progress.</li> <li>• Behaviour in school.</li> <li>• Close working with parents.</li> </ul>

Inspectors fully support parents' positive views. However, they do not support the concerns expressed by a small minority of parents about the behaviour in school, which inspectors found to be satisfactory and often good, or about homework, which generally provides good support for teaching and learning.

There is a good variety of opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress, to find out about school life and what is being taught, and to contact staff. The school works very closely with parents when setting individual targets for improvement and when making choices about further education.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. In 2001, the average point scores in the standard tests for fourteen-year-olds were well below the national average for English and very low in mathematics and science. When compared with the results of schools with more than 50 per cent of free school meals, the school's results were average in English, below average in mathematics and well below the average in science. Teachers' assessments of standards in other subjects were very low when compared with the national averages, except in art, where results were marginally above the average. The worst-performing subjects were design and technology and information and communication technology.
2. In 2001, boys and girls performed at well below the corresponding gender-related national averages for the tests. Analysis completed by the local education authority shows that the most successful ethnic group in the school was African, and that Caribbean pupils significantly underachieved. There has been some stabilisation in results of fourteen-year-olds since 1999 and a little improvement since 2000. The overall trend since 1997 has been broadly in line with the national trend – but at a much lower level. Although the trend in the average point scores has moved only slightly upwards in the last three years, the actual percentages reaching the nationally expected level have all risen significantly in this period. This is an indicator that the school is successfully improving the proportion who are crossing the threshold to the expected level but that comparatively few pupils reach higher levels.
3. Once the permitted adjustments have been made for refugee pupils and those recent admissions learning English as an additional language, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A\* to C grades in the 2001 GCSE examinations and the overall average point score were well below the national average. However, the percentage gaining five or more A\* to G grades was close to the national average and all pupils obtained at least one grade G. These results are an improvement on previous years. As with the Year 9 results, the scores indicate that the school is successfully enabling almost all pupils to gain some qualification but that comparatively few reach the expected national standards. The previous declining trend in the average point scores since 1997 was reversed in 2001.
4. The average point score was well above the average for other schools achieving comparable results in the 1999 standard tests for Year 9; the percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A\* to C grades was above the average for these schools and the percentage obtaining one or more A\* to G grades was very high for this group. The adjusted percentages of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in English and mathematics were well above the averages for schools in this category and the percentage in science was above average. These figures indicate that very good progress is being made in Years 10 and 11, compared with schools of similar prior attainment. The school does better using this comparison than it does when compared with schools having more than 50 per cent of free school meals. This is largely because the latter comparison does not take account of the many additional factors tending to affect attainment adversely at Kingsdale. It also fails to reflect the significant differences between schools with 50 per cent of free school meals and Kingsdale, which has 63 per cent. Nevertheless, the average point score was only one decimal point from being above the average for this group and the percentage of five or more A\* to G grades was well above average.
5. Attainment in music and drama was outstanding in 2001, with all candidates obtaining A\* to C grades, and results were above the national average in art. Attainment was significantly below the national average in all the other subjects, except physical education. In 2001, boys' and girls' average point scores in the GCSE examinations were both very low compared with the corresponding gender-related national averages. Over time, girls' scores have tended to be considerably higher than boys' but they have still been well below those of girls nationally. As in

Year 9, pupils with African heritage tend to do better than other ethnic groups and Caribbean pupils significantly underperform.

6. Standards are affected by an unusually complex set of factors that are mostly outside the school's control.
  - Firstly, although it is a mixed school, there is a very high proportion of boys, and boys generally attain lower standards than girls nationally.
  - The school's own assessments and the available information about standards at the end of Year 6, in primary school, show that the attainment of most pupils when they enter Kingsdale is well below the nationally expected levels for all pupils of their age and well below the national average for boys. This has been the case for every year group currently in the school, although there are some indications that attainment on entry is slowly improving, year on year.
  - In addition, the proportions of pupils who are learning English as an additional language and of pupils with special educational needs are well above the national averages.
  - The school has a high and rising proportion of pupils from refugee or asylum-seeking families with no experience of the English educational system or, sometimes, of any kind of formal education. In addition, some of these pupils are suffering from emotional trauma. At the moment, this group forms about one tenth of the school's population.
  - Finally, the rate of mobility amongst pupils is extremely high by national standards, affecting about one third of the total number of pupils at any given time. For example, one in every three pupils in Year 11 has been in the school for less than a year and only 40 per cent of pupils in Years 10 and 11 entered the school in Year 7. Only two thirds of the current Year 7 started school in September 2001.
  
7. The proportion of casual entries creates a statistically significant population within each year group whose attainment is likely to remain well below the national expectations for their age because the individuals in it are constantly changing. This also makes it extremely difficult to monitor the progress of year groups as the membership is likely to change radically over three or four terms. Another factor that affects attainment is absenteeism. Absence rates at the school are higher than the national average but, in reality, this is mainly due to comparatively small percentages of chronic non-attenders. In 2001, this amounted to ten pupils whose average attendance was about 35 per cent.
  
8. The school has recalculated its Year 9 test results and GCSE results in various ways in an attempt to isolate some of these factors. For example, removing the chronic non-attenders from the Year 9 test results shows that the remaining pupils' progression through Years 7 to 9 was above the average for the local authority. In another example, those of the Year 11 cohort who were in Year 9 at Kingsdale in 1999 and who achieved the nationally expected levels in the standard tests in that year, also did well in the 2001 GCSE examinations. Fifty-three per cent of this group achieved five or more A\* to C grades - a higher percentage than the national average. These figures do show that, when only one or two of the adverse factors are removed from the equation, the school is enabling most of its pupils to achieve well and make good progress, particularly through Years 10 and 11. Furthermore, the local authority's own statistics show that progression through Years 10 and 11 is well above the average for all the schools in the authority's area.
  
9. Although the objective results in the Year 9 tests and the GCSE examinations are low by national standards, there are indications of improvement. There have been steady improvements in the percentages obtaining expected levels in the Year 9 tests over the past three years and the results in English and mathematics are close to those of schools with more than 50 per cent of free school meals. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more A\* to G grades in the GCSE examinations was close to the national average. All the pupils who were entered obtained at least one grade G and over half of all the pupils identified as having special educational needs obtained five or more A\* to G grades. Two thirds of the pupils identified as needing substantial extra support obtained at least one G grade or better. Comparisons show that Kingsdale is doing very much better in terms of A\* to G grades than schools achieving similar results in the 1999 Year 9 tests and the adjusted percentages of A\* to C grades in English and mathematics were well above

the averages for these schools. The percentage obtaining five or more A\* to G grades was well above the average for schools with more than 50 per cent free school meals.

10. One area where the school's efforts are clearly meeting with success is in raising standards in reading, where the evidence shows rapid improvements. In Year 7, the proportion of pupils with a reading age of over eleven years has increased significantly since the beginning of the school year and the proportion with a reading age below nine years has decreased by a similar percentage. This pattern is beginning to appear across the school but, overall, standards in literacy are still low and poor comprehension limits pupils' progress in all age groups. This is particularly damaging in older groups, as their work becomes increasingly theoretical. Skills in numeracy are less well developed, as the numeracy strategy has not had time to take full effect. Only the highest-attaining pupils are confident in applying numeracy skills independently in subjects other than mathematics and overall learning is adversely affected as a result. Standards in information and communication technology are well below the expected levels across the school.
11. In addition to the difficulties identified above, attainment has been pulled down in some subjects specifically by the shortage of appropriate resources. This applies most obviously to information and communication technology and its use across the curriculum, to design and technology and to physical education. The new building and refurbishment programme should ensure that this will no longer be a problem. Staffing has been a serious difficulty in many subjects, but particularly in mathematics, science, design and technology and information and communication technology. Recent appointments are already seeing improvements in all of these, except design and technology, and in other areas, too. In art, drama and music, where the school very successfully teaches not only the academic aspects of these subjects but also deliberately uses them to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, staffing and resources have not been problematic and standards are very high.
12. Inspection evidence shows that attainment overall is well below national expectations although, in Years 10 and 11, it improves and is just below the standards normally expected. Taking into account pupils' prior attainment, their achievements are very good across the school in music and drama. In art, they are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Achievements are good across the school in English, geography and history. In mathematics and information and communication technology, they are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Achievements are satisfactory across the school in science, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. Only in design and technology are pupils' achievements unsatisfactory. The overall trend is towards good progress in Years 10 and 11 and gradual improvements in standards.
13. Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress in relation to their prior learning. Their achievements are good overall, as they were at the time of the last inspection in May 2000, although their numbers have increased by ten per cent since then. Most pupils acquire enough English language skills to function well and they are well integrated into the mainstream. They continue to develop skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing and individual achievement is reviewed once a term. Those who are at the more advanced stages of English and on the borderline of predicted grades in the GCSE examinations are helped to improve their performance. They generally achieve well as the result of additional subject-specific language support that helps them with their coursework and homework.
14. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall. In most subjects, they benefit from extra help provided by support teachers and teaching assistants and achieve as well as other pupils. The recent emphasis by the special educational needs department on teaching reading skills to small groups enables many pupils to make very good progress with their reading. The comparatively new learning support unit is beginning to help pupils with more severe emotional and behaviour difficulties to understand and overcome their problems.
15. The school is developing detailed and effective methods of tracking pupils' progress. These systems are also used to inform target-setting and targets are set carefully for each year group, based on prior attainment and assessments. Although the targets are set at levels that are well

below current national averages, they represent real challenges and the majority of pupils will need to make very good progress to achieve them.

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

16. Pupils' attitudes are good and behaviour in lessons is generally good. However, taking into account the occasional disruption inside and outside the classrooms, behaviour is satisfactory overall. This situation reflects the continuing improvement in this area identified during the last inspection. These standards contribute well to achievement, teaching and learning and to the positive ethos of the school. Discussions with pupils, parental views and observations during the inspection reveal that nearly all pupils enjoy being at school and many participate in the additional activities offered during the school day as well as those after school. Pupils feel increasingly secure at school and value the support and help they receive from all staff.
17. In most lessons, pupils take care in their work, concentrate well and are eager to improve. They heed the advice of teachers and respond to instructions they are given. In a few lessons, usually when activities do not challenge them, pupils lose concentration and become disruptive. When given opportunities to work in groups, pupils show the ability to work together well to achieve a common goal. Behaviour in and around the school is satisfactory and often good. This is a considerable achievement, considering that very large numbers of pupils have to travel through narrow corridors between lessons, creating many opportunities for confrontation. At these times, pupils follow the school rules and show tolerance towards one another. Even when levels of supervision are lower, pupils behave well and act responsibly. For example, during the early morning breakfast sessions, they follow the routines and behave well. During breaks, relationships are harmonious and informal activities are conducted in a competitive but mature manner.
18. The school's buildings, grounds and property are treated with respect and, although some damage was noted, there is hardly any litter or graffiti. One pupil, without prompting, was observed picking up waste paper in the corridor. There is a continuing decline in the overall level of exclusions. Permanent exclusions, in particular, have fallen significantly and are used only for the most serious incidents. Nevertheless, the figures are still very high in comparison with national averages.
19. Relationships throughout the school are good. Discussions with pupils reveal a high degree of trust and respect for teachers and other staff. Pupils are polite and helpful to visitors and are able to engage in mature and constructive conversations with strangers. They demonstrate good awareness of visitors' needs, for example, by offering to help find a classroom or a spare seat. These interactions occur without prompting by staff. Pupils generally treat one another with respect. Whilst pupils, parents and staff report the existence of low level bullying, this is confined mainly to name-calling or inappropriate comments. Overall, however, there is marked absence of racism, sexism, or any other form of oppressive or violent behaviour. Pupils form positive relationships irrespective of their ability or cultural background. They have a very well developed awareness of the needs of others and understanding of the wide range of different values and beliefs within the school population. Several pupils highlighted this as one of their key learning experiences whilst at school.
20. A further strength is the way pupils respond to opportunities for taking personal responsibility. They make mature contributions to personal, social and health education lessons. For example, in a lesson touching on relationships between boys and girls, sensitive issues were openly discussed in a sensible and serious manner. Prefects carry out their duties conscientiously, ensuring that school rules are followed and mentoring and supporting younger pupils. Membership of the school council is also taken very seriously. Meetings are characterised by good standards of discussion, debate and problem-solving and topics are generally focused on improving the school's environment or on arrangements for the benefit of pupils and staff alike.
21. Pupils learning English as an additional language have positive attitudes to learning, showing a lot of interest in school life and participating fully in school activities. They respond well as they gain confidence and feel secure. They have good relationships with the language support staff and other teachers and classroom assistants. They collaborate well with each other as a diverse and multi-lingual group and they are happy to share their experiences and learning with one another. Those who have been at school longest help their peers by interpreting and translating for them.



22. Attendance is improving year on year and it is above the average for similar schools in the local authority's area. Although authorised absence is below the national average, unauthorised absence is still above national averages and overall attendance remains below the national average. It is close to the average for all schools in the local authority's area. Punctuality has improved since the last inspection but it is still unsatisfactory, not only at the start of the school day but also when arriving for lessons during the day. Whilst truancy levels have fallen significantly, there remains a small minority of pupils who absent themselves from school during the day.
23. These findings reflect the views of parents at the parents' meeting and those expressed in the school's own parental survey.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

24. Teaching is satisfactory overall and has improved significantly since the last inspection. It was good or better in more than half of the lessons seen and only about one lesson in every 15 was unsatisfactory. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11, where there was a much higher proportion of good, very good and excellent lessons, than in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is very good in music and drama and good or better throughout the school in English, art, geography and the GNVQ courses. Literacy is well taught, as is English as an additional language. In all other areas, including numeracy, teaching is satisfactory.
25. Generally teachers know their subjects well. In some English lessons, excellent teaching conveys enthusiasm and clearly inspires pupils. In mathematics, teachers plan their lessons carefully and the best lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Not all teaching takes sufficient account of the wide range of needs and abilities in many groups. When pupils, usually younger boys, lose interest, their behaviour presents challenges to teaching that are not always effectively addressed. In science, teachers use established methods well, conveying lesson objectives clearly to pupils at the outset and assessing their progress at the end. This helps pupils to see how to improve.
26. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory overall. Literacy is well taught. The priority given to reading is most appropriate and has had a considerable impact on raising standards. In many other subjects, teachers emphasise important words and their meanings. In some, such as history, music and mathematics, the use of language is demonstrated well by teachers, who give time for pupils to practise orally. In mathematics, key words are translated into the most common minority languages and, in geography, pupils are taught debating skills to improve their speaking. Emphasis is placed on grammar in modern foreign languages and design and technology, where pupils are taught sentence construction. Helpful guidance for writing is provided in art and science. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. In many mathematics lessons, pupils are taught number strategies and a programme for similar work in tutor periods has recently begun. In some other subjects, direct teaching of key numeracy skills is given its due prominence. In geography, teachers ensure pupils know how to use scales accurately before embarking on map work. In English, a teacher revised the calculation of percentage parts to determine the number of pupils expected to achieve certain levels in forthcoming tests. In the best lessons, teachers give regular, frequent and well-focused attention to the teaching of basic skills for pupils of below average attainment. However, good practice is not yet sufficiently widespread for its impact on standards to be good.
27. The school works hard to provide for and meet the needs of all its pupils. Its success is particularly clear from the good teaching and learning of those pupils who are learning English as an additional language. It is also evident in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs who make satisfactory progress in their learning throughout the school. Pupils identified as either gifted or talented have opportunities to enrich their learning, for example, through a programme of educational visits or early entry for public examinations.

28. Pupils learning English as an additional language have the equivalent of 50 lessons a week of effective, targeted support in withdrawal groups. In addition, bilingual or multi-lingual assistants provide valuable support both in classes and in withdrawal groups. This help is targeted mainly on three areas. It focuses on English, mathematics and science, on the promotion of literacy and numeracy, and on helping new pupils to settle in school. The subject teachers, on the whole, have good strategies to meet pupils' general needs. Specialist teachers use a variety of teaching strategies, including the use of peer or 'buddy' help and the use of first or second language. Multi-lingual support staff work with pupils, sharing their languages in small groups and on a one-to-one basis. This helps pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills and gain confidence in reading and recording information. For example, with a Year 11 group, male and female jobs were discussed. Pupils shared their own opinions about jobs in which stereotypes about traditional gender issues emerged. The teacher dealt with them in a sensitive manner and enabled pupils to consider jobs that are becoming increasingly common both to men and to women. As yet, there is no partnership teaching to improve the skills of more subject teachers in this area, although two teachers have recently attended relevant training.
29. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and enables them to learn as well as other pupils in most lessons. English and science teachers often adapt their lesson plans and teaching resources well, to ensure that all pupils can participate fully. Teaching assistants and support teachers are aware of the difficulties experienced by pupils with special educational needs and provide helpful advice and support for them in many lessons. However, support teachers in particular are not sufficiently involved in the planning and teaching of lessons. For example, they often help individual pupils effectively but are unable to support others with similar needs because they do not always plan seating and grouping arrangements with the subject teacher.
30. The special educational needs department withdraws small groups of pupils from a few lessons for extra reading tuition from teaching assistants. Pupils enjoy these regular opportunities to practise their reading skills because assistants enthuse them with interesting texts at an appropriate level. As a result, most make very good progress over time. In the best lessons, experienced teaching assistants assess pupils' needs accurately and plan a good variety of appropriate activities. However, less experienced assistants do not have such a secure knowledge of how to teach literacy skills and this limits the pace of pupils' learning at times. Specialist teachers and assistants also use literacy progress units with small groups of pupils, as part of the school's response to the National Literacy Strategy. Teaching and learning in these lessons are satisfactory but the teaching resources need further adaptation as pupils have difficulty understanding the published reading materials.
31. The school has recently opened a learning support unit for pupils with more severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Teaching in this unit is good and helps pupils to understand their difficulties. Teachers plan their lessons well. They make good links with work that pupils are doing in mainstream lessons, but ensure that they match objectives specifically to pupils' needs. For example, in an English lesson, the teacher helped pupils to understand that the street brawl in Act One of *Romeo and Juliet* resulted from a lack of respect between the Montagues and Capulets. In a history lesson, pupils considered the consequences of their actions during a discussion of cause and effect in historical events. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the presentation of their work, and pupils respond well to this.
32. High priority has been given to raising teaching standards in recent years. New appointments and extensive and effective staff training have contributed to improved planning and higher expectations of pupils' learning and conduct in lessons. There is a very good system for monitoring and evaluating teaching and these arrangements are being very effectively implemented by senior managers. Heads of department and subject leaders, working closely with subject directors, are also monitoring teaching in their areas and this is making a good contribution to the improvements in teaching standards.
33. Some excellent teaching was seen. Typically, this employs a wide repertoire of skills intelligently and with enthusiasm. The lessons are very demanding but they allow teachers and pupils to enjoy humorous elements maturely. Teachers use searching questions to probe pupils' understanding

and focus their thinking. They skilfully stimulate pupils' enthusiasm while sensitively and unobtrusively controlling minor misconduct. In one exemplary lesson, pupils were analysing *The Lord of the Flies*. The teacher used sophisticated questioning, enabling pupils to uncover hidden truths through disciplined analysis. In this way, the teacher created an intellectual and critical atmosphere in which pupils grew in self-assurance and self-esteem while learning to corroborate ideas rigorously by textual reference. By responding well to the teacher's high expectations, pupils learned to speak fluently and confidently, explaining and supporting their views in mature standard English.

34. In a Year 9 music lesson, the teacher made very good use of her excellent knowledge of the subject to explore the differences between instruments of the Baroque period and the present. She captured pupils' interest by providing intriguing answers to their questions that led to further hypotheses and questioning. Great variety and depth were introduced by interspersing skilful live demonstrations with taped performances and by using pupils' answers to highlight stylistic differences. The teacher concluded the lesson very well, with pupils providing evaluations of their performances, thereby promoting good understanding of their learning.
35. Unsatisfactory elements in teaching are principally weaknesses in assessment in Years 7 to 9, giving rise either to a lack of challenge and pace in planned activities or to insufficient attention being given to the needs of particular groups of pupils. In some lessons in these years, there was insufficient intervention by the teacher to redress the slow rate of learning, and ineffective management of misbehaving pupils, resulting in disruption to the learning of others. In some lessons, teachers' expositions were weak, taking little account of pupils' concentration spans. In one lesson, the demonstration was insufficiently clear to allow pupils to select suitable components or to assemble them correctly.
36. Homework is used well to support pupils' learning. It is generally appropriate and most teachers adhere closely to the schedule. Occasionally, planned homework is not set or it is too difficult for pupils to tackle successfully.

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

37. The school has made significant progress since the last inspection in developing the curriculum to meet the needs of its pupils. These positive developments include the introduction of GNVQ courses for the great majority of fourteen to sixteen-year-olds and the introduction of options within the Year 9 curriculum. There is very good equality of access and opportunity to the curriculum and pupils learning English as an additional language are very well supported. Extra-curricular activities are a strength of the school and reflect the high levels of commitment amongst the staff. The main weaknesses are in Years 7 to 9, where many subjects have insufficient access to information and communication technology and therefore cannot fully cover the National Curriculum's programmes of study. In design and technology, there are significant gaps in the curriculum.
38. In Years 7 to 9, all subjects of the National Curriculum are offered as well as religious education. Drama is not taught as a discrete subject but there are units of work built into the English curriculum. Overall, there is satisfactory breadth of provision. English has a higher time allocation compared to the other core subjects but this is appropriate in view of the very low literacy levels of pupils on entry to the school. Option choices have been offered to Year 9 pupils for the first time this year, providing an earlier element of choice than is usual. The humanities and the modern foreign languages departments begin GCSE courses in Year 9, helping pupils to obtain an earlier grasp of what will be expected of them when they start the full GCSE/GNVQ programme. GCSE astronomy is offered to pupils in Year 9 as part of the provision for gifted and talented pupils.
39. Pupils learning English as an additional language have full access to the whole curriculum, including the National Curriculum. They are withdrawn from classes for only a brief period. This approach is used mainly for new arrivals and those at very early stages of learning English, to help

improve their language skills, providing additional emphasis on speaking and listening. When pupils move into mainstream classes, they are helped by learning support assistants and this works well in most cases. Many of the learning support assistants have been appointed relatively recently and, although there is an induction system, their liaison with teachers is not yet as good as it could be. There are good arrangements for pupils to take GCSE in their first language, usually in Year 10. Pupils take full part in school activities and take responsibility for themselves, with additional encouragement from other pupils and staff. They also discuss issues of concern to them, such as personal, social and health education, in their own language and cultural groupings through the Albanian, Somali and Arab, Latin American and African Caribbean projects. This also helps their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well.

40. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school meets most of the requirements identified in statements. However, despite the school's best efforts, some pupils do not receive the speech and language therapy to which they are entitled. The school provides an appropriate mix of in-class support and small group tuition for pupils with learning difficulties. Breakfast and lunchtime clubs in the special educational needs base provide valuable support for pupils who need help with homework. Support for pupils with more severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties has recently improved through the provision of a learning support unit. This enables the school to retain more pupils who were previously at risk of exclusion. Funding from the Excellence in Cities initiative enables the school to provide effective extra support and counselling for these pupils. In Years 10 and 11, the school provides some appropriate alternative accreditation for pupils with special educational needs, through certificates of achievement in English and science. However, some pupils would benefit from the opportunity to study GNVQ courses at foundation, rather than intermediate level.
41. There are two weaknesses in the curriculum for Years 7 to 9, the first of which is in information and communication technology. There is a satisfactory taught programme in Years 7 and 8 but, in Year 9, the subject is timetabled for two 30-minute periods a week and the programme is mostly taught by non-specialists. Progress here is unsatisfactory because much of the time available is spent using the technology as a tool instead of improving knowledge and skills. In addition to this, recent building work has severely limited access to facilities for other subjects in the curriculum, with the result that the specific technological components of the National Curriculum's programmes of study are not being covered in a satisfactory way. The school is well aware of these shortcomings and is nearing the end of a building programme which will see much improved facilities and opportunities for teaching the subject. This should go a long way towards improving the current situation.
42. The second area where improvement is required is in the design and technology curriculum, where the programmes of study for Years 7 to 9 are not fully covered. There are gaps in the coverage of control technology and in the proportion of time spent on the design and evaluation elements of the subject. This represents a breach of statutory requirements.
43. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 has seen a major development with the introduction of GNVQ intermediate courses for the majority of pupils. Overall, this is a strength, helping to provide a closer match between the interests of pupils and the learning opportunities available. Inspectors saw examples of good learning in some of these classes, for example on the information and communication course. However, the policy of offering these courses almost exclusively at intermediate level means that the course requirements are not always matched to the abilities of pupils and they are unlikely to obtain a full award. For example, some Year 10 pupils on the intermediate health and social care course find some of the complex care issues difficult to appreciate. Although these pupils may gain a Part One or Unit accreditation, it is likely that, for most of them, foundation GNVQ courses would provide more appropriate goals. A relatively small number of pupils already follow a foundation course, with a strong element of work-related learning, in conjunction with Lambeth College. Considering that the intermediate GNVQ qualification is equivalent to four GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, the time allocation of five periods a week is relatively low.

44. The overall organisation of the school splits pupils into two bands - an express band, containing two classes in Year 7 and three classes in all the other year groups, and another band containing a further five classes. Within these bands, pupils are arranged in mixed-ability classes for most subjects, including mathematics and science. Classes contain a very wide range of attainment and, in some cases, teaching strategies are not meeting the needs of all the pupils. Many pupils arrive in the school with very low levels of literacy, but there is a good programme aimed at boosting reading ages in Year 7, which has been very effective.
45. The school has taken a number of steps to improve literacy, including the recent appointment of an assistant headteacher with specific responsibility for this area of work, and an effective strategy for teaching the basic skills has been developed. Consequently, the good practice established in English lessons is gradually being replicated across the curriculum. All departments have developed clear literacy strategies and teachers recognise their rôle in making these strategies work. For example, in a design and technology lesson, the teacher showed pupils how to construct a sentence and spell technical words. In information and communication technology, many activities reinforce the need for accurate spelling, careful sentence construction and editing to improve written work. There are similar examples of good practice in most departments. Key words are displayed in physical education and teachers emphasise their technical application. Speaking and listening skills are well developed in geography, history, mathematics and music. In drama, pupils are encouraged to discuss, analyse and develop ideas. In modern foreign languages, pupils' attention is focused on grammatical accuracy. Writing frames are provided in art and science to help pupils to construct appropriate written work.
46. The school's provision for careers education and advice is satisfactory, as is the support, help and preparation for pupils' next steps after school. Careers education is provided through the well planned and taught programme of personal, social and health education. This includes visits from a range of speakers and specialists, such as a representative of the local education authority's careers service. During these sessions, pupils also learn key skills, such as interviewing techniques and compiling a curriculum vitae. Pupils and parents are given the opportunity for a one-to-one discussion with a careers adviser and can, if required, request a second interview.
47. The school has a satisfactory work experience programme for Year 10 pupils. Each pupil undertakes a two-week placement, maintains a log of experiences, receives feedback from the host employer and takes part in a group debriefing, enabling them to reflect their learning experiences. The school is able to call on a wide range of organisations to host placements but also makes good use of parents and governors to find suitable organisations. Feedback from pupils about the programme is positive. The school has a recently refurbished careers library that has a wide range of good quality information about careers. In addition, pupils can and do use computer programmes to explore in more depth possible career choices.
48. The school provides good support for pupils preparing to move into further education. Parents are closely involved and are invited to a parents' meeting for this purpose. The school has a wide range of links with local colleges and helps pupils with applications. The library has a good range of data about colleges and entry requirements. Overall, the school's provision in this area is satisfactory and provides pupils with a useful introduction to the world of work and prospective future employment, as well as supporting pupils when making choices about the next stage of their education.
49. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities is a strength of the school. There is a strong emphasis on booster classes for Year 9 pupils and on extra support for homework and revision for the GCSE examinations. This extra-curricular provision is made possible by the very strong commitment of teachers and by their willingness to give a great deal of extra time to support pupils' learning. In science, the extra-curricular provision for GCSE pupils compensates in part for the lack of depth in the taught curriculum. A quick tour of parts of the school on Wednesday afternoon found 60 pupils involved in four different clubs and several more were taking place at the same time.

50. The Saturday school is an unusual feature of the school's provision and is further evidence of its strong commitment to supporting pupils. Inspectors were not able to visit this, but the school's documentation lists a good range of classes in mathematics, science, music, art and information and communication technology. There are also revision classes in other subjects, such as modern foreign languages. The art department runs an after-school club, where pupils receive tuition from experts in ceramics or mosaics from the Dulwich Picture Gallery. The work done is of very high quality and this activity is a very worthwhile experience.
51. Good provision for personal, social and health education is supported by very good planning. The coverage of sex education is progressive and in line with national guidelines. The subject makes a good contribution to the curriculum. For example, one lesson explored the attitudes of different cultures to personal relationships and raised many thought-provoking issues. The English curriculum also makes a good contribution to moral education, with opportunities for pupils to explore moral issues through the study of texts such as *Of Mice and Men*.
52. There are strong links with the community and with other institutions that reflect the cultural diversity of the school. The physical education department shares playing fields and a swimming pool with the neighbouring Dulwich College Preparatory School. There are also links with a number of local sports clubs, including Charlton Athletic Football Club. In performing arts, there are very good links with a wide variety of institutions, giving pupils access to classical concerts as well as to jazz, drama and dance workshops. The school has built up good links with refugee networks, helping to support new pupils from a number of different countries. The music and modern foreign languages departments have long-standing arrangements with Goldsmiths College and King's College, London, for training student teachers.
53. Overall, the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. It has improved since the inspection in 2000 by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. Spiritual provision is good. It is promoted not only through assemblies, but also through other subjects, such as English, mathematics, science, art, music and physical education. Assemblies address the theme of the week and involve presentations by pupils as well as by visitors, such as a local vicar and school governors. Each school day starts with 'thought of the day' involving a reading or a story and offering a moment for thought and reflection. In one assembly observed for Years 10 and 11, there were readings from the Bible and the Holy Qur'an. Pupils were reminded of living according to the school motto, 'Do everything for the glory of God.' The beautiful and melodious recitation from the Holy Qur'an lent the occasion a profound sense of spirituality. It led to a moment of very good reflection in total silence. Such acts of collective worship make a powerful contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. The school also offers a prayer room so that pupils may worship on their own.
54. There is very good provision for pupils' moral development. There is a strong emphasis on doing the right thing. Adults set a good example for pupils and morning announcements over the Tannoy reinforce the school's expectations, such as courtesy to visitors and procedures for lateness and inculcate pride in appearance through wearing the school uniform and the house tie. Most teachers impart high expectations of behaviour and communicate a strong sense of right and wrong, emphasising the right course of action when incidents arise and consistently reinforcing the school's code of conduct. The moral code and rules of behaviour are displayed around the school. For example, pupils are clearly told not to bring any kind of offensive weapons to school and there are reminders that the sanction for not abiding by this rule is permanent exclusion. Moral dilemmas are also discussed in assemblies and built in to the reading of texts, such as *Macbeth* and *Of Mice and Men*. Issues arising from studies of genetics and habitat destruction are built into the science scheme of work. Racism and sexism are discussed and challenged in separate language and cultural groupings, in the teaching of English as an additional language and in personal, social and health education.
55. Pupils are taught ways of overcoming anger and finding ways of dealing with violence by becoming more aware of the effects of their actions on others and the actions of others on them. They learn about developing trust and friendship. Through the house system, the school ensures that pupils develop a strong commitment to its ethos, promoting values, such as academic and personal

excellence, applauding achievement, cherishing success and celebrating differences. Pupils begin to recognise that with freedom comes responsibility. The school successfully promotes positive, self-confident, responsible and articulate young people, who care for and respect themselves and one another. The ethos of the school encourages pupils' willing commitment to fairness and the right kind of behaviour. Pupils also raise money for charity, such as the Sickle Cell Society, which is a matter of concern for many pupils.

56. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility, show initiative and develop understanding of living in a community. They are often set to work together in pairs or in groups, working collaboratively in lessons and sharing their learning by supporting one another. Unselfishness is emphasised when pupils work together. Mentors and counsellors also help pupils to develop social skills and self esteem and enable them to take responsibility for their own learning. Last year, the 'A+' project for encouraging individual pupils' self-development was very successful and it is being repeated this year.
57. The school community is organised into five houses and pupils from all year groups, staff and governors belong to one of the houses. There is healthy competition amongst the houses and the system allows pupils to forge relationships with different age groups. Families of pupils in the school are also members of the same house. Pupils elect house officers, prefects and the head boy and head girl. They produce a school magazine and there are plans for each house to publish its own magazine. In the last issue, Year 7 pupils interviewed the headteacher and deputy head. There is a school council made up of councillors elected by each year group. School councillors bring issues about school life and the facilities available to them to their meetings with the headteacher or assistant headteacher. House prefects take on a variety of responsibilities in school, including raising money for charities and organising activities, such as house competitions and trips linking school with the wider community. Pupils have forged good links with a local day centre for the elderly. Last term, a talent competition, organised by the music and art departments, was mounted at the day centre. Sporting events, such as basketball coaching or Year 7 five-a-side football provide opportunities for pupils to participate in competitive team activities and pupils in Year 8 are currently involved in the Norwood Park environmental campaign. Such opportunities help pupils to become familiar with the responsibilities of citizenship.
58. Cultural provision is very good overall. The school celebrates the cultural diversity and richness pupils bring to school. Eighteen languages are spoken by staff and these are used to support pupils' cultural and language development. The school celebrates Black History month. National role-models from television, sport, politics and other spheres visit the school to address pupils. In literature, drama, art, modern foreign languages, history, geography, music, physical education and religious education, the school offers very good provision to deepen pupils' understanding of their own culture and that of others. For example, African-Caribbean, African, Islamic, European, American, Indian, Egyptian and Aboriginal art is all on display. One class of pupils learning English as an additional language had worked out their own design for a mural, illustrating harmony in the school. They had chosen their own symbols and they were painting the mural, which they titled, 'We all smile in the same language'. These words were written in many languages across the painting. Music lessons and extra-curricular activities include the teaching of Western classical music, steel bands and Latin American salsa dancing.
59. Albanian, Somali, Arabic and African-Caribbean projects support cultural awareness which is further reinforced by organised visits to theatres, museums and concerts and to local places of interest. The music department organises concerts involving local schools in the summer. Teachers demonstrate how to challenge stereotypes and develop cultural awareness. Most displays and notices around the school and in classrooms have a strong multicultural dimension and there are attractive 'welcome' posters in a range of languages.

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

60. The school's commitment to the care and support of its pupils can be summed up by a remark made by a governor, who said, 'The school never gives up on any pupil'. This philosophy is evident in the many interactions between pupils and staff as well as in the systems and procedures set up

to ensure support for the wellbeing of pupils. The school has a wide range of support services, both internally and within the community, to meet pupils' needs and efficient provision of this support ensures that pupils start to make progress quickly.

61. Good communication between pastoral support staff and subject teachers produces an effective response to emerging behavioural or academic problems. The systems for bringing emerging concerns to light are well used and the subsequent meetings between staff enable strategies to be put in place quickly to improve performance. Often these include the daily monitoring of behaviour or additional teaching support. Pastoral support is good. Discussions with pupils show that they have developed trust for the staff and are willing to seek help or advice about academic concerns as well as personal issues. Staff know their pupils well and are aware of the needs of the diverse school population. For example, they will ensure that older pupils from a similar background mentor new pupils who have limited English language. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities are welcomed into the school community and made to feel at ease. The school makes very effective provision for pupils from refugee or asylum-seeking backgrounds.
62. The school has clear, well-established procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils. There are frequent health and safety checks, as well as risk assessments, before beginning lessons. The school is quick to seek expert advice when necessary so as to ensure that potential risks are eliminated. For example, when designing systems for the heavy traffic flows along the narrow corridors and other parts of the building, the fire service was closely involved. Child protection procedures are effective and are well known by staff, especially those with pastoral responsibilities.
63. The school continues to tackle the unsatisfactory attendance as a priority, making good use of the school's liaison staff as well as the local education authority's education welfare officer. The school's efforts are hampered by the unreliability of the electronic registration system and so teachers are also using manual systems for tracking and monitoring attendance. The school has recently produced a system to track the many pupils who are attending support sessions outside lessons. If this initiative proves to be effective, the system will reduce the likelihood of internal truancy. Punctuality is often affected by unreliable public transport. During the inspection, a group of 40 pupils arrived late after the bus they were travelling on broke down. The school is seeking to address this problem by providing alternative transport. Staff continually stress the importance of good attendance to pupils and parents. This commitment was evident when several pupils were seen leaving school without authority. Within minutes, several members of staff left the school and returned with the pupils concerned a short time later.
64. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are good. Nearly all pupils like the system for rewarding good behaviour and attendance, and value the rewards given. These procedures are fairly and consistently applied across the school and have the full confidence of pupils. The procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. Staff are very alert to instances of bullying, racism or sexist behaviour and respond rapidly and effectively if incidents occur. Pupils themselves are willing to bring such behaviour to the attention of staff. The constant reinforcement of the school's ethos of mutual respect, together with effective action to prevent such behaviour has, according to many pupils and staff, led to the virtual elimination of such behaviour. Key to this success are the high levels of supervision before and after school and at key times during the day, such as between lessons. Teachers and support staff provide a good physical presence and their vigilance and non-confrontational reinforcement of school rules and routines ensure that pupils moving about the school feel safe and secure. This provision is a credit to the school.
65. Procedures for monitoring and reviewing pupils' personal development are good. Staff with pastoral responsibility monitor and record personal development and parents are closely involved in agreeing targets for behavioural improvements. Pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to demonstrate trust, responsibility and leadership. These include manning the reception desk, becoming a prefect, serving on the school council, showing prospective parents around the school and representing the school in various other activities. The programme of personal, social and health education provides well for the personal development and good citizenship of the pupils.



66. The school has good arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils enter the school from many primary schools and many enter between Years 7 and 11, rather than at the usual start of Year 7. The pupils' previous schools do not always provide attainment records. However, the school ensures that all pupils are assessed on entry, so that teachers can set appropriate levels and grades for pupils to achieve in all subjects. Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and keep clear records that enable them to track their progress. As a result, teachers are able to identify pupils who are not achieving as well as they might. These pupils are then monitored more closely through the use of academic report cards. The school uses information well, to monitor the progress of pupils from different ethnic groups, those learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, and most departments follow this policy consistently.
67. The school makes good use of assessment to help with curriculum planning. For example, the science department analyses pupils' results in different topics to amend schemes of work and teaching methods each year. The English and science departments are especially successful in adapting resources and teaching methods to meet the needs of lower and higher-attaining pupils by taking account of their assessment grades. Pupils are placed in appropriate express or mixed ability bands on the basis of teachers' assessments and these placements are regularly reviewed according to rates of progress. Pupils who will benefit from early entry to GCSE are also identified from teachers' assessments.
68. Despite the generally good procedures for assessing attainment and progress, pupils are not as aware as they should be of how to improve their performance. Form tutors and heads of year agree targets with pupils during lessons and on 'Academic Monitoring Days', when parents are invited to attend to discuss their children's progress. However, most pupils are uncertain about their targets. In English, teachers give pupils clear advice about how to improve their work and achieve higher grades. In most other subjects, this advice is less clear and pupils are unsure about how the marks that they are given relate to the levels set out in the National Curriculum or to potential GCSE grades.
69. Pupils with special educational needs are also insufficiently aware of the targets in their individual education plans, although they are involved in the reviews and in setting the targets. Annual reviews of statements of special educational needs are carried out efficiently and special needs staff regularly review pupils' progress, but they do not always record this progress in individual education plans.
70. Overall, the care, welfare and support of the pupils have a positive impact on learning, attainment and personal development. This judgement is in line with the positive views expressed by parents about this aspect of school life.

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

71. The school continues to find ways of building strong partnerships with parents. All staff recognise the importance of parental involvement in their children's education.
72. Analysis of the parents' questionnaire, together with the results of the school's own parental survey and the views expressed at the parents' meeting, show that parents have positive views about the school. In particular, parents very much value the expectation of all staff that the pupils should work hard and reach their potential. They feel comfortable about approaching the school when problems arise and state that their children enjoy being at school. A minority of parents are less satisfied with the amount of homework set, how well they are kept informed about progress, the standards of behaviour in school and the extent to which the school involves parents. Evidence during the inspection supports the strengths identified by parents but does not fully support the concerns about homework, the standards of behaviour or the involvement of parents. Formal parents' meetings are well supported and provide an opportunity for parents to discuss their children's progress and achievement with staff and annual progress reports include details of achievement and provide parents with a full picture of progress.

73. Links with parents are good. The school has a range of systems for ensuring that parents are quickly informed about emerging problems. These include daily communication through a school journal, issued to every pupil, and the good use of monitoring cards issued to pupils with particular needs. The frequent telephone links between tutors or heads of year and parents is good and a further example of effectiveness in this area. Parents are kept well informed about school events, developments in the curriculum and other aspects of school life through good quality newsletters and the school magazine – this latter produced by the pupils. Parents particularly value the monthly parents' forum, which provides an opportunity for parents to meet staff to discuss the curriculum, welfare issues or plans for the future. These events are well supported by parents.
74. All parents, including those of pupils who are learning English as an additional language, are kept well informed and they are encouraged to become involved in supporting their children's learning and to participate in reviews. Between them, the staff at the school speak 18 different languages and interpret and translate information into the most common languages spoken by parents, including Albanian, Arabic, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Involvement by parents in the daily life of the school is limited by the location of the school and by parents' work commitments. However, some parents do give up time to serve as governors, to help with sporting activities or in other ways.
75. The majority of parents provide their children with active educational support and are keen for them to do well. Parents' meetings are well attended and most take a strong interest in their children's progress. Parents provide good support when behavioural or academic issues emerge and work well with staff to implement joint strategies for improvement, such as additional work after school. However, a small minority of parents either show little interest or obstruct efforts to raise behavioural or academic standards. Overall, the partnership with parents makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and progress.

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

76. The headteacher has been in post since just after the school was put in special measures in 1998. He provides outstanding leadership, backed up by clarity of vision and enormous drive and determination. He is supported by a recently formed senior executive team of very high calibre who share responsibility for managing the teaching departments and main aspects of the school's work. In a space of only four years, the school has been changed from an institution with many weaknesses that was failing to provide a satisfactory standard of education to one that has no serious weaknesses and is rapidly improving.
77. The senior management structure is unusual in that it has a senior executive team of the headteacher, the deputy and six assistant headteachers, all of whom also carry out duties as directors, as well as being classroom teachers. The directors form a larger group, most of whom act as faculty heads or pastoral heads. The two groups share membership; communication is very good between them and they operate very effectively individually and together. The heads of department and other middle managers in the school also carry out their duties well and the overall leadership and management of the school are very good.
78. Some of the most urgent tasks initially were to raise the morale of staff and pupils, improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour and improve the reputation of the school locally. These goals have been approached in a variety of ways. Morale was gradually improved, partly through a process of consultation, involving staff in decision-making whenever possible, and partly through a campaign to improve the quality of teaching, giving greater responsibility to heads of department. In addition, the school's aims and values were redefined. This has been extremely successful. Arrangements for monitoring teaching are very good and are being implemented effectively in almost all areas. The quality of teaching has improved very significantly and morale has reached a level where all staff are now very strongly committed to the school's improvement. Most pupils enjoy being at the school and their attitudes are good. The school's aims and values are well known to staff, pupils and most parents and they permeate all its activities to a very high degree. Recognition of this, together with the news of the £12 million development and opportunities for local people to contribute to its planning have raised the school's profile considerably in the community. The school is now very well placed to improve further.

79. The school's development was driven originally by the need to address the issues identified in the most recent inspection reports, but the senior managers have also used their wide range of experience and knowledge to sharpen priorities and add new ones. The result has been a school development plan that is based firmly on the need to raise standards and to improve teaching, behaviour and the environment for learning. Although the plan is very detailed, it is also very businesslike, identifying targets, deadlines, responsible persons, resource implications and criteria for judging success. Progress towards the goals is regularly and rigorously monitored by the senior executive team, each of whom has responsibility for ensuring that a section of the plan is successfully completed. Within the team, each member is accountable to the others and the highest professional standards are demanded. In this way, a culture of open review has led to very realistic appraisals of what the school has achieved and how much remains to be done.
80. The governing body carries out its duties very effectively. Many governors visit the school regularly and their visits, together with the very detailed regular reports from the headteacher, other senior staff and the financial consultants, ensure that they are very well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Staff are required to make presentations to meetings of the relevant sub-committees about the nature of their work. The governors are a strong group with a wide range of personal and professional experience that fits them very well for their duties. They are clear that their first responsibility is to the school and its pupils and they ensure that all members of staff, including the headteacher, are accountable for meeting the targets set. For example, directors and heads of department are challenged hard about the standards reached in their areas. They have played a very important part in helping the headteacher to set the priorities for development and in providing practical, professional, political and moral support, when needed.
81. Financial management, an area that had previously been problematic, is now very good and is a further example of the successful culture of open management. External financial consultants provide strategic advice as well as closely monitoring patterns of expenditure. They operate independently of, but in partnership with, the headteacher and senior financial managers within the school. Both parties present their reports to the governors, who then have the opportunity to compare and challenge the views being offered. This system has operated so successfully that a £200,000 deficit four years ago has been turned into a well-planned surplus of almost £500,000. The very substantial sums received by the school in specific grants are very well deployed to meet their designated purposes. All the necessary checks and balances are now in place and the principles of best value are strictly implemented. The last financial audit found no major concerns and all its recommendations have been followed.
82. The work with pupils learning English as an additional language is well led. Teaching and multi-lingual support staff are suitably deployed. The senior management team is well aware of the changing intake in the school and provides good support. Teachers undertake regular reviews of pupils' progress and the head of department maintains the register of pupils who receive targeted support, recording their stages of language development. The school has recently extended its provision for pupils with special educational needs. The development of closer links between subject teachers and the special needs department has rightly been identified as a priority. A learning support unit has been established to help pupils with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties who are at risk of exclusion. The head of this unit and the co-ordinator for special educational needs have clear plans for future developments and are ably supported by the senior management team. The special educational needs policy meets most of the requirements of the revised Code of Practice. However, criteria for evaluating the success of the policy are unclear and do not enable the school to report on the effectiveness of its provision.
83. Arrangements for the induction of teachers and support staff new to the school are very good. The match of staff to the needs of the curriculum is good. Technical assistants in music and science support teachers very well and there is good technical support in information and communication technology. However, the school has not yet succeeded in recruiting enough specialist staff to teach information and communication technology in Years 7 to 9 or the textiles modules of design technology. Non-specialist teachers teach religious education and this affects standards of attainment. There is insufficient technical support for art. Teaching support for pupils with special

educational needs and English as an additional language is good, although frequent changes of staff make effective support teaching difficult, as many subject teachers and support staff have just begun to work together. The school provides well for trainee teachers in music and modern foreign languages.

84. Accommodation is satisfactory. The corridors and staircases are narrow but congestion is kept to a minimum, owing to the ordered passage of pupils through colour-coded sections of the building. The school is well maintained and in satisfactory condition, considering the number of pupils. The teaching rooms are generally adequate for the size and age range of the pupils in all areas of the curriculum except mathematics and art. The new building development will greatly improve the situation. Accommodation is very good in music and good in science and geography. The accommodation for teaching English as an additional language is used well, considering the high numbers of pupils using the area. The music block presents a stimulating learning environment, owing to the good display space, acoustics and light. There are also good display areas for science, English as an additional language, English, geography and art.
85. Resources are satisfactory overall. They are very good for music and good for special educational needs and information and communication technology, but unsatisfactory in art and religious education. Most subjects have enough text books but there are some shortages in modern foreign languages and a considerable shortage in religious education. In some subjects, books are old and in need of replacement. Most subjects suffer from lack of access to computers, preventing the school from fully meeting statutory requirements, but this should no longer be the case when the new building works are completed. Furthermore, and mainly as a consequence, the school is making unsatisfactory use of the new technology. At the time of the inspection, the library was in the course of refurbishment, following a fire, and the stocks of books and other facilities were limited.

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

In order to continue the school's good rate of improvement and further raise standards of attainment, the senior management and the governors need to:

- further improve standards of attainment, particularly in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology;  
*(Paragraphs 1, 10, 11, 41, 89, 90, 101, 110, 147, 149, 150)*
- develop the quality and use of teachers' day-to-day assessments;  
*(Paragraphs 35, 124, 130, 150, 165, 192)*
- further develop teachers' skills in:
  - working with groups containing a wide range of abilities;  
*(Paragraphs 25, 35, 103, 104, 124, 150)*
  - managing pupils' behaviour;  
*(Paragraphs 17, 25, 35, 103, 104, 123, 130, 165); and*
  - planning and providing more opportunities for independent learning.  
*(Paragraphs 109, 112, 158, 184, 190, 191)*
- continue to implement strategies for improving the levels of attendance.

*(Paragraphs 22, 63)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	164
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	62

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	29	54	64	11	0	0
Percentage	4	17	33	39	7	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1,150
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	719

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	32
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	489

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	581

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	204
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	171

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.9

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	168	52	220

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	50	61	48
	Girls	22	19	12
	Total	72	80	60
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	33 (26)	37 (26)	27 (15)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	7 (1)	14 (7)	5 (2)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	53	69	73
	Girls	23	24	23
	Total	76	93	96
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	35 (38)	42 (30)	44 (8)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	9 (11)	19 (9)	12 (1)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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



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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	121	31	152

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	17	104	121
	Girls	10	31	31
	Total	27	135	152
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	18 (11)	89 (72)	100 (92)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	26.7
	National	39.0

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

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	383
Black – African heritage	377
Black – other	34
Indian	6
Pakistani	11
Bangladeshi	7
Chinese	6
White	235
Any other minority ethnic group	61

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	32	7
Black – African heritage	6	2
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	8	1
Other minority ethnic groups	3	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	71.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.4

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	37
Total aggregate hours worked per week	920.5

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0.54
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	29.4
Key Stage 4	26.8

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	4,526,473
Total expenditure	3,734,115
Expenditure per pupil	3,434
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 62,425
Balance carried forward to next year	669,933

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	26
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	43

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1,150
Number of questionnaires returned	35

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	34	6	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	37	6	9	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	43	14	3	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	40	14	17	3
The teaching is good.	46	40	9	3	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	26	14	11	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	29	6	6	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	31	3	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	46	31	9	9	3
The school is well led and managed.	46	37	3	9	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	26	3	6	14
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	40	14	0	9

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons and manage classes very well so that pupils are encouraged to raise the standards of their work.
- English teachers have developed very good schemes of work.
- Leadership and management of the department are excellent and are helping to improve English throughout the school.
- Formal monitoring of teaching and learning provides guidance on how to improve.

#### Areas for improvement

- The department needs to build further on the school's recent efforts to improve pupils' skills in literacy.
- The department needs to develop strategies further for increasing the number of pupils who obtain the nationally expected levels in tests at the end of Year 9.
- The department needs to develop strategies further for improving pupils' results in the GCSE examinations for English language and English literature.

86. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below the nationally expected levels. However, this represents good achievement by the majority of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, compared with their standards on entry to the school. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 11 is good in relation to standards when they begin Year 10.
87. Pupils come to the school with levels of attainment that are consistently well below the national average. In 2001, the Year 9 test results were well below the national average but close to the average for schools with over 50 per cent of free school meals. Pupils' performance in English was slightly better than it was in mathematics and science. The performance of girls has been consistently better than that of boys. Over the three years from 1999 to 2001, pupils' performance has remained well below average. In order to improve the performance of pupils, the department has trained all staff to teach the National Literacy Strategy, introduced schemes of work to promote reading and created small teaching groups to support the development of literacy. Since the previous inspection, pupils' performance in English has improved.
88. In 2001, the results of the GCSE English examinations were well below the national average and results were very low in English literature. Overall, the GCSE English language and English literature results have declined slightly since the last inspection. This is largely because 20 per cent of the pupils were still at early stages of learning English and lacked the linguistic knowledge and skills to gain a grade C. Despite this, the performance of pupils in English is better than in most other subjects and the percentage with A\* to C grades was well above the average for schools with similar prior attainment in the 1999 Year 9 tests. Since the last inspection, the performance of girls has been better than that of boys. Teachers are setting realistic but challenging targets to encourage pupils to improve.
89. The work of most pupils in Years 7 to 9 is below the standard expected nationally. Pupils often cope less well when writing than when speaking and listening, or reading. Higher-attaining pupils can spell monosyllabic words and common polysyllabic words accurately. They can use full stops, capital letters and question marks correctly and organise simple and complex sentences into paragraphs. Teachers' marking shows that there is a strong emphasis on the need to improve punctuation and spelling.
90. The standard of work seen Years 10 and 11 is below the nationally expected levels. At the end of Year 11, girls achieve higher standards than boys. Pupils are becoming confident speakers and

standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory. For example, in a Year 11 class, pupils were able to rôle-play a discussion between characters from Doris Lessing's short story '*Flight*'. By the end of Year 11, the majority of pupils listen attentively and are keen to answer questions. This is because they are highly motivated and respond well to their teachers' very helpful spoken comments and probing questions. Where pupils are well prepared for discussions, they make well-structured contributions. For example, in a well-planned lesson in Year 11, a group of pupils used an analytical matrix to compare and contrast two short stories, enabling their spokesperson to make a clear presentation to the whole class.

91. Standards of reading are improving. In Year 7, the proportion of pupils with a reading age of over 11 years has increased significantly since the beginning of the school year and the proportion with a reading age below nine years has proportionately decreased. A similar pattern is replicated throughout the school. Pupils read aloud as part of their regular learning routine and the majority do so with confidence. More able pupils read with fluency and expression. A shared reading and discussion of *Romeo and Juliet* by a Year 11 class showed that pupils could understand significant ideas and events and make moral judgements based on their understanding of the text. For example, a boy explained, 'People like Tybalt don't solve problems; they kill. Killing causes more killing'.
92. Higher-attaining pupils write fluently and at length. For example, pupils in Years 10 and 11 have written extensively about relationships in *King Lear*. The writing of most other pupils is limited in range and fluency. Levels of accuracy in spelling and grammar are often low. Much extended writing lacks the clarity produced by appropriate punctuation. Pupils write for a suitable range of purposes. Good oral work prior to writing is often used to help pupils to write more fully. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, a group preparing to write an analysis of conflict in *Romeo and Juliet* collected and sorted ideas. One boy explained that, 'Most characters can't overcome family feelings; they just keep on killing'. Information and communication technology is used effectively for drafting, and higher-attaining pupils use it well to improve the fluency and accuracy of their writing. Their GCSE assignments are carefully drafted and re-drafted to produce focused and well-constructed essays.
93. Pupils' achievement in all years is good. This is mainly due to the good teaching and to the development of very well-balanced schemes of work that underpin stimulating lessons. Throughout the school, well-targeted work and very high expectations of learning and behaviour result in the majority of pupils making good progress. Across the school, pupils with special educational needs or with low prior attainment make good progress, as do those learning English as an additional language. Gifted and talented pupils make very good progress. This is because their teachers provide intellectual challenge and support. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the teacher asked all pupils to state a view on characters from *The Lord of the Flies*, providing supporting textual evidence before inviting other pupils to act as critical friends. This process clearly stimulated interest. It also raised the self-esteem of the group members.
94. Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. The most effective teaching is very well planned and structured to help pupils learn. Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of their subject. They all recognise that pupils need to be motivated, encouraged and provided with opportunities to succeed. Teachers use constructive spoken comments very skilfully to achieve this. Consequently, attitudes to learning are very good throughout the school and most pupils are very well motivated. Very good management of pupils' behaviour encourages them to co-operate and most pupils behave well. Lessons are very well managed and planned, not only as individual events but also as a progressive sequence of learning opportunities. This results in good levels of achievement. Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils' work and behaviour and make these very clear. They consistently identify the learning objectives for lessons and ensure that pupils understand them, often asking for them to be written in pupils' books.
95. The English department has raised standards by using assessment to inform planning, combining subject matter with the development of language skills, developing pupils' confidence and skills to speak effectively in a wide range of situations and by improving skills in reading. Pupils are

encouraged to use information and communication technology for drafting their written work and there are some very good examples of word-processed essays, stories and newspaper articles in the coursework folders of pupils in Years 10 and 11 pupils. The schemes of work indicate the content of lessons, the teaching and learning styles that might be adopted, contributions to the school's literacy strategy, the resources to be used and the range of the work to be assessed. They focus on pupils' basic literacy skills, promoting the development of reading and improving the presentation of pupils' written work.

96. The leadership and management of the English department are excellent. Formal monitoring of teaching and learning provides guidance for teachers and pupils on how to improve. Teachers set realistic but challenging targets to encourage improvement. The department has made a very significant contribution to the education of all of the pupils in the school. The departmental policy documents are clear and well focused on raising pupils' attainment in English and their performance in public examinations. All members of the department share the highest level of commitment to the school's aims. Resources for teaching are very good. Accommodation is satisfactory. All classrooms contain stimulating displays that are well organised and of good quality.
97. Since the previous inspection, there have been some good and significant improvements. The ability of pupils to speak clearly and with confidence has improved and reading standards have improved. The management of the department is excellent. The teaching of English is now good and frequently excellent. Formal monitoring of teaching and learning provides guidance on how to improve and staff have developed very good schemes of work.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- The improvements in the quality of teaching; good planning and expectations of high work rate.
- Leadership of the subject and the challenging yet realistic plans for improvement.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment.
- Consistency in good teaching; strategies for teaching the wide range of capability found in many classes.
- Emphasis given to teaching aspects of shape, space and measures, the use and application of mathematics and the use of information and communication technology.

98. The attainment of pupils who enter the school at the beginning of Year 7 is well below the nationally expected level. In 2001, the results of national tests at the end of Year 9 were very low by national standards and below the average for schools with over 50 per cent of free school meals. However, this comparison does not take account of the effects of many pupils entering the school throughout the year, a significant proportion of whom are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The results for 2001 were better than those for 2000 but not enough for the low trend of recent years to rise significantly. Boys' results were above those of girls. Pupils learning English as a second language make good progress and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Considering these factors, although attainment is well below the expected levels, achievement, including that of the many pupils whose reading levels are low, is satisfactory after the first three years in the school.
99. GCSE results in 2001 were well below the national average but considerably higher than in 2000, representing significant improvement. The percentage of pupils with A\* to C grades was well above the average for schools with similar prior attainment in the 1999 Year 9 tests. Boys' results were above those of girls. Generally, Asian and African pupils attain significantly higher standards than Caribbean pupils. The attainment of pupils in Year 11 is below the nationally expected standards. However, the many pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress in

- Years 10 and 11 and pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress by the age of sixteen. Nonetheless, many are weak readers or have enduring comprehension difficulties that explain why the grades they attain in GCSE examinations are not as high as those achieved in their school work. Work seen in school remains below the expected levels but represents good achievement compared with pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9. The pupils who have been identified as talented in Year 10 are attaining above average standards and will be entered for the GCSE examination earlier than other pupils.
100. By the age of fourteen, pupils have learned a basic technical vocabulary, although many struggle to use it correctly and in context. Most can use algebraic techniques correctly to solve problems that have been explained to them beforehand. However, particularly when working unaided, poor comprehension prevents them applying their knowledge and skill to written problems. Pupils do not readily use their skills in graphical interpretation in other subjects. For example, in a science lesson, pupils had difficulty relating force to extension when studying Hooke's Law. The emphasis given to number, algebra and data handling is evident in pupils' work but lower priority is given to the development of ideas relating to shape and space. Consequently, higher-attaining older pupils can follow reasoned arguments, such as why the angle sum of a quadrilateral is 360 degrees, but their knowledge of angle relationships and concepts of transformation is weak.
  101. By the end of Year 9, only the most capable pupils have reached a level of numeracy that allows them to apply mathematics effectively and independently in other subjects. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have not benefited from teaching of numeracy skills in their earlier years in the school are hindered in their learning by a poor command of strategies for mental arithmetic and persistent weaknesses in ready recall of number relationships such as multiplication tables. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 11 struggle to recall basic facts relating to complementary and opposite angles but higher-attaining pupils have mastered the principles to a satisfactory level. More able groups in Year 10 can work confidently and accurately with expanding brackets in algebra and explain their reasoning to others.
  102. Overall, teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Although much teaching is good, the quality is uneven and there is considerable difference between the best teaching and the least effective, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and plan their lessons well. When pupils are engaged in productive work from the very beginning of the lesson, rising to meet high expectations of work and conduct, they make very good progress. Teachers of older pupils have particularly high expectations. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils were individually greeted as they arrived and were given sample GCSE questions so that they were fully engaged in productive work whilst waiting for the rest of the class to arrive. Then, the teacher conducted brisk exposition of the solution of equations using compound terms and expressions. After that, about a quarter of the group was asked, at different times, to work at the board, explaining their reasoning. In the closing five minutes, the teacher questioned pupils, assessing their learning against the initial key objectives and addressing emerging misconceptions before setting homework.
  103. When pupils are not sufficiently challenged or the pace of the lesson does not promote sustained learning, many do not make the progress of which they are capable. In a Year 11 lesson, the teacher required all pupils, including those with good number skills, to follow a rigid, structured procedure suited to the least capable. It was not until late in the lesson that the more capable pupils were able to work at a rate that matched their ability, by which time their initial enthusiasm had waned. Generally, however, the strengths in teaching outweigh the weaknesses and the improvement since the time of the last inspection has been substantial. Some teachers of other subjects make a good contribution by directly teaching specific skills in numeracy before embarking on their specialist teaching. For example, in a geography lesson, pupils practised applying scales before undertaking map work. In an English lesson, the teacher revised the calculation of percentage parts before setting pupils the task of determining the number of pupils who could be expected to reach certain National Curriculum levels. Teachers mark work regularly and some provide good guidance for pupils. However, they do not provide pupils with enough information about their potential National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades or what specifically they need to do to improve their levels or grades.



104. Pupils generally show satisfactory attitudes to their learning. Most begin each new lesson enthusiastically. However, many have only a short concentration span and, if the teacher does not productively engage them during this time, their interest wanes. This sometimes produces misbehaviour that some teachers find difficult to manage. At the beginning of lessons, when teachers are conducting short, purposeful numeracy practice, many Year 7 and 8 boys compete desperately for the teacher's attention, craving recognition for their work when asked to give oral answers. In their enthusiasm to contribute, they often give insufficient thought to the question, answer incorrectly, then give even less thought to subsequent attempts to earn the teacher's praise before losing the opportunity to another pupil. In those sessions where the teacher uses strategies for quiet reflection before answering, such as using individual white boards, learning is more successful and pupils make worthwhile use of the time.
105. The leadership of the department is good and the management satisfactory, although the team is new. The head of department took post only two weeks before the inspection and the subject directors and the consultant have all been appointed this school year. The team already shares a corporate vision for the future, has well-defined roles and has instituted changes based on a realistic review of provision. Whilst there has been insufficient time for these to become securely established, early indications are favourable and the team's capacity to secure improvements is good. For example, a whole-school numeracy policy has been introduced, training has taken place and teaching of numeracy by non-specialists has begun, supported by a co-director. A monitoring programme has been introduced in order to establish improvements in the quality of teaching, marking and homework. Basic resources are satisfactory but, at the time of the inspection, the department had neither sufficient software nor comprehensive access to computers to provide the full breadth of the programmes of study. Staffing levels are good. The department has well-qualified and experienced teachers supported by effective learning support assistants. Some rooms are too small for the numbers of pupils timetabled to use them and accommodation is unsatisfactory.
106. There have been very good improvements since the last inspection. Principally, this is as a result of the considerable improvements in the quality of teaching and the recent improvements in standards at the ends of Years 9 and 11.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Improved achievement of pupils throughout the school.
- Improvement in the quality of teaching.
- Very good leadership and management of the department.
- Extensive range of extra-curricular activities.

### Areas for improvement

- Further improve the standards of attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11.
- Ensure that the curriculum includes coverage of statutory information and communication technology, sufficient experimental and investigative work and appropriate depth of coverage in Years 10 and 11.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching.

107. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are well below expected levels. In 2001, standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were very low by national standards and well below those of schools with over 50 per cent of free school meals. Standards fell from 1998 until 2000 and, although they improved in 2001, they are still below those in English and mathematics.
108. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well below the national average, although they have improved over the last three years. Boys and girls reach similar standards. As in other subjects, pupils from Caribbean heritage attain lower standards in science than other ethnic groups, while

Africans are generally the most successful. Pupils' results in science are lower than in English and mathematics. They were in line with those of schools with over 50 per cent of free school meals and above those of schools with similar results in the 1999 tests for Year 9. This represents satisfactory achievement.

109. Although standards of work seen during the inspection are better than the results in 2001 would suggest, they are still well below the nationally expected levels throughout the school, especially with regard to the proportion of pupils working at higher levels. Little investigative or experimental work was seen during the inspection and analysis of pupils' previous work shows that this has been the case for some time, especially in Years 10 and 11. For example, in a Year 10 lesson with higher-attaining pupils, the relationship between voltage and current was explained to pupils at the start of the lesson, together with a graph of the expected outcomes of their work. When asked to make measurements, pupils were unclear what to do and demonstrated a lack of skill in wiring simple circuits, predicting what would happen and evaluating their measurements. By contrast, in a Year 7 lesson, lower-attaining pupils were encouraged to explore the relationship between weight and the extension of springs. They were able to make and test simple predictions and compare their results with their hypotheses.
110. Standards of literacy and numeracy are well below the expected levels. Literacy is addressed in every lesson by the frequent use and definition of key words, reading aloud and translating what is read into everyday language. In a Year 8 lesson, writing frames aimed at two different ability levels were provided to support lower-attaining pupils in structuring their arguments. Such strategies help to ensure that pupils at all levels of language acquisition can gain access to the science curriculum. Numeracy is less well planned into schemes of work and lessons. When it is specifically addressed, it helps to improve pupils' numerical skills. For example, in a lesson on forces with lower-attaining Year 7 pupils, the teacher explained how to read scales before asking pupils to measure the forces required to pick up objects. They were then able to read the Newton meters accurately. In another Year 7 lesson, the technique of drawing a line graph was explicitly taught before pupils plotted their results from an experiment with weights and springs. However, in other lessons, pupils' difficulties with reading graphs and using formulae hamper their learning. In a Year 9 lesson on the relationships between predators and their prey, most pupils were unable to interpret graphs of frog and slug populations. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and those learning English as an additional language make good progress across the school.
111. The quality of science teaching is satisfactory. This represents an enormous improvement since the last inspection when teaching was poor in almost half the lessons observed. The strengths of teaching are in the quality of planning and assessment and in the careful way that basic skills are taught. Teachers make good use of their own experience and of real-life examples to capture pupils' interest. For example, in a lesson with lower-attaining Year 10 pupils, the teacher used the date - May Day - to talk about manual labour and how this has been replaced by labour-saving devices before introducing the topic of wiring electrical appliances. Pupils' attention was successfully captured and they worked well for the remainder of the lesson. Lessons are well planned and structured. Learning objectives are set out on the board at the start of lessons and plenary reviews are used to check how well these have been achieved. This has the twin effects of securing good behaviour and providing immediate feedback on learning.
112. Momentum is often lost in the last third of lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9, although it is usually recovered in the plenary. For example, in a Year 8 lesson with lower-attaining pupils, a good introduction was followed by a number of tasks, very well matched to the wide range of reading ages. As a result, the pupils learnt well initially but the teacher went on to try to explain further concepts before most pupils were confident with the first. This led to inattentive behaviour and limited learning in the last part of the lesson. In these lessons, teachers' expectations are not high enough. For example, their questions often require only a limited response; teachers tend to direct them at the most enthusiastic pupils and allow insufficient thinking time. Teachers also allow too little thinking time when setting tasks. For example, in a lesson with lower-attaining Year 11 pupils, the teacher supplied the answers before most pupils had had a chance to work them out for themselves. This approach secures quiet compliance but also enables some pupils

to be passive, to wait for the answer and then copy it down without understanding. In the very best lessons, a fast pace is maintained while allowing pupils space to learn.

113. In a number of lessons seen, the focus was on preparing for the national tests and examinations taking place shortly after the inspection. Revision strategies are well developed. For example, in a lesson with higher-attaining Year 9 pupils, the teacher's own diving equipment was very well used to illustrate adaptation to habitat. Pupils labelled and explained the purpose of everything they could see in a photograph of a diver and were presented with test questions of increasing difficulty on this theme. In a revision lesson with able Year 11 pupils, a brisk review of terms and definitions relating to genetics was followed by a challenging group activity. In this, pupils were asked to work out how it was possible for the teacher to be white while her mother was white and her father and brother were both black. Pupils approached this with great enthusiasm, learning to put into practice their knowledge of the topic and explaining and justifying their theories. Nevertheless, pupils generally show less independence and perseverance in lessons than is required for them to make good progress in this subject.
114. Overall, curriculum coverage is satisfactory. Insufficient time is given to the development of investigative and practical skills and activities using information and communication technology and statutory requirements are not fully met. Extensive extra-curricular provision after school and on Saturdays partly compensates for the relatively low time allocation for science in Years 10 and 11. Some classes, especially in Years 7 to 9, include pupils with a very wide range of prior attainment in science and varied learning needs. This, combined with the length of lesson in relation to pupils' attention span, is another factor leading to some loss of pace and attention in the last part of lessons. Pupils enjoy science, want to learn and are keen to contribute. However, a significant minority rely too much on the teacher's direction. Their behaviour is good when the teaching captures their interest. It is unsatisfactory in a significant number of lessons in Years 7 and 8 when the work and pace of the lesson are not well matched to the range of learning needs.
115. Leadership and management of the department are very good. In the twelve months that the head of department has been in post, there have been significant improvements in all aspects of the department's work. Those with management responsibilities have an exceptional knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and the priorities for action. There are termly action plans focusing on the most important priorities and identifying tasks, responsibilities, timescales, resources and training needs. The plans for the last three terms have been implemented and reviewed with rigour. The teaching and support staff work very well together as a team, are committed to improving standards and use departmental meetings effectively to share teaching strategies, as well as for curriculum and administration matters. There are good policies on assessment and targets are set, based on prior attainment. In Years 7 to 9, pupils have a good knowledge of the level at which they are working.
116. Monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work has been introduced. The outcomes are intended to help improve the quality of teaching and learning but the evaluations of teaching quality are sometimes over-generous and areas for improvement are not always sharply defined. New staff are well inducted and attention is paid to professional development needs arising from lesson observations as well as from departmental priorities. Support staff contribute significantly to the effectiveness of the department. The quality of the environment has been greatly improved and chemicals and equipment are stored and used with due attention to health and safety. There are sufficient resources, although access to information and communication technology at the time of the inspection was limited. A new computer suite is under construction and will be available later this term.
117. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have improved in all years and the quality of teaching has improved significantly. The learning environment is now safe and attractive and standards of discipline and behaviour are now satisfactory. Pupils enjoy science and have opportunities beyond the timetable to pursue this interest. Pupils' progress is monitored and tracked and this has led to improved achievement. Procedures for performance management have been introduced and are contributing to the improvement in teaching quality.

Staff work well as a team and the department is committed to securing good learning. It is very well placed to continue improving standards.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Leadership of the department and the capacity for improvement.
- The procedures for tracking the progress of pupils across the department.
- The curriculum, including extra-curricular activities.

### Areas for improvement

- The accommodation and resources.
- The use of computers in the department.
- Technician support for ceramics, photography and textiles.
- The analysis and use of performance data.

118. Standards in the department have improved steadily over the past few years. Work seen during the inspection was close to the nationally expected levels in Years 7 to 9 and above the nationally expected levels in Years 10 and 11.

119. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 2001 was above the national average. Over the past four years, every pupil entered for the examination has gained at least a G grade. The results are amongst the highest in the school. With the recent appointment of skilled teachers of textiles, this area is a developing strength that will support the anticipated improvement in standards over the coming years. Several boys have shown an interest in textile art and are working well alongside the girls in preparing for the first GCSE in the subject next year. Current building work has delayed the introduction of GNVQ art and design but it is expected that there will be a course introduced next year. Attendance levels in Years 10 and 11 are low and a significant proportion of pupils who register for the examination at the beginning of the year is formally withdrawn because of prolonged absence.

120. Pupils arrive at the school with a wide range of experience of art but with overall skill levels generally below national expectations for Year 7. The well-planned curriculum ensures that they quickly build on their basic skills and, by the age of fourteen, they have made good progress and are working in line with national standards. Year 7 pupils learn a wide range of techniques, including three-dimensional work in clay, mod-roc, plaster and papier-mâché. By Year 8, they know that the Impressionist painters used 'optical' colour mixing, blending their colours with points or dabs of paint. They work effectively in the pointillist style. By Year 9, the more able and talented pupils produce work of a high individual standard in their painting and drawing. They demonstrate very good drawing skills in constructing simple, bold graphic images from commercial packaging. The lack of good sketchbooks impedes the progress that pupils can make in annotating their work, although there are good examples of note-taking from research into the work of significant artists. On the other hand, pupils in Year 7 develop their critical writing skills well by making good use of writing frames to evaluate their own work. More able pupils in Year 9 grasp the technique of bold, blocked colours used in 'Pop Art' and produce striking results in their self-portraits. Less able pupils do not use watercolour effectively and their pale, watery images lose the visual impact required in 'Pop Art' work. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress through these years. Pupils learning English as an additional language work well together in the classroom, understand what is required of them and make the same progress as others.

121. Pupils preparing for their GCSE examinations are working at standards above national expectations. They work more or less independently, researching and developing their work from a study of artists that interest them. Annotation and note taking, whilst a weakness overall, make effective contributions to their studies. Some individual written work is well composed and presented and shows evidence of thoughtful research and sound learning. Pupils work freely on their drawings and most work with confidence in using colour in their studies. Pupils in Year 10 are able to paint on silk and transfer it to cotton using the 'bondaweb' technique. They trail 'gutta'

- effectively around selected forms, in the style of Klimt or the Egyptian tomb painters, producing highlights that create a strong visual impact. Boys and girls are adept at quilting painted fabric using hand-stitching methods.
122. More able and talented pupils in Year 11 demonstrate advanced drawing skills in their vividly imaginative work based on the surrealist painters, Dali and Magritte. Their reflective studies provide a good stimulus for spiritual development. Lower-attaining pupils lack the perceptive and observational skills to explore works of art independently, relying on the clear guidance of their well-informed teachers. Those on the photographic course work hard to build their theoretical knowledge of photography, as they plan practical portrait studies in small groups. The inadequate spot lighting and the lack of a studio in which natural light can be controlled limit the progress they can make in setting up their work. Portfolios of work show generally very good progress through Years 10 and 11. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are not impeded by their weaker literacy skills and progress at the same rate as others in Years 10 and 11.
123. The attitude of pupils to lessons is generally positive and shows a particularly strong commitment in Years 10 and 11. The behaviour of pupils is satisfactory but variable, with a significant amount of low-level disruption in Years 7 and 9, talking over the teacher, ignoring others or failing to do as they are told. Teachers with less experience have not yet developed an effective repertoire of responses to such challenging behaviour and are not effectively supported when they face large, difficult classes.
124. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. All teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subject areas and they plan their lessons very well. The preparation for some lessons is weakened by the serious shortage of storage space, necessitating potentially disruptive movement around the classroom. Very good use is made of introductory question and answer sessions to check on learning and develop lesson themes. Key words are explained and used well in these sessions. Teachers have high expectation of the pupils who choose to study for GCSE examinations and they manage these lessons very effectively. Evaluations at the end of lessons are not always effective in developing critical thinking skills and more time and thought needs to be given to how they are used. The management of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory but some thought is needed about the best ways of supporting teachers who take the larger, more difficult classes. A very good lesson was seen in which a well thought-out introduction to 'Pop Art' took in the cultural background of the music, fashion and food of the time. Some concrete examples of the background would have made this an exemplary lesson. Teachers build up good relationships with pupils as they grow through the school, creating a very good environment for learning in which pupils can make good progress without distraction.
125. The department benefits from very good and experienced leadership and there has been good improvement since the last inspection. The strong teaching team works well within the faculty of performing arts, of which the head of art is an assistant director. The department makes good provision for the moral, social and cultural development of pupils, particularly in the cultural provision. The progress of pupils is tracked well throughout the school and teachers' records are consolidated in a departmental monitoring sheet. The analysis of performance data is well set out in the department's handbook but it does not analyse results by gender or ethnicity, which is important for effective feedback on teaching and learning. The lack of a technician for ceramics, textiles and photography limits the development of work in those areas.
126. Work displayed in art rooms is colourful, vibrant and up to date. Much of the work in public areas around the school is outdated and, in some cases, is suffering damage from vandalism or wear and tear. The two larger classrooms are well appointed, but the four smaller rooms are not adequate for classes of more than 20 to 25 pupils and many of the sinks are inadequate and unsightly. There is a well-equipped darkroom, but no dedicated studio in which pupils could set up effective lighting. The resources for computer art are poor. As the school's new suite for information and communication technology comes into use, the opportunity to develop digital art will present itself and the department has plans available for such a development. The department makes good use of visiting artists to extend the curriculum through clubs in the evenings and on

Saturday afternoons. This is currently enabling pupils to learn more about ceramics and mosaics, if they wish to. This is a department that has built a strong teaching team with a very good capacity to improve further in the coming years.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- A committed team of staff who are managed effectively.
- The amount of accommodation available to the department.

### Areas for improvement

- The department needs to make further progress in raising attainment in all age groups in order to match more closely the national standards.
- Improve standards of teaching to bring all staff to the level of the best.
- Review the scheme of work to ensure that it meets all the requirements of the programme of study for the subject.
- Produce a department handbook which provides guidance for staff about the organisation and teaching of the subject.

127. In 2001, about one tenth of those entered for GCSE examinations in design and technology gained grades A\* to C and this is well below the national average. Results in food technology were slightly better than in graphics and resistant materials. Attainment in the GNVQ manufacturing course is quite good, with seven of the ten pupils entered gaining grade C. The other three pupils failed to submit their course work and did not achieve a grade.

128. Pupils come into the school with very low levels of attainment in design and technology. There is evidence of an improvement in attainment between entry to the school in Year 7 and the end of Year 9, but progress is slow and attainment is below the nationally expected levels. For example, in one Year 9 lesson, pupils assembled the components of a box incorrectly and few could explain what they were doing. Although they can generally use tools adequately, they have little opportunity to select them for themselves.

129. Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 are working at levels that match their ability and standards in graphics have improved since last year. Nevertheless, overall progress is unsatisfactory and standards are generally below those expected nationally. In a Year 11 graphics lesson, pupils were seen trying very hard to work out orthographic views of a range of objects and were achieving some success but a Year 10 group designing and producing plastic cards produced only a limited range of ideas and the quality of much of the work was unsatisfactory. However, in a Year 11 GNVQ manufacturing lesson, pupils were able to provide some good answers to questions from the teacher about why products required packaging. In a very good lesson on food technology, pupils worked well and independently. They were able to explain reasons for their choices of ingredients and their design concepts were of a good standard.

130. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is good, the teachers have an effective and positive working relationship with the pupils, who respond in an equally positive manner. Where teaching or learning is unsatisfactory, the causes are sometimes a lack of detailed planning and preparation or inappropriate expectations for the age and ability of the class. Teachers in the department work very hard to build good relationships with the pupils and show a high level of care for them. Generally, the management of pupils is good. In some lessons, however, despite the best efforts of the teacher, learning is unsatisfactory because some pupils are not prepared to listen and to learn. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 often work slowly and unproductively. Teachers do not use assessment well in these years and the pupils have a poor understanding of their learning. The achievements of pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language are satisfactory across the school.

131. The curriculum is limited and in need of review and updating. Much of the work takes the form of focused practical tasks, with few opportunities for open-ended tasks or for the investigation and evaluation of existing products. Currently, there is no opportunity for pupils to experience



computer control, as required by the programme of study, and the use of information and communication technology, particularly computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing is very limited. More extensive use of information and communication technology is needed to comply with national requirements and to support designing and making in all years. Aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural values are promoted by the department but the place of these in the curriculum is not documented.

132. The department is managed effectively and the staff work well together as a team. The department is short of one full-time teacher. This situation hinders the department from developing as it should and raising of standards of attainment. However, there is a good level of technician support. Steps need to be taken to ensure that health and safety requirements are complied with at all times. The assessments of pupils' work need to be used more effectively to plan for subsequent teaching and learning and to inform pupils of their progress through the National Curriculum's levels. Although some work has been done on assessment, this needs to be completed to ensure that accurate assessments are made and that teaching is pitched at the correct level for all the pupils.
133. Although the department has enough accommodation, it is dispersed throughout the school, making it difficult to create a departmental identity. One of the workshops is in urgent need of refurbishment in order to create an effective learning environment. The department also lacks suitable space for a staff resources area. Although there are some computers available, the general lack of resources for information and communication technology means that the department cannot easily meet the demands of the National Curriculum or GCSE syllabuses.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The leadership and management of drama are excellent.
- Drama teachers have developed excellent schemes of work.
- Drama makes a very positive contribution to the overall ethos of the school.

### Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement in this subject.

134. Standards of attainment are very high across the school. Pupils have a clear understanding of the skills they require and they work very hard to attain high standards. Opportunities are provided for them to express themselves freely and to develop their individual interests and strengths, though always within clearly understood boundaries. Pupils are developing their imagination and using vocabulary effectively. They shape ideas and select forms to structure work and evaluate the achievement of others. They are developing performance, devising and improvisational skills. They are developing and realising ideas and communicating well. Individual, paired and small group presentations are constructed carefully. Pupils' use of language and voice projection is very good. They are developing attitudes, skills and techniques that have a positive effect on other areas of learning. The quality of work is particularly good in Years 10 and 11, with much original and exciting work being undertaken. This is reflected in the GCSE examination results that were very high in 2001, when all pupils entered gained A\* to C grades.
135. Progress in lessons is always very good with pupils of all abilities being able to integrate fully into the process of creating and presenting work. Units of work have been produced which ensure continuity and progression in the teaching of the subject. Careful use of time during classes keeps pupils on target so that they can focus on preparing performances for presentation and evaluation at the end of the lesson.

136. The quality of teaching is very good. The teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject and their enthusiasm inspires the pupils. Drama teachers manage behaviour very well. Pupils trust their judgements and respond very positively. The overall effectiveness of teachers' planning for individual lessons and sequences of lessons is excellent. Lessons contain varied activities that are carefully timed and well spaced. Excellent technical advice is given to the GCSE pupils.
137. The majority of pupils in the school enjoy drama. This is reflected in their attitudes during lessons. They are attentive and enthusiastic and quickly become immersed in their work. The quality of discussion is frequently very good. Many pupils make perceptive and encouraging remarks. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils worked in pairs and small groups to create a sequence and make a presentation to the whole class. The class analysed and evaluated the presentations before offering constructive criticism. Drama provides opportunities for the personal development of pupils when they are encouraged to explore a range of issues and ideas. For example, a Year 10 class studying prisons was able to explore what happens to families when men or women are imprisoned.
138. The management of drama is excellent. Many drama topics contribute immensely to pupils' personal development. As a result, the subject makes a significant contribution to the curricular aims of the school.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- The department is well managed.
- Very good relationships exist between staff and pupils.
- The attitude of the pupils is positive. They are keen to learn and they make good progress.

### Areas for improvement

- The provision of fieldwork across the year groups.
- The use of computers to enhance teaching and learning.
- The application of literacy and numeracy and display of pupils' work to demonstrate the standards expected.

139. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A\* to C in the 2001 GCSE examinations was well below the national average but the percentage achieving G grades or better was close to the national average. The average point score was well below the national average but the relative performance indicator of the subject within the school was significantly above that of other subjects in the school's curriculum. There has been a significant upward trend over the past four years, resulting in a six-fold increase in the percentage achieving A\* to C grades. Teachers assessed the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 9 as below national expectations. The high levels of mobility and the high proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language have a negative impact on attainment.
140. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Planning is more detailed, schemes of work have been updated in line with the requirements of 'Curriculum 2000', standards of attainment have improved year on year and resources have been increased.
141. The standards of work seen were well below national expectations in Year 9 and below expectations in Year 11. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make good progress because of the good support provided by their teachers. Although work is not always set at appropriate levels, taking account of prior attainment and the degree of challenge presented to higher-attaining pupils, good progress is made from a very low base.

142. Pupils in Year 7 acquire good map work skills and understand the significance of symbols on Ordnance Survey maps. They locate features using six-figure grid references accurately and begin to interpret landscape from information in maps. Some numeracy skills are applied when using scale on a map to measure distances accurately. By the time they reach the age of fourteen, pupils have gained a sound basis in knowledge and understanding of both human and physical geography. Year 8 pupils recognise the importance of farming and the location of industry in Britain. They gain wider perspectives from their case study of economic activity in California. By the end of Year 9, they can compare the distribution of population in countries with greater or lesser levels of economic development, examining urban contrasts between Kenya and the United Kingdom. They understand some of the reasons for the differences observed. Studies of population migration, such as that between Mexico and the United States of America, help to broaden their understanding of some of the problems encountered in many countries today. The impact of natural hazards helps to reinforce the relevance of geography to everyday life. Some pupils contribute from their personal experiences and many opportunities are provided in this way for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
143. Pupils preparing for GCSE examinations build on work covered in earlier years. For example, a study of urban life as part of the 'People and Places' unit extends their knowledge of the redevelopment of Docklands. Work on flood control and the management of the Mississippi river provide a logical link to discussions about natural hazards. Particular emphasis is placed on understanding concepts because of the high proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language, many of whom join the school at different times throughout the school year.
144. The quality of teaching is good. No unsatisfactory lesson was seen during the inspection and there was a significant proportion of very good teaching. Teachers plan their work well, including opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils know exactly what is expected from the lesson, especially as the objectives are clearly displayed and discussed from the start. Good ongoing assessment establishes the level of pupils' understanding and is used to determine the progress of the lesson. Teachers make sure that pupils have a full understanding of what is being taught before moving on to the next stage. They have good knowledge of their subject and give very good support to all their pupils, according to their levels of prior attainment. The staff know the pupils well. In most classes, a significant number of pupils are relatively new arrivals and many are learning English as an additional language. The teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies to overcome some of the difficulties. The relationship between staff and pupils is very good and, as a result, work proceeds in a relaxed but firm atmosphere conducive to learning. Pupils know what is expected of them in behavioural terms as well as academically.
145. The management of the department is good. There are good relationships between members of staff who are all highly committed to achieving higher standards. Good assessment procedures are used to track pupils' progress. Resources are kept up to date and are adequate, except for the provision of computers. However, the head of department plans to replace the existing four older machines. Teaching is regularly monitored and this effectively maintains high standards. However, there are areas for improvement. These include the provision of fieldwork and the use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning. The department needs to extend further the application of skills in literacy and numeracy and reinforce these through marking and the display of pupils' work to demonstrate the levels of attainment expected.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils are supported to use and develop their literacy skills.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is effective.
- There is a very strong, shared commitment by all the teachers to raise standards of attainment of all pupils.

#### Areas for improvement

- In order to build upon the improvements already made, teachers need to extend the writing and research skills of their pupils.
- Information and communication technology needs to be better used to support pupils in their learning.
- Teachers need to use assessments made of pupils' achievements more effectively in order to help pupils become more independent in their learning.

146. Standards of attainment in the work seen during the inspection were well below national expectations at the end of Year 11. The GCSE results for 2001 indicated that all pupils, including the higher-attaining pupils, achieved well below the national average. The average point score for history was well below the national average. Standards are low because only a small number of pupils select the subject in Year 9 from the competing options, and there is a high level of non-attendance. Improvements in the quality of the teaching have yet to make an impact on standards. Teachers assessed the standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 as well below national expectations and this was confirmed by observation during the inspection. This is due to the large number of pupils learning English as an additional language, the high numbers of pupils who do not attend school and, again, the lack of time for improvements in teaching methods to take an effect. Higher-attaining pupils achieve levels that are close to those expected nationally. However, standards are improving as a result of the school's emphasis on improving literacy and behaviour. The achievements of most pupils, including those learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, are good throughout the school.
147. By the age of fifteen, pupils can investigate the long and short-term causes of the Russian Revolution. They understand that the rivalry between different social groups and the poor condition of the Russian peasants contributed to the unstable conditions in Russia in 1917. They also understand that Russia's involvement in the First World War had a major impact on future events. Pupils can explain and evaluate these events orally and discuss the relative importance of these causes. They are aware of the sequence in which events took place. They begin to produce structured written answers with guidance. However, their writing skills are not as well developed as their oral skills. Pupils understand the difference between evidence of events written at the time and evidence written at a later period, but they use evidence to illustrate events rather than to enquire into the nature of bias in their interpretation. Higher-attaining pupils can explain events in writing and achieve well because of the support and challenge provided by the teachers. Pupils with special educational needs develop their thinking skills and gain confidence because teachers emphasise the development of spoken language and use texts which are well matched to the pupils' needs.
148. By the end of Year 9, pupils broaden their experience of history. In Year 7, pupils begin to understand the beliefs of Mohammed and how these changed views in the Arab World in the seventh century. They can recognise some of the differences between Christian and Islamic beliefs at that time. In Year 8, pupils can follow the sequence of events in the English Civil War, debating whether Charles I was a martyr or a traitor. They assess the character of Oliver Cromwell and are aware of alternative ideas of government propounded by the Levellers and the Diggers. In Year 9, pupils know about the changes that took place in industry and agriculture during the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Britain. The higher-attaining pupils investigate the impact made on those changes by Richard Arkwright, Robert Owen and the Darby Family at Coalbrookdale. The use of numeracy is limited to timelines and pupils are not supported enough in their use of charts, graphs and numerical data. Likewise, use of information and communication technology is limited to gathering information from a small range of CD ROMs. Use of the Internet is developing but pupils have limited access to it in school.
149. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, with some good teaching in Year 9. Teachers share a determination and commitment to help their pupils succeed. They have a good knowledge of the subject and use this to challenge and support pupils in their learning. Teachers share high expectations of their pupils and place great emphasis on raising their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils are encouraged to be responsible for their actions and, as a result, they relate well to others. Teachers quickly build good relationships with the pupils, even though some

teachers and pupils have been in the school for only a short time, and they manage pupils well. Teachers have a clear brief to develop the literacy skills of their pupils. Key words are shared, spoken language is emphasised and guidance is given in writing. Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon what they have done in a lesson to evaluate what they have learnt. In Year 9, pupils are given an overview of a historical period, as an introduction, so that they can then see that events have both causes and consequences. In doing this, they extend their language by addressing broad ideas and begin to look at the wider implications of ideas like democracy and dictatorship. Pupils have good opportunities for working in pairs and learn well in these situations. For example, pupils in Year 10 discussed the causes of the Russian Revolution together and then decided on their importance before reporting their findings to the class.

150. In some lessons in Years 7 and 8, pupils are expected to listen to teachers or to other pupils for long periods of time. This taxes their levels of concentration and teachers sometimes lack the range of skills to retain pupils' involvement in the lesson. Teachers expect all pupils in a class to achieve similar tasks. This means that many lower-attaining pupils do not finish their work, losing the important sense of achievement. Planning does not sufficiently identify those skills that are needed to explore the content of the course effectively. Teachers do not always pay enough attention to the presentation of pupils' work or offer enough help with writing, research and numerical skills. Information and communication technology is not sufficiently used to encourage and support pupils in their work. Whilst teachers assess regularly and collect a wealth of data on the pupils and their progress over time, they do not always make good use of it. For example, they do not share them with pupils in such a way that they understand what they know and what they need to do to improve.
151. The subject is well managed. An effective line management system has resulted in significant changes in the support given to pupils in their work and in their behaviour. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching effectively ensure very high levels of shared commitment from all teachers, whether they are long-serving or recent appointments. Plans for the development of the subject are good, indicating the direction needed to raise standards of pupils' attainment and the subject is well placed to improve further.
152. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Support for literacy has assisted pupils to become more confident in their use of writing, although the range of their work is limited. Good opportunities are available for pupils to read and to listen to others reading. Teachers' good management of pupils' behaviour creates classrooms where pupils are interested in their learning and listen to their teachers and to other pupils with respect. Oral skills are well developed and all pupils, including the lower-attaining pupils, are willing to explain their ideas to the class at length and with some confidence. Pupils are well behaved in lessons.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Many of the pupils following the GNVQ course make good progress in the development of their knowledge and skills.
- Accommodation and resources are improving significantly as part of a major school development project.
- Positive management is beginning to have an impact on standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils benefit from the considerable weekend and holiday study provision offered by staff committed to raising standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards are low in Years 7 to 9, where there are continuing staffing problems.
- Constraints on the directly taught and on the cross-curricular elements of provision result in the incomplete coverage of the National Curriculum requirements.
- Monitoring and assessment procedures, particularly in Years 7 to 9, are limited.

- While the GNVQ full course is worthwhile, it does not meet the needs of all pupils.

153. Until recently, standards and progress have been adversely affected by severe staffing problems. Results in the GCSE examinations were very low in 2001, with less than half of pupils gaining a graded result and just one achieving a grade A\* to C. The school has now made significant improvements in staffing and management and the development of this subject is being considerably boosted by the school's innovative building and resources project.
154. Pupils come to the school with very low levels of attainment and much of their initial knowledge and skills relate to accessing the networked computers and organising and communicating ideas and information. Many have limited skills in literacy and pupils often need guidance throughout Years 7 to 9 about the appropriate style and layout for their work. Most are able to use given databases to find and use information, although pupils with special educational needs require additional support to cope with the work and have greater problems following instructions. In Year 9, pupils have fewer structured opportunities to learn new skills, as they are limited to the short tutorial periods at the end of the day. Pupils use those opportunities to search the Internet for specific information, for example, on careers guidance, although their limited skills restrict the range of outcomes. Towards the end of Year 9, standards have improved, although they are still well below the national expectation.
155. Over Years 7 to 9, pupils make satisfactory if modest progress in skills relating to the handling and presentation of ideas and information. Certain subjects, such as English, art and music, help reinforce these skills. Other aspects of the National Curriculum's programme of study, such as measuring, modelling and controlling data, are not adequately covered owing to resources being in short supply in several subjects, including design and technology, mathematics and science. The imminent improvements in resources will remedy many of these weaknesses but the continuing lack of permanent specialist teachers seriously limits the progress pupils are able to make in the taught programme.
156. In Years 10 and 11, standards in the GNVQ Intermediate level course are well below those expected nationally. The full course has proved to be both valuable and challenging for many pupils, although a significant minority have not been able to complete it because of chronic absence and a lack of application. However, about half of the pupils in Year 11 are on target to complete the necessary portfolio work. About one in eight pupils are working at merit and distinction standard and this is evident in the quality and range of their work. In lessons, those pupils work with greater independence. For example, they can analyse the needs of clients when setting up an information and communication system and they can evaluate and present their ideas with some confidence. However, the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 lack secure prior knowledge and require a considerable amount of structured support from their teachers to complete the required units of work.
157. Given their previously limited experiences in the subject and the lack of effective teaching earlier in the GNVQ course, many pupils in Year 11 are now making good progress. This is the result of recently improved provision that has considerably accelerated progress and enabled many pupils to achieve well. Even so, while most pupils are clearly improving their knowledge and skills, there is a significant minority, including those with special educational needs, who struggle with the Intermediate level learning and assessment tasks. Other pupils pursue a GNVQ course in different vocational areas, such as business, media studies and leisure and tourism. They use information and communication technology to complete their assignment work and most make at least satisfactory progress in the further development of their skills. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language progress at the same rate as others of their age.
158. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with practice stronger in Years 10 and 11, where the courses are taught by experienced specialist staff. In most lessons, teachers organise the learning effectively in ways that engage and develop interest and this contributes to the positive attitudes that most pupils have towards the subject. For example, in two lessons in Year 11, the teachers made effective use of an interactive whiteboard and a digital projector to involve pupils closely while they

were working through and discussing different ways of storing and analysing data. The core team of specialist staff demonstrates a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to teaching the GNVQ course and provides considerable additional learning opportunities for pupils after school, at weekends and in the holidays. In the best lessons, good planning provides pupils with a clear idea of the learning objectives so that they work with greater purpose. However, in some longer lessons, the focus on supported self-study results in a lack of variety and a subsequent loss of pace and productivity. The need to use temporary teaching staff for some classes in Years 7 to 9 occasionally results in unsatisfactory teaching, where the planned lesson outcomes lack challenge and the management of learning is less effective, slowing the rate of learning.

159. Very good leadership and good management are beginning to improve provision. There are still a number of major challenges facing the new team, particularly in the provision for Years 7 to 9. The taught programme has yet to be fully implemented and, consequently, the current provision does not fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. The lack of specialist permanent staff adversely affects the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of teachers' monitoring and assessment in those years. Consequently, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are not always aware of the standards they are achieving or what they need to do to succeed.

160. The GNVQ programme in Years 10 to 11 is a good innovation. However, the full course is proving too difficult for some pupils and it limits opportunities for developing outside links with more vocational relevance. There is a significant number of positive changes. The strategic management of the £500,000 development project is very effective and will shortly lead to the completion of a modern centre containing four computer suites and a multi-media production area. This should cure the problems of access that are limiting the use of information and communication technology in other subjects. The building of a further seven computer suites in subject areas will ensure that the school has excellent resources. The new management in the subject has introduced improved materials for learning and assessment in the GNVQ course and more rigorous monitoring and staff development are improving the quality of teaching. Overall, the subject has experienced a number of problems but is now establishing a worthwhile provision.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Standards of work in Year 11 are improving in comparison with previous examination results.
- Pupils in express groups make good progress by the end of Year 9.
- Teachers share a strong common approach to oral work in the first part of lessons.
- There are opportunities for pupils with French as a home language to take GCSE early and progress to examinations at AS or A2 level.
- The close teamwork and commitment of the department give very good support to pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- GCSE examination results.
- Standards achieved by eleven to fourteen-year-olds, especially in the lower-band classes.
- The motivation and response of some eleven to fourteen-year-old pupils, especially in the second half of lessons.
- Consistency in teaching the interrelationship between sounds and spellings in French.

161. Standards in the 2000 and 2001 GCSE examinations were well below the national averages. However, over half of the pupils who took the examination in 2001 had been taught for only an hour a week throughout the course - a very low time allocation that has since been increased. Work seen during the inspection was of a higher standard than this. All pupils' achievements are satisfactory, although standards are still below the nationally expected levels. For example, Year 11 pupils wrote and then read aloud short passages about their future plans, using the future tense accurately. They then extended this work by adding sentences giving their opinions and justifications. A Year 11 German class, preparing for their oral examinations, worked successfully

on rôle-play at both foundation level and higher level. Displays of assessed coursework illustrate the full range of grades, including several examples with grades in the A\* to C range.

162. Most pupils in Years 7 and 8 can recognise and pronounce individual words and can sometimes use them in short sentences. Typically, pupils are working at the first two levels identified in the National Curriculum's programme of study. This represents an appropriate level of attainment for many, given their prior attainment, and the progress of most pupils, including those learning English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs, is satisfactory overall. However, there are insufficient opportunities for potentially higher-attaining pupils to move on to higher levels. Standards are well below national expectations, especially in the lower-band classes. In Year 9, pupils begin a modular GCSE course that requires them to complete significantly more demanding tasks. In an upper-band class in Year 9, pupils read aloud passages prepared for homework, using the present tense and occasionally the imperfect tense. Their pronunciation was clear and they were all working confidently at higher levels. In 2001, 69 per cent of pupils in Year 9 achieved at least the minimum number of points needed to achieve a GCSE grade.
163. The high rate of mobility amongst pupils is a key factor in limiting the attainment of some classes. For example, only seven of the 26 pupils in one of the classes in Year 11 were in the class at the beginning of Year 10.
164. Teaching is satisfactory overall in both French and German and teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the languages being learned. With younger pupils, there is a consistent strength in the oral work at the start of lessons. Overhead transparencies are well used and a good variety of techniques is employed in repetition and questioning. For example, longer words are carefully split up into syllables. Some very good teaching is characterised by extensive use of the language being learned, teachers' high expectations of pupils, their challenging questions and a very good use of time. Pupils respond well to the demanding pace and the quality of learning is very good.
165. In other lessons, although the sounds of words are well taught, insufficient attention is paid to teaching the interrelationship between the sounds and spellings of new vocabulary. This means that many pupils, especially those with special educational needs, have difficulties later on in the lesson, when they are expected to work independently with the written word. Younger pupils' attitudes are less satisfactory in the latter part of lessons, partly because of this and also because the tasks they are set are not always sufficiently motivating, and teachers' management of these pupils is not always strong enough. Unsatisfactory use of assessment in these years sometimes leads to low expectations of what can be attained. However, pupils in examination classes behave well and display positive attitudes.
166. The new course book introduced in Years 7 and 8 provides a very clear structure for the curriculum and offers a good range of teaching resources. The learning objectives are clearly explained to pupils at the start of lessons, but do not necessarily give pupils a good view of what they will go on to do with the material they are learning. The curriculum for younger pupils does not offer enough short-term goals to provide additional motivation or to relate lessons to pupils' interests. The department has in the past made good use of information and communication technology but current building works limit access to the specialist facilities.
167. The school legitimately withdraws most pupils in Years 10 and 11 from modern foreign languages and relatively small numbers now follow GCSE courses. However, there is much more time available for pupils taking GCSE than in the previous year. The modular GCSE courses in French and German are well managed and pupils are very clear about what they have achieved so far and what they will need to do in order to achieve their target grades. There are good arrangements for assessing the progress of younger pupils, using the levels set out in the National Curriculum. However, the relationship between these levels and the tasks set is not made explicit to pupils in the regular course of lessons.



168. Good arrangements are made for the increasing number of pupils who are native speakers of French to take the GCSE examination early. Many of these pupils then progress to an AS/A2-level course. There is only one taught period for this and pupils are expected to pursue individual work during their ordinary lessons. Similar opportunities are offered to native speakers of other languages. A key strength of the department is the level of support offered to pupils outside the formal timetable. This is provided through homework clubs and the Saturday school individual support is offered before, during and after school. In previous years, the curriculum has been enriched by short trips and cross-curricular residential visits abroad.
169. The department is well led and managed. Very strong leadership by example has secured good levels of commitment from the teaching team. Long-standing links with the teacher-training course at King's College bring benefits for trainees and for the school. The thorough procedures for monitoring teaching have a positive impact, for example by extending the range of techniques used to teach reading. Further work needs to be done to improve pupils' attitudes and to facilitate progression in learning, particularly in Years 7 and 8. The quality and range of resources have improved, especially in terms of new books, good visual aids and well-prepared resources. However, there are still some very old cassette players whose poor sound quality adversely affects the quality of learning. The classrooms are not carpeted and the acoustics are therefore not helpful for activities such as collaborative games, paired work or group-work.
170. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, particularly in teaching and in the curriculum. These have yet to show through in the results of public examinations although there is good reason to expect that they will do so in the near future.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **very good, with some outstanding features.**

### Strengths

- Music is well supported by a strong teaching team with excellent leadership.
- The rich and varied curriculum provided for pupils of all ages.
- Very good teaching resources.
- Very good relationships with pupils.
- Opportunities for extra-curricular involvement are excellent.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils need more opportunities to analyse their progress and to articulate their own and others' achievements within lessons.

171. During the inspection, standards of attainment were well above those expected nationally at the ends of Years 9 and 11 and pupils' achievements were very good across the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make very good progress. The results of the GCSE examinations in 2001 were well above the national average, with all the pupils entered obtaining A\* to C grades.
172. Pupils in Year 8 learned to play a Russian folk song on the xylophones, identifying where changes of pace took place. A Year 9 group was able to devise improvisations based on Pachelbel's Canon, using the keyboards in a variety of different styles and adding their own rhythmic accompaniments. In a drumming workshop, pupils in Year 10 showed that they were competent and confident performers, well able to keep complex rhythmic patterns. Their technical skills were progressively extended throughout the session. Other pupils in Year 10 worked well and achieved high standards when devising improvisations based loosely on a melody by Bach. Compositions at GCSE level are structurally sound and show sensitivity to musical texture. Performances are competent and confident and, in some cases, well above the standards normally expected from GCSE pupils.

173. Standards of literacy vary greatly owing to the nature of the school's intake. Teachers use every opportunity to advance pupils' speaking and listening skills in lessons and refer to wall displays to support the development of literacy. A notable feature of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is the revision handbook given to all pupils that contains key words, concepts, and stylistic features to aid pupils' progress.
174. The quality of teaching is very good with some outstanding features and teachers have excellent knowledge of the subject and how to teach it. Consequently, pupils learn very rapidly and generally display very high levels of creative imagination. In one lesson, the teacher demonstrated the tone quality of both baroque and modern flutes, giving a highly competent performance on each, which led to a lively comparison among pupils of the two timbres and their suitability for different musical styles. Teachers expect the highest standards from their pupils in terms of attainment and effort and pupils' attitudes to the subject are excellent. Gifted and talented pupils make extremely rapid progress. Teachers make excellent use of time and of technical resources. For example, in one lesson, the teacher ingeniously used a computer as a basis for a class improvisation upon a repeating musical pattern, thus enabling all pupils to contribute and at the same time freeing the teacher to move around the classroom and offer extra support in performance to those in need of it.
175. Relationships are very good and teachers manage pupils well. Pupils are motivated by the quality of teaching in the lessons and there are therefore few instances of poor behaviour or attitudes. Written work is marked regularly, with helpful comments included on how work might have been improved. Although pupils make some use of self-assessment worksheets, they do not have enough opportunities for evaluating their own work or that of others. This practice would introduce an even greater sense of self-esteem, ownership and understanding of their efforts and progress.
176. The curriculum includes a range of exceptional practical opportunities. In particular, pupils work regularly with visiting musicians of a high calibre. Schemes of work are detailed, and the content is regularly updated and adapted. Many pupils have taken part in formative musical experiences which they will remember all their lives. For example, one pupil was invited to attend a jazz drumming workshop at the Royal Academy of Music with a boy from Dulwich College, and the steel band regularly gives public performances both inside and outside school. Very good teaching resources include information and communication technology. This technology is well used for teaching musical composition to option groups in Years 9, 10 and 11, and is being well developed for the rest of Years 7, 8 and 9.
177. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. Regular communication is maintained between staff and visiting instrumental teachers. The staff have an excellent, up-to-date knowledge of recent developments in the subject and are looking to the future in terms of developing sound-recording facilities. The head of music holds regular departmental meetings to which all members of the department contribute freely. At the meeting observed during the inspection, the progress of pupils was discussed and individual pupils' needs were considered carefully. For example, potentially gifted pupils were identified and the possibility of instrumental tuition being offered to them was discussed. Pupils whose behaviour was causing concern were also dealt with and a departmental plan for monitoring them was formed. Trainee music teachers, who are welcomed into the school, were involved in a discussion about how they might rapidly take on important rôles in the department. Meetings are minuted and records made available as required.
178. The department has made further very good improvements from an existing very strong base. The quality of all staff is excellent. The wide range of curricular opportunities already present during the last inspection has been developed even further. For example, the school has taken advantage of external funding to secure the services of an expert in Brazilian drumming who is providing a series of exciting workshops for older pupils. During this inspection, a highly competent young violinist visited the school and performed a movement from Vivaldi's Four Seasons, accompanied on keyboards by a class from Year 10. A strong feature of the department is the growing number of ex-pupils who are returning, following further training, as

peripatetic instrumental tutors. These teachers provide excellent rôle-models for pupils in the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Assessment procedures provide opportunities for the clear identification of pupils' attainment.
- The programme of extra-curricular activities in physical education provides good opportunities for pupils to attain higher levels of physical performance.
- The physical education instructors provide good levels of support for pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching approaches to involve pupils in the evaluation of their own and others' work and improve their knowledge and understanding.
- Implementation of the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum with regard to information and communication technology.
- Implementation of policies and procedures to ensure a close link between curriculum planning and practice.
- The formalisation of procedures for risk assessment.

179. Standards of attainment in Year 9 are in line with national expectations, but standards in Year 11 are below national expectations. There is no significant difference between the attainments of boys and girls or of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, including those learning English as an additional language. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress through the school. In 2001, the percentage of pupils gaining A\* to C grades in the GCSE examination was below the national average, but results compare favourably with those in other subjects. The percentage obtaining a G grade or better was also below the national average.

180. In Years 7 to 9, athletic skills are developing well, although pupils sometimes lack consistency and control in their performances. Pupils of all ages demonstrate good quality performances in cricket and apply their skills well in badminton. They are able to answer questions about different muscle groups and demonstrate techniques for safe stretches. Skills and routines on the trampoline are carried out with quality and control. During games, pupils respond well to others and they play competitive games with a good sporting attitude. They co-operate well and abide by the rules of the game. They sustain their efforts and concentration well. Behaviour is generally satisfactory or better, although some pupils need to be reminded about modifying and improving their behaviour. The behavioural problems of some pupils lead to time wasting and disruption.

181. The teachers have developed good relationships with the pupils and their efforts have a beneficial effect upon achievement, attitudes and behaviour. Pupils make gains in self-esteem through the good levels of support and encouragement they receive. They make sustained effort, particularly when developing their bowling action in cricket and their sprinting technique in athletics. They participate keenly in health-related activities and work hard to consolidate their skills in trampolining. However, they have very few opportunities to evaluate the performance of others, mainly owing to the limited range of teaching approaches and the lack of resources available for some activities.

182. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are better in Years 7 to 9 than they are in Years 10 and 11, where they are satisfactory. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge of the subject, plan well, promote positive relationships and provide good support to pupils. Where lessons are good, they are taught with good pace and provide good feedback, based on good day-to-day assessment, with good reinforcement of key words. Teachers clearly identify the learning objectives for the lesson and make good use of warm-ups and other related activities. Time and resources are generally well used.

183. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, teachers use limited questioning strategies to develop knowledge and understanding. Progress is sometimes limited by inadequate resources or by insufficient opportunities to select and apply previously acquired skills in individual, group or team activities. On some occasions, pupils are not clear about the purpose of an activity and some find the work difficult, especially when there are no appropriate activities to match their ability. Non-participants are not always actively involved in the lessons and late arrivals are often disruptive. Nevertheless, pupils try hard and learn well for most of the time.
184. Management of the department is satisfactory. Good use is made of delegation and in-service training to promote staff development, although there are no formal monitoring procedures to raise standards or to ensure new teachers are aware of the policy or procedures of the department. When teachers have attended courses, they provide feedback to colleagues and are able to implement changes into the curriculum. For example, one member of the department attended a course about assessment and, subsequently, new assessment strategies have been introduced. These strategies inform pupils of the levels at which they are performing and allow challenging targets to be set. Pupils are not yet fully involved in their own assessment and overall levels of attainment are not systematically monitored.
185. There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities that leads to school, regional and representative successes. These activities take place at varying times, including Saturday mornings. Good use is made of the physical education instructors who provide good support for the teachers. They are well informed about the curriculum planning, are well qualified and know the subject well. They help promote high standards in performance during both the curricular and extra-curricular programmes.
186. Curriculum planning is good, although details of effective practice are not included. These need to identify how pupils will be involved in their own assessments, how literacy and numeracy can be approached and how the range of different ability groups can be addressed. Risk assessment procedures need to be formalised in the departmental procedures and included as a regular activity during every lesson. Further development of the curriculum is required to ensure information and communication technology is built into the physical education curriculum to improve learning opportunities.
187. The changing rooms are in a poor condition and this is having a significant impact on behaviour and on the standards of work seen. The new facilities and planned refurbishment will improve opportunities to raise the standards of work of the department.
188. Since the last inspection, progress has been satisfactory. Assessment strategies have been implemented in order to inform pupils of their level of attainment and improve progress. Lessons now provide good reinforcement of key words and their meaning and pupils' attitudes to learning are satisfactory or better in the majority of lessons.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' management of pupils in lessons.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment as a tool for learning.
- Use of specialist teachers in Years 10 and 11.
- Textbooks for homework and revision.
- Continuing professional development.

189. The school entered candidates for the GCSE and GCSE (short course) examinations in 2000. In that year, one pupil in 20 achieved an A\* to C grade. In 2001, one pupil in five achieved an A\* to C

grade. Despite the strong upward trend, both sets of results are well below the national average and below what pupils achieve in their other subjects. At the end of Year 9, pupils sit an internal examination, but their performance is not measured against the focus statements of the locally agreed syllabus or the levels of the national scale of attainment.

190. Pupils begin Year 7 at well below the expected standard and remain well below the expected standard at the end of Year 9. Given the low level of attainment on entry, pupils, including those with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress. Pupils learn about Christianity and the other major religions, identifying the beliefs and practices of each religion. They make correct use of some technical terms but lack understanding of how religion may be a powerful force in people's lives. They also lack the capacity to reflect on, and give a personal response to, religious and moral issues. In their attitudes, behaviour and relationships, however, pupils show an appropriate level of personal maturity.
191. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress although, by the end of Year 11, attainment is still well below expectations. Pupils know about Christianity and Islam. Their knowledge of religious belief and practice is at the right level for GCSE but their understanding of religious ideas and their ability to evaluate issues remain underdeveloped. Only a minority possess the skills and precision that lead to higher grades at GCSE but, in their attitudes, behaviour and relationships, most pupils continue to show the expected level of personal development.
192. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In Years 7, 8 and 9, teachers' management of pupils is very good but some teachers' knowledge and understanding of religion is inadequate. In Years 10 and 11, teachers manage pupils well but, again, some teachers lack the necessary knowledge and understanding. To be successful in the GCSE examinations, pupils need teachers who are confident about the content and familiar with the skills required. Observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work show that assessment is not used as a tool for learning in any age group. No procedures exist to tell pupils their standard of attainment or to give them targets to work towards. Teachers' marking gives pupils encouragement but does not tell them what level they are at or how they could improve. Consequently, pupils' responses and their rate of learning tend to be no more than satisfactory. Another weakness is in homework. Teachers comply with the school's policy by setting homework but, for most pupils, regular work at home is impossible without a textbook. Exercise books show that work done in class is not extended and developed by tasks done at home.
193. The curriculum meets the requirements of the agreed syllabus. The programmes of study are broad and relevant but show a lack of balance. The emphasis in the content is on what pupils are to learn about religions and not enough on what pupils may learn about themselves from their study of religion. Similarly, systematic use of assessment to support pupils' progress and to guide curricular planning is absent from the programmes of study. In Years 10 and 11, the GCSE course provides good content and a valuable incentive. More emphasis on the skills of explanation and evaluation would prepare pupils better for the examination and contribute more to their personal development.
194. Leadership and management are sound. Religious education reflects the aims and values of the school. It shares the school's emphasis on respect for people's beliefs and on social inclusion. The development plan is practical and embraces the school's overall priorities but lacks specific expectations for the future of religious education in the school. The school has plans to monitor and evaluate teaching but these have not yet been systematically implemented. The department is committed to improvement but its capacity to succeed is limited. Although most pupils have the benefit of specialist teaching, in Years 10 and 11, when all pupils follow the GCSE course, the lack of knowledge and understanding of some teachers has a negative impact on pupils' learning. Further improvement depends on specialist teaching for the examination course and a programme of continuing professional development. There is also a shortage of good learning resources, including textbooks. Pupils often have to share textbooks in the lesson or use photocopied sheets. It is a serious disadvantage not to have a textbook for homework and revision.

195. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The most recent results at GCSE are much better than those for the previous year. In their attitudes and behaviour, pupils continue to show the appropriate level of personal maturity. Teachers manage pupils well in lessons and pupils make satisfactory progress in learning. The present head of department wants to take the subject forward. The introduction of regular assessment will help the move towards an effective self-managing department. Further development will depend on the school's continuing support for religious education and on commitment to the areas still in need of improvement.

## VOCATIONAL COURSES

### LEISURE AND TOURISM

Overall, the quality of provision in leisure and tourism is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- The subject is well taught and managed.
- Good teaching of basic skills.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment.
- Further links with external organisations.
- Greater emphasis on gathering information through questionnaires and field surveys.

196. The GNVQ course was introduced last year as an option. There are, therefore, no examination results to report. The standard of work seen is below national expectations due in part to the high level of mobility in the school and the high proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Many pupils experience difficulty in understanding concepts and lack basic knowledge of, for example, the location of places such as York or Dartmoor. In spite of this, they work hard and make good progress.

197. Pupils follow the requirements of the examination board, pursuing a broad curriculum through case studies and examinations. The quality of work varies from very good to weak. The investigation of facilities for tourism in the region around the school produced work of very good quality by some pupils, whereas other results revealed weaknesses in techniques of investigation as well as analytical skills.

198. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers plan their work well and reinforce the importance of professionalism in the presentation of case studies. Basic skills are well taught so that the pupils are given the basis for independent work. However, many pupils require additional support to bridge the gap between prior attainment and expectations. Teachers prepare their lessons thoroughly and work at a pace which gives pupils enough time to absorb new concepts. A variety of strategies is used in order to maintain the interest and enthusiasm of the class. These include discussions, presentations by pupils, note-taking and analysis of data. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge of the subject, enabling them to answer questions accurately and to direct pupils' learning effectively. In spite of starting from a low base, a significant proportion of pupils makes good progress during the course.

199. The subject is well managed by a very able co-ordinator who has a very clear vision for the course, reflecting the aims of the school and providing appropriate opportunities for the pupils. Plans are well organised and links have been established with the examination board to ensure that requirements are met. Satisfactory resources include a good range of up-to-date texts and other supporting materials.

## BUSINESS STUDIES

The overall provision for GNVQ business studies is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Experienced and well-qualified teachers give good support and guidance to pupils.
- Expectations of work and behaviour are high and pupils respond well to these.

#### Areas for improvement

- The broadening of the experience of the working environment through visits, visitors or personal experience would improve pupils' learning.

200. Standards of attainment are below those normally expected. Whilst many pupils did not achieve a full GNVQ award last year, this was mainly due to the change in course half way through the year. Pupils did receive unit accreditations, which can be followed up when they transfer to further education. This is an important factor in motivating and keeping those pupils interested in their learning. The course is in its second year and the number of pupils in Year 10 has doubled.

201. Teaching and learning are good and pupils are motivated and interested in their learning. Their pace of learning is slow but pupils benefit from the tight structure of the course that allows deadlines to be set, clear goals to be established and small steps of learning identified. This enables pupils to gain some control over what they learn.

202. The management of the course is good. Teachers share common standards which are effectively communicated to pupils. The monitoring and organisation of teaching are effective and contribute to the vibrancy of the course. Whilst the higher-attaining pupils achieve full accreditation of a GNVQ, the time allocation is half that recommended for the course. This results in insufficient opportunities for pupils to experience work-related studies.

## MEDIA STUDIES

The overall quality of provision in media studies is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Staff experienced in the teaching of the subject bring a confidence and competence to lessons.
- A good range of learning opportunities is offered to pupils.
- A good choice is made of the topics on offer within the GNVQ syllabus, often generated by pupils' enthusiasm.
- Very good teaching ensures a high level of motivation among pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The school should consider providing a designated room for the subject, equipped with multi-media computer facilities.

203. The present Year 11 pupils will be the first ones to take the GNVQ in this subject and there are therefore no previous examination results as indicators of attainment. However, the pupils' files to date contain some extremely good examples of finished and externally moderated work, with a very good proportion of pupils obtaining high grades in the subject. The results of the external unit tests are very encouraging. Standards of literacy and numeracy vary greatly, owing to the nature of the intake, but staff plan and teach their lessons in such a manner as to maximise opportunities for developing both areas whenever possible.

204. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Pupils are introduced to the scope and range of the subject very competently in Year 10 and develop skills in oral and written presentation in a variety of ways. In the lesson observed during the inspection, pupils gave constructive and articulate advice on how to improve an oral presentation given by a pupil who had no previous experience of such a task. In Year 11, pupils are encouraged to develop their critical skills through an understanding of genres in various media, including film and literature. This is assisted by thoughtful and intelligent discussions, facilitated by the teacher. For example, pupils were invited to construct a range of interpretations of a 'still' from a well-known film, based upon what they observed in the image. In addition to class-based work, pupils have visited the British Broadcasting Corporation, a local newspaper office and a local radio station in order to gain a deeper understanding of the variety of working situations available to those employed in the media industry.

205. The teacher with overall responsibility for media studies is very experienced in teaching the subject and has made great progress in developing outside links and in acquiring useful equipment, such as a digital camera and laptop computers. There are good displays in both classrooms where the subject is taught, one of which was based on pages from the Internet, describing career opportunities in the media world. Cross-curricular links are frequently made. For example, in one lesson, the pupils' attention was drawn to a very good example of a relevant English essay that was displayed on the classroom wall.