

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HIGHBURY GROVE SCHOOL**

Highbury New Park, London

LEA area: Islington

Unique reference number: 100452

Headteacher: Ms T White

Reporting inspector: Mrs G Kayembe  
2901

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 199705

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 and students:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils and students:	Mixed
School address:	Highbury New Park London
Postcode:	N5 2EG
Telephone number:	020 7288 8900
Fax number:	020 7288 8910
Appropriate authority:	The local education authority
Chair of governors:	Ms M Dawes
Date of previous inspection:	April 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2901	G Kayembe	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9779	S Smith	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils and students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
19913	R Garrett	Team inspector	English	
15268	J English	Team inspector	Mathematics	
6432	M Sewter	Team inspector	Science Chemistry	
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art and design English as an additional language	
28106	J Majid	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
7084	J Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology	
19532	H Davies	Team inspector	Business studies	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
31329	K Barratt	Team inspector	History Equal opportunities	
15023	A Haouas	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
19532	E Charlesworth	Team inspector	Music	
22584	C Goulding	Team inspector	Physical education	
10807	P Quest	Team inspector	Religious education	
12336	M Overend	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs	

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National Westminster Bank Chambers  
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Burnham-on-Sea  
Somerset  
TA8 1AN

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' and students' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>15</b>
The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements	
Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	<b>74</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

There are 1141 students aged between 11 to 18 on roll. The school caters for boys and girls in Years 7 and 10 although boys outnumber girls by five to one. In Years 11 to 13, there are only boys. Though the school is larger than average, the sixth form is relatively small with 70 male students. The intake of the school is very ethnically diverse and about 75 per cent of the pupils on roll are representative of a wide range of minority ethnic groups, the largest being African Caribbean followed by Bangladeshi. Though a large proportion of pupils, about 60 per cent, speak English as an additional language, relatively few, less than five per cent, are beginners in English. Nonetheless, many who are reasonably fluent speakers are still developing fluency in writing and their wider knowledge and understanding of the English language. The school caters for a high proportion of pupils with refugee status, most of whom are from Somalia.

Nearly half of the school's pupils have special educational needs, and this is well above average. Many of these pupils have behavioural difficulties. Those with statements make up 4.2 per cent of the roll and this is high. The pupils' home backgrounds are very mixed but, overall, reflect considerable levels of social and financial hardship. A high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school, though improving, is well below average.

The school is participating in, and benefiting from, a number of government initiatives, such as Excellence in Cities. Funds from such initiatives have been used to put in place a learning support unit to help meet the needs of pupils with behavioural difficulties. A City Learning Centre opened very recently. The current headteacher is relatively new and took up post just over a year ago.

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

This is an effective and improving school. The quality of education provided is satisfactory and teaching is satisfactory overall though much good teaching was seen during the inspection, especially for pupils in Years 10 to 11. There is a very clear direction from the headteacher for continued improvement and much has been done in her first year in post. Rigorous and effective systems for managing the school are in place. However, given the challenging nature of the intake, much remains to be done. Standards of work are well below average by the end of Year 9 and below by Year 11. Low standards are due in part to poor levels of attendance and punctuality and poor attitudes amongst a significant minority of pupils, though many behave well and are enthusiastic about school. Poor literacy and lack of basic learning skills drag down standards further. Nonetheless, pupils make satisfactory progress and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- There is very good inclusion of all pupils in what the school provides.
- The leadership by the headteacher is very good.
- The quality of teaching is good in nearly three-quarters of lessons in Years 10 to 11.
- The recent improvement in the GCSE results, in particular the good increase in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C.
- The sixth-form provision is good and, as a result, post-16 students make good progress.
- Procedures for monitoring attendance and behaviour are good.
- Provision for English, music, physical education and personal and social education is good.
- The provision for extra-curricular activities on Friday afternoons is very good.

## What could be improved

- Poor attendance, punctuality and behaviour amongst a significant minority of pupils adversely affect progress.
- Pupils' learning in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory and their learning skills are underdeveloped.
- Numeracy is poorly developed.
- Legal requirements for religious education in Years 10 to 11 and in the sixth form, and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across subjects of the curriculum are not met.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Some aspects of the education provided have improved well since the last inspection in April 1998, such as the special educational needs provision. The quality of teaching has also improved well and is now much better. GCSE results, though still well below average, show good signs of improvement. Though there have been improvements in behaviour, much remains to be done to ensure that it is satisfactory overall. Despite considerable effort on the part of the school, attendance remains well below average. A number of statutory breaches identified in the last report have yet to be satisfactorily addressed. The overall improvement has been satisfactory, though some very innovative measures taken by the headteacher are increasing the pace of change and hence improvement. These include the split lunch hour and the 'nurture groups' in Year 7. The biggest challenge for the school is to raise the attainment by effectively tackling factors such as attendance, behaviour and literacy, which hold back progress and depress standards. Given the strength of the school leadership, there is good capacity for the school to improve further.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

Standards in public examinations and tests have been well below average for a number of years. Pupils' overall performance in GCSE examinations was well below average in 2001. However, there was a significant improvement in the percentage gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C. Results in national tests for 14-year-olds in English and science were also well below average in 2001 and in mathematics were amongst the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. The gap between boys and girls was narrower than was the case nationally. A-level results were well below average. The results in vocational courses were better than in A-levels.



GCSE results in 2001 in most subjects were below average. However, in ICT, physical education and Turkish they were above. GCSE results in English, English literature and mathematics were creditable given that pupils' attainment on entry to the school was low. In design and technology, French and Spanish, GCSE results were well below average. There are some differences between different minority ethnic groups. Black pupils, especially those of Caribbean origin or of dual heritage, Indian and Pakistani pupils performed less well than other groups at GCSE in 2001, whilst Bangladeshi pupils did rather better than others. In the National Curriculum tests, pupils of Turkish origin performed less well than others. Asian pupils, especially Bangladeshi pupils, outperformed other groups in the tests.

The inspection findings reflect a similar picture, though standards of work seen in Years 10 to 11 are a little better than examination results. This is because pupils seen in lessons tend to be those whose attendance is better. Thus the pupils seen did not represent the whole intake.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory overall, with many pupils demonstrating enthusiasm for school and positive attitudes to work. However, attitudes amongst a minority are unsatisfactory.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory in most lessons though in a minority, pupils' behaviour disrupts learning. Behaviour around the school is unsatisfactory. Pupils are often too boisterous.
Personal development and relationships	Though pupils make sound progress in developing social skills, their overall personal development is unsatisfactory. Pupils are very tolerant of, and interested in, the ways and beliefs of others. However, understanding and respect for others' feelings are less well developed.
Attendance	Well below average. Punctuality to lessons is poor.

There is some bullying, though the school deals with it swiftly once it is brought to its notice. Fixed-term exclusion rates are above national norms, though below the local education authority rate. Exclusions of pupils of Caribbean heritage are high.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10 – 11</b>	<b>Years 12 – 13</b>
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Good

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

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, though good in Years 10 to 11 and in Years 12 to 13. Teaching is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this effectively in most lessons to help pupils understand key subject ideas and develop their subject knowledge. Questioning is often good and helps to extend pupils' learning. The overall match of work to pupils' needs is satisfactory though the

use of different tasks and materials for different groups of pupils, such as those with special needs or English as an additional language, is not widespread. Hence, there is some variation in the extent to which pupils' individual needs are met. Able pupils are not always stretched enough. Most teachers manage behaviour well and establish an effective, work-centred learning environment but where teaching is less than satisfactory, it is usually, but not always, due to weaker management and control of behaviour.

Pupils' learning skills in Years 7 to 9 are often unsatisfactory, principally due to the erratic attendance of many. Many pupils require considerable input from their teachers to help them complete the work set and teachers work very hard in lessons to support them. Whilst in most lessons pupils make a conscious effort with their work, many find it hard to maintain concentration for long periods or to work by themselves. Poor literacy further exacerbates the pupils' capacity to work on their own. Literacy skills are satisfactorily taught but not enough attention is given to teaching numeracy in subjects.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 11 and good in the sixth form. Legal requirements are not met in the use of ICT in subjects, or in religious education in Years 10 to 11 and the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision for pupils with special educational needs and a wide range of strategies and initiatives are in place to help meet their needs. These are increasingly effective in helping pupils to make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The English as an additional language team is new and is beginning to provide good quality support both in lessons and when pupils are withdrawn for additional help for learning English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory overall. Provision for cultural development is good. Good attention is given to developing pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity in Britain today. Provision for social and moral development is satisfactory but is unsatisfactory for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pastoral care is good in many respects. The procedures for monitoring behaviour and attendance are good. Assessment systems are in place and are satisfactory, though the use of assessment information is underdeveloped.

The school works hard with parents and partnership with them is effective. Pupils' learning in art and design, design and technology and ICT in Years 7 to 9 has been adversely affected by the rotational teaching arrangements. As a result, skills are not developed systematically and pupils have poor recall of work completed over time. These weaknesses contribute to the unsatisfactory learning in lessons.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership and has set a very clear direction for development. Members of the senior management team provide good support to the headteacher and good leadership and management in their own areas of work. Line management arrangements are well established and generally contribute well to the development of middle managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well with the exception of legal requirements in ICT and religious education. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are actively involved in its work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good overall. Good systems are in place to monitor and review work, though some further attention is needed to ensure that all monitoring activities are rigorous. Monitoring information is used well to guide improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily. Staffing and learning resources are satisfactory but accommodation is unsatisfactory.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL<sup>1</sup>

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That pupils are expected to work hard</li> <li>• That their children like school</li> <li>• That the school is approachable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour</li> <li>• Homework – not enough is provided</li> <li>• Information to parents</li> </ul>

The inspection evidence largely supports parents' positive views and also parents' concerns about behaviour as it is unsatisfactory around the school and in some lessons. General information provided to parents is good though pupils' annual reports are not easy to read. Homework is regularly set, but many pupils do not complete it.

<sup>1</sup> Only a small number of parents returned the questionnaire.

## **ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM**

## **HIGHBURY GROVE SCHOOL**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form is a joint provision between Highbury Grove and Highbury Fields Schools. There are 70 male students from Highbury Grove and 88 female students from Highbury Fields. The total roll of 158 is just below the national average size for sixth forms. There is a joint director of the sixth form who works in both schools, and separate deputy directors, based in the individual schools. The sixth form is smaller in size than at the time of the last inspection. Entry to the sixth form is on the basis of GCSE successes and currently most students on AS/A-level courses have gained five A\*-C passes by the age of 16. In mathematics, a B grade at GCSE is required. The staying on rate at Highbury Grove from Year 11 is very low at 27 per cent. The retention rate on courses is satisfactory in English, art and design and business but lower in mathematics and science.

### **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The joint sixth form provides well for its students and is cost-effective as the joint arrangements result in viable group sizes. A good range of learning opportunities is available across the two schools. Students talk enthusiastically about their life in the sixth form and are appreciative about the support and guidance provided by subject and pastoral staff. Students have a wide range of AS/A-level and vocational subjects to choose from. Standards are average compared to the national picture. The leadership of the senior staff and tutors ensures clear educational direction. Every effort is made to provide appropriate guidance and support to meet students' individual needs and aspirations.

#### **Strengths**

- The quality of teaching is good.
- The range of courses available is wide and caters well for the future needs of students.
- There is very good progress on vocational courses from Years 10 and 11.
- Good relationships between teachers and students promote a positive ethos.
- There is good educational and personal support and guidance.
- The opportunities for students to be actively involved in their own learning are good.

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

- Provision for the teaching of numerical skills is unsatisfactory.
- The quality of accommodation in the sixth-form area is unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements for religious education and assemblies are not met.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students show good attitudes to work and independent learning habits.
<b>Chemistry</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> teaching is effective and hence students achieve satisfactory standards overall. Though they make satisfactory progress, this is hampered by the lack of use of computers.
<b>Business.</b>	<b>Satisfactory:</b> students are achieving well in relation to earlier academic achievements at GCSE due to good teaching. There is not enough involvement in work-related activities.
<b>Art</b>	<b>Good:</b> AVCE courses provide well for students' needs. Teaching and learning are good and students make good progress. Standards in previous years at GNVQ Intermediate level have been very good.
<b>English</b>	<b>Good:</b> teaching is good overall. Students achieve well. They appreciate the learning environment at Highbury Fields.

### Other subjects sampled

**ICT:** very good provision in the GNVQ course in the new City Learning Centre. Very good teaching and learning. In key skills ICT, provision is poor and learning unsatisfactory as a result of poor motivation.

**Psychology:** good teaching and positive attitudes to work from students resulted in good gains in learning in the lesson observed.

**History:** very good teaching with well-designed tasks and a wide range of stimulating resources resulted in extending students' knowledge and understanding well.

**Recreational physical education:** coaching was of good quality and students' level of fitness and related knowledge improved during the session.

**Biology:** provision is good and students make good progress as a result of good teaching.

**Intermediate GNVQ science:** provision is good and students are making satisfactory progress.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	<b>Good:</b> regular feedback from teachers and termly academic progress reviews help students to understand how well they are doing and how they can improve the standard of their work.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	<b>Good:</b> the director of studies, ably supported by the two deputy directors, provides a clear educational direction for the sixth form. They manage day-to-day working of the sixth form well. There are no problems associated with equality of access and opportunity for students. There are, however, some weaknesses in communication between the two schools in English and mathematics.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choice of courses allows me to follow a programme suited to my talents and aspirations.</li> <li>• School helped me to settle into the sixth form.</li> <li>• I am taught well and challenged to do my best.</li> <li>• I am helped and encouraged to study independently.</li> <li>• Teachers are accessible to help me if I have problems with my work.</li> <li>• I enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise other students to enter the sixth form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on what I should do after the sixth form.</li> <li>• The school does not provide a wide range of enrichment courses.</li> <li>• I do not feel that I am treated as a responsible young adult.</li> </ul>

Fifty questionnaires were completed by male students at Highbury Grove. Inspection evidence fully endorses the students' positive replies. During the inspection, discussions were held with a large number of students who expressed the view that careers advice was good. They were also very clear that they were treated as young adults. They stated that relationships between staff and students were friendly and helpful. Students also considered that the range of enrichment activities was good but that some students did not take up the opportunities available. This view was also supported by the inspection team. Inspectors therefore do not agree with the areas for improvement identified in the table above.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils begin at the school with levels of attainment that are well below average. This is evident from nationally available tests carried out by the school in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills. There are signs that attainment on entry is improving, and this is noticeable in the higher scores in these tests obtained by pupils currently in Years 7 and 8. However, despite the improvement, the overall attainment on entry remains well below average. This is confirmed by the National Curriculum results of tests taken by current Year 7 pupils when they were in Year 6. The overall proportion reaching the expected level in these tests was well below average, though the proportion gaining the higher levels was below rather than well below. Overall, however, the school has relatively few pupils who demonstrate high attainment on entry to the school. From this low base, pupils make satisfactory progress through the school, though attainment overall remains significantly below average, especially by the end of Year 9.
2. The overall results of National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in English, mathematics and science are well below national averages. The achievement of pupils, based on comparisons with similar schools, was satisfactory in 2001. In 2001, the National Curriculum test results were well below the national average in English and science and very low in mathematics.
3. English results have been a bit erratic over the last few years – they rose, keeping pace with the national rise between 1997 and 1998, but then fell dramatically in 1999. In 2000, they went back up to a similar level to 1998 but fell again in 2001, though not as significantly as before. Boys' performance in 2001 was a little better than that of the girls when compared to their counterparts nationally i.e. the gap between them was a bit narrower than the gap nationally. This was the first year when the Year 9 cohort included girls. The English results were in line with those of similar schools.
4. Overall, results in mathematics in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds have remained static despite a rising trend nationally. The 2001 results, based on the average point score, were exactly the same as at the time the school was last inspected, and were overall very low when compared to schools nationally. On the whole, girls did not do as well as boys in mathematics. Science results were on a downward trend between 1997 and 2000, but showed good improvement in 2001, though they remained well below average. The girls outperformed the boys.
5. The overall trend of improvement of National Curriculum test results has been below the trend nationally. The gap between boys' and girls' results for 2001 was narrower than the gap nationally.
6. At GCSE, the results for 2001 were well below average based on the average point score and the proportions of pupils who gained five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C. However, they were very low, and amongst the bottom five per cent of schools in relation to the percentage of pupils gaining five or more, or one or more, GCSEs at grades A\*-G. Pupils did better when compared to similar schools in relation to the proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C, where their results were above similar schools. High rates of absence and the small but significant proportion of pupils who are in alternative education or following courses at college rather than in the school affected the results quite substantially.

7. The overall GCSE results have been well below national averages for the last four or five years, but were in line with the results in similar types of schools in 2001. Though they remain well below average, there has been good improvement in the GCSE results and the trend of improvement has been better than the trend nationally. For example, between 1997 and 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C showed significant improvement, going from 16.5 per cent in 1997 to 29.9 per cent in 2001.
8. The school performed worse than usual in relation to the percentage of pupils gaining one or more GCSEs at grades A\*-G in 2001. In previous years, this has been in line with national norms, occasionally below but never well below. This is, at least in part, due to the increased numbers of pupils who are following alternative courses of education which are not recognised in the school's GCSE point scores.
9. The overall trend of improvement at GCSE has been better than the trend nationally over the past five years. Since no girls have yet taken GCSEs at the school, the improvement is all the more significant as boys do not perform as well as girls at GCSE. There are some variations in the results of different ethnic groups. There are some differences between different minority ethnic groups. Black pupils, especially those of Caribbean origin or of dual heritage, Indian and Pakistani pupils performed less well than other groups at GCSE in 2001, whilst Bangladeshi pupils did rather better than others. In the National Curriculum tests, pupils of Turkish origin performed less well than others. Asian pupils, especially Bangladeshi pupils, outperformed other groups. The school exceeded its targets for performance at GCSE in terms of the overall average point score and the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C. However, it fell short of the target set for the percentage of pupils gaining one or more GCSEs at grades A\*-G.
10. GCSE results in 2001 in most subjects were below national averages, however, there were exceptions. Results in information and communication technology (ICT) were above average and in English literature and other languages, they were close to the national average. In 2001, in English and mathematics, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A\*-C was below the national average, but significantly above the average of similar types of schools. Science results were well below the national average, but also well above the average of similar types of schools. In mathematics and science, results were not as good at A\*-G grades as other subjects.
11. In design and technology, French and Spanish, the proportions of pupils gaining A\*-C grades were much lower than was the case nationally. In these subjects, the gap between the school's results and results nationally was wider than in most other subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-G was 90 per cent or above in most subjects. Only in science, design and technology, mathematics, economics and other languages was it lower than the national norm for those subjects.
12. Standards in lessons and other work seen largely reflect the results of National Curriculum tests and GCSE examinations. By the time pupils are in Year 9, the standards of their work are well below average though they have made satisfactory progress. By the time pupils are in Year 11, standards are below average. They are better than the overall GCSE results would suggest. However, this is due to the absence in lessons of:
  - some who have poor records of attendance, and whose attainment is hence likely to be very low;



- a minority of pupils who are in alternative education; and
- a minority who are following alternative courses, for example combining some GCSEs at school with units of work at local college.

In most cases, these pupils tend to have very low prior attainment.

13. Attainment in English, as seen from lessons and pupils' written work, is still well below average by the time pupils are in Years 9 and 11. Progress over time is satisfactory throughout the school. Though literacy skills improve over the time that pupils are in school, for many, poor literacy remains a barrier to learning, not just in English but in other subjects of the curriculum. Lower attaining pupils have handwriting and presentation weaknesses. Pupils' difficulties with written expression are often a reflection of their patterns of speech. For many pupils, their writing standards were affected by awkwardness of expression, spelling mistakes and a limited range of vocabulary.
14. Attainment in mathematics and science is well below average by the time pupils are in Year 9 and below average in Year 11. In science, the attainment is better than the most recent GCSE results due to improvements in teaching and a greater focus on thinking skills at both key stages. In mathematics and science, pupils achieve satisfactory standards, but there is some underachievement due to poor attendance and, in mathematics, also because of shortages in teaching staff. Pupils' numeracy is poor overall, both in mathematics lessons and in their capacity to apply numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum.
15. Attainment in most subjects is below average, but in physical education it is average by Year 9 and above by Year 11. Standards of work are also above average for pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are following an accredited course in ICT. In art and design, attainment is well below average by Years 9 and 11, particularly in relation to research and critical analysis. Standards of work are well below average in design and technology and modern foreign languages. In almost all subjects, the standards of work and the progress pupils make are adversely affected by poor attendance and punctuality, and sometimes poor behaviour. Recall of past work is often a weakness, usually as a result of poor attendance but also because many pupils do not take homework seriously enough. Thus, they do not use it to consolidate and build on what has been learned in school.
16. In art and design, pupils throughout the school are underachieving quite significantly due to lack of sufficient curriculum time. In Years 7 to 9, the shortage of time is exacerbated by the fact that art and design is being taught in rotation with other subjects, hence, there is insufficient continuity to learning. Music and ICT are also affected by this rotational arrangement and pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not make sufficient progress in either subject though progress in Years 10 to 11 is satisfactory. Progress is good for the musically able who are prepared to put in extra time and effort out of school hours to improve their work. The school has already identified the curricular issue of teaching subjects in rotation and has clear plans to alter the curriculum for the next academic year. Good progress is also evident in history in Years 7 to 9 and in physical education throughout the school. In religious education, the lower and average attainers in Years 7 to 9 make good progress, but the higher attainers underachieve. Pupils following the accredited course in religious education make good progress.
17. Though pupils taking GCSE ICT are making good progress and reaching high standards of work, those not following an accredited course in Years 10 to 11 are not making as much progress as they should be and the standards of their work are lower. This is

mainly because not enough use is made of computers through subjects of the curriculum.

18. In design and technology, though pupils' skills in practical work are satisfactory, their design work, especially in Years 7 to 9, is of poor quality and there is significant underachievement in this aspect of their work. The work folders of pupils currently in Year 11 are not at as advanced a level as they should be for this time of the year. Standards in modern foreign languages are well below average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11, though some individuals are reaching high standards of work.
19. Although levels of attainment for pupils assisted by the learning support faculty are well below average, their achievements are satisfactory overall. Where support is provided in the special educational needs department and the learning support centre, or by additional teachers and learning support assistants in lessons, pupils make good progress towards the literacy and behaviour targets set for them. Often they gain knowledge and understanding of the subjects being studied that is equal to those of their peers. The quality of their learning in such cases is good. The amount of support available, however, does not meet the demand and there are many occasions in lessons when the lack of additional support, especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, reduces the quality of learning and the progress pupils make. This is not the case, for example, for pupils in the Year 7 nurture groups, where extra support is always available, or for lessons in the learning support centre. One pupil commented that she wanted to be in school because of the success she was achieving in lessons taken in the centre. However, pupils do make satisfactory progress that is commensurate with their prior levels of attainment and improve their behaviour, attendance and language skills. Able pupils make satisfactory progress.
20. About 70 per cent of the pupils in the school come from backgrounds where another language is regularly used. In total, 44 languages are represented in their backgrounds. Most pupils with English as an additional language are competent users of English, most having been born here and undertaken their earlier education in English. The department is moving from more traditional ways of assessing pupils' English levels based on the Hilary Hester scales, to a locally based initiative which combines National Curriculum levels, literacy competence and Hilary Hester levels together as one level. Pupils have been re-classified using these new levels and the resulting information is part of the assessment package available to all staff. These new assessments place pupils at rather higher levels of pure English language competence but identify that progress may not have been good enough due to other learning or behaviour difficulties. Relatively few pupils are at the early stages of English language development with good evidence that those who are make good progress because of good teaching. For example, some students from Angola, after only six weeks, are already able to write simple texts on wordprocessors about Luanda. Their writing indicates that they use simple tenses appropriately and they are extending their vocabulary range well. However, progress for pupils with English as an additional language is more varied, and is satisfactory overall, as subject teachers do not always provide additional or alternative work to match their needs. Hence, the good progress pupils make when they receive specialist support is not consistently sustained in all lessons, or over time.

## **Sixth form**

21. Overall, results in 2000 and 2001 were well below the national average. The number of students on AS- and A-level courses has been very small; in the subjects identified for an in-depth inspection, there were only five male students entered in total at A-level and three at AS-level in 2001, which does not make valid national comparisons easy or significant. In chemistry, mathematics and art and design, the AS-level results in 2001 were well below average and several students underachieved in relation to their expected grades. In 2001 and 2000, results in art Intermediate GNVQ were well above the national average. In 2001, Intermediate GNVQ results in business were well below the national average and no students completed sufficient units to enable overall certification to take place. This was an uncharacteristic year as in previous years, students achieved a level at or above the national average. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds attained similar standards to their peers.
22. Standards of work seen during the inspection, however, from observation of lessons and from analysis of written work, are at the national average in mathematics, chemistry and English. In GNVQ and AVCE art and business, attainment is also in line with the national average. Students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to target expectations based on GCSE and GNVQ grades. The difference between the standards seen in lessons and the most recent examination results is due to the small numbers taking the course rendering any valid statistical comparison almost impossible. Also the number of subjects inspected in depth was small.
23. In mathematics in the pure and applied units, students use precise and appropriate processes. Their work is generally accurate and of a satisfactory standard. In English, students' written work reveals a range of attainment from potential grade B to D. Some writing is therefore fluent and detailed, showing thorough knowledge of texts and evidence of wider reading. Other writing, though quite well written and expressed, lacks the level of detail, supporting quotation and range of reference necessary to obtain the highest grades. In Year 13 chemistry, poor background knowledge and understanding have adversely affected attainment. Key skills are insufficiently developed and students' experience of note-taking skills is minimal. Use of mathematics in science is weak, as are data collection and manipulation skills. In art, students apply earlier gained skills and knowledge well to meet new challenges. Work is highly individual and shows a good level of skill using media in two or three dimensions. In business education, students are achieving well and are actively involved in their own learning. The major weakness is the frequent lack of evaluative and analytic skills.
24. Most students in art and business make good progress over time in developing subject knowledge, understanding and skills, in relation to their grades on entry to the sixth form. In mathematics, students are currently achieving at a satisfactory level influenced by sound teaching and students' positive attitudes to learning. Progress in Year 13 chemistry is influenced by weak prior knowledge of the subject, but, with an increase in the entry qualifications to the subject at AS-level, current Year 12 students are not experiencing the same difficulties.

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

25. The attitudes of pupils to school are satisfactory overall. Inspection evidence confirms the views of the majority of parents that most pupils like coming to school, and that, particularly in Years 10 to 11, they want to do well. There is, however, a significant minority, usually boys, who are immature and disaffected; they have a poor work ethic and show little interest in their lessons. This manifests itself in low levels of attendance,

inattention and making little effort in lessons. They are sometimes a disruptive influence and this has an adverse impact on their progress and that of others in the class. Many pupils have short attention spans and find it difficult to remain focused on their work for long periods. This results in some work not being completed. Where lessons are planned to provide suitable challenge and are stimulating, many pupils respond well and try hard. Pupils particularly enjoy practical work and lessons where they are able to take an active part, for example drama, physical education, art and design and music. Most pupils progressively develop a more positive attitude to work and value their education as they move through the years. In addition, the most challenging pupils by this stage tend to have moved elsewhere or have been placed on alternative educational courses. Many in Years 10 to 11 are prepared to work hard to improve their expectations in GCSE examinations. Personal study skills are not used well and pupils do not readily take notes, skim read or use investigative skills. Much of the homework set is not completed and in some instances, pupils do not fully record work set for them to do at home. Homework clubs are not well attended, although opportunities provided for revision and 'catching up' for pupils approaching tests and examinations are more popular.

26. Although in most lessons, in particular those for pupils in Years 10 to 11, there is a suitable response to strategies used to manage behaviour, standards seen are unsatisfactory overall. A significant minority of pupils, usually boys, do not value their education, have poor self-discipline and do not always respect the right of others to work. This leads to a disproportionate amount of the time available for teaching in some lessons being spent in managing their behaviour, thus slowing learning for all. This is especially so in some art and design and modern foreign language lessons. The majority of pupils socialise and play effectively at break and lunchtimes, however, the behaviour of a significant minority of boys is often over boisterous and in too many instances, this leads to aggression. The high level of staff presence during these times usually ensures that problems are dealt with well. Separate break and lunchtimes have recently been introduced for younger pupils, which they appreciate. Pupils are aware of the measures taken by the school to raise standards of behaviour and feel that it has improved recently. During the last school year, there were three permanent and 86 fixed-term exclusions. The rate of permanent exclusions is broadly in line with the national average. The rate of fixed-term exclusions is high in comparison with schools nationally though lower than the local education authority average. The school uses exclusion only as a last resort and applies its procedures consistently for all pupils. Most respond well to the support arranged for them when they return to school, although this does not result in changed behaviour patterns for all and some are excluded more than once. The rate of exclusion is particularly high amongst pupils of Caribbean origin.
27. The personal development of pupils and the overall quality of relationships are unsatisfactory. Many pupils enter the school in Year 7 with poorly developed social skills. They usually respond positively to the well-planned programme for personal, social and health education and the range of extra-curricular provision, with most making satisfactory progress in their social development and personal effectiveness as they move through the years. In Year 10, pupils value the well-planned work experience programme, developing an understanding of workplace expectations and the need for them to take personal responsibility for organising themselves. They are usually confident with visitors, expressing views and opinions freely. Pupils from the many ethnic groups that are included in the school community usually get on very well together, and most value the rich mix of cultures and backgrounds. There are good levels of tolerance towards the beliefs and traditions of others. The richness of language and cultural diversity which pupils with English as an additional language bring to the school form part of the characteristics from which all benefit. However, pupils'

understanding and respect for others' feelings are less well developed. Older pupils do not always develop a sense of responsibility towards, or care for, those smaller and younger than themselves. The school has successfully reduced the level of bullying behaviour, partly through the separation of younger pupils at breaktimes. It promotes an anti bullying culture well, particularly through the programme for personal, social and health education for younger pupils. It is, however, still a concern for a few pupils and parents, making them hesitant about joining in extra-curricular activities; for example school visits. Although they feel that most teachers respond quickly and effectively when bullying is reported, some have not yet developed full confidence in procedures. Most pupils like and respect their teachers, and this is particularly evident in the nurture groups in Year 7. There is, however, a significant minority, usually boys, who are rude and unco-operative and this has an adverse impact on learning.

28. Attendance for the last school year is at the same level as the time of the last inspection, 89 per cent, which is well below average. Unauthorised absence has reduced significantly and is now broadly similar to the national average. Although the school has introduced a range of well-thought-out strategies for improving attendance, these have not yet improved the levels achieved. The social difficulties of some families impact on the attendance of their children, for example when the children are needed to translate for visits to the doctor and other necessary appointments. Some parents do not value education sufficiently highly and condone unnecessary absences. There are a few pupils who are jointly registered with the pupil referral unit and some that do not respond well to school, who have been provided with alternative vocational education for part of the week but remain on the school roll. Some pupils take extended holidays to their country of ethnic origin and others, usually from the refugee population, move from the area without first informing the school. There are also instances of pupils being absent for extended periods because of illness. Throughout the school population, there is a high proportion of pupils whose attendance is below the national benchmark, but not sufficiently so for individuals to be targeted for attention or referred to the educational welfare officer. This is particularly so in Year 9. Poor punctuality disturbs many lessons. The school takes suitable measures to minimise disruption by the many pupils late at the beginning of the day, but subsequent lessons are often disturbed when pupils stop to socialise or do not move purposefully between classrooms or when returning after breaks. Some pupils are late because of the considerable distance between classrooms. In some instances, pupils are responsible for taking younger siblings to primary school and this makes them late at the beginning of the day. A few pupils truant after registration and these are usually found and returned to lessons by the member of staff on patrol. Attendance overall makes a poor contribution to pupils' attainment.
29. Relations between staff providing learning support and their pupils are good. These good relationships help to motivate pupils who otherwise have lost interest in work and successfully help them to see the importance of attending school, to concentrate in lessons and to improve their behaviour. Pupils with special educational needs concentrate well in withdrawal lessons and are encouraged to succeed and to make progress towards the targets set for them. Only occasionally does inappropriate behaviour detract from their achievements. For the most part, these positive attitudes enhance pupils' self-esteem, their social skills and their capacity to learn.
30. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils with English as an additional language both in lessons and withdrawal groups are generally good. Most are keen to develop their English language skills and welcome the opportunities they get in small groups, or with targeted help in larger classes to improve their knowledge and understanding. Outside classes, these pupils are as involved as their peers in the poorer behaviour mentioned elsewhere in this report. Lateness to lessons and absences are as prevalent amongst

these pupils as elsewhere. Their absence and lateness to lessons contribute to their own lack of progress, and especially in the lessons where arrangements for additional classroom support have been made. Pupils with English as an additional language seen in the lessons were generally very appreciative of the opportunities provided.

### **Sixth form**

31. Attitudes are good and the attendance record is satisfactory. Most are punctual and use their non-lesson time productively. A significant majority appreciate the opportunities available to them in the school and are proud of their school, particularly as a result of the changes that have taken place recently. They participate in the work of the school council and a number have trained as peer mentors to support their fellow students. This mentoring scheme is to be extended to the main school in the future.
32. Sixth-form students are mostly enthusiastic about their work and want to do well. They are confident, are involved in the life of the school and are effective role models for younger pupils. Students develop mature, responsible attitudes. Most develop good independent learning skills in and out of lessons. Particularly good examples were seen in English, art and business education.

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

33. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory though much good teaching was seen, especially in Years 10 to 11. Teaching is satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and good for pupils in Years 10 to 11. Learning matches the quality of teaching reasonably well in Years 10 to 11. However, lower down the school, the quality of learning is unsatisfactory. There are a number of reasons for this difference. Poor attendance by a significant minority affects the rate of progress in lessons and the continuity of learning. In addition, many pupils have poor learning skills, and often do not complete homework or complete work set in class due to poor concentration and lack of independent learning skills. In some subjects, such as art and design, music and ICT, the quality of learning is adversely affected by current curricular arrangements which break the continuity in learning.
34. The quality of teaching is good in English. Teaching is satisfactory overall in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography and religious education. It is good in art and design, ICT and history, and very good in music. In modern foreign languages, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall.
35. There has been good improvement in the teaching and learning since the last inspection.
36. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this effectively in most lessons to help pupils understand key subject ideas and develop their subject knowledge. Questioning is often good and helps to extend pupils' learning. Most lessons are meticulously planned and the level of detail in planning is often very good. Clear outcomes for learning are identified and usually shared with pupils. The overall match of work to pupils' needs is satisfactory. However, the use of different work for different groups of pupils in the same class, such as those with special educational needs or pupils with English as an additional language, is not widespread. Therefore, there is some variation in the extent to which pupils' needs are met. Able pupils are not always stretched enough. There is variation in the extent to which subject teachers provide work which matches the targets in the individual education plans of pupils with special educational needs or the needs of pupils with English as an additional language. Most teachers

manage behaviour well and establish a sound work-centred learning environment, but where teaching is less than satisfactory, it is usually, but not always, due to weaker classroom management skills and ineffective control of behaviour. Resources are effectively used and though teachers aim to conduct lessons at a brisk pace, their intentions are all too often thwarted by the late arrival of some pupils or the difficult behaviour of a few which takes time to settle, though most teachers manage to do this effectively.

37. Pupils' learning skills in Years 7 to 9 are often unsatisfactory. Many require considerable input from their teachers to help them complete the work set and teachers work very hard in lessons to support them. Whilst in many lessons pupils make a conscious effort with their work, many find it hard to maintain concentration for long periods or to work by themselves. Poor literacy further exacerbates the pupils' capacity to work independently. Literacy skills are satisfactorily taught but there is insufficient development of numeracy. In Years 10 to 11, there is often a calmer and more work-centred atmosphere. Most older pupils are keen to do well in their GCSEs and hence make good effort in lessons. In most lessons, they stay on task well and sustain concentration considerably better than most younger pupils.
38. Homework is regularly set and teachers make good efforts to follow the policy and ensure that pupils write down what they have to do at home in their planners. The homework tasks are appropriate and often good. However, the non-completion of homework by many pupils is a real issue for the school, despite good efforts by most staff to encourage and support pupils to do it. Pupils have homework diaries, but not all record work to be done and some do not record it in full, subsequently being unsure what to do. Some do not understand what is required and this is not checked before they leave. Given the context of the school, the difficulties many pupils encounter in finding suitable space, resources and encouragement at home to complete homework, the school needs to develop approaches that are significantly more rigorous than usually required to obtain a satisfactory response from pupils to homework. The lack of books for pupils to take home exacerbates the issue of homework completion. The school is working on improving the quality of homework and has done valuable work on identifying the type of homework most suitable for these pupils. The setting of homework is better in Years 10 to 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
39. In the quarter or so of lessons where teaching is very good, teachers are very well organised and teaching methods are lively and imaginative. Hence pupils are easily engaged and take enjoyment from their learning. In most cases where teaching is very good, there is very good and active involvement of pupils in the lesson. As a result, they make very good gains in learning and learn very well through participation in relevant and very well-structured activities.
40. In discrete lessons taught by the special educational needs department or the learning support centre, the quality of teaching is usually good or very good. This is also the case in lessons for the Year 7 nurture group. Lessons are well prepared to match the needs of pupils and to promote skills of literacy that will help them to make progress in other subjects of the curriculum. In other lessons, teachers are well aware of the pupils with special educational needs in their classes. Several departments, for example science, geography and physical education, make a determined effort to provide tasks and materials that are suited to the special needs of the pupils. This is not universally the case, however, and in other departments, teachers rely too much on seeing how well pupils do the work or additional support to cater for pupils with special educational needs. There is now a much better relationship than reported by the last inspection between teachers and those providing additional support in lessons. The contents of

lessons are known beforehand and thus, the additional support provided is effectively planned and appropriate materials prepared. Where such support is lacking, teaching is less effective and pupils find it more difficult to keep up with work or understand what is required of them.

41. The new team of teachers supporting pupils with English as an additional language is already having very positive influences on the development of these pupils' English language learning. All teaching in the department is good. Teachers often operate with subject staff as team-teachers, sometimes leading lessons very effectively. The special, well-developed materials these teachers provide for pupils with English as an additional language are very helpful for learning in most subjects. They also help native English speaking, lower attaining pupils because the language is simplified. The methods used are effective because they enable pupils with English as an additional language to become more independent whilst also spreading the benefits of language expertise across a wider range of pupils. Subject staff and staff supporting pupils with English as an additional language, work very well together, planning the roles and responsibility of each so that maximum benefit can be extended to all pupils. Several teachers in this department have expertise in other areas, for example with special educational needs pupils, so the breadth of experience in this new team is extensive and can be used across a variety of needs in the classes they support. In English, for example, in several lessons, support teachers effectively helped their targeted pupils, and their analysis of language errors and mistakes also helped other lower attaining pupils to understand how to use English to create better essays for coursework.
42. Although the department's objectives are to get as many pupils as possible with English as an additional language into mainstream classes, with their support, some carefully selected withdrawal groups still occur. These are very effective in providing help through the language expertise of specialist teachers. These are mainly targeted at pupils in the early stages of English language learning, where observation showed pupils making good progress, and at pupils in Year 11 who need help with GCSE coursework. The carefully structured support for the latter is very effective.
43. Teaching staff are ably supported by an experienced Bengali bilingual classroom assistant who is an asset to the department. Two further classroom assistants for Turkish and Somali pupils were appointed the week before inspection and were in training to start their new posts. Not all subject staff are yet providing work which is sufficiently well matched to the needs of pupils with English as an additional language, but new staff in the ethnic minority achievement department have plans to provide training to improve the awareness and competence of other staff. Some teachers speak too quickly, for example, so pupils who are beginners in English cannot easily grasp the meaning of spoken information or instructions without help.

### **Sixth form**

44. The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. About 72 per cent of teaching seen was good or better and almost all the remaining teaching was at least satisfactory. There has been a big improvement in the quality and effectiveness of teaching since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are good in art, chemistry, business and English. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory.
45. A strength of the teaching is the good subject knowledge teachers have and their understanding of relevant concepts and skills related to their subject areas. This subject expertise is effectively used to provide clear, coherent and well-argued expositions of subject content and to ask students probing questions which help to develop their



thinking and deepen their subject knowledge. Students recognise this subject strength amongst their teachers and are well motivated and gain confidence as a result. For example, in English, teachers' mastery of texts and critical analysis and their encouragement of independent thinking enhance students' learning. This was particularly the case in the Year 12 lesson on Blake's poem 'London' where students learned much about the significance of the poem's imagery both from their initial preparation and from their teacher's knowledgeable, supportive and challenging contributions to their discussions. In business education, teachers' good knowledge of the world of business enables them to prepare good assignments, clearly linking theory to the real world of the company.

46. In most subjects observed, teachers effectively develop students' independence in the learning process. In English, students prepare work on texts before a lesson so that they can contribute their ideas during class discussions. In business education, students in all courses are effectively encouraged to carry out independent research on a variety of local and national firms. A good example observed was when students were examining the purposes, rights and remedy aspects of consumer charters.
47. In the best lessons, students are provided with imaginative and creative tasks to help them learn. Lessons are well planned. A wide range of approaches to teaching and learning is used in chemistry and, as a direct consequence, students respond well. In art, while most of the teaching is from art department staff, the design and technology department, bringing valuable insights into the commercial applications of students' work, gives helpful assistance. This team teaching is very successful in providing a variety of approaches to the subject.
48. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and this helps students to make progress. Teachers are accessible to assist with work problems and this is greatly appreciated by students. Teachers have high expectations and most students work well to meet these. Lessons in most subjects are well resourced. In art and business education, however, there is inadequate access to computers in the art studios and business classrooms. There is poor use of ICT in chemistry lessons.
49. Key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are taught within the tutorial programme to all vocational students. In the numeracy part of the course the teaching was not well enough focused on the needs of the students or to that of the curriculum.
50. Teaching in the other subjects visited in the sixth form was mainly good. In history it was very good.

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

51. The curriculum overall is broad but still lacks balance in a number of areas. The slight lack of curriculum time identified in the last report has been addressed and now the recommended minimum time of 25 hours of teaching time is provided across Years 7 to 11. Statutory requirements are met, apart from provision for ICT across the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 and in the time for religious education for non-examination candidates in Years 10 and 11.
52. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is broad. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught with the addition of drama and personal, social and health education. ICT is taught as a discrete subject in Year 7 and as part of the carousel of design and technology subjects in Years 8 and 9. This is an improvement on the situation at the

time of the last inspection, though the time allocated within design and technology in Years 8 and 9 is rather limited. The music, art and design and drama carousel which operates in Years 7 and 8 is an unsatisfactory provision and results in too little time being allocated to each subject. There are also considerable gaps between modules in each of the subjects, which hinder progress as it does in ICT in Years 8 and 9. Parents expressed concern about the carousel in music, art and design and drama and their views are supported by inspection evidence. The school does plan to discontinue the carousel in 2002/03. There is no opportunity for pupils to take up two languages. There is not quite enough time in history and geography to enable full coverage of the National Curriculum.

53. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a common core curriculum in English, mathematics, science, physical education, ICT and personal, social and health education together with four option choices. GCSE economics, media studies and drama are offered in the options along with a good vocational choice from GNVQ courses in business, ICT and leisure and tourism. While three languages, including Turkish, are included in one of the option blocks, pupils can only study one language. A very high proportion of pupils are disapplied from studying a modern foreign language. This significantly influences the number of pupils continuing with modern foreign languages but the weak literacy skills of many pupils justify disapplication. Time is short for GCSE religious education and insufficient for pupils not opting for GCSE. The latter continues to be a breach of statutory requirements.
54. In the current academic year, the school has introduced several innovative measures to raise the standards of literacy and numeracy in Year 7. Primary specialists teach two 'nurture' groups, made up of 30 pupils who are not entirely ready for a secondary-orientated curriculum. This has had a positive effect in raising the level of basic skills. This curriculum model will be extended into Year 8 in the next academic year, for one group of 15 pupils. In the current Year 8, some pupils are receiving additional literacy and language lessons in place of a modern foreign language.
55. Overall, the strategies to teach literacy skills are satisfactory. Raising attainment through improving standards of literacy was a key issue at the previous inspection. There has clearly been much effort put into spreading information on literacy strategies and appropriate support is apparent through summer literacy projects, provision in special educational needs and training days for staff. As a result, the contribution of other subjects to standards of literacy, though still somewhat uneven, is improving. Though the overall implementation of the use of literacy across subjects of the curriculum is satisfactory, and is having a measure of success, given the high level of need, further work needs to be done.
56. The school has put in place plans to address the Key Stage 3 strand of the numeracy strategy. However, the extent to which subjects across the curriculum incorporate the teaching of numeracy skills into their planning is varied. The impact so far of strategies to improve numeracy has been very limited.
57. Some subjects make effective use of computers as part of teaching and learning in that subject, however, many do not, mainly because of difficulty of access to equipment. Hence the requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully met.
58. The school tries hard to keep all pupils in education and goes to some lengths to find the best opportunity for each. There is an effective extra study option for less able students and for less well-motivated pupils, a vocational option at the local college. This runs alongside a core curriculum in English, science, mathematics, ICT, physical

education and personal, social and health education. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is at a developmental stage. The school has identified who these pupils are. There is some good provision in science through special project work in conjunction with higher education. Gifted and talented pupils in Year 10 have the opportunity to take GCSE mathematics early. However, overall, there is no co-ordinated provision through the school's curriculum.

59. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language is good. Pupils catered for by the learning support faculty have access to the full curriculum offered to all pupils and, additionally, to vocational and other courses specifically designed to meet their needs in Years 10 and 11. Additional support for literacy is a feature of the work of the department for special educational needs and the learning support centre through programmes of individual support and the teaching of small groups to improve, for example, reading. Targets in individual educational plans reflect the curricular needs of pupils to improve levels of literacy well. Where pupils are withdrawn from mainstream lessons for additional support or through part-time programmes to improve their behaviour or attendance, there is a danger that they miss important aspects of the National Curriculum. The learning support centre, however, makes every effort to ensure that this is not the case through the provision of appropriate work where necessary. As a result, when pupils are re-integrated into mainstream lessons, their entitlement to important elements of the National Curriculum has not been overlooked.
60. The needs of pupils with English as an additional language are an integral aspect of the inclusion provided by the school for ethnic minority individuals and groups. The ethnic minority achievement department provides increasingly carefully structured curriculum support for all pupils with these needs. A great deal of support material is generated and provided by the teachers in the department so that they and other staff can tailor work to specific requirements. Because pupils' other special educational needs have been untangled from their language needs, this material and all help provided are increasingly well matched to pupils' needs.
61. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, including new modules on citizenship, is good. The programme is broad and balanced and has been carefully planned. There has been a recent review by a new post holder which has resulted in a good range of initiatives to promote education on sex and relationships through the involvement of outside agencies including the University of Hertfordshire and the Camden and Islington Health advisory team. Sex education is also taught in science. A sample of pupils' work seen shows a very good response to the contribution of young parents to the course and there is good involvement of learning mentors and learning support staff as well as form tutors in the development of interactive learning styles.
62. The school has developed a close and effective relationship with the local careers service, Enterprise Careers, which provides effective advice to pupils and parents as well as careers information and interviews and workshops for Years 10 and 11 pupils.
63. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities for its pupils. By a very innovative rearrangement of the school day, time has been made available on Friday afternoons to enable a very good range of over 40 enrichment activities to take place. These include sporting and music activities, community service, revision classes, study support groups and subject-based clubs. There are opportunities to widen multicultural understanding of African dance, music and drama. An activities day, when individual year groups organise visits and activities to widen their knowledge and understanding of a range of issues, effectively contributes to their personal development.

64. The school's involvement with the community is currently satisfactory. There are good links in business education with a number of local firms on which students base their individual coursework assignments. Local firms provide work-experience placements for Year 10 pupils and GNVQ students in the sixth form. The school has appointed a dynamic out-of-school hours learning manager who has explored a number of new schemes with the community and other agencies since January. They include the Skillsforce project, a link with the local authority in which an analysis of attendance and attitudes towards work will be carried out to measure value for money provided by the school. The project also aims to improve pupils' self-esteem and confidence and to improve school leavers' awareness of life after school. There are good extra-curricular links with Arsenal football club and the Royal Air Force.
65. Curricular links with feeder schools are satisfactory, complicated by the number and distance away of some of the primary schools sending pupils to Highbury Grove. There are good links within the joint sixth form with Highbury Fields School. Effective links also exist with the local college and other vocational course providers.
66. The school has made good progress in improving its curricular provision since the time of the last inspection, particularly in relation to the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
67. Overall, provision of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision for pupils is satisfactory. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils is unsatisfactory for two key reasons:
- Assemblies and tutor periods do not offer enough opportunity for reflection or spiritual enrichment through inspiring ideas about human experience.
  - Subjects do not plan into the curriculum opportunities for spiritual development.
68. The longer afternoon form periods for year groups not attending assembly do not have any spiritual content. There are no assemblies in the sixth form. This was a weakness in the last report and the school has begun to address it. There is a well-thought-out set of themes for assembly which organises a wide range of material under the umbrella of inspiring pupils to achieve, to change the world and to know themselves. The assembly record shows good reference to religious festivals and pupil involvement, for example in leading prayers for Eid and by St Francis of Assisi, and celebrating pupils' successes. There have been some reflective moments, for example in the period of silence for Remembrance and following September 11. There is a 'thought for the week' which is distributed to all classrooms but use is not specifically expected by form tutors and it is unclear how it contributes to overall spiritual and moral development. The lack of planning within subjects for spiritual development means that opportunities are missed. Only religious education has a policy and, while history teachers use opportunities which arise naturally from the curriculum, there is an overall lack of recognition by the school of the potential contribution of all subjects.
69. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. The school has a behaviour code and operates a positive discipline policy which is generally effective in most subject areas and staff regularly monitor public space during non-lesson time. The personal, social and health education programme makes a good contribution to pupils' moral development, particularly through modules on sex and relationship and crime and punishment. Religious education in Year 9 asks pupils to evaluate the moral issues within the external pressures upon family life and there is good reinforcement of rules within physical education. Pockets of unsatisfactory behaviour seen during non-lesson

time and in several subjects, especially art and design and modern foreign languages and in one assembly, indicate that more development is needed.

70. Provision for social development is satisfactory. The school has recently developed its enrichment programme to include a full-time co-ordinator who works closely with senior staff and local authority services, as seen during the inspection with the visit, for the first time, of staff promoting local holiday activities. Other initiatives include relaunching the breakfast club, co-ordinating revision classes in the last half term and planning a residential summer school for eleven Year 11 pupils. Some of the enrichment activities are mixed age and a sample of Year 8 pupils noted their enjoyment of the social aspect. The school council offers good opportunities for personal development. All available evidence suggests that girls make a satisfactory transition to the school and that subjects monitor the placing of girls in teaching groups. Drama uses group work effectively as does physical education in its promotion of teamwork.
71. Provision for cultural development is good. Since the last report, drama has been built up successfully and there is no longer an issue regarding financial support for pupils opting for trips and visits off-site. Parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting considered multicultural development to be a strength of the school and assembly plans confirm the school's overall commitment to this. The history and physical education departments make a very good contribution to the annual black history month. Religious education makes good curricular provision and modern foreign languages has the potential to do so on the basis of its staffing, for example from francophone countries across the world.
72. Overall, progress since the last report includes a well-planned set of assemblies and a satisfactory policy statement. There is good cross-curricular provision in special events, for example Holocaust day and black history month. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not, however, embedded in departmental planning, in all assemblies and tutorial time, nor highlighted in the school's aims with regard to spiritual and cultural aspects.

### **Sixth form**

73. A wide range of 'traditional' sixth-form courses is available within the joint sixth form to meet the needs and aspirations of potential students. Other subjects include sociology, psychology, economics and business, Turkish, media studies, drama and general studies. Insufficient opportunity is provided for students to cover religious education topics in line with the statutory requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The school is therefore not meeting statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form. There are no assemblies or collective worship at post-16. This was also the situation at the time of the last inspection when both omissions were made key issues.
74. There are very good opportunities for students to take vocational courses. A wide and appropriate provision to meet the needs and aspirations of many students is offered, all based at Highbury Grove. This includes Intermediate GNVQ and AVCE courses in art, business and ICT. In addition, Foundation and Intermediate GNVQ science is taught. The provision for the very small number of students with special educational needs is good.
75. A well-planned personal, social and health education programme is provided across the sixth form. Students are able to discuss a wide range of issues which contribute effectively towards their personal development and understanding of citizenship. These include sex and health education, substance abuse and racial prejudice and

harassment. The police are also involved in this course raising students' awareness of current issues such as 'stop and search' and problems associated with policing inner cities. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of study skills.

76. A programme for the development of key skills in communication, application of number and ICT is taught by a team of specialist staff from the two schools. It is a compulsory element in the programme of all vocational students. In the case of AS- and A-level students, key skills are taught within subjects.
77. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Opportunities include recreational activities on one afternoon a week. Currently take up is low. There are opportunities for community involvement and involvement in the performing arts. There is a residential visit to the Isle of Wight for vocational students and a number of visits within individual subjects. The effective peer mentoring programme is also another opportunity for students to assist their peers. A number of students are also involved in the Arsenal Football Club scheme developing literacy and football skills in local primary schools.
78. Some students who responded to the student questionnaire were concerned about the amount and quality of guidance for 'life after the sixth form'. After talking to students and staff and examining the guidance provided and the quality of information available to students, inspectors consider it to be good provision.

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

79. The arrangements the school makes for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory. Pupils usually stay with the same form tutor and head of year throughout their time at the school. This results in the staff knowing them, and often their families, very well indeed. There is a strong pastoral system that rapidly identifies where pupils are experiencing difficulties and triggers support through the well-established mentoring system. In addition, support from a wide range of outside agencies is sought to meet the individual needs of pupils. The full-time education welfare officer and school nurse are easily accessible to pupils and many seek their support on an informal basis when they have problems or need to talk something through. There is a suitably trained person with designated responsibility for child protection. Staff are generally aware of their responsibilities. However, the policy and guidance to support them in this have not been reviewed recently and now need updating.
80. There is a suitable health and safety policy and testing of appliances and equipment is carried out regularly as required. Fire drills are practised regularly. The requirement for risk assessment within subject departments is met and teachers ensure that pupils are made aware of necessary safety procedures during the course of their work. Although an assessment of risk for the school buildings and grounds has been done and check lists drawn up, these do not include the roof space walkway and the storage of flammable liquid, which require attention. At present, there is no system in place for monitoring that risk assessment procedures for buildings and grounds are carried out regularly.
81. There are well-thought-out procedures for promoting high standards of behaviour. Because consistent application of these is relatively recent, there has been insufficient time for them to have a major impact. Pupils interviewed, however, are confident that standards have improved. Expectations are communicated well to pupils when they start at the school and are included in information provided for parents. They are further re-enforced during personal, social and health education. The consistent application of sanctions is being promoted well by senior managers and heads of year and there is a

growing awareness amongst pupils of the results of unsatisfactory behaviour. Despite this, there is a significant minority of pupils who are disaffected and continue to ignore behaviour expectations. Work done by the school to promote consistent and high standards of behaviour management in lessons has been affected by the high turnover of staff and the number of supply teachers that have recently been needed. Because of this, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of classroom management that the school has plans to address. The school has a system of awards that is valued by most pupils and which acknowledges achievement in all areas of school life. There is a high level of staff presence around the school at break and lunchtimes and between lessons when all staff monitor behaviour in corridors.

82. Exclusion procedures ensure parents are given every opportunity to be involved in working with the school to support their children. Pupils are excluded only where other means of managing their behaviour have not been successful and procedures are consistently applied to all pupils. Arrangements for their subsequent return to school are well planned to provide necessary support. The school is aware, through analysis, of the way in which the behaviour of differing groups of pupils within the school community affects the standards they achieve. Suitable consideration is given, when there is conflict between pupils, to the possibility of racial motivation, and the school's view coincides with that of both parents and pupils, that pupils value the broad cultural mix. The school does not, however, have procedures to record conclusions about individual incidents. There are good procedures to deal with bullying and an anti-bullying culture is promoted well within personal, social and health education for younger pupils. There is growing awareness amongst them of what to do if they have concerns, although some still lack confidence that they will be taken seriously by all staff. Recent arrangements separating the time at which younger pupils break for lunch have reduced the number of incidents of bullying that occur. The school uses a range of alternative provision for disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11. This usually includes work-related courses and is often successful in improving levels of co-operation. Any disruption to lessons is minimised by the duty teacher who is called on a radio system to remove pupils from classes where they cause problems.
83. The promotion of good attendance is given high priority by senior managers. The procedures are good, although relatively new and not consistently applied by all staff. The school has suitable arrangements to minimise disruption caused by pupils who arrive late at the beginning of the day. There is a recently introduced system of first day contact with parents in the event of unexplained absence that has resulted in increased numbers of parents contacting the school first. Attendance levels of individual pupils are monitored effectively each half term and where these give cause for concern, parents are made aware of the impact on their children's work. The school uses a computerised registration system. It is not, however, used well by all staff. This results in wasted time correcting errors and limits its use as a management tool, for example in the immediate identification of truancy after registration. Not all teachers challenge pupils who are late to lessons. Measures to deal with poor punctuality between lessons are hampered by the distances between some classrooms. Teachers do, however, monitor corridors during lesson changes and hurry pupils along.
84. As at the time of the last inspection, the personal development of pupils is supported and monitored well. Form tutors, heads of year and school mentors work together effectively to track progress. The programme for personal, social and health education provides good guidance and support for pupils' personal development. Careers education has been recently reviewed and prepares pupils well for making choices and decisions about their futures. Within careers education, work experience plays a significant role in introducing pupils to workplace practices. It is planned well to develop

understanding of how what pupils learn in the classroom relates to jobs people do and, particularly for pupils who are following vocational courses, adds relevance to what they learn in lessons. There is strong support from the careers advisor that includes a weekly 'drop in' session at the school for pupils needing individual advice.

85. Academic support systems for individual year groups provide good academic guidance. Where needed, these are backed up by learning mentors, the learning support unit and school counsellors. Pastoral support plans are effectively in place where needed and regularly discussed and reviewed to monitor progress. Pupils have suitable opportunities to get to know the school and its staff before they start in Year 7 and this helps them to settle well. The school provides very well for pupils starting in Year 7 who need additional support. This is done through the Year 7 nurture groups where suitably qualified and experienced members of staff help them to grow in self-confidence and independence and to catch up academically. Individual guidance in lessons is usually effective, although sometimes limited because there are too few learning support assistants. Pupils are aware of the levels they are working at in English, mathematics and science. Although their progress towards targets set is discussed with them twice each year, the quality of target setting is not consistently effective in all subjects, reducing the value that some pupils place on this process. The school makes suitable provision to support pupils through homework clubs; these are not, however, taken advantage of by most pupils. Revision and 'catch up' clubs for pupils before the national tests for 14-year-olds and GCSE examinations are more popular and support pupils well. Marking does not consistently help pupils to know the quality of the work they produce and what must be done to improve it. Many pupils arrive at the school with a poor work ethic and the school's efforts to improve this have resulted in raised standards for many. There is still, however, as at the time of the last inspection, more to be done to raise aspirations and expectations to work for a significant minority.
86. The arrangements for assessing and monitoring academic standards are satisfactory overall. Detailed records of attainment on entry are supplemented by formal six-monthly assessments that are stored in individual files within a database. These provide a very good basis for planning support to raise achievement and are used well by heads of year to identify pupils needing additional support and channelling them into appropriate support provision such as 'catch up' and 'revision' clubs. In some circumstances, options chosen by pupils for study at GCSE level are reviewed. Within subjects, the quality of day-to-day assessment varies. Procedures are usually at least satisfactory with good practice being seen in science, ICT, religious education and physical education and within the special educational needs department. In mathematics, suitable systems are in the process of being developed. The use of assessment data to improve the curriculum and teaching is underdeveloped, particularly for pupils aged 11 to 14 years.
87. The quality of care that is provided by the departments within the learning support faculty is good. Dedicated teachers and learning support assistants work hard and effectively to cater for the educational and social needs of pupils. All staff within the faculty know their pupils very well and extensive records and referral systems of good quality ensure that needs are established and progress monitored through a series of measures that include regular meetings for each year group. These meetings, which are attended by both staff of the school and external support agencies, provide a wealth of expertise and experience that can be brought to bear to ensure that the welfare and care for each pupil is of a high standard. For pupils who find the process of learning difficult, mentors allocated to individuals give good guidance with study skills. Individual education plans of good quality with specific short-term targets for literacy, numeracy, behaviour and attendance exist for pupils at the school action plus stage. Effective use



is made of outside agencies to help the school meet the needs of pupils. For some pupils identified as having special educational needs and for others that are a cause for concern, personal support plans and internal report systems complement individual education plans in ensuring that their needs are catered for, and the progress of pupils is effectively monitored by year tutors and support staff. Targets for improvement are prominently displayed in the learning support centre, enabling both pupils and staff to effectively measure progress on a regular basis.

88. The assessment of pupils with English as an additional language is now accurate. The department is participating in a new pilot scheme which links together the National Curriculum levels and English language development stages. This is providing a useful bank of information for subject teachers. Not all are yet using this information as fully as they might, but the new ethnic minority achievement team has planned training to assist them with better development of materials and English language usage in teaching.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

89. Day-to-day procedures for assessing students' academic progress are good in most subjects. Day-to-day assessment is good in English, chemistry, art and business and satisfactory in mathematics. In chemistry, the regular assessment of students' work is accompanied by helpful comments to help them improve the standard of their work. In art and business, students benefit from good, regular, individual assessment which they value. Good guidance and the use of drafting and re-drafting techniques are effective in business.
90. Teachers are provided with GCSE, AS-level and GNVQ performance data as well as the regular, three times yearly, progress grades and this information is used satisfactorily in most subjects to keep track of students' progress. Better use of this data in art to gauge progress over time would be beneficial to students.

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

91. The school has satisfactory procedures for ensuring students' safety and welfare. Students are provided with information about a range of issues including substance abuse, HIV/Aids and sex education, so that they gain an informed perspective on critical and sensitive issues.
92. Most teachers give good day-to-day advice and support within their subjects and the pastoral team is accessible and provides an effective service for students. Tracking of students' progress over a longer period is effective and there are opportunities for teachers to carry out, and students to receive, regular reviews of progress.
93. The advice provided for students entering the sixth form is good. Year 11 students and parents can attend induction meetings immediately after GCSE examinations to find out about opportunities available post 16. They are able to talk to teachers about courses and sample lessons are provided in subjects. Useful documentation is provided about courses. There are effective arrangements for the induction of external students into the sixth form.
94. Up-to-date careers information is available for students. Interviews are arranged with the careers enterprise officer. Students arrange their own visits to universities but all have the opportunity to visit a London university convention each year. The school

intentionally guides students to make informed choices and encourages them to carry out research into options and careers. Most students spoken to were appreciative of the quality of information and guidance provided. Although some of the students who completed the questionnaire felt that more should be done for them, this is, in fact, good provision.

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

95. Very few parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaires or attended the pre-inspection meeting. Those who express their views about what the school provides and achieves are largely satisfied. Most feel able to approach the school with concerns. They say their children like school and are expected to work hard. Some concerns were expressed about behaviour and inspectors agree that, although behaviour in most lessons is managed effectively, behaviour around the school and in the playground is often over boisterous and too frequently aggressive. There are mixed views about the setting of homework with some parents feeling there is too much and others not enough. Evidence during the inspection shows that, although timetables are not always followed, suitable amounts are usually set, particularly for pupils in Years 9 to 11. Not all pupils record their homework in the diaries provided and some do not record it in full making it difficult for parents to know exactly what work should be done. Although the school provides a broad range of information to parents and opportunities for them to meet with teachers, inspectors agree with those who feel that annual progress reports are not presented in a way that gives them easy access to the information they need about how well their children are doing.
96. The school has satisfactory links with parents. The prospectus and governors' annual report are well written, giving good information about the school's routines and expectations. They also include useful information about extra-curricular activities and homework. Some of the required information has been overlooked. This includes some aspects of provision for pupils with disablement, authorised absence rates, information to help parents make comparisons between the school's standards and those of similar schools nationally and progress on targets set following the last inspection. Parents receive suitable information about the school prior to their children's enrolment. The school newsletter produced each half term informs effectively about school news and events. The school makes every effort to ensure that all parents who need translation or help from an interpreter have access to this. Every effort is made to involve parents where there is cause for concern about any aspect of their children's life at school, ensuring they are involved in finding a way through difficulties. Form tutors and heads of year move through the school with pupils which enables them to get to know individual pupils and their families well. The school takes pride in ensuring that parents are told informally about their children's day-to-day achievements.
97. An interim statement of levels supplements annual progress reports to parents. In addition, the final annual report is used to set targets on target setting and review days. Parents are invited to these target-setting sessions and this gives them a good opportunity to understand their child's progress and what needs to be done for him/her to improve. There is good information in pupils' written reports about their personal development, attitudes to school and the work that has been covered during the course of the year. Reports clearly identify what pupils know and understand and what they need to do to improve. However, the language used is not easily accessible for many parents. Thus, reports do not give parents sufficient understanding of what their children need to do to improve, though there is opportunity for this to be clarified where parents attend the review days. Where subjects studied are rotated during the year, progress is reported only for those currently on the timetable, resulting in parents having no

information about how well their children are doing in the other subjects. There are suitable arrangements for parents to meet with staff to discuss their children's progress following the issue of reports. When parents do not take advantage of these and staff have concerns they wish to discuss, they make contact by telephone where possible. Parents are invited to the twice-yearly review of targets with their children and this is a useful opportunity for those that attend.

98. The involvement of parents with the school and their impact on pupils' learning is unsatisfactory. Although some parents take high levels of interest in their children's progress, too few take advantage of the opportunities provided by the school for them to meet with teachers and find out how their children are getting on. The school has used questionnaires to obtain parents' views about the school and, although the rate of return was higher than for those issued prior to the inspection, overall, the level of participation is low. Too few parents support the work of the school by ensuring their children complete their homework and attend school regularly and on time.
99. A very small number of parents returned the questionnaire and no sixth-form parents attended the parents' meeting. No significant comments were made on sixth-form provision.
100. Sixth-form students in interviews with inspectors expressed their satisfaction with the school and the support and range of opportunities it provides. In discussion, students said they were treated in a more adult way in the sixth form and the school listened to their views. They appreciated it was not always possible to respond, but they felt they were listened to and points made were considered. Students are particularly positive about the way they were helped to settle in the sixth form, the way they are treated as young adults, the degree to which they are encouraged to develop independent learning skills and the range of subject choices at post-16. Inspectors do not agree with a view expressed by a significant minority that they could be better advised about opportunities at post-16 or that the range of enrichment activities is less than satisfactory.
101. For pupils with special educational needs, links with parents are good. The learning support faculty establishes good links with the parents of pupils for whom it has specific responsibility. It actively seeks the support of parents to resolve problems and to encourage them to contribute to the progress made by pupils towards the targets set for them in individual education plans and personal support plans. Good quality advice and guidance is provided when sought by parents. As required, parents are encouraged to contribute to annual and other reviews of their children's progress.
102. The parents of pupils with English as an additional language are routinely informed of their progress, where necessary through translation into the mother tongue. One experienced and two recently appointed English as an additional language classroom assistants also greatly help with this.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

103. The overall quality of leadership and management within the school is good. The headteacher provides very strong leadership characterised by a very clear direction for development and unerring focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and raising attainment. Her leadership is inspirational and the impact is evident in the extent to which staff and governors are working towards shared goals and in the innovative but rigorous systems that have been put in place for managing the school. These result in effective management under very challenging circumstances. Delegation of duties to members of the senior management team is well organised making good use of individual strengths. Particularly striking is the work being done to unite the wide range of services for pupils with different needs – such as learning difficulties, English as an additional language, behavioural difficulties – under a unified and coherent system. Members of the senior management team subscribe fully to the key aims of the school and work with vigour and commitment towards realising these. They provide good leadership and management in their areas of work and, through the line-management system, good support to middle managers. The quality of middle managers is improving and many lead their teams with a clear vision of how they intend to improve standards. Management at this level is good overall, with some very good examples of leadership and management amongst heads of department, such as science, physical education and religious education.
104. The overall monitoring and evaluation of the school are good. Members of the senior management teams are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is regular monitoring of teaching and examination of books. Results of monitoring and evaluation have been used effectively to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom and the leadership of the school has not delayed in taking necessary action where performance has been weak. A system of departmental reviews is in place. However, there is room within the ongoing monitoring and in the departmental reviews for greater rigour and sharpness in evaluation. Performance data is analysed carefully, including by gender and ethnicity, and used to inform management decisions about where and how areas need to be improved.
105. The governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They actively monitor the work of the school through their committees and are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Encouraged and supported by the headteacher, the governing body is going from strength to strength in its active involvement in schoolwork and in the astuteness of questions that are being raised at governing body meetings. However, a number of legal requirements are not being met, though the governing body is largely aware of these.
106. The school development plan is very well developed. It focuses very astutely and with considerable clarity of purpose on key areas for improvement. The development plan is a very good guide for school improvement and maps out systematically what needs to be done and how the targets set will be achieved.
107. The quality of leadership and management within the various sections of the learning support faculty is good and the recent appointment of an overall head of faculty augurs well for the future. Outside the faculty structure, the support provided by year heads and senior staff is also good. The sub-sections of the faculty are well organised by the co-ordinator for special educational needs and the head of the learning support centre, contributing significantly to the support provided for pupils and the progress they make. Support systems and referral procedures are well documented providing clear guidelines for all staff who work to ensure effective inclusion for all pupils with special

educational needs. Proficient guidelines are provided in the new policy for special educational needs, indicating that the school is making good progress in adopting the new Code of Practice into its work. Plans to bring the various sections of the faculty together under one roof are a positive step to improving further the work of the school to cater for the needs of pupils. However, they are not yet fully matched by the need to firmly embed a culture of support for pupils in the work of all subject departments.

108. The newly appointed team for supporting pupils with English as an additional language is well led and the department well managed with a sense of joint purpose evident. Staff support each other well and feel well supported by subject staff who value their expertise and help in classes. The department development plan is clear and well targeted, with early objectives, for example to sort out the assessment of pupils' different needs, already accomplished. Newly recruited bilingual classroom assistants were being effectively assimilated into the team during the week of inspection. This is a team with determination to improve its provision through all available opportunities.
109. The school has effective systems for ensuring that finances made available to the school are allocated appropriately against priorities identified in the budget. Accounting systems ensure that specific grants are used for the purposes intended. Governors play a full part in formulating and appraising the school budget and receive regular reports against which financial monitoring can take place. Appropriate measures are taken to ensure that the school remains solvent and in fact the school and governors have worked hard and very effectively to overcome an inherited budget deficit. The school has responded appropriately to the recommendations of the most recent audit report. The school seeks best value solutions for all major purchases but this does not always apply at departmental level where more expedient decisions may be accepted. Though the school leadership is astute in directing funds towards key educational priorities, formal mechanisms to establish the impact of spending on teaching and learning, for example, are not in place. The school is certainly, currently, setting itself challenging targets.
110. The use of ICT for financial accounting and expenditure ensures that these aspects of school management do not intrude on the educational work of the school. The school development plan has clear links to expenditure though it does not always indicate costs in financial terms. The written plan has a one-year cycle so there is no formal forward planning or modelling over a longer period. The current budget surplus is appropriately earmarked for much needed building developments and refurbishment.
111. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection to provide for the needs of pupils with a variety of identified special educational needs and to ensure that all these pupils are fully included in the work of the school. This now good provision is the result of new developments established through additional funding that has been directed specifically to support these pupils. In particular, there has been an increase in the number of learning support assistants and support teachers employed by the school. However, the demand for support staff outstrips their availability, though the school is making a determined effort to improve this position. As a result, there are many occasions in lessons when the quality of learning and the progress pupils make are restricted through a lack of additional support. Learning support mentors have been appointed to help individual pupils who find learning difficult. Regular meetings of year and learning support faculty staff discuss the progress and needs of pupils and bring to bear a wide range of expertise in providing for the wide range of special educational needs identified by the school. As a result, the learning support faculty is providing increasingly effective support for pupils with a variety of special needs and is a strength of the school.

112. The present match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall, with the exception of mathematics where full-time vacancies are being temporarily covered. Elsewhere, supply teachers are covering some vacancies; although this has recently reduced as a result of successful recruitment. In science, there is very effective technician support. There is good quality administrative support for the work of the school, although at present, insufficient time is allocated to monitor attendance resulting in the very sophisticated equipment available not being used to its full potential. There are suitable arrangements for the induction of new staff. The programme for newly qualified teachers is well thought out to meet their needs and they receive good quality support that helps them to settle well and to quickly become effective. Staff development is planned effectively to meet priorities set in the school development plan. Performance management is fully in place.
113. At the moment, the overall quality of accommodation is unsatisfactory, although there are areas of excellence, for example the City Learning Centre, and other good areas such as that provided for religious education, special educational needs, ICT and some science accommodation. Counterbalancing this, there are some areas which are poor: provision for the sixth form and pupils following GNVQ or AVCE courses on the Highbury Grove site, other than in the library; physical education, where changing facilities are inadequate; music rooms; no playing fields and inadequate outdoor play space; the hall, which is large but acoustically poor and has limited sight lines and pupils' toilet facilities throughout the school.
114. The school is aware of its deficiencies and has made some improvements to accommodation since the last inspection. For example, the high quality City Learning Centre has been built, the swimming pool re-roofed along with other buildings, fire doors have been replaced and some play areas have been resurfaced and relined. Generally, however, there is insufficient total space for the current number of pupils on roll, but the school is about to embark on a major programme of rebuilding and refurbishment which, when complete, should improve accommodation significantly. The programme will focus on improving accommodation for the library, the learning support faculty, the sixth form and staff. The kitchen facilities are also to be rebuilt. The strategic plan, underpinning these improvements, is designed well to ensure that the curriculum and teaching and learning will not be interrupted during this period of development.
115. Resources for learning are variable but generally satisfactory. Resources in English, religious education and ICT, where new computers have been purchased, are good. There are insufficient computers to support learning throughout the school however. Resources for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory but good in the learning support unit where there is a good supply of resources to prepare pupils for re-integration into mainstream classes. In most other subject areas, there are sufficient resources to deliver the curriculum in school, but insufficient to support learning out of school. For example, in many subjects, there are insufficient textbooks to allow pupils to take them home to complete homework. In mathematics, there are insufficient resources to support the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 and, other than textbooks, resources for business education are poor. In science, resources are sufficient in quantity but more variable in quality and, in art and design, there is insufficient ICT to support learning. Stocks of library books, to support learning in some subjects, are low and there is an unacceptable incidence of non-return of loaned books and disappearance of books, despite the installation of a new electronic monitoring system.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

116. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The director of the joint sixth form ensures that there are supportive relationships and all students have equal access to the wide range of opportunities provided. Students are helped to settle into sixth-form studies well and teachers and tutors are freely available to assist students. There are some weaknesses in liaison between some shared subjects in the two schools. In mathematics, this has an impact on standards achieved and in English, they are mainly involved with examination arrangements.
117. Thorough development planning has been carried out on a three-year basis. Appropriate priorities for development have been identified in relation to the widening of curriculum provision, the recruitment of students to increase the staying on rate in Year 11, as well as improvements in the management of the joint sixth form. The plan is carefully costed and appropriate criteria have been set to test its effectiveness.
118. Heads of department monitor teaching effectively in most subjects, and for the most part, the arrangements work well; teaching and learning are good overall. The joint deputy directors and subject heads of department with delegated responsibility carry out their roles satisfactorily. They contribute to the effectiveness of post-16 education and to the standards achieved.
119. The governing body is very supportive of the sixth form and knows its strengths and weaknesses. Governors have, however, failed to provide religious education and collective worship on a daily basis for all students and both omissions are statutory breaches. Governors, the headteacher and staff have a satisfactory understanding of the need to obtain best value for the resources and services provided in the sixth form and put these principles into practice.
120. Performance management arrangements are well in place in the sixth form and they form a satisfactory part of the school's quality assurance strategy. Opportunities for professional development are satisfactory and teachers take advantage of opportunities to improve their skills.

### ***Resources***

121. There is a good match between teachers and the needs of the sixth-form curriculum. The sixth form is cost effective and provides satisfactory value for money.
122. Learning resources overall are satisfactory. Resources to support learning are good in mathematics, chemistry and English. In business they are satisfactory but are unsatisfactory in art. In mathematics and business, textbooks are well backed up by materials prepared by teachers. The major weakness is the number and availability of computers to support classroom learning in chemistry, art and business.
123. Sixth-form accommodation is unsatisfactory; the common room is a depressing place and there are few private study facilities with computers apart from the library.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

124. In order to raise standards further, the governors, headteacher and senior leadership team should:

(1) Improve behaviour, attendance and punctuality by:

- ensuring that all staff are equally rigorous in challenging poor behaviour and punctuality;
- establishing the assertive discipline policy and ensuring that it is consistently implemented by all;
- maintaining a racist incident book;
- reducing the level of exclusions, particularly amongst Caribbean pupils;
- targeting pupils whose attendance is easier to improve first, for example those whose attendance is only just below the 90 per cent benchmark;
- introducing warning bells after break and lunch;
- improving timetabling to reduce as much as possible the distance pupils need to travel inbetween lessons;
- making more effective use of the computerised system for recording attendance and punctuality to lessons; and
- considering ways of increasing the patrols around the school during lesson times to reduce the numbers of pupils outside lessons.

(Paragraph numbers: 12, 13, 15, 25-28, 30, 36, 69, 81-83, 95, 112, 128, 136, 142, 144, 146, 150, 157, 160, 168, 179, 190, 193)

(2) Improve the quality of learning in Years 7 to 9 by:

- developing pupils' literacy skills, especially through regular opportunities for extended reading and writing in subjects of the curriculum;
- developing teaching strategies that help to improve pupils' learning skills, such as providing more opportunities for active involvement in lessons;
- improving the match of work to individual needs in lessons;
- examining ways of improving continuity of learning amongst those whose attendance is more erratic; and
- improving pupils' response to homework.

(Paragraph numbers: 13, 20, 25, 27-28, 33, 36-38, 40, 43, 52, 55, 85, 95, 115, 128, 130, 133, 135, 142, 146, 149, 150, 160, 162, 165, 171, 178, 190, 193-194, 197-199, 209, 218, 219, 220)

(3) Improve pupils' numeracy by:

- implementing the Key Stage 3 strand of the numeracy policy effectively; and
- implementing a whole school policy on the use of numeracy in subjects.

(Paragraph numbers: 14, 56, 132, 134, 137-139)

(4) Meet legal requirements for religious education and ICT across the curriculum by:

- providing sufficient time for religious education in the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 to 11 and Years 12 to 13; and



- increasing the use of ICT in all subjects and in particular the use of computers in science and design and technology.

(Paragraph numbers: 17, 51, 53, 57, 115, 138, 148, 153, 156, 158, 166, 174, 178, 180, 184-185, 187, 215, 219, 233, 245)

- (5) Continue to work towards improving the school's accommodation and environment for learning by:

- implementing plans to re-model the dining areas, library and music accommodation;
- improving the quality of display around the school, especially in art and design and technology areas;
- improving the accommodation and facilities for physical education; and
- renewing and re-decorating parts of the building that are in poor condition.

(Paragraph numbers: 113, 159, 184, 211)

### **Sixth form**

- (6) Develop effective use of numeracy by:

- improving the delivery of the key skills programme in numeracy; and
- encouraging the teaching of numeracy through subjects of the curriculum.

(Paragraph numbers: 23, 49, 226-227, 230)

- (7) Meet statutory requirements for religious education and assemblies by:

- providing a suitable religious education course for all sixth-form students; and
- making effective use of tutor periods and assemblies to provide periods of reflection.

(Paragraph numbers: 63, 68, 73)

- (8) Improve the accommodation in the sixth-form area by:

- fulfilling the plans for a new sixth-form centre; and
- providing suitable private study areas with availability for computers.

(Paragraph numbers: 113, 123, 239, 245)

In addition to the key issues above, the school should consider including the following minor issues in its action plan:

### **Main school**

- Make effective use of assessment data/information to improve pupils' standards of work; (Paragraph numbers: 85-86, 88, 137, 166, 183, 195)
- Improve the provision for pupils' spiritual development; (Paragraph numbers: 67-68, 172)

## **Sixth form**

- Improve the communication between some shared subjects in the two schools; (Paragraph numbers: 116, 228, 251)
- Improve the staying on rate into the sixth form. (Paragraph numbers: 229 and see summary)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	139
	Sixth form	25
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		53

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	1	38	53	35	9	2	1
Percentage	1	27	38	25	6	1	1
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	0	4	14	6	0	1	0
Percentage	0	16	56	24	0	4	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1069	74
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	511	

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	40	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	516	3

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	681

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	60
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	74

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.5
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	182	39	221

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	70	58	56
	Girls	18	12	13
	Total	88	70	69
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	40 (44)	32 (36)	31 (28)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	6 (15)	14 (19)	14 (9)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	75	53
	Girls	21	14	13
	Total	98	89	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	45 (38)	40 (37)	31 (27)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	10 (9)	19 (19)	11 (8)
	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	154	0	154

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	46	115	133
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	46	115	133
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	30 (29)	75 (81)	86 (95)
	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	25.9
	National	39.0

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations	Year	Male	Female	Total
	2001	19	0	19

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	19	0	19
	Average point score per candidate	7.8	n/a	7.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18	17.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	19	0	19	0	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	7.8	n/a	7.8	n/a	n/a	n/a

National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6
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*Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.*

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	85
Black – African heritage	139
Black – other	68
Indian	13
Pakistani	9
Bangladeshi	119
Chinese	19
White	295
Any other minority ethnic group	322

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	22	2
Black – African heritage	10	0
Black – other	12	1
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	2	0
Chinese	0	0
White	19	0
Other minority ethnic groups	21	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 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	80.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.9

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

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	112

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	0.58
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 2	
Key Stage 3	25.5
Key Stage 4	25.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	4,593,693
Total expenditure	4,571,200
Expenditure per pupil	4,024
Balance brought forward from previous year	405,891
Balance carried forward to next year	428,384

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	26.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	28.0

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
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	1143
Number of questionnaires returned	31*

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	35	58	3	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	16	55	10	6	13
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	42	13	16	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	39	26	16	0
The teaching is good.	23	35	13	13	16
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	48	10	19	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	32	48	6	6	6
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	39	42	10	3	6
The school works closely with parents.	13	52	10	19	6
The school is well led and managed.	19	39	16	6	19
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	16	45	19	3	16
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	26	10	10	16

\* The number of parents returning the questionnaire was very small.

### Other issues raised by parents

The carousel for art, drama and music which some feel does not support learning.

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- The department is well led and managed.
- Teaching is good in Years 10 to 11, and the teaching team is enthusiastic and committed to raising standards.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. They respond positively to their English work and behave well in class.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards of literacy remain too low and impact adversely on pupils' learning.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is not consistently good and could be improved through continued monitoring of teaching and sharing of good teaching practice.

125. In 2001, pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 was well below average compared with pupils' performance nationally, but average when compared with pupils in similar schools. Their results in English were similar to the school's results in science and better than those in mathematics. The cohort of Year 9 pupils in 2001 included girls for the first time; they did better than boys but not by as much as they do nationally. Pupils' average points score has been between two and three points below the national average over the last four years except in 1999, when it was much lower. The trend of average points scores has been below the national trend. Given that pupils' attainment on entry to the school has consistently been well below average or very low, the figures represent at least satisfactory achievement.

126. Boys' English GCSE results for A\*-C grades and A\*-G grades in 2001 were significantly below the national average, and below average for English literature. Boys' performance was well above average, however, when compared with results in similar schools. Comparing boys' average points score at the end of Year 9 with their GCSE English score indicates that they achieved at least as well as should be expected, and that higher attainers' achievement was good. The 2001 results in GCSE English were the best in recent years, and results have improved year on year since 1998.

127. In work seen during the inspection, standards are well below average at the end of Years 9 and 11 though achievement is satisfactory throughout the school. Many pupils enter the school with low reading ages and very low scores on cognitive ability tests. Standards are well below average in reading, writing and listening. Speaking skills are better, though still below average. Many pupils at both key stages demonstrate confidence when speaking and are able to express their ideas simply but clearly. However, few express themselves with similar confidence, fluency and clarity of expression in written work. The nurture groups in Year 7 provide particularly good support for the special needs of pupils. In one such class, they made very good progress in looking up words quickly and writing in question form. They followed their teacher's model successfully to produce very good starts for their stories. Pupils with English as an additional language are also well supported, as in another Year 7 class where the teacher's use of different passages to match pupils' differing reading skills helped them to keep up with the rate of learning of the rest of the class. Those pupils at the early stages of learning English make good progress. Later stage learners make similar progress to others. Lower attaining pupils have handwriting and presentation

weaknesses. Their difficulties with written expression are often a reflection of the pupils' patterns of speech. Not all pupils retain information well over time; in two different Year 9 classes some pupils were still uncertain about the storyline of 'Macbeth', for instance, or about the format of their examination papers. Year 9 students wrote thoughtfully and at some length in response to the mood or atmosphere evoked by well-chosen music, but their writing standards were affected by awkwardness of expression, spelling mistakes and limited range of vocabulary. Year 11 pupils lacked confidence in making spoken presentations in front of others but, given encouragement and the good example of their teachers, could speak to and handle a computer-generated presentation capably. They could rightly be proud of their achievement. There is much carefully written and worthwhile coursework in Year 11. Examination targets for current Year 9 and Year 11 pupils suggest results at least matching those of 2001, reflecting the fact that achievement is satisfactory given their well below average attainment on entry. Current Year 10 and 11 pupils continue to achieve as well as should be expected given their performance at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2000.

128. Teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 to 11. Though some good and very good teaching was observed in Years 7 to 9, the quality was not consistent and one lesson was unsatisfactory. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 was consistently good or very good. Well-planned lessons provide appropriate learning activities within a secure framework. Clear learning objectives are set out in advance. Teachers usually manage their pupils well and behaviour is usually good as a result. Some very good teaching exists in the department, characterised by high expectations and active involvement of all pupils. Teachers' enthusiasm and interest generates positive attitudes to the subject and fosters good learning. Pupils respond particularly well when teachers expect their involvement and a positive contribution to the lesson and make it possible for them to work productively at an appropriate level. In a Year 7 class, for example, pupils responded with enthusiasm to work on synonyms and antonyms and to work on how writers use direct and indirect methods of telling a story because the teacher encouraged involvement from all and provided carefully selected passages for different groups to study. He reviewed the contribution of all by name at the end of the lesson. In a very good Year 9 lesson, pupils' attentive listening and thoughtful writing arose directly from their teacher's careful choice of stimulating music and strong encouragement of self-evaluation, with the result that they produced work of a higher standard than expected. Pupils in a Year 11 class surprised themselves by their ability to give a computer-generated presentation. This was as a result of the very good examples provided by their teachers and the careful preparation and encouragement of individuals that had been done beforehand. On the one occasion when attitudes, behaviour and learning were unsatisfactory, it was because insufficient attention had been paid to planning for the learning requirements of individual pupils and the teacher did not insist on pupils attending carefully to others' contributions. As a result, learning was slow and little productive work was done. Satisfactory use is made of ICT in teaching and learning.
129. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of attainment, though still well below average, are improving, particularly in relation to GCSE results. Satisfactory standards of achievement have been maintained and there is evidence of good achievement among higher attainers. There is a higher proportion of good or very good teaching now than at the previous inspection, and pupils' attitudes have improved. All this reflects good leadership and management by the head of department, who provides strong support for a large but well-balanced team of relatively new and experienced teachers. This team of teachers has a strong commitment to raising standards for their pupils. Given continuing monitoring of the consistency of the quality of teaching, the capacity for further improvement is good.

## Literacy

130. Raising attainment through improving standards of literacy was a key issue at the previous inspection. There has clearly been much effort put into spreading information on literacy strategies and appropriate support is apparent through summer literacy projects, provision in special educational needs and training days for staff. As a result, the contribution of other subjects to standards of literacy, though still somewhat uneven, is now sufficiently effective to be satisfactory. There is good practice in ICT where pupils in the new City Learning Centre have their reading skills reinforced and they are shown how to present work effectively. In physical education, key subject vocabulary is effectively reinforced through flash cards. Pupils following GNVQ courses are given time to use ICT for coursework production. The department takes seriously its responsibility to enhance standards of literacy. In history and geography, too, support is prominent and effective. Opportunities are provided in both subjects for pupils to read aloud in class, and 'writing frames' help pupils to structure their written work. They are particularly extensively used in history and significantly help pupils to analyse historical events, issues and sources of historical evidence. Higher attainers in history do not, however, get many opportunities for extended writing. In modern foreign languages, there is obvious emphasis on important literacy skills, but some limitations exist. Speaking is not well developed because the skill is not routinely rehearsed so that pupils can develop spoken confidence. The focus in reading is on comprehension rather than developing strategies for tackling unfamiliar text. There is insufficient building on previous learning (on, for instance, pupils' knowledge of a related language). In mathematics and science, the literacy issues are ones of inconsistency and lack of opportunities. Key words are present but not always used. Some mathematics teachers encourage speaking by asking open-ended questions, others do not. There are few opportunities for writing, and this particularly affects standards in science, where written work is of a poor quality generally with few examples of creative, imaginative and extended writing. Though pupils' standards of literacy are still below average, and well below in Years 7 to 9, and there is still some inconsistency in the use of appropriate strategies, the overall picture has improved to a satisfactory extent since the previous inspection. However, it needs continued focus and development given the high level of need amongst pupils.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision overall is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Standards in Key Stage 4 are improving.
- There is a new acting head of department who has made a good start to reorganising the department.
- There is good teaching in half the lessons.
- The teachers work hard and are committed to raising standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in Years 7 to 9, and in numeracy, are too low.
- The progress of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is not good enough.
- Short- and medium-term assessment of pupils' progress is inadequate.

131. Standards on entry to the school are well below average. Standards in mathematics in the first three years are well below average, although in Year 7 they are higher. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2001, the proportion of the pupils attaining the expected level, Level 5, and the proportion of those achieving the higher level, Level 6, was very low and amongst the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. Standards

have declined steadily over the last five years compared to national norms. Mathematics results are lower than those in science and English. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are below average. In the GCSE examinations in 2001, the proportion of pupils gaining a grade A\*-C was below the national average. This was well above the average for similar schools. The proportion scoring A\*-G was well below the national average, and below the average for similar schools.

132. Since the last inspection, there have been a number of improvements in provision, and in standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have declined. The proportion of satisfactory lessons, and the proportion of lessons where pupils make satisfactory progress, have both improved. The provision for ICT has improved, but numeracy remains weak.
133. The progress that the pupils make during the first three years is unsatisfactory overall, although it is better in Year 7, particularly in the nurture groups. It is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In lessons seen, the progress made by pupils in Years 7 to 9 varied from poor to good, depending on the quality of the teaching, irrespective of the attainment level of the group. In Years 10 and 11, progress in lessons was good in most cases, but in a minority of cases was unsatisfactory, due to the poor attitude of a significant group of pupils who inhibited the learning of the whole class.
134. Pupils cover all areas of the curriculum at an appropriate level. There is an appropriate emphasis from Year 7 on algebra, and standards in this are higher than in other areas of the curriculum. They are introduced to general problem solving early on, and in most cases, by the end of Year 11, have learned how to form a hypothesis, record results appropriately and draw relevant conclusions. Pupils in the nurture groups in Year 7 benefit from very good teaching and learn the basic principles of all the areas of mathematics, as well as spending a high proportion of their time consolidating their skill in handling basic processes with numbers including fractions, decimals and percentages. All pupils become familiar with the fundamental properties of shapes, and learn some simple principles of handling data at a level appropriate to their needs. Standards of numeracy are too low. Pupils attain satisfactory standards only in Year 7 and in the higher attaining sets in the other years. In the middle and the lower attaining sets in Years 8 to 10, pupils are still unfamiliar with multiplication tables and other basic number knowledge, and this slows their progress in many areas of the mathematics curriculum. These pupils also tend to lack appropriate strategies and the confidence to work problems out in their heads. Most pupils with special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, make as good progress as their peers, but a significant number do not, due to a lack of adequate in-class individual support in many lower attaining classes.
135. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In half of the lessons seen, teaching was good. In one third of lessons, it was satisfactory. In a minority of lessons there was some poor teaching. Teaching was better in the top two years, and in the higher attaining sets, except in Year 7. All the teachers plan lessons thoroughly. They tell the pupils what they are going to learn, although only in the better lessons do they return to these objectives at the end of the lesson in order to check that the pupils have learned what they should have. In most lessons, the teachers explain the mathematical processes very carefully to the pupils and make sure they understand the meaning of key words. Not enough time is spent ensuring that the pupils understand the underlying principles, so in many cases, the pupils' ability to solve particular sorts of problems is short lived. In many lessons, the teachers provide exercises with different levels of difficulty to take account of the pupils' different abilities, and a few teachers have learned how to use skilled questioning to enable pupils to express their understanding at their

own level. In general, however, pupils are not given enough opportunities to become actively involved in lessons, or to explain in their own words how they work out answers.

136. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour vary in all five years from unsatisfactory to good. In most of the lessons where teaching is good, pupils respond well and have a good attitude to learning. They listen well to the teachers and follow their instructions, getting on with the exercises set, showing a reasonable degree of pride in their work and taking care to present it neatly and accurately. In some classes where the teaching is good, particularly in Years 10 and 11, teachers have to work very hard to keep good order with a group of pupils who would otherwise disrupt learning. They succeed in so doing, but at some cost to the progress of the whole class. In a minority of classes, the pupils respond to poor teaching by doing very little work, rudely talking when the teacher is attempting to explain the work and very seriously disrupting the progress of the whole class. Standards in the presentation of work in exercise books are unsatisfactory. Work is often untidy and unfinished.
137. There are well-developed systems to assess the progress of the pupils in periodic tests, but teachers have insufficient understanding of the progress of individual pupils in lessons and over the period between the tests in a way that would help them to plan their lessons more effectively. Teaching and assessing techniques, which have been introduced by the national strategy for mathematics at Key Stage 3, have not yet been effectively implemented.
138. The department is well organised and led by the new acting head of department. There are difficult staffing issues that face the school; the department is one teacher short, and not all the teachers have the appropriate experience to teach effectively. There is a good allocation of time to mathematics in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11 which, however, exacerbates the shortage of teachers. There are not yet any systematic strategies to improve numeracy and to provide pupils with strategies to cope effectively with mental arithmetic problems. In addition, not enough use is made of ICT in teaching and learning.

## Numeracy

139. Standards of numeracy are too low, although there are signs of improvement in Year 7. There are significant numbers of pupils in all years who lack confidence in their ability to use number. These pupils do not know their multiplication tables, and a small number are unsure of some number bonds. They also often lack strategies to tackle mental arithmetic problems, and it is this, rather than over-reliance on calculators, which is the cause of the difficulty for many of the pupils. It impedes their achievement, particularly in mathematics, and can lead to difficulties in other areas of the curriculum. The school is planning a strategy to promote the improvement of numeracy across the curriculum. Effective applications of mathematics across the curriculum are relatively rare; in geography, pupils use scales in map work and graphs of various kinds, in science, pupils can transpose formulae and interpret data to a satisfactory level and in physical education, pupils can measure times and distances appropriately.

## SCIENCE

Overall provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of science and are enthusiastic about it.
- Teaching and the planning of lessons are good overall, with some excellent practice.

- Leadership and management ensure clear direction and a shared commitment to science.
- Documentation is of very high quality and good assessment and recording systems are in place.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Standards of attainment are low, especially by the age of 14.
- Pupils' study habits and the work ethic are not sufficiently well developed.
- Not enough use is made of ICT in scientific investigations.
- Monitoring and evaluation are in need of further development.

140. All pupils follow a modular course in science during Years 7 to 9. This is followed by double award science to GCSE at the end of Year 11. Some continue as pupils in the sixth form to study chemistry, biology at AS- and A-level or GNVQ science with varying success. Physics is also available in the joint sixth form.

141. Although results in 2001 were low, there is a slowly improving trend in standards overall by the end of Years 9 and 11. Standards are well below average, and by age 14, many pupils have not achieved as well as they should. In 2001, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level, Level 5, and above in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds was very low when compared with the national average. The proportion gaining the higher levels, Level 6 and above, was well below the national average. Standards have been very low since 1998, although there has been a gradual but measurable improvement over the last four-year period. In relation to similar schools, the 2001 results were below average. Results in science for 2001 were better than in mathematics and broadly similar to those in English. In 2001, when the first group of girls took the tests, girls performed slightly better than boys at Level 5 and above, whereas at Level 6 and above, there was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

142. The standard of work seen in lessons during the inspection varied considerably but overall attainment is well below average by the age of 14, though some pupils show satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding. For example, as part of their work on magnetism, pupils in Year 8 made satisfactory progress in identifying and understanding the factors affecting the strength of an electromagnet. However, for other Year 8 pupils, their understanding of magnetic materials and of how to make a permanent magnet was limited and short-lived. Pupils in Year 9 made good progress around a circus of examples of simple machines and, in another class, pupils showed satisfactory standards as they worked successfully on the relationship between the number of batteries and the current in a simple circuit. Less successful was the attainment and progress of Year 7 pupils as they looked at the behaviour of particles in solids, liquids and gases. In the nurture group, some unsatisfactory behaviour and poor concentration prevented progress as pupils investigated and tested the properties of rocks and minerals. Lower attaining pupils are supported well by teachers and achieve about the same as others in the class, and there is no difference in the attainment of boys and girls or pupils from different ethnic groups. The overall attainment by Year 9 is well below average but achievement is largely satisfactory though some pupils underachieve.

143. Standards are well below average by the end of Year 11. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in double science was well below the national average in 2001. The proportion gaining grades A\*-G was less than the national average. Since the last inspection, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C, with the exception of 2001 when figures fell. In spite of the low results and

occasionally unacceptable behaviour, some pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11; better than in earlier years.

144. In work seen during the inspection, some pupils in Years 10 and 11 attain better standards than recent examination results indicate. For example, lower attaining pupils in Year 10 successfully extend their knowledge and understanding about the differences in animal and plant cells. In another lesson, Year 10 pupils with English as an additional language were well supported and also made satisfactory progress. Working on forces, some pupils in Year 11 clearly demonstrate that they understand the relationship between the load and the extension of a spring according to Hooke's Law. However, in the classes seen, serious disruption and a history of poor working has prevented learning for a majority of pupils and attainment is generally poor and, though the overall achievement of pupils is satisfactory, it is less than many pupils are capable of.
145. With a small exception, the quality of teaching is satisfactory and there are examples of very good and excellent practice. Specialist teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of science, which they use well with pupils. They organise and prepare individual lessons conscientiously, often with detailed plans and lesson notes as in a lesson on electromagnetism in Year 8, and electricity and levers in Year 9. In nearly all lessons, aims and intended outcomes were shared with pupils. This clearly contributes to their understanding and the overall success of the lesson. A range of teaching and learning strategies is used with success. Most teachers use whole class questioning effectively and the pace of lessons is generally good. Materials are well matched to individual needs and well prepared and presented. Many pupils are challenged well by the tasks they are given and speak confidently about their work although for some, knowledge, understanding and skills are insufficiently developed, and many show poor writing ability. More recently, assessment has been properly organised and is now effective. There are regular opportunities for pupils to show what they can do and the tracking and recording of pupils' success is good. Eventually this information will be available centrally for all key stages and used to group pupils by ability, to set targets, to report progress to pupils and parents and to support teaching and learning. Teachers mark pupils' books and other work well, often using praise and giving supportive and informative comment. Increasingly, younger pupils' work is on display in laboratories and is largely well received by their friends and classmates. The displays improve the learning environment.
146. In the main, pupils generally are not very enthusiastic about their work in science, and behaviour in lessons is barely satisfactory. Yet, where teaching is of good quality, attitudes to learning in science are largely positive, expectations are improved and relationships are good. However, in a small minority of lessons, weaker class management and control of behaviour slows down the pace of teaching and learning. Very few pupils take pride in their work and books are not well looked after and, in many cases, work is unfinished, of poor quality and insufficient quantity. A small number of pupils are keen, willing and attentive and approach work with a sense of enjoyment. They enjoy practical work and investigations in science, stay on task and work collaboratively and with good concentration. Nonetheless, for many, the work ethic is weak and pupils do not know how to learn effectively. Written work is of a poor standard generally with few examples of creative, imaginative and extended writing. Recording what pupils know and can do in science is not well developed.
147. A new head of department has been appointed since the previous inspection and her very good leadership is already having a tangible and positive impact on the work of the department. In the past, there has been a high turnover of staff and some poor teaching. Along with the acquisition of new staff, the department has made some changes which support learning well. As a result, standards are improving. The



curriculum is under review and documentation is of very high quality, especially the department's new improvement and development plan which encapsulates the head of department's vision for improvement. However, monitoring and evaluation are not yet sufficiently well in place. In Years 7 to 9 in particular, textbooks and other resources have been made available to support new aspects of teaching and learning. Extra-curricular support for external tests is in place and additional activities, such as clubs, trips and visits, all assist the move towards a more positive and exciting subject image. A small group of more able pupils benefit from an industry initiative and are involved with a stimulating project at the internationally renowned Centre for Applied Optics. Recent relocation and refurbishment have made a positive impact on the quality of pupils' work, and the new laboratories are a pleasing environment which is supportive to learning.

148. The department is very well organised, and resources are used effectively. Teachers and technicians work successfully together and are familiar with safe working practice, and daily routines reflect this. However, access to the storage of bulk flammable materials via a walkway across the rooftops of tall buildings is very unsatisfactory and presents a serious hazard for technicians, particularly in poor weather. The head of department supports and manages people well and with sensitivity. Activity in science is very well supported by three technicians (3.0 FTE) led by a well-qualified and experienced team leader. However, technician provision is insufficient for a department of this size especially with the good range of post-16 courses in science. Teachers and technicians are developing the skills of using computers for administration and lesson preparation but not enough use is made of ICT in lessons. For example, there is very little opportunity for pupils to use electronic data collection and handling, and tables and graphs are very often drawn by hand.

## ART AND DESIGN

Though aspects of provision for art and design in the main school are good, the low time allocation and the poor curricular arrangements for teaching it in Years 7 to 9 mean that the overall provision is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- There is a well-established and stable teaching staff in the department.
- The leadership of the department is energetic.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' attainment in all skills is very low and pupils' writing and presentation skills are too low to enable them to achieve the expected levels of research and critical study work in any year group.
- Curriculum arrangements in Years 7 to 9 prevent pupils achieving the standards of which they are capable.
- The amount of time for art and design as a GCSE subject is too low to enable pupils with such low skills to achieve the standards they could in examinations.
- The degree of individuality and independent, personal interpretation in pupils' examination work is well below average.
- Behaviour in some classes leads to unsatisfactory learning.

149. When pupils enter Year 7 their skills in art and design are very low. Their spatial awareness in particular is weak hampering their conceptual understanding. The current curriculum arrangements in Years 7 and 8 greatly impede the acquisition of the basic skills pupils need to overcome these existing weaknesses. The rotational organisation of the school's teaching of art and design was criticised in the last report. The school's current plans to alter these carousel arrangements are long overdue because the skills

and understanding of current pupils in the school have been gravely impaired by this system. Pupils experience a cycle of art and design teaching then a long gap, during which they slip backwards and lose the skills which their art teachers have so carefully nurtured. Pupils have too little curriculum time for art and design in these years, with long, damaging gaps between cycles, and they do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. Although more time is available in Year 9, many pupils have become frustrated with their lack of development in handling tools and materials by then and have decided that they are not going to continue with art and design into GCSE years. They therefore lack motivation and in some cases, behave badly in lessons, further hindering their own learning.

150. During each cycle of the art and design carousel, and in those lessons seen on inspection, teachers work very hard to ensure that progress is good in the skills they are teaching and pupils' achievement is often good. In Year 7, for example, pupils working on large-scale paintings based on a Cézanne picture were learning well how to make bold marks with paint directly on to large paper. They lose these skills though, before their next experience of art and design, and work seen in Year 8 shows they have not progressed sufficiently. Work scrutiny shows this lack of progress more clearly than individual lessons, where most pupils and all teachers try hard to make a success of their learning. These difficulties are exacerbated by additional factors, some common across the school. Absence, lateness to lessons and restless, unsettled behaviour in lessons all add to the obstacles inherent in current curriculum arrangements. This is common to all pupils, with no significant differences observed between the impact on pupils with special educational needs or pupils with English as an additional language and others. All pupils are similarly disadvantaged. In Year 9, current projects in the two- and three-dimensional aspects of the curriculum are beginning to be successful in raising standards and achievement. In their wire sculptures, for example, in a 'Day of the Dead' project, pupils were successfully developing their practical skills. Similarly, in two-dimensional work, some were starting to develop successful compositions in large-scale graphite drawings in a project about music. Pupils' writing and ability to research imaginatively and annotate their visual work analytically remain very weak and, by Year 9, standards overall are still well below average.
151. Pupils start GCSE work with these weak skills. The curriculum provides only two periods per week for their course which is too little to improve standards enough. GCSE results in 2001 were well below average when compared against all pupils' grades, but better when judged against boys' averages. Grades represented good improvement over the very poor results in 2000. In the current Year 11, a quarter of pupils who began the course have left it. Amongst the remainder, attainment is very low, partly because pupils and teachers have had insufficient time to improve their skills. Teachers have to teach pupils in Years 10 and 11 in very structured ways because of their previous unsatisfactory experience, so pupils cannot develop the individual, personal responses expected. Only very few of the current Year 11 are currently at C grades in their work, with most much lower. Attainment in Year 11 is well below average.
152. The quality of teaching is good. Some classes seen have had a recent history of poor staffing and have developed very challenging attitudes towards the subject. Class management has to be very firm to overcome this and create situations where pupils can learn effectively. This is generally successful and whilst most classes are noisy, pupils are learning well in their lessons. All the factors described above combine to militate against good teaching being as effective as would be expected. Team teaching in Years 10 and 11 is effective, pulling up pupils' skills from a very low base and allowing pupils greater contact with teachers whose one-to-one help is useful and helpful.

153. Improvement since the most recent report has been unsatisfactory. Standards described then were much higher. Attainment has fallen significantly in all years. Progress and achievement are less good than they were. The effects of a discontinuous curriculum were clearly not impacting so adversely on achievement at that time. Examination results are similar but likely to be much weaker for the current Year 11. A very newly appointed head of department is building on the work done by the previous head of department and vigorously addressing the issues mentioned above. He is well supported in this by the team of teachers within the department. The school is also helping by planning to eliminate the carousel arrangements. The quality of teaching is still good. The department's use of ICT is still unsatisfactory because insufficient hardware and software exist in the art rooms.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Leadership by the acting head of the department is good.
- The accommodation for teaching design and technology is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in all aspects of the subject are too low.
- There is insufficient access to computers and resources to teach computer-aided design and control.
- The quality of display is unsatisfactory and does not create a sufficiently stimulating learning environment.
- Risk assessments are not routinely carried out.

154. Standards in design and technology are well below national averages. They have remained at this level over the past few years. All evidence indicates that, although standards could be higher and examination results for 16-year-olds could be better, the quality of teaching and learning has been effective in promoting at least satisfactory achievement. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

155. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is well below nationally expected standards. Pupils have an insecure knowledge of the subject by the age of 14. They know how to use tools and equipment to a satisfactory standard and can work with various materials and apply practical processes that help them to achieve satisfactory quality in the products they make. Satisfactory standards were seen in their textile and food technology products and in the resistant materials projects. However, pupils' understanding and application of the design process is insecure and research and evaluation are weak elements of their work. For example, Year 9 pupils rarely produce more than one idea for development. They are very vague about what a specification is and how to apply it to their own project work. Development of pupils' skills and knowledge is affected by the rotational teaching arrangements.

156. GCSE results in 2001 were well below national averages as were the results in the two preceding years. Current groups in Year 11 are achieving a higher standard than this in their practical work, though their folder work is not at a satisfactory stage of completion for this time in the year. Year 11 pupils' attainment in lessons overall is below average. They have satisfactorily mastered a range of skills in making products but their knowledge and understanding of the properties of materials is generally weak. Research and evaluation work is of poor quality in many cases. Though overall standards are below average, higher attaining pupils are attempting a good range of

products and are using sketching well to develop their ideas. Their research is thorough and helps to shape designs such as a point of sale stand for a clock project. There is little use of ICT to present design work due to the lack of computers in the department. There are resources available to teach computer-aided design but these are not being used.

157. Pupils generally work purposefully and demonstrate a positive attitude to the subject. However, younger pupils often demand a lot of attention from teachers. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are more confident in practical work and help each other in their tasks, offering comment and criticism in a positive manner. Pupils regularly arrive late for lessons and this causes some disruption, and for older pupils, late arrival means that they have less time to complete project work.
158. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with nearly half of lessons featuring good teaching. All staff work hard to develop productive relationships with classes and in this they are mostly successful. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. The best teaching is well planned and leads to a coherent learning programme that is well supported with prepared lesson notes and worksheets. These are then retained to build up a good picture of individual progress. In some classes, there is very good individual mentoring and target setting in Year 11. Each day's progress is reviewed effectively in the plenary session at the end of lessons. There is a sound stress on health and safety. Teachers work well with pupils with special educational needs. They support the literacy policy well and are careful to introduce new words. Teaching and learning are well supported by a good technician and classroom assistants. Teachers have taken part in ICT training but lack the skills to teach computer-aided design and control systems.
159. The leadership of the department is good. The acting head of department has a clear view of how the department should be developed. She is fully aware of the need to provide more support for pupils in Years 7 to 9 in the form of design booklets in order to give pupils a helpful structure and framework for developing the required range of design skills. The introduction of a system to record and track progress is intended to help teachers' planning and lead to the necessary improvements in standards. However, it is too early to evaluate how effectively it is being used. There is some display of pupils' work but this does not provide the necessary focus to stimulate interest. The department does not carry out risk assessment. Accommodation is good for all aspects of the subject. There has been little change in the department since the last inspection and standards remain low, though there has been improvement in accommodation and the appointment of a food specialist. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**. Levels of attainment in GCSE examinations are improving.

### Strengths

- Lessons are very well planned.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons is well managed.
- Teachers are well qualified and dedicated to their work.
- The department makes a determined effort to provide tasks and teaching materials to match the needs of all pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The attainment of pupils is too low.
- Not enough use is made of ICT as a means of learning.
- The amount of teaching time available for the subject is too low.

- The attitudes of pupils to homework and to completing work set are unsatisfactory.

160. Low levels of prior attainment by pupils taking geography contribute significantly to the fact that levels of attainment are below average for pupils at both the age of 14 and at the end of statutory education at age 16. Attainment is also restricted by weak literacy skills and by language difficulties, particularly in Years 7 to 9. There is a measure of underachievement in the subject as a result of the poor attitude of pupils towards homework, to completing work set and to attending regularly. Attainment also suffers from the limited time for the subject in Years 7 to 9 and timetabling arrangements in Years 10 and 11. As a result, coverage of the National Curriculum and of external examination syllabuses is less detailed than it should be and this adversely affects the levels of attainment in all years.
161. Nevertheless, results in GCSE examinations, though still significantly below the national average, are rising and have done so for the last four years. In 2001, they were above the targets set by the school. Since 1998, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A\*-C has risen from 27.7 per cent to 36.8 per cent and the number gaining grades A\*-G from 86.8 per cent to 100 per cent in 2001. This is a notable improvement. The number of higher grades A\* or A remains small. At this level, however, the performance of pupils is below that of pupils in other subjects in the school and below that of pupils in similar schools. There are variations in the performance of pupils from different ethnic groups. Pupils of Asian and Greek/Turkish ethnic backgrounds reach higher standards than those of white or black backgrounds and the attainment of those with English as an additional language improves as their mastery of English improves through the school.
162. The attainment of pupils and the progress they make is better in lessons than in written work completed outside lesson times. For many pupils, the lack of completed homework and their failure to catch up with work missed or work that is incomplete result in a reduction in standards as there are gaps in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and work undertaken in class is not consolidated or retained. Limited skills of literacy also adversely affect standards when it comes to recalling knowledge for tests or examinations in written form.
163. Pupils, however, do make progress in lessons and confidently respond orally to questions or to the investigation of topics from texts or other printed material. Year 7 pupils understand and can give reasons for the development of out-of-town shopping centres. In Year 8, they know the factors that lead to the migration of people across the world and in Year 9, they appreciate the advantages and disadvantages of tourism and the conflicts that may arise from opposing views on its development. Pupils' lesson notes show a good understanding of initial mapping skills and gradual progress to a satisfactory knowledge of physical geography by the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 9, pupils have made satisfactory progress in geography given their prior levels of attainment. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is also satisfactory. In a very good lesson, a group of Year 10 pupils quickly learned the factors that affect world trade, while Year 11 pupils fully understood the locational factors leading to the development of a new shopping centre.
164. This satisfactory and sometimes good progress made in lessons is in part due to the efforts pupils make to concentrate throughout the lesson. When given the opportunity to co-operate, learning becomes more focused. Teaching that is always satisfactory and good or better in half the lessons assists this. The behaviour of pupils is well managed and a variety of tasks maintain concentration and employ pupils fully throughout. Teaching makes a special effort to provide tasks and materials that are suitable for both pupils with special educational needs and for those with higher levels of attainment. Worksheets are carefully prepared to cater for the different levels of prior attainment of

pupils, and teachers and additional support, when available, provide good individual help to pupils. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and with English as an additional language often make progress at the same rate as their peers. Lesson planning is a particular strength of the department and ensures that there are clear aims to lessons and appropriate targets for learning.

165. Case studies are used well to illustrate topics, to raise moral and social issues and to encourage the understanding of location through reference to specific examples. These specific examples help pupils to learn as they often relate to developments with which pupils are familiar in everyday life. Occasionally, teachers play too great a part in lessons. This reduces the quality of learning as pupils become less attentive and the progress they make is not as good as it could be. In these cases, pupils wait for teachers to provide answers rather than search for answers in the materials provided for learning. Good use is made of videotapes to illustrate topics but practical approaches to learning are less evident. Where they do occur, such as in a Year 10 lesson using a game to illustrate how world trade operates, the quality of learning is very good and the pupils' sense of enjoyment in their learning is apparent. All years undertake some element of fieldwork, though the local environment is not conducive to a range of fieldwork activities.
166. The management of the subject is satisfactory. All teachers are well qualified and dedicated to their work. New ideas are being introduced into teaching and there is good support for the newly qualified member of the department. Schemes of work are linked closely to the National Curriculum and indicate teaching strategies and ideas for meeting the needs of all pupils. There is a good supply of video material. However, the supply of textbooks and atlases is limited and precludes books being taken home, placing a great reliance on the use of school produced worksheets in teaching. A significant weakness is the lack of computer equipment in the department in order to assist teaching and learning in geography. Access to centrally based computers is also limited, although some Year 11 coursework indicates that when pupils have access, they benefit from information available on the Internet and use this medium well to analyse and present data and to draw conclusions. Assessment is regular through end of topic tests and the department keeps samples of previous work as a benchmark for standards. Marking is methodical with more attention now being paid to levels of the National Curriculum (which are displayed in classrooms) and GCSE grades, but it is not yet fully used to provide rigorous targets for improvements in attainment. The work of the department is evaluated annually but this review is limited in scope, and development planning has no links to financial considerations or to longer-term proposals that resolve the major need of the department to raise standards as identified above.
167. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Results in GCSE examinations are rising, the department uses a greater variety of methods in teaching, greater attention is being paid to the needs of all pupils and behaviour in lessons is significantly improved, but the need to raise standards of attainment remains.

## HISTORY

Overall provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- There is good management of pupils' behaviour.
- The curricular development is good.
- Teaching makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy.

### Areas for development

- Opportunities to use ICT are limited.
- Planning for pupils' spiritual and moral development is not sufficiently well developed and there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop and express their opinions.
- Not enough time is allocated to teaching history.

168. Standards are below average overall. The GCSE pass rate at A\*-C has fluctuated over the last four years but remains below the national average. The pass rate at A\*-G has remained steady and it is close to the national average. Pupils perform slightly less well in history than in their other GCSE subjects. Results at AS- and A2-levels show that students in Years 12 and 13 are working in line with national expectations across the ability range. Work seen during the inspection shows that higher attaining pupils are working close to the national average by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. This is more marked in the work of pupils in Year 10 where there are more higher attaining pupils than in Year 11. Absence to lessons is a significant issue within the current Year 11 class and has resulted in non-entry to GCSE for just over 50 per cent of the pupils. Pupils with middle or lower attainment are working below national averages due to written and oral skills which are below average across all years.
169. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Achievement by pupils is good by the end of Year 9. All pupils are able to identify a variety of purposes intended by propaganda posters during World War 1 and to record their analysis satisfactorily. They show satisfactory understanding of technological change in the eighteenth century textile industry and good knowledge of the reasons for the growth of the British Empire. This is based upon good achievement during Year 7 where an effective curriculum, tailored well to the needs of pupils, is provided. This recognises the low standards on entry and includes well-designed tasks which help pupils to acquire relevant knowledge and skills, and motivates them.
170. Achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 11. Pupils entered for GCSE understand the causes of the building of the Berlin Wall within the context of the Cold War after 1945 and they can satisfactorily identify historical sources drawn from statements made by both sides. Achievement is satisfactory in the sixth form. Students in Year 13 are able to identify the various features of the anti-Vietnam war movement in America and to analyse satisfactorily its effectiveness in bringing the war to an end.
171. Teaching is good in all years. Individual lessons are well planned to include clear aims and often the use of teacher designed resources of high quality, for example a set of paintings of medieval women. Teachers have high expectations of pupil behaviour and they manage the pupils well by appropriate use of praise for good work, by instilling a sense of purpose and by developing good standards of presentation so that pupils take pride in their work and try to complete set tasks. The stable learning environment in all classrooms enables all pupils to concentrate and for good progress particularly to be made by pupils with special educational needs. Teachers use skilful questioning techniques to explore pupils' understanding and they regularly consolidate this. Pupils persevere well with all tasks but show little independence of thought. There is less

opportunity for pupils to be personally engaged with historical issues through developing and expressing their opinions. Pupils might make further progress if they were given such opportunities. Teachers use computers for Internet research with sixth-formers and make a good contribution to pupils' numeracy skills through regular use of timelines, graphs and charts. Good contribution is also made to literacy.

172. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum is regularly revised and some interesting depth was seen in the coverage of topics, for example the experience of heretics in the medieval church and of resistance by black slaves in the British Empire. The new sixth-form courses are satisfactorily established and resourced. Policies are consistently implemented across the department, for example regular and helpful marking, and there is good support for all staff including several non-specialists. The introduction of National Curriculum level descriptors into exercise books should help pupils to know how to improve. The curriculum makes a good overall contribution to the pupils' social and cultural development; opportunities to provide for their spiritual and moral development are taken satisfactorily but could benefit from more planning.
173. Improvement since the last inspection is good overall due mainly to the provision of tasks which help all pupils to analyse historical sources, for example the lives of medieval women, and which addresses the need to tackle higher order skills as noted in the last report. Good use of materials tailored to the needs of pupils enables all to access key ideas, for example work on trench warfare, and there is regular use of tasks which support reading and written skills, for example true/false statements and crosswords with writing frames frequently used to satisfactorily develop extended writing by lower attaining pupils.
174. ICT was described as 'undeveloped' in the last report and it remains so due to the lack of access to computer suites for whole classes. One weekly period of 55 minutes in Years 7 and 9 and two such weekly lessons at GCSE are insufficient time in which to cover the courses to the required depth. Standards are particularly affected in Year 9 as there is not enough time to cover Britain from 1750 to 1900.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The overall provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The management of the City Learning Centre is very good and there is a very clear vision for improvement.
- There is very good planning for teaching throughout the subject area.
- Over half the teaching seen was very good.
- The new City Learning Centre is an excellent resource.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT across the curriculum is underdeveloped and hence statutory requirements are not fully met.
- Access for staff to computers and appropriate skills training is too limited.
- Suitable programs and resources for control technology are not currently available.
- The curriculum offered to pupils in Years 8 and 9 is weak.

175. Attainment at GCSE in ICT is good. The proportion of pupils obtaining A\*-C was above the national average in 2001. The overall attainment in ICT in Years 10 and 11 is average and often above. The attainment in Years 8 and 9 is below average, as the carousel system currently operating does not promote sufficient progress. In Year 7, where there is a completely new and effective scheme of work, attainment is in line with



national expectations. Standards of achievement are good and sometimes very good in Years 10 and 11. They are good in Year 7 and generally unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9, although some very good progress was seen in a Year 8 lesson on databases.

176. The provision for the GNVQ and GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils follow courses in GNVQ or GCSE information technology or ICT key skills. Non-examination students have one period a week and a very good lesson was seen as part of a web creation course using industry standard software. The pupils were able to create several different website buttons to create new links. In a satisfactory GCSE lesson, the pupils showed good examples of independent learning as they joined together relational databases with a query.
177. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory, and in some cases good, progress. Very good progress was made by the Year 7 nurture group as a result of very good teaching. By the end of the lesson, the pupils were able to choose a background colour for their PowerPoint presentation and add a title. Some pupils also added a graphic to their slide. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress overall.
178. The quality of teaching is satisfactory though much very good teaching was also seen, especially in the new City Learning Centre. Though no unsatisfactory teaching was seen, that seen was either very good or satisfactory. Overall, specialist teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good and at times excellent. A very good lesson was seen with a large Year 7 group, where the firm insistence on good behaviour and the excellent subject knowledge resulted in the pupils achieving all the targets. In this lesson, the pupils effectively used graphic 'spray paint' techniques to alter a picture, transferred it to a desktop publishing package and added their own text. The National Curriculum levels were displayed on the whiteboard and therefore the pupils knew exactly what level they were achieving. In the very good lessons, there is a good balance between whole class teaching and individual work and activities are well structured. In these lessons, teachers have high expectations of what they want pupils to achieve. Very good practice was seen when the lesson objectives were displayed on the whiteboard and these were continually reinforced throughout the lesson and in the plenary, thus ensuring that all were achieved. Explanations were very clear, leading to pupils knowing exactly what they had to do and staying on task. Where teaching is satisfactory, there is insufficient use of questioning to engage and challenge the pupils and behaviour management skills are not as good as they need to be. In these lessons, pupils are given tasks to complete on the computer and teachers tend to provide support as and when needed rather than driving pupils' learning through a wider range of teaching techniques. Not enough use is made of computers by teachers in other subjects, and this contributes to the overall judgement of satisfactory teaching.
179. Pupils are generally enthusiastic and highly motivated and attitudes are very good, especially in Year 7. In other years, some attitudes are unsatisfactory and are related to the unsatisfactory accommodation and resources in one computer room. There are, however, some very positive attitudes in response to very good teaching, the examination courses and the new facilities in the City Learning Centre. One Year 11 pupil was very proud of his achievement, 'I can use the applications in Access now'.
180. There is limited work with computer control programs and this, combined with the lack of resources for data logging, limits the contribution they can make to the development of pupils' ICT skills. At the moment, there is some limited use of control technology on the teaching programme. The department is planning to purchase data logging equipment and suitable control resources, which will then fulfil the statutory curriculum. Planning over the whole subject area is very good.

181. Twenty-six students are studying A-level at Highbury Fields. There is a reasonably wide range of other courses, including AVCEs, GNVQs and ICT key skills. The Year 12 GNVQ science group were learning how to create a simple database query as part of the ICT key skills. They had already completed courses on wordprocessing and spreadsheets. The Year 12 GNVQ ICT group were looking at logo design and had seen real example materials. They were making good progress as they understood the meaning of 'a corporate image'. One student explained her logo design as 'simple and the colour makes it calm'.
182. There are good enrichment activities in ICT. There are planned summer school activities for Year 9 gifted and talented pupils which will introduce them to the latest industry standard web-creation tools.
183. Assessment is good in examination related courses in Years 10 to 13. Good procedures for assessment have been put in place in Years 7 to 9, but the use of assessment is unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9. The new procedures are designed to ensure continuity and progression and consist of an assessment sheet on individual skills to be completed by each class teacher as their pupils complete a specific module in the scheme of work. These will all contain a final teacher-assessed National Curriculum level which will be placed in a student database. Scrutiny of work showed some very good marking with constructive comments.
184. The standard of accommodation is varied. There are excellent accommodation and state of the art resources at the new City Learning Centre and one computer room in the school, but another computer room is dark and far too hot, with computers that have come to the end of their useful life. This has a detrimental effect on the attitudes and motivation of the students using this room. At present, the ratio of computer to pupil is 11:1 and this is below the national average.
185. The provision for ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Certain departments, such as history, have no access to computer suites and no computers in the department. Some good cross-curricular practice was seen. For instance, in a good geography lesson with Year 11, pupils analysed field data to produce a variety of graphical illustrations. In GNVQ leisure and tourism, during a four-week unit, the fourth week is sited in the ICT room, where high quality work is produced. There are some very good examples of work in media studies for Years 10 and 11, when they use video editing for projects and short films. In a very good Year 11 English lesson, pupils prepared presentations in PowerPoint to enhance their speaking and listening skills. Examples of this were effectively displayed on the wall. Work produced by Year 8 pupils included evidence of the Internet being used for projects on artists such as Pablo Picasso. The provision for ICT is good in music, where the keyboards fulfil the National Curriculum requirements and the teacher is competent in using the computer for music arrangements. However, in a number of other subjects, the use of computers is very limited. This includes science, mathematics, history, and geography.
186. Management of the subject by the head of the City Learning Centre, who has only been in position since June 2001, is very good. He has a clear vision for the development of the subject and has produced effective development plans. The new City Learning Centre is an excellent facility and plans, particularly for the use of the centre to develop and improve the cross-curricular use of ICT, are very good. When they come to fruition, they should have a dynamic effect on pupils' achievement. The systems manager has very good plans for hardware improvement with the upgrading of computers in one of the rooms in the main school, the installation of Windows 2000 and the change to broadband Internet access.

187. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. However, in some areas, such as ICT across the curriculum and control technology, it is unsatisfactory. In examination courses, such as GCSE and GNVQ, the improvement is good.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

### **Strengths**

- The members of the department work well as a team.
- They reflect the ethnic mix of the school and are in a strong position to enrich pupils' insights into the multicultural aspects of the languages curriculum.
- Provision for the Year 7 nurture group is good.

### **Areas for development**

- Pupils are not achieving as much as they should.
- A high proportion of teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Systems for evaluating the work of the department are not sufficiently well developed.

188. Teacher assessment in French and Spanish in 2001 indicates that attainment by the end of Year 9 was well below the national average and this is confirmed by inspection findings.

189. The proportion of pupils attaining higher grades, A\*-C, in the GCSE examinations in 2001 was well below the national average in French and very low in Spanish. Over the last four years, results were variable but have generally remained low. In Turkish, they were much better and above the national average for other languages. Inspection findings broadly confirm these results except in Year 10, where the standards in French are improving, although they are still well below average by the end of Year 11.

190. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 study either French or Spanish in mixed ability groups. A smaller size class of pupils is taught in a nurture group. A significant number of pupils who have been withdrawn previously from Years 7 and 8 are being reintegrated but are struggling because of time lost and this is one factor contributing to low attainment. By the end of Year 9, the few higher attaining pupils show basic understanding of classroom language and answer questions related to the topics being studied. They show some grasp of question forms by matching key words with their English equivalent and basic comprehension of reading materials, for instance when identifying key words and phrases in the text. However, many show limited understanding and have little recall of basic language when they need to express themselves orally. This is mainly due to a lack of motivation which has developed as a result of constant inattentiveness during lessons and weaknesses in teachers' behaviour management skills. Attainment in listening and responding is generally better especially when taped material is used judiciously in conjunction with oral work to reinforce understanding. However, this is rare because in many instances, classes are noisy and are not conducive to enabling pupils to retain what they learn. Attainment in reading and writing is also low because these skills are not effectively practised and modelled for pupils to enable them to apply them and transfer them into different contexts. Evidence from the analysis of pupils' work indicates that much of it is focused on vocabulary and self-contained exercises, which are not harnessed sufficiently in oral work to enable pupils to gain fluency in composing their responses from an early stage. Very few pupils in Year 9 produce writing in paragraphs to enable them to perform at the required level and use past and future tenses. This results in underachievement, mainly because teaching

is not focused sufficiently to enable pupils to activate their previously acquired language, constantly build on it and transfer it to new contexts.

191. Attainment by the end of Year 11 in French and Spanish is well below average. Pupils' understanding in both languages is better than their speaking and writing. A significant number in current Year 10 show skills in speaking, with the highest attainers able to sustain a conversation with a native speaker and write extended pieces in accurate French. On the other hand, the majority of pupils in the current Year 11 do not match these standards. In listening and responding, pupils attain better, although a number fail to record anything and this is because teachers do not monitor the extent to which pupils understand the material heard or adapt it if it is too fast or inaudible. Whilst middle and lower attaining pupils learn topic vocabulary, their grasp of past tenses and key structures is weak and the majority of pupils do not transfer this knowledge into their writing. Evidence from the analysis of pupils' work also shows insufficient opportunities to develop their writing skills beyond the practice of structures. There is unnecessary translation and few examples of modelled compositions which are crucial to achieving higher levels of attainment. Pronunciation is overall satisfactory but distinctly better in Spanish.
192. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, do not achieve appropriately against their prior attainment. This is due, to a large extent, to the lack of high expectations in the use of the target language as the normal means of communication and the lack of emphasis on oral skills. These need extensive practice to develop oral fluency. The use of target language as the basis for developing skills in reading and writing is underdeveloped.
193. Progress of pupils, especially in Years 8 and 9 is hampered by the poor ethos in learning, constant inattentiveness and the tendency of pupils to consider chatting during lessons as a matter of habit which in many cases goes unchallenged. During the inspection, a high proportion of pupils were either absent or late, and this often caused the lesson to be restarted or unduly delayed to the detriment of those who were keen to work and learn. Although many pupils are well disposed to learning, ground rules for communicating in the target language are not constantly reinforced and consolidated for pupils to develop fluency.
194. There is some very good teaching and a third of lessons seen were satisfactory. However, the overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Although good examples of the use of the overhead projector, flashcards to revise or introduce vocabulary and choral repetition result in some good learning, this is not sustained because teachers are not always able to command the full attention of pupils and in some cases do not intervene to establish discipline. Planning is often focused on topics based on the textbook, with much of the lesson taken up with learning vocabulary, but without using it to practice communication skills through pair and group work or to develop pupils' oral fluency. The critical revision of language that pupils have already been taught is not always used effectively at the beginning of lessons to build on previous learning. In many lessons, teachers use English indiscriminately and excessively and few strategies are used to enable pupils to practise the foreign language and use it spontaneously. Expectations with respect to this are often low. As a result, pupils do not rehearse or become accustomed to adopting effective habits of speaking in the target language. Much of the homework set is often not completed, even, in some cases, by higher attaining pupils. Although marking is regular and work is assessed against levels of attainment, the advice given to pupils is of a general nature and not specific to what they need to do to improve a specific piece of work. Often the work is not carefully matched to the range of abilities in the class and higher attainers are not suitably challenged.

195. The department has an ethnically mixed staff with some of the members having a francophone Caribbean background and are therefore positive role models for pupils. This is used well to enrich and develop pupils' insights into aspects of francophone countries with work, for instance, on the French Department of La Guadeloupe. Since the last inspection, staffing has improved and is enhanced by the use of French and Spanish foreign language assistants. Members of the department work well as a team and support one another. However, the department has not yet benefited from monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to develop good practice. A review of the department, led by members of the senior management team, was carried out shortly before the inspection. The report arising from this review, though noting some useful points, was not full enough to provide sufficient direction for development. The current development plan does not identify critical areas that are likely to impact on standards. Assessment information is not analysed and used to focus on raising achievement. Very little staff development is planned, and monitoring of teaching and learning is limited to the review of the department recently undertaken.
196. Progress since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards have not improved and the most important aspects of provision, namely teaching and learning, are in need of further development.

## MUSIC

Provision in music is **good**.

### Strengths

- There is very good teaching with excellent musicianship.
- Relationships in class are good.
- Music makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards across all years are low.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory, though the school has plans to address this.
- Pupils do not take sufficient initiative and responsibility for their learning.

197. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well below national levels. There were no teacher assessments available for 2001 but standards seen in lessons reveal that very few pupils are working at the level normally seen by 14-year-olds. Although pupils have some knowledge of musical terms, they are not able to demonstrate their understanding consistently through performing, composing and appraising. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils could identify musical features in film music such as mood, related to major and minor tonality, rhythm and tempo, and attribute these to the atmosphere created, but the depth of their evaluation was not sufficient for the expected level. Year 7 can distinguish between instruments and musical features as seen in a lesson comparing Renaissance and Modern music, recognising wind and string instruments and the difference in rhythmic characteristics. During lessons, pupils make good progress but this level is not sustained between lessons. Pupils are not in the habit of doing homework and because of the carousel arrangements, whereby pupils do not have continuous lessons throughout the year, the rate of progress is less than it could be. Achievement through Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make similar, long-term progress as their peers.
198. In 2001, only one pupil gained a C grade at GCSE. Results have fallen steadily since the last inspection although numbers entered are few. In the present Years 10 and 11, pupils are working at a level which is below average. Composition is the strongest

feature of their work and, as many are competent in using the composing software on computers, they are able to improve and refine their compositions beyond some interesting basic ideas. The rich cultural heritage of the pupils comes through in composition. For instance, the effect of the pentatonic scale on the work of two Turkish boys is very effective. Provision for performance is adequate as most pupils have instrumental lessons provided by the school. It was not possible to observe these lessons during the time in school. Pupils have a short concentration span which impedes their efforts in the listening and appraising part of the course and is the weakest area of their work. They can recognise instrumental sounds and intervals and range in a piece of music but soon tire of the effort required to make a rigorous evaluation of what they hear. For the few pupils identified as gifted and talented, achievement is very good because they are prepared to put in the additional time and effort between lessons. Others make satisfactory progress with their learning confined to lessons.

199. Pupils generally enjoy music and come to lessons with an expectation that they will make music. Where good teaching recognises their difficulties with concentration, they are able to enjoy a range of activities, which helps them to learn more about music and helps them to behave well. Boys in Year 11 are keen to do their best course work and happily stay behind after school to use computers and to help each other complete work. After a good start last term in choir, pupils are reluctant to continue with their singing because of the adverse reaction they experienced from their peers. Very few pupils learn an instrument or pursue music beyond Year 9. Those who do study for GCSE are very appreciative of the time and effort invested by teachers in helping them to complete their work. Behaviour in lessons is mostly good but pupils rely too much on teachers to help them progress in their learning.
200. Teaching is very good throughout the school. Excellent musicianship underpins planning and a clear understanding of how pupils learn results in lessons which are interesting and provide pupils with a range of activities to pursue. Pupils are left in no doubt as to what is expected of them and in turn know that their efforts are valued. There is a strong contribution to personal development because pupils are encouraged to do their best and are given constructive feedback on how well they perform against National Curriculum levels. Pupils are encouraged to try things out and, during the inspection, several pupils were able to play to the whole class for the first time in a supportive atmosphere. Relationships have been carefully nurtured over the last few months that the new teaching team has been in place and pupils openly express their appreciation of how teachers help them to succeed.
201. A new head of department has been in place for six months and leads the department well. She has a very clear vision of how she wants music to develop in Highbury Grove and has already made an impact on learning by putting in place a new scheme of work which not only meets National Curriculum requirements but also appeals to the pupils because it is practically based. It is early days yet to judge the effect of monitoring and evaluating on the work of the department but the impact on improving behaviour can clearly be seen. Clear priorities have been identified which include improving the ethos for achievement and the confidence to perform in public. This is part of a drive to improve standards, which have fallen in recent years following a period of uncertainty in music. The school also has plans to improve the accommodation which is currently unsatisfactory and impacts on teaching and learning. Progress since the last inspection is good but this takes account of a dramatic fall in GCSE results in 2001 to the green shoots of improvement already seen in Year 11. A graduate trainee has been taken into the department, and the school and head of department are well placed to support this teacher.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Pupils achieve well by Year 9 considering their prior attainment.
- Pupils achieve well in GCSE and GNVQ physical education.
- There is good participation and response by girls in lessons, particularly in Years 10 to 11.

### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- The standards of theory work in Years 10 and 11 are too low and could be better.
- Not enough attention is given to matching work to the needs of the full range of capabilities of pupils in lessons.

202. Standards in physical education are good overall. Progress and achievement are good in GCSE physical education.

203. Inspection evidence indicates that in Year 7, standards are average for most pupils, although departmental assessments show that, on entry, standards were below average for a significant number of pupils. At the end of Year 9, the majority, including some pupils with special educational needs and others with English as an additional language, are reaching standards that are in line with those expected for their age. This represents good achievement and progress.

204. In Years 7 to 9, lessons were observed in athletics, basketball and swimming. In a Year 7 lesson in athletics, both boys and girls demonstrated a satisfactory level of skill in sprint starting and a good level of competency in timing and recording the performance of others. In basketball, a Year 9 class showed an above average level of proficiency in footwork, passing and shooting. Other pupils accepted responsibility for refereeing basketball games and did so with skill and confidence. In a lower ability Year 7 group in swimming, few of whom had been able to swim at the beginning of the year, the remaining non-swimmer successfully swam his first length of the pool. This was greeted with applause from the rest of the group, a handshake from the teacher and the award of a certificate. This type of mutual support and encouragement was observed in a number of lessons and has a highly motivating effect on pupils to try hard to succeed in their work.

205. Results in the GCSE physical education examination, have shown good improvement since the last inspection in 1998. At that time, only 4.2 per cent achieved A\*-C grades and 96.8 per cent A\*-G grades. The success rate has increased each year since then and, in 2001, 75 per cent gained A\*-C grades and 100 per cent achieved A\*-G grades. A scrutiny of work in the current GCSE groups in Years 10 and 11, indicates that the school is on course to improve further the A\*-C figures and maintain the level of success in A\*-G grades, although standards of theory need to be improved to bring them up to the high standard of practical work.

206. Standards of work are above average in Years 10 and 11, and their overall achievement is good. In the GNVQ leisure and tourism course, which is taught by the physical education department, pupils undertake independent personal research well and produce good quality work through the skilful use of ICT. This is achieved through careful planning in which every fourth lesson is taught in the ICT room. In a Year 10 girls' health and fitness lesson, pupils had a very good understanding of the anatomical and physiological effects of exercise and, with the help of the teacher, had designed good

programmes to meet their individual needs. They understood well how to use modern weight training equipment and did so with confidence and a high degree of commitment.

207. Similarly, a large mixed group of sixth-form students demonstrated the same degree of understanding and commitment to developing their levels of health and fitness in a circuit and weight training recreational session. Despite these recreational sessions being voluntary, increasing numbers of students are taking part and standards are good. This is an area of improvement since the last inspection and a wide variety of activities are on offer to them.
208. Pupils are co-operative in lessons and their behaviour is good. The majority are enthusiastic, show interest in the subject and fully participate in lessons. Their commitment and effort are key factors in the good progress made. Girls especially show considerable maturity and accept responsibility readily when leading groups through exercises in preparation for the main activity of the lesson.
209. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Important strengths of teaching are the good relationships teachers have with pupils, planning and class management techniques. Expectations of behaviour and response are consistently high across the department. As a result, in most lessons, there is a co-operative atmosphere for learning, and pupils respond well to these expectations. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the activities they teach, and establish clear learning objectives for their lessons, which they share with pupils. This ensures that pupils learn appropriate techniques and improve their knowledge and understanding. In the most effective lessons, teachers frequently question pupils to check on their learning and understanding. A further strength of the department is the way teachers implement the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In most lessons, specially prepared target worksheets are placed around the room and discussed with pupils. For example, in a Year 7 swimming lesson, pupils learned the meaning of the words 'supine' and 'alternate' amongst others, and entered these in their spelling books when they had dressed. In another Year 7 lesson, pupils were taught how to use stopwatches, record results and compare the performance of different pupils as a result of this work. An area that does require further development, however, is the raising of standards of more able pupils. The emphasis, in some lessons, is on lower ability and average pupils, who comprise the majority, while higher ability pupils tend to be given less attention.
210. The new leadership and management of the department are very good. Teachers co-operate well, both formally and informally. There is a strong determination to continue the good improvement evident since the last inspection. Good progress has been made in developing schemes and units of work, linked with good assessment procedures and pupils' self-assessment. Provision in all years is educationally and socially inclusive. National Curriculum requirements are met. Performance management is now taking place and monitoring of teaching and learning is done through team teaching strategies, which is helping to promote continued improvement by sharing the good range of successful practice that currently exists.
211. Since the last inspection, teaching and learning have become more consistent and are resulting in improving standards in examination work. Staff are committed and work hard in their curricular and extra-curricular roles, the latter extending into the wider community. The school sees itself, increasingly, as a community resource in this subject. However, although equipment resources of the department are adequate to deliver the curriculum successfully, accommodation is not. Changing facilities are poor in quantity and quality. The swimming pool has been refurbished successfully but the sports hall roof is too low for certain games such as badminton and volleyball and, along with the gymnasium, is in need of general refurbishment, particularly as the school has



no playing fields. These deficiencies are well known to the school and plans are being drawn up to make significant improvements for physical education, dance and drama in a specially designed block. On completion, this should make a significant contribution to improvement in standards in these subjects.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Although the provision for religious education in Years 7 to 9 and in the examination classes is good, the lack of time allocation and failure to meet statutory requirements in Years 10 to 11 mean that the overall provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The subject leadership is very good.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The achievement of most pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good.
- The progress made by the Year 11 examination group is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Far too little time is given to religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.
- Higher attaining pupils are not making as much progress as they could.
- Not enough use is made of resources, including those in the local faith communities.

212. The GCSE examination results were well below the national average but comparison with the predicted grades and the results achieved in other subjects show that the progress made by the whole group was very good with one student obtaining an A\* grade.

213. In Years 7 to 9, the standard of attainment is below the levels set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Whilst pupils are able to identify some of the principal beliefs and practices of the religions they have been studying, their knowledge lacks depth. They recognise the importance of basic religious symbols, as seen in a good wall chart produced by a Year 7 class, and are beginning to understand the importance of religious language. In Year 8, pupils were looking at the teaching of Islam on the sanctity of life but were finding it hard to grasp the full meaning of the concept. They understand what it means to belong to a faith community. Pupils are sensitive to the beliefs and lifestyles of others. They openly share their own religious commitment in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance. They are beginning to understand the moral values that religion can bring to society. A Year 9 group was carefully considering the teaching of Christianity on divorce.

214. Achievement for lower and middle attaining pupils is good. They make good progress. It is particularly good for those pupils with special educational needs. Structured learning materials and good support from the teachers, particularly in structuring their writing, keep these pupils on task. Pupils with English as an additional language also make good progress. Achievement for the higher attainers is unsatisfactory.

215. With the exception of small examination groups, this sound foundation is not built upon in Years 10 and 11. There is a small unit of work in the personal and social education course each year. This is taught by tutors with resources that are well prepared by the subject leader who is unable to monitor the delivery because she herself is a tutor. During the visit, a Year 11 class was sensitively addressing the relationship between religious values and sexual behaviour. The overall provision is unsatisfactory because time is too short to cover the locally agreed syllabus.

216. The work seen in the current examination groups varied considerably. In a Year 10 group, with a very wide spectrum of ability, the standard of work for middle and lower attainers was below average but satisfactory given their prior attainment. Pupils had a satisfactory understanding of the teaching of Islam on life after death. The achievement of the more able pupils was unsatisfactory. Pupils with a strong commitment to their faith, and a sound knowledge of the basic beliefs of Islam, were not being stretched. The work seen in their books suggests that this group will not reach the grades that are predicted.
217. In Year 11, a group with a very wide spread of ability were making good progress and should achieve grades that are at least in line with predictions and, in some cases, above. They have a very good understanding of Islam. They are able to use specialised language well and fully appreciate the importance of such events as the Hajj. Muslim pupils commented that they had 'learnt a lot during the course because of the knowledge of the teacher'.
218. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but varies considerably, from unsatisfactory to very good. Of the eight lessons seen, four were good or better. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and plan lessons well. This was demonstrated in a Year 11 group where the teacher was effectively using her very good knowledge of Islam to develop pupils' understanding of the Hajj. They also have a satisfactory understanding of the teaching methods required to help pupils reflect and respond to religious issues. This is especially so with the lower attaining pupils. Lessons are carefully structured with suitable learning tasks. Teachers do prepare effective tasks for the higher attainers, but the very wide spread of ability in the groups and the need to maintain classroom discipline dominate the teaching and, as a result, the needs of the higher attainers are not fully addressed.
219. Lessons begin with clear aims and pupils are constantly reminded of the levels of attainment expected. Modern resources are satisfactorily used to stimulate and involve pupils although limited use is made of the local faith communities. The subject leader prepares very good lesson worksheets which do give structure to the lessons, but there is a tendency for some teachers to over rely on these. Particular attention is paid to literacy with writing frames and key words frequently used. Some exciting developments in ICT are about to be implemented.
220. Most pupils respond well, showing an interest in the subject. They are sensitive to the beliefs and lifestyles of others. A Year 8 group was discussing the current situation in the Middle East in a thoughtful manner. A significant number of pupils have poor listening skills and low levels of concentration. The challenging behaviour of these pupils is dealt with in a positive and firm manner. Many pupils do not have the independent learning skills or self-motivation required to take charge of their own learning. As result, teachers have to spend time frequently refocusing pupils' attention to their work. Suitable differentiated homework is set and when produced, it is well marked.
221. The management of the subject is very good. The recent introduction of a well-structured system of assessment, which involves pupils in self-assessment, is a good example.
222. Since the last inspection, staffing shortages have presented difficulties. These are reflected in the level of work seen in pupils' workbooks. The problem has now been solved and standards are improving. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

### DRAMA

223. In the limited observation possible in this inspection, pupils in Year 9 have above average standards of attainment and are achieving well. They work collaboratively and productively in groups, using different levels of gesture, expression and movement to convey such ideas as 'intimidation'. They know, and can use, appropriate technical terms such as 'the collective voice' to describe what they are doing. One pupil confidently sang 'Amazing Grace' to add to the dramatic effect of her group's tableau. Pupils in Year 10 have average standards of attainment at this stage of their GCSE course. Again, they show good collaborative skills and good control in situations which require strong emotional extremes. Some pupils vary pitch and tone of voice to convey dramatic conflict very effectively. Others, however, lack clear diction and this affects performance standards.
224. Pupils' attitudes to their drama work are very good in both year groups; they are attentive to the performances of others and appreciative of them too. Their positive response arises from the very good teaching they receive. The teacher's skilful demonstration of how a small shift in body posture could change image and mood was absorbed by pupils and had an immediate effect on the quality of their subsequent performance work. Her very effective preparation for their presentations of domestic conflict resulted in dramatic monologues which were often poetically revealing and full of empathy for the emotional cost involved in such situations. The collaboration shown by pupils from many different backgrounds and cultures was testimony to the teacher's expectations and cultivation of this aspect of their work. Other evidence too, such as the successful school production of 'Bugsy Malone', shows that drama under this teacher's very effective leadership makes a significant contribution to the life of the school and to pupils' personal development.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

### *GCE AS-level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	1	-	83	-	23	-	2.27
Mathematics	2	-	62	-	15	-	1.51

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Chemistry	3	100	90	-	43	4.00	5.90
Communication studies	2	50	93	-	31	3.00	5.53
Computer studies	4	75	86	-	23	3.50	4.62
Drama	2	100	99	-	38	6.00	6.59
Economics	8	50	89	-	36	1.50	5.52
English literature	1	-	95	-	37	-	5.91
Full design and technology	2	100	91	50	30	6.00	5.38
Mathematics	1	-	87	-	43	-	5.80
Music	4	-	93	-	35	-	5.74
Other languages	4	50	93	25	56	4.00	6.84

### *Intermediate vocational qualifications*

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	5	0	-	0	-	0	-
Art	3	66	-	33	-	0	-

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### MATHEMATICS

Provision is **satisfactory**.

##### **Strengths**

- Teaching is satisfactory in the A-level course.
- Students receive a good level of individual support.
- The course is well organised.

##### **Areas for improvement**

- Teaching in the key skills course is unsatisfactory.
- Liaison with the partner school on the A-level course is underdeveloped.

225. The numbers of students entered for the GCE A-level examination has steadily decreased from four in 1998, to one in 2001. Attainment in these examinations has generally been below the national average. In 2001, nine students re-sat the GCSE at the partner school, of whom only one half attained A\*-G, and none succeeded in converting their original grade to a higher grade A\*-C.
226. Standards of work seen in the AS- and A2-level courses are generally in line with national expectations. The students follow a modular course. This involves units that include pure mathematics, applied mathematics, and statistics. Some of the units are taught at the partner school in the joint sixth form, and in the lower sixth form, there are a number of students from that school in the group. During the inspection, work was seen in the pure and the applied mathematics units. Presentation was good. The students take care with their work, and use precise and appropriate processes as taught to them. Their work is generally accurate and of a satisfactory standard. In pure mathematics in Year 12, students were seen developing their familiarity with the language of functions, and with composite and inverse functions. In Year 13, the students revised basic differentiation, and its application in practical situations. The students' progress over the period of the course is satisfactory, influenced both by satisfactory teaching and by their own conscientious attitude, particularly in Year 13. Standards seen in a key skills (application of numeracy) class were low. Students learned a method for working out percentages which they did not really understand, and had very poor numeracy skills to support them.
227. The teaching in the A-level course is satisfactory. The teachers have a good understanding of the key requirements of the course and are good mathematicians. Lessons are well organised and appropriately resourced. Although some are diffident about contributing actively to the lessons, they ensure that they record all necessary information, and mostly get their work done on time. In the key skills course, the teaching was not well enough focused on the needs of the students or on the requirements of the curriculum.
228. Since the last inspection, the number of students taking A-level has declined, although the number now enrolled on the course has risen again. Because of the small numbers involved, it is not possible to make any comparisons with standards or provision at the time of the last inspection. The course is satisfactorily planned and managed, although there is a need for better and regular liaison between the two participant schools. Resources for learning are good and are well backed up by further material prepared by

the teachers. The students are generally appreciative of the high quality that is provided for them in the course.

## SCIENCE

Chemistry was inspected in depth but, during the period of the inspection, it was possible to observe only two lessons in chemistry, both in Year 13. However, it was helpful to talk with teachers and students from Years 12 and 13 and to look closely at their work. Biology is also taught at AS- and A2-levels, and science at GNVQ Foundation and Intermediate levels, and it was possible to sample teaching of these subjects as part of the overall inspection. The number of students in these mixed gender groups is typically between 10 and 15. Attainment and progress in the biology and GNVQ science lessons was satisfactory.

### Chemistry

Overall the quality of provision is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Attitudes are positive, and students are interested and concentrate well.
- The leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Students are managed well and assessment is positive and supportive.
- Teachers' specialist knowledge and understanding are very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards are below average in Year 13.
- The lack of spontaneity and appropriate level of debate and discussion in Year 13.
- The use of ICT in chemistry is poor.

229. Students' examination success in post-16 chemistry has been below the national average for a number of years. Until the present Year 12 group, the number of boys doing chemistry has been quite low at between two and five students. In spite of a slight improvement in examination results in 2000, with one pass at the higher grade, they remain well below the national average, although with very small numbers, such comparison is not significant. Overall, the proportion of successful candidates in the AS-level examinations in 2001 was below the national average and less than many students' expectations. The drop-out rate is relatively high and, in 2001, five boys left during the year, or at the end, of the AS-level examinations and two boys have continued into the A2-level course in the present Year 13. The present Year 12 group has both male and female students and is of reasonable size.

230. The standards of work seen during the inspection were average, and students' levels of achievement are satisfactory. However, for both students in Year 13, their earlier experience of chemistry has been poor and some concepts are not firmly established. Even now, with improved teaching lower down the school, some have difficulty in coping with the content and concepts of chemistry at GCE Advanced Level. For Year 13 students in particular, key skills are insufficiently developed and their experience of making and taking notes is minimal. Communication skills are sometimes poor and they have little experience of cogent discussion and debate and there is a lack of spontaneity and confidence in their response in lessons. On occasions, there is insufficient understanding and experience of mathematics in science and of data collection and manipulation. Some students in Year 12 are also doing mathematics and consequently, they experience less difficulty. Unlike earlier occasions, entry for this course in 2001 required at least a BB grade in double award science, and some Year 12 students have A\*A\* grades. Thus, the overall attainment on entry has improved and the Year 12 group is a much stronger group academically than the Year 13 group.

231. From the observation of lessons and analysis of students' work, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers' expectations are high, and students try hard to meet these. However, effective individual lessons lose their impact because of the limited experience of the students. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and understanding. They have very good relationships with the students and use time and resources effectively. The range of teaching methods is wide and, as a direct consequence, students respond well. In the two lessons seen in Year 13, preparation was good and resulted in learning which at least matched the students' ability. Students are attentive and work productively in lessons and make satisfactory progress. With generally higher grades on entry, and the stability of specialist teachers, students in Year 12 demonstrate that their study skills are better developed and levels of confidence are increasing. For these students, skills include practical investigation skills, competent handling of apparatus and equipment, confident written work and the ability to follow detailed instructions. The regular assessment of work and supporting commentary is satisfactory and, with good teaching, students' efforts have improved.
232. The quality of students' work varies although learning is satisfactory. The standard of work is in line with national standards and they make sufficient progress. Students show increasing understanding of basic facts, such as the factors affecting the rate of reaction of metals with acid, but their grasp of fundamental concepts, such as activation energy and those related to the organisation and techniques of practical investigations, is weak. Year 13 students show an insufficient depth to their understanding of earlier work on the concentrations of solutions and reactants generally. In spite of stimulating and engaging presentation, they have difficulty in taking useful notes for personal study. Lesson observations and work scrutiny also indicate weak skills of organisation and presentation. In contrast, students in Year 12 are only a little way into the course yet most are successful in using these skills and in taking a greater responsibility for their own learning. In spite of some poor earlier experience, students are reasonably confident in explaining a range of concepts to non-specialists and interested adults. Attainment and achievement over time are satisfactory.
233. Leadership and management of the subject are good overall and there is evidence of a clear direction to the department's development. Whilst attention has been given to improving teaching, other aspects have not received sufficient emphasis. Regular assessment, recording and reporting are effectively carried out. However, with the exception of a one-to-one tutorial using computer simulation of lock and key action and the effects of pH on enzyme activity, there is poor use of ICT in chemistry lessons. It is generally limited to wordprocessing or simple interrogation of the Internet for information to support project work and private study. In addition to these features, small numbers of students in the group often fail to generate the challenging and stimulating environment required. Similarly, with such small numbers, there is difficulty in triggering and enabling appropriate levels of personal development and increasing responsibility to be undertaken because there are not enough students to push one another along or challenge one another.
234. With good teaching and technician support, the organisation and management of chemistry at AS-level and Advanced Level is effective and supportive.

## BUSINESS

The focus was on AVCE (advanced vocational certificate in education) and Intermediate GNVQ business studies courses, but economics/business at A-level was also sampled. In A-level economics/business, the teaching was good with students attaining well in relation to their attainment at AS-level and GCSE. Results in 2001 were well below the national average in 2001 in a group of eight male students. Results have varied significantly over the years since the last inspection. In 1999, the average points score was above the national average for male students but below in 1998 and 2000. The focus of the inspection was on Intermediate GNVQ and AVCE business.

Overall the quality of provision in business education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The range of opportunities for students to build effectively on previous qualifications from Year 10 through to the sixth form.
- The very good open relationships between teachers and students have a positive affect upon learning.
- The opportunities for students to be actively involved in their own learning.
- The teaching is good overall; lessons and assignments are well planned and cater well for students' individual needs.

### Areas for improvement

- Not enough emphasis is placed upon the integration of current learning into work-related activities.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The subject lacks a model business environment.
- Opportunities to participate in business conference activities, to widen students' awareness of the real business world and to enable them to relate theory to practice are not as well developed as they could be.
- Students' analytical and evaluative skills are not always sufficiently well developed to help them achieve the higher grades.

235. Standards attained on the Intermediate GNVQ course in 2001 were well below the national average. No students completed sufficient units to enable certification to take place and all five of the male students, out of a mixed group of 16, were granted credits for the units completed. In 2000, results were much better and 68 per cent of male students achieved a pass or merit grade overall. Out of a class of 14, the male students achieved at a higher level than females. Weak motivation and absence adversely affected students' performance in 2001. Since the last inspection, results have been satisfactory and sometimes good in relation to the national average and when compared to students' GCSE grades on entry to the sixth form. An ASVCE course was offered for the first time in September 2001 but as a result of lateness in submitting units by the male students, results were not awarded in 2001. All units have now been completed and results will be issued in the near future. Retention rates are good.

236. Observations in lessons and an analysis of students' work indicate that standards achieved by current students on both the AVCE and Intermediate courses in Years 12 and 13 are at the national average. Students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on GCSE grades. The major weaknesses in learning at both AVCE and Intermediate GNVQ is a lack of depth in understanding of how to analyse and evaluate the impact of business procedures and processes on a firm's effectiveness and profitability. This was seen in files, when students were working on assignments assessing how well firms were meeting their objectives set out in their business plans. Also in Year 13 AVCE, when studying business organisation and structures, some lack



of understanding of the possibilities of alternative quality control measures on the effectiveness of the business was evident. This is an important area to develop.

237. In both courses, GNVQ Intermediate and the single and double AVCE, where Year 12 and 13 are frequently taught together, students display satisfactory research and independent learning skills and are able to be actively involved in their own learning. Some of the students are in their third year in the sixth form having taken the GNVQ course in Year 12. They are able to relate theory to the real business world in a satisfactory manner. Students have established good individual links with local firms. AVCE students make adequate notes to assist their learning and understand the case study materials used to relate business theory to the real world of business. Good progress in understanding was seen in a GNVQ lesson examining the need for and the characteristics of consumer legislation. In a Year 13 AVCE lesson, they developed good understanding of the nature and purposes of customer services as a result of examining the Silver Link Passenger Charter.
238. Overall, teaching in both courses is good. Learning matches this pattern. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and the world of business, and lessons and assignments are well planned. Students are supported effectively on a one-to-one basis particularly in regard to GNVQ assignments and AVCE coursework. Good use is made of case studies and up-to-date business data to allow students to apply and extend their learning. Most students work well, know what they are meant to do and learn effectively. Students are challenged to think and opportunities are provided for them to develop independent learning skills. A satisfactory example was seen in a GNVQ lesson on the purpose, rights, protection and remedy aspects of consumer charters. There is good input into personal development and the raising of awareness of citizen issues from a business perspective. Students' files display a satisfactory understanding of business structures and management styles in a real world context. Able students' files demonstrate greater depth of knowledge and understanding. Most students are now well motivated and this, combined with good teaching, results in good learning taking place in both GNVQ and AVCE courses. Students appreciate the guidance they are given and the quality of teaching they receive.
239. The management of the subject is organised so that three different staff have responsibility for different courses. There is no overall leadership and despite the fact that individual leaders work hard and meet frequently, formally and informally, there is currently no overall manager to plan and monitor teaching and learning for the subject as a whole. Hence, the overall leadership is unsatisfactory. Assignments and schemes of work are well written. Assessment is good and, when combined with the quality of guidance, has a favourable impact on students' learning. Currently, the department does not provide a model of the business work place and the accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory and this does hinder learning. The addition of opportunities for students to participate in business conference and other work-related activities would be beneficial to learning and contribute to students' confidence and understanding of the major functions of a business. There is very good provision for progression from Years 10 and 11 into post-16.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

### ART

Provision for art in the sixth form is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Good teaching leads to good progress and above average attainment.
- Relationships between staff and students are very good and enable staff to provide effective support and guidance to students.
- The high prior attainment of Years 13/14 students in the GNVQ Intermediate course provides a very good basis for good achievement in AVCE work.

#### Areas for improvement

- The classroom currently used as the sixth-form art studio is inadequate for students' needs.
- The availability and quality of ICT hardware and software in the studio are unsatisfactory and do not match the requirements for vocational courses.

240. Options for art courses in the sixth form are GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced Vocational Certificate (AVCE). No students are currently studying the GNVQ option, as all entrants to Year 12 were skilled enough to start directly on the first year of AVCE. The current AVCE year two students mostly undertook GNVQ Intermediate for one year, and are now Year 14 students in the third year of the sixth form. Their results in GNVQ were well above average. Only one student dropped out at that stage having attained a pass grade; all current students achieved distinctions or merits in 2000. Two of the cohort are girls, whose work is not reported in detail here. In 2000, only two students took GNVQ Intermediate, attaining a merit and a pass grade.

241. Attainment of the current Year 13/14 students is high. They achieved good GNVQ grades and have moved on well to apply their knowledge and skills effectively to the new challenges of AVCE. Most of these boys' work and artefacts are of A/B grade potential and above average. They work hard, enjoying their course and understanding very well the progress and achievements they are making. They appreciate the very good relationships they share with their teachers and speak very favourably of the personal support and guidance they have received over the years from art teachers and other staff in the school. Students feel valued, benefiting from the rigorous expectations their teachers have of them. They, very maturely, accept the critical feedback they receive as a necessary form of support. They rightly attribute much of their success to the hard work of their teachers. These students' work is highly individual and shows a good level of skill using different media in two and three dimensions. Research is good, often showing imaginative evidence of how visits they have made, both independently and as a group, have informed their visual development and thinking. Practical work shows that students are specialising very effectively into aspects such as interior design, graphics or illustration. Individual oral presentations show good understanding of their research and explorations of successful and less successful elements of their portfolios and of their learning processes. Students who have English as an additional language have very high levels of competence with the English language in all its forms and they make good progress and reach high standards of attainment.

242. None of the current Year 12 students entered the sixth form from the school's own cohort. Most are girls, whose work is not reported here, with only one boy amongst the group. He entered with no GCSE experience and, like the girls, is making good progress in Year 12.

243. Given their very different starting points all students are achieving well. In the first year of their sixth form, Years 13/14 students' progress to GNVQ was good. Some went from an F grade at GCSE to merit in GNVQ a year later; others from D grade to distinction level. This represents good achievement which they have mostly maintained.
244. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. Some lessons seen were very good. Teachers are knowledgeable about the requirements of vocational courses and manage their students as mature, sensible adults who can play a large part in taking responsibility for their own learning. Students rise to these expectations with alacrity and very good humour. Most of the teaching in the sixth form is from the art department staff, but valuable assistance from the design and technology department brings useful insights into the required aspects of, for example, the commercial applications of students' work. Such an example was observed in a product analysis lesson, where students were analysing the attributes of plastic eggs available for children. The team-teaching approach is very successful in providing a variety of approaches to the subject.
245. The management of art in the sixth form has been effective in maintaining the high standards in vocational courses described in the last report. AVCE has been introduced very successfully and constitutes very good provision for these students. A-level is no longer offered. Students benefit from good individual assessments, which they value and appreciate. Better tracking of achievement in the sixth form would be useful to identify how much progress students have actually made through their courses. The current classroom used as a sixth-form studio is too small and inadequate for current needs. Years 12 and 13/14 are taught together and there is insufficient space to develop the scale of work required. Students also need access in their studio to more and much better quality ICT hardware and software than they currently have. Current ICT provision is unsatisfactory for vocational course requirements.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English literature

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good overall, particularly in relation to teachers' own knowledge and understanding and their encouragement of independent learning.
- Students' achievement is satisfactory given their prior attainment. Students value highly the learning environment at Highbury Fields and the support they receive there.

#### Areas for improvement

- Not all students maintain their folders of notes and background material sufficiently well to gain the most benefit from them.
- Communication on administrative matters between Highbury Grove and Highbury Fields schools has occasional flaws.

246. Male students from Highbury Grove School following the AS- and A-level English literature course are taught at Highbury Fields School alongside the female students there. At present, there are two such students in Year 12 and four in Year 13.
247. Over the past three years, the number of students taking A-level English literature has been similarly small, so that valid comparisons of results with national averages are not possible. Only one student was entered in 2001 and two in 2000 and 1999. Students have usually attained grades in the A-E range in line with what might be expected given

their GCSE performance. The exception was the one student entered in 2001 who failed to achieve a grade in that range.

248. Current standards of attainment are average overall at the end of Year 13, reflecting students' satisfactory achievement given their GCSE performance and performance in AS-level examinations. Their written work reveals a range of attainment from potential grade B to D. Some writing is therefore fluent and detailed, showing thorough knowledge of texts and evidence of wider reading. There is evidence of re-drafting and refining written work based on the teacher's recommendations for how it could be improved. Other writing, though quite well written and expressed, lacks the level of detail, supporting quotation and range of reference necessary to obtain the highest grades. Students' folders at their best contain helpful background material and notes provided by their teachers and evidence that these have been used effectively to help essay preparation. One or two folders are less well maintained. In one lesson, students tackled a 'timed essay' in preparation for one of their exam papers with concentration and confidence. They showed that they understood the significant issues in Tennyson's poetry and could write about them in an appropriately structured essay. In another lesson, they could contribute effectively to discussion about the religious aspects of Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure'. One student had researched the four main periods of Shakespeare's writing to help provide a context for the play.
249. Current Year 12 students are also achieving satisfactorily given their prior attainment at GCSE. Both are working at a standard that reflects the stage they have reached in their AS-level course and their target grades are realistic. In one lesson, they showed sound understanding of how a scene from Tennessee Williams' 'A Streetcar Named Desire' revealed the tensions between the characters Blanche and Stanley. In another lesson, they contributed well to group work on Blake's poem 'London', and one had helped to prepare an introduction and questions for subsequent group discussion that showed perceptive understanding of the poem's ideas.
250. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers' own knowledge and understanding of texts and critical analysis and their encouragement of independent thinking enhance students' learning. This was particularly the case in the Year 12 lesson on Blake's poem 'London' where students learned much about the significance of the poem's imagery both from their initial preparation and from their teacher's knowledgeable, supportive and challenging contributions to their discussions. She was particularly good at making them re-think their initial perceptions and at requiring them to be explicit about their views and the supporting evidence. In a Year 13 lesson, another teacher had built up, from students' contributions, a series of points about the themes of Tennyson's poetry that eventually provided a very good model for their subsequent timed essay. As a result, students were able to tackle a difficult subject successfully. Occasionally, as in one Year 13 lesson, the pace of learning was a little slow because a teacher over-explained or did not involve students sufficiently. Nevertheless, the teacher's good advice about appropriate essay writing style and helpful background material ensured that students had the necessary information to write about Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure'.
251. Students in both year groups have positive views about the course and the quality of teaching they receive. Year 12 students appreciate the learning environment at Highbury Fields and comment favourably on the good teaching they receive. Year 13 students referred to occasional lapses in communication between the two schools over, for instance, examination entries, but otherwise they feel that Highbury Fields is a 'a good place to learn in'. As a result, one Year 13 student plans to pursue his English literature studies at university. All Year 13 students appreciate the way their teachers make

learning relevant by relating topical issues to their text studies. They will be 'sad to leave'.

252. Leadership and management of the subject are effective in maintaining students' standards of attainment and achievement, the quality of teaching and supportive relationships. Students from Highbury Grove are successfully assimilated into a productive learning environment at Highbury Fields.