

INSPECTION REPORT

WALTON HIGH

Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 131396

Principal: Mr R Blatchford

Reporting inspector: Tony Byrne
2561

Dates of inspection: 22 - 25 January 2001

Inspection number: 230027

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:	12 - 14
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Marilyn Moffat
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

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9184	Geza Hanniker	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
27050	Valerie Blackburn	Team inspector	Science	
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12331	Vera Grigg	Team inspector	Design and technology	
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4373	Peter Mckenzie	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Walton High is a new secondary school on the southeast side of Milton Keynes. The school opened in September 1999. It is planned to develop as a 12-19 high school and at present has 282 students on roll in Years 8 and 9. The initial admissions limit was 120, but in view of local demand for places this has been raised to 150. There are approximately equal numbers of boys and girls in the school (57% girls in Year 9, 56% boys in Year 8). The accommodation is sufficient to provide learning and social space for the students, with some limitations on outdoor physical education during the first phase of construction. The attainment of pupils on entry is a little below average. The school has an average proportion of students with special educational needs (SEN), with 19% of students identified on the Register of SEN. There is a below average proportion of students entitled to free school meals; the figure is 9%. The majority of students are of white ethnic origin; there are 9% of students of other ethnic origins and 11 of them have English as an additional language. About 66% of students come from 2 nearby middle schools. The staffing of the school as it grows has allowed the full national curriculum to be offered. The school has a strong determination to serve students from the full ability range, to offer extended learning experiences and to become a centre for learning for the whole community.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Walton High has made a very good start. Students are making good progress from the levels of attainment at which they enter. Teaching is consistently good and frequently very good. Staff work as a team to provide leadership and management which sets and maintains a clear direction. The school encourages students to work hard and boys and girls respond equally well. Their learning extends well beyond the school day through homework and additional opportunities for study and development. The buildings provide an inspiring environment and the setting up of the new school is being managed very well, to the advantage of current students. Excellent use has been made to date of strategic resources to establish a first class centre of learning. The vision of innovative approaches to learning, within and beyond the school day, is well underway. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Enables students to attain standards that represent good progress.
- Teaching is consistently good and frequently very good
- Staff and governors work as a team to provide excellent leadership and management, day to day and in setting up the new school.
- Promotes values which enable students to learn and take responsibility. Boys and girls expect to work equally hard.
- Provides an inspiring environment for learning, within and beyond the school day.
- Has good links with parents and the local community

What could be improved

There are no major weaknesses that detract significantly from the quality of provision or the standards that students attain. Minor issues to address are:

- In modern foreign languages develop students' confidence in speaking
- Within the generally good pace of lessons, give enough time to reflect on and consolidate what is learned
- Extend the strong support for literacy by increasing opportunities and support for writing

At this early stage of the school's development, taking account of good progress made by students, the good and frequently very good quality of teaching and the way the challenge of establishing a new school has been met, the inspection team found that there were no major issues for improvement. The governors' plan for the further development of the school deals with appropriate priorities to provide for a high quality of education and will readily encompass actions to deal with the points raised above.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This was the first inspection since the school opened in 1999.

STANDARDS

As a new school, Walton High has no national test results to compare with other schools. Standards in the work and lessons inspected are at least in line with national expectations in all subjects, except modern foreign languages, and above expectations in some subjects. Students regularly attain above expectations for the key stage in science, history, information and communication technology, religious education, art and music. They attain in line with expectations in English, mathematics, design and technology geography and physical education. Standards are below average in modern foreign languages in Year 9, but in line with what should be achieved in Year 8. Altogether this represents good progress by the students. It is a feature that there was not a noticeable gap between standards achieved by boys and by girls. In the skills of literacy and numeracy, standards are in line with expectations for the age group: students practise reading skills more frequently in lessons than writing and consequently reading is more strongly developed. Students with special educational needs improve their standards in relation to targets set in individual education plans. Students who have English as an additional language achieve standards which are satisfactory and gifted and talented students reach high standards in response to the challenges they are set. Governors have set demanding targets for tests at the end of the key stage, expecting students to reach levels well above average. If these targets are achieved they will represent very good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students take pride in their new school and look after the buildings and equipment. They show enthusiasm by participating in the extended school day. They enjoy the additional learning opportunities and expect to work hard in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good. Students respond well in lessons and behave responsibly when moving round the school or studying independently.
Personal development and relationships	Students respond well to opportunities to work together and to take responsibility. They treat everyone's contribution with respect.
Attendance	Attendance is good. This is further strengthened by the willingness of many to participate in learning beyond the school day.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 12-14 years
Lessons seen overall	Good and frequently very good

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

Teaching is consistently good and frequently very good. No teaching is less than satisfactory. Teaching is good in five out of six lessons and in more than half of those lessons it is very good or excellent. Lessons are well planned with a variety of opportunities for active involvement in learning and a lively pace. Teachers and learning support assistants use knowledge of students effectively in supporting them. Questioning makes students think for themselves and good resources create memorable activities. Homework is planned well to extend students' learning. Lessons have many more strengths than weaknesses. However, sometimes the pace does not allow time to go into enough depth on some tasks and there is too little time for reflection at the end. Teaching is very good in art, design and technology, history, information technology, music, religious education and science. Teaching is good in English, geography, mathematics, physical education and in modern foreign languages (with the exception that teaching the spoken language requires more attention).

Literacy is taught effectively through opportunities for reading and support given in class, though writing tends to be done mainly as homework and so support comes mainly through corrections in marking.

Numeracy is taught as opportunities arise and a policy approach is being discussed.

Teaching takes good account of the targets of students with special educational needs. Students with English as an additional language are taught with consideration for the stage of their development in

English. Teachers are aware of gifted and talented students, use their insights effectively and encourage them to take tasks to an appropriately high level. In response the effort of students is good. There is no evidence of a culture amongst students of underachievement or inequality; boys and girls work equally hard.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Minor restrictions in a few subjects as staffing and facilities develop are more than compensated by the exceptional range of additional learning opportunities to which all students have access. The requirement for a daily act of worship is not met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. Support from learning support assistants is provided in many lessons. Some extra help with literacy and numeracy skills is arranged and teachers are fully aware of individual needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good support is given in class and through withdrawal from French.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The building itself provides space in which to reflect or to interact. There are opportunities in lessons for all aspects of development, though the spiritual dimension receives less emphasis. Opportunities for social development through the additional activities of the Learning Centre are particularly good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for students very well. All students are well known to staff, academically and personally. They are encouraged to take responsibility and to be mature. They feel safe and secure.

The school works very well with parents. It provides an extensive range of information about courses, homework and the general development of the school as well as information about individual progress. The school seeks to be accessible to parents and to take their views into account. There are already some opportunities for parents to be directly involved in their children's learning by learning together.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the Principal and other key staff	Leadership and management are excellent. Staff cooperate to put the values of the school into practice. Day to day organisation is meticulous. Very good contacts are maintained with a range of people who can support the ambitious development of the school as a learning centre.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors have played a key role in the development of the school. They think imaginatively about what students need and actively seek parents' views.
The school's evaluation of its performance	A very good start has been made to monitoring through lesson observations and collation of data.
The strategic use of resources	Setting up a new school is being managed very well. Resources are of exceptional quality and provide a learning centre which extends beyond school. The small number of students has very good access to resources.

Staffing has provided as broad a curriculum as possible. Accommodation is of exceptionally high standard as are resources. The governors have sought best value in providing resources well suited to purpose and likely to last. Given the efficient and effective administration of the large sums of money involved in setting up a new school and the imaginative use of additional learning to compensate for facilities not yet

available, the school provides good value for money. As the school grows, governors should apply measures of success to evaluate key features of provision to ensure that the present high level of quality is maintained.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects high standards • Students' progress is supported because the school knows them well • Students' self-esteem is enhanced by the school • Behaviour and attendance are managed well • Parents can approach the school easily • The good facilities • Additional activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework requirements are not always clear • Too little time for lunch or access to lockers

The inspection team agreed with the positive views of parents. Students know what is expected of them; they do feel that they are known as individuals. They take pride in the building and the range of activities and they respond well. Curriculum areas plan homework well and take pains to explain what is required. Lockers are accessible and lunch arrangements are convenient: students are certainly busy, but they find the time to do all the things that they make a priority.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. As a new school with its first intake currently in Year 9, Walton High has as yet no national test results to compare performance with other schools. On entry in Year 8, judging from work completed in the first term students are attaining standards which are below average. The school conducts standardised tests at an early point in the term and results provide further evidence that performance will tend to be below average. In national tests taken at the end of year 6, results in mathematics were particularly low for the current Year 9 and the current Year 8 outperformed Year 9 in science.
2. Standards in the work and lessons inspected are in line with national expectations in all subjects, except modern foreign languages, and above expectations in some subjects. Students regularly attain above expectations for the key stage in science, history, information and communication technology, religious education, art and music. They attain in line with expectations in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography and physical education. Standards are below average in modern foreign languages. Altogether this represents good progress by the students. It is a feature that there was not a noticeable gap between standards achieved by boys and by girls
3. In English, standards are just below average on entry. By the time they are in Year 9, the accuracy and expressiveness of students' writing for a variety of purposes has improved. They read a range of books, including authors such as Shakespeare, Tennyson and Dickens and can recall narrative and engage in discussion of meaning and character. Through active participation in lessons, students can express themselves adequately in speaking and they listen with a good level of understanding. Standards are in line with what is expected of students of this age.
4. Standards in mathematics are below average on entry. By Year 9, a high proportion of students achieve in line with standards expected. Weaknesses in investigation skills have improved though some basic skills are still weak. Regular opportunities for mental arithmetic are having a positive impact.
5. In science, students are attaining well. In the majority of lessons they are already achieving standards at or above the level expected at the end of the key stage. This represents significant progress from levels being achieved on entry.
6. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are above national expectations. The majority are attaining at least the national expectation of level 5 and many students are working above that level. Students manage information well, particularly in accessing the Internet; good levels are achieved in control technology. Only in understanding the applications of ICT is there a more limited level of achievement.
7. In religious education, the great majority meet the expectations of the local syllabus and many achieve above average for the age group through exploring their ideas about religion in lively discussions. Many students extend their knowledge of religions through appropriate use of the Internet.
8. Achievement in art indicates very good standards of drawing, use of media and colour, composition and three-dimensional work. The work on display around the school represents a high level of achievement. Although many students have had a limited experience of skills and processes in design and technology within the key stage, they rapidly gain confidence in a range of projects and achieve standards in line with what is expected in the key stage in planning, carrying out work and evaluating products. At the start of Year 8, attainment in geography is limited and standards are below average, but by this point in Year 9, standards are in line for the key stage; students have a very good range of skills and good understanding of most aspects of the subject; the analytical skills of high ability students are brought out well. In history many students work at a level above what is expected nationally; historical skills and grasp of events and people involved in them are very good. Higher attainers reach exceptional levels of enquiry and interpretation. In modern foreign languages attainment is below average in Year 9; Year 8 are improving more rapidly but Year 9 lack confidence in speaking French. In music, there are above average standards in composing and

performing. There are aspects of background knowledge which are less well developed, but students have good understanding of music terminology and above average standards in appraising music heard. In physical education, attainment is in line with expectations for the key stage. Students develop a satisfactory range of gymnastic techniques and above average levels of performance are attained by some students, particularly in basketball.

9. Standards in literacy are in line with expectations of the age group. Reading and speaking and listening skills have reached a higher level of development than writing skills. Students have frequent opportunities to read in lessons using texts or worksheets. Those who need support have frequent contact with learning support assistants, particularly if they have special educational needs or English as an additional language. Many subjects provide opportunities for writing in homework but there are limited opportunities in class. Reading skills are better developed than writing, which often contains inaccuracies in spelling and grammar.
10. Students' standards of numeracy are generally in line with expectations. There is a strong emphasis on improving numeracy skills in mathematics lessons and mental arithmetic skills are practised regularly as part of most mathematics lessons. Examples of the effective use of numerical skills were seen in a number of subjects. For example, in design and technology, students use measuring skills accurately to construct scale-drawings and models. There is no evidence that calculators are over-used by students, but when required they are used competently.
11. Students with special educational needs make good progress and reach good standards, relative to their previous attainment. They achieve well when their progress is measured against the specific targets set out in individual education plans. Students receive extra help when needed in mathematics and in aspects of English such as spelling, although for the great majority of the time they are included in the ordinary lessons of each subject.
12. Students who have English as an additional language achieve standards which are satisfactory for the stage of language acquisition they have reached.
13. Gifted and talented students are identified by teachers and respond well to opportunities to reach high standards.
14. The school and governors have set demanding targets for tests at the end of the key stage this year, expecting to achieve levels well above average at levels 5 and 6 in English, mathematics and science. If these targets are achieved they will represent very good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The students' attitudes to Walton High are very good. Many arrive ten to 15 minutes before the start of Session 1 at eight o'clock and the numbers build up rapidly during this 30 minutes session. Throughout this time the students can use the cyber café, the library and gym where some socialise, others check homework, organise teams, or go to their lockers, or simply mentally get ready for the start of Session 2. This creates a relaxed and orderly start to the demanding day ahead, which for many stretches until five-thirty or beyond. Session 9 extends learning beyond lessons. Students join many different activities available during lunchtime and Session 9. Their enthusiasm can be gauged from the fact that often a third or more of the students are still engaged in some activity on or off site at this late hour. In consequence, many students who come with no more expectation than getting through their school years find their horizons lifted and they begin to think about exploiting their talents more fully.
16. The behaviour of the students is good. They respond well in lessons to varied and interesting teaching. They show very good self-discipline outside lessons and the atmosphere is calm and orderly. There are a few who have not yet come to terms with the social expectations at Walton High but teachers' management of behaviour and the prevailing atmosphere prevent them having a negative effect. There were no signs of bullying or harassment during the inspection and the students confirm no scope is allowed for any. The Principal and the staff take prompt, effective action if it happens and everyone is expected to adhere to the code of conduct proclaimed on the "pledge card". There has been only one fixed term exclusion since Walton High opened its doors to students.

17. The students look after Walton High's property very well. They appreciate the excellent facilities and are proud of the surroundings. They handle equipment with care and keep the buildings and classrooms tidy. They are trusted to use the library during Sessions 1 and 9 on their own and surf the Internet responsibly with minimum of supervision. They learn to be responsible for their own actions and take responsibility for others; for example, researching for homework, or being captains of teams. The student councillors take their duties seriously on behalf of their peers. Students have organised discos and a residential visit to the Isle of Wight and recognise the importance of being the creative motivator in group work. They appreciate the opportunities of doing something different in the short courses and approve the wider choice available this year compared to last year. Walton High displays the artwork of its students prominently alongside work by professional artists, thus they learn about the possibilities of expressing similar things in many different ways. They like the tutor periods too, for the variety of content and learning about a range of things; for example, the different ways one can be assertive.
18. The students are polite to visitors and to each other most of the time; they are approachable and it is easy to have a conversation with them. They work very well in pairs and groups and allocate tasks to members of the groups fairly. They often demonstrate their understanding of the impact of their actions on the feelings of others. In a science lesson, several groups chose to demonstrate their knowledge of peer-pressure and misuse of various drugs by play-acting. A group included a student for whom English was an additional language and another with learning difficulty: both of them were allocated acting parts. At the end of the presentation the rest of the class applauded them with equal appreciation. Walton High is thoughtful of the needs of others. It provided a separate room for fasting students during lunchtime at Ramadan. All staff are very good role models for the students, and the relationships are very good between adults and the students. The moral, social and cultural education the students receive prepares them very well for living in a multi cultural society. The students' parents are very supportive of the way Walton High is helping to develop their children's character.
19. The attendance rate at the school is about the national average and the rate of unauthorised attendance is low. The parents respond very well to providing reasons for absence and appreciate the policy of the same day follow-up of absence. The school analyses the attendance pattern of individuals and groups so that problems are recognised early. It has established a good working relationship with the education welfare officer, who has provided much appreciated help as required.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Teaching is consistently good and frequently very good. No teaching is less than satisfactory. Teaching is good in five out of six lessons and in more than half of those lessons it is very good or excellent.
21. Lessons are very well planned; the outline is explained and a variety of opportunities are provided for learning, using the high quality resources available. Teaching maintains a lively pace, which keeps students interested. High standards are expected, yet teachers know the ability levels of students well through regular assessment and they create opportunities for success at different levels. Learning support assistants who work with classes regularly have additional knowledge of students' needs and collaborate with the teacher to support and intervene as needed. The small size of the school and opportunities to know each other outside lessons enables teachers and students to have relationships which remove some of the barriers that lead to underachievement. Questioning by teachers is skilful, designed to make students think through to correct answers, thus making understanding secure. Good resources lead students into exciting and memorable activities. Teaching areas are filled with stimulating examples of work in the subject and reminders of key facts or vocabulary. ICT is used imaginatively to support learning. Active participation in role-play, demonstrations or group work and evaluation of each other's work help students to learn. Teachers involve them by sometimes allowing a degree of choice of the level of work they undertake. Teachers plan homework well, often providing detailed guidance as to what is required.
22. Some of this good practice was exemplified in two excellent lessons in history and art. In history, the teacher introduced the topic of life in Germany at the time of the Nazi party's rise to power, linking with previous work. Students listened to accounts by contemporary witnesses, then they scrutinised the accounts for content and reliability, using prompt cards and vocabulary supplied by the teacher to assist discussion. They absorbed the information and thought about the wider issue

of the reliability of sources of evidence. In art, an introductory session of constructive criticism of homework was followed by a clear demonstration of a printing technique. As they worked, students were encouraged to discuss the effects they were seeking and achieving, sustaining the atmosphere of constructive criticism established earlier. All students' progress was enhanced by the mature approach to learning.

23. Lessons generally have many more strengths than weaknesses. However, the pace of lessons sometimes does not allow students to go into depth on a particular aspect; this occurs particularly in relation to writing in lessons. The purpose of lessons is usually clear at the start, but in some lessons little time is left at the end for reflection or consolidation of what has been learned. The practice in some lessons of involving students in choosing has advantages, but occasionally more able students choose less demanding tasks.
24. In art and in design and technology, teaching is consistently very good. High expectations, clear demonstrations and good questioning are regular features. Teaching in English is usually good with clear structure, precise timing and pace, though just occasionally some activities are rushed or not quite clear to students. Geography teaching has some very good features, particularly investigation techniques, but sometimes lessons do not link the learning to a wider body of knowledge. In history, teaching is very good with imaginative planning and lively presentation. Specialist information technology lessons are very good and interest students with tasks which challenge different levels of ability. Mathematics teaching is good with pace and high expectations, although occasionally some struggle to keep up. A modern foreign language is generally well taught but students do not use the language continuously. The teaching in music is very good with good planning based on very secure knowledge and skills resulting in approaches that motivate students. Teaching is good in physical education, providing opportunities to succeed at different levels. Very good teaching in religious education creates discussion and independent learning. Teaching is often very good in science, with methods that challenge students to think for themselves: complex concepts are conveyed effectively; there is exceptionally good use of homework. Worthwhile approaches are adopted in tutor periods but sometimes the response of students is over-casual.
25. Appropriate attention is paid to supporting literacy with frequent opportunities to read texts or screens. Additional support is given by teachers and by learning support assistants who know students' needs well. Teachers draw attention to subject vocabulary. Writing tends to be left to homework and, whilst marking stresses correct language and presentation, there are fewer opportunities for direct support.
26. A formal policy has not been agreed for teaching numeracy but skills are called upon in lessons, including science, history, geography design and technology and health related fitness in physical education. Some students have received extra support for numeracy as part of the programme run alongside tutor periods.
27. The quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is good except in modern foreign languages. The expectations and work provided are usually well matched to students' particular needs, and they therefore make good progress and learn well. Personal development of students with special educational needs is also good, and they are well supported by good educational plans. Teachers plan well and always include specific work for those students who have special needs. Most teachers understand the individual targets set for these students and use them well. Support assistants keep good records of what students with special needs do, and what progress they make. In modern foreign languages students do not make progress when they copy work out without understanding.
28. Teachers identify gifted and talented students, encourage their contributions in class and set tasks at a level to challenge them.
29. In response to the teaching students' learning is usually good and they catch up to the standards expected of the age group within the key stage, having started a little below average in many cases. The effort put in is good. They know that their best is expected and that the teacher and learning support assistants will support them. There is no evidence of a culture of underachievement or inequality. Boys expect to work as hard as girls and girls expect to take a lead just as much as boys.

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

30. The curriculum reflects the aims of the school in providing excellent equality of access and opportunity. Breadth and balance of the curriculum is good, lacking only in the usual range of activity in physical education, design and technology, and a second modern foreign language. It is planned that these matters will be addressed as the outdoor facilities develop and the languages and technology staffing increases.
31. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and of the local agreed syllabus for religious education. The extended curriculum, delivered through short courses and advanced learning days, enhances learning by the acquisition of both new knowledge and new learning skills. Short courses, offered on a Wednesday afternoon, comprise a choice of off-site and school-based activities alternating with compulsory courses in careers, personal, social and health education and first aid.
32. Advanced learning days make a challenging contribution to the curriculum and develop students' learning in different ways. By allocating blocks of time to activities, often with small groups, the learning is intensive and active. Master classes, too, extend the learning experience and there is a range of learning activity in the evenings and at weekends, such as the Yamaha Music School, which is attracting 250 students from the community per week.
33. Learning opportunities extend beyond the framework of the traditional school day. In addition to the activities listed above, session 1, for half an hour from 8:00am and session 9 up to 5:30pm every day include a wide range of extra-curricular and extension activity. This extra-curricular provision is excellent. The use of information and communication technology is fully integrated into these sessions. Some students are identified as needing to attend, as they need to do further work, such as homework which has not been completed. The physical education activities are open to all students and include work with visiting coaches. There are developing partnerships with local sports and music organisations.
34. Literacy is well supported. Students read regularly in lessons, they have open access to the well-stocked library and frequent opportunities to use the Internet for research. Most classrooms have key vocabulary on display and teachers correct some spelling when marking. Learning support assistants know students well and support those likely to experience difficulty. Students have targets related to literacy in their planners and these are reviewed at meetings with tutors. Students are encouraged to develop their spoken language and they listen well. Opportunities for writing are confined to homework in many lessons.
35. Examples of the effective use of numerical skills were seen in a number of subjects. For example, in design and technology, students use measuring skills accurately to construct scale-drawings and models. In history and geography, there are numerous examples of data being represented in graph work and of given data being analysed. In physical education, there is a stated commitment in the schemes of work to develop numeracy through the tracking of health related fitness. Data, collected from time keeping and measuring a variety of indicators, is analysed to chart progress.
36. There is very good access to ICT in the curriculum, including the excellent keyboard provision in music. Students use ICT for presentation and research in most subjects. The Intranet provides popular opportunities for informal communication. Curriculum time is greater than normally found, and this provides good continuity from entry to the school up to preparation for GCSE. Regular lessons for all Year 10 and 11 students are planned. Teachers of all subjects are aware of ICT opportunities and school-wide ICT opportunities are well coordinated.
37. The curriculum provided for students with special educational needs is good, being almost fully integrated, with some additional support for literacy and numeracy. Learning support assistants work closely with students who need extra help. For students who have statements of special educational need, annual reviews provide a good focus for improvement.
38. The National Curriculum is disapplied in modern foreign languages for four students who have English as an additional language. They spend time improving their work in other subjects. The school is entering the students for GCSE in their first language.

39. Work-related education is excellent. This part of the curriculum is delivered, as a component of the programme of compulsory short courses, in partnership with Buckinghamshire Careers Service and the Education Business Partnership, which introduces a range of visitors from the business community. Students also follow the 'Steps' careers programme and have access to a range of literature in the developing careers library and to a wide range of information on the Internet.
40. Statutory requirements for health, sex and drugs education are met in the compulsory elements of the short course provision.
41. All students have a timetabled individual review with their tutor every term. The weekly tutor period is used flexibly and well to build up the sense of tutor group identity, to provide extra learning in basic skills for some and to ensure that all groups have appropriate preparation for choosing options.
42. Provision for homework is very good. Teachers set a variety of tasks to extend and enhance the curriculum. Practice observed in history, geography and science is particularly good. Parents' support is sought by publishing a termly homework guide to enable parents to know what type of work will be set and to enable them to support students in completing tasks.
43. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Opportunities for consideration of moral, social and cultural issues are central to the school's pledge and the context of the extended school day. However, the whole school spiritual provision is less strong. The school is not meeting the statutory requirement for a daily act of worship. Although the themes of assemblies are reintroduced into other work, such as tutor time, this aspect of the school's spiritual provision is under-developed.
44. Provision for spiritual development has good features. The school building provides an excellent environment for students to reflect individually and to feel inspired. There is good spiritual development in music and art and through participation in the Milton Keynes Oratorio and the exhibitions in the school gallery. In English, students are encouraged to develop spiritual reflection in response to literature; for example, in studying themes of loss and death in poems by Tennyson and writing about Scrooge's redemption through caring for his fellow men in 'A Christmas Carol'. History provides understandings of the religious backgrounds to historical events. In science, students learn about the awe and wonder of life.
45. Provision for students' moral development is very good. There is a strong moral framework in the school pledge, which is based on high expectations and made clear to students. Throughout the curriculum Inspectors observed students' clear understanding of behavioural expectations and respecting others' right to learn. Themes taught included poverty and slavery in history and non-replaceable natural resources, global warming and pollution in geography, and students have learnt mathematics through such issues as malnutrition and Amnesty International. In physical education, there is a strong moral code in supporting the laws and rules of sports and activities. Teaching in science promotes an understanding of gene technology and the environment. In English they are encouraged to take a responsible moral view on racism through studying 'The Diary of Anne Frank'.
46. Provision for students' social development is excellent. The great strength of this provision is that social interaction is successfully developed to support learning through voluntary sessions 1 and 9 where a variety of activity enhances the formal curriculum. This extended day is an innovative cornerstone of the school's philosophy and activities attract a large proportion of the school's students. Social development is strong in physical education, where there are links with local leisure centres, clubs and visiting specialist coaches. Frequent opportunities for group work and listening to others read or perform work foster social development. It is noticeable that students listen with equal respect to able students who can take their thinking forward or to students who need help to develop an answer. Good discussion based on mutual respect was observed in a Year 9 tutor period. Good relationships and practice in the school promote understanding of a multi-racial society through the pledge to value and respect every individual.
47. The Walton Learning Centre is preparing to open its doors all year round to students of all ages and abilities. A wide range of courses is about to begin. Already the Yamaha Music School provides tuition on keyboards and guitar, four evenings a week and at weekends.
48. Provision for students' cultural development is very good. The opportunity to experience aspects of other cultures is seen in teaching music from Africa and in using authentic materials in French. Students are introduced to science from other cultures, such as Islamic chemistry and the role of

other cultures is acknowledged in the development of mathematics. In physical education, emphasis is placed on celebrating success through role models. History teaching includes the development of art, architecture, medicine and science during the Reformation. Cultural experiences for students include the Yamaha Music School and the opportunity to perform in the Milton Keynes Oratorio. There is respect for the artwork displayed in the Gallery and for work in poetry in English.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

49. The school has a well-developed system for looking after the health, safety and welfare of its students. The Staff Guide documents procedures well and students have many opportunities to reveal any worries; for example, at tutorials or when visiting the medical room. Students are aware of helplines. Only registered instructors are employed for coaching. The procedures comply with recommendations of the area child protection committee. The health and safety of activities are managed well and governing body members fully participate in safety inspections. The school applies due pressure on the contractors to complete a few outstanding problems remaining after each phase of construction work.
50. The school has very good procedures to promote attendance. Students receive certificates for achieving high attendance rates. The system is flexible enough to take account of students' personal circumstances, for example for those with chronic illnesses. The automated registration system ensures that any absence or pattern is quickly noted, and it activates a clear chain of responses from staff and the education welfare officer should that be necessary.
51. The code of conduct for all is a high priority. Walton High is a centre of learning "where every member of the community has the right to attend classes, take part in activities and to carry out their duties without being hindered by the behaviour of any other person or group". All students and staff carry the "pledge card" that expresses these principles; students know what is expected of them in detail, these form part of the home – school agreement, which they sign. The staff reward the students consistently for good work and good deeds, and students appreciate it: they remind the teachers, should they forget, to provide the merit award at the end of the lesson. Poor behaviour may result in the student being taken "off timetable" thus he or she has to work on his or her own for a specified time. The Principal draws up "contracts" to improve the conduct of the very few who need more support to live up to the expectations of the community.
52. The school's personal care for its students is of very high quality. The students have close contact with their tutors twice a week and have a personal interview with them once a term. The interview identifies the perceived strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, things the student is proud of, or whatever troubles him or her. The student suggests targets to achieve by the next interview. The student negotiates the targets with the tutor to ensure these are realistic and achievable. The learning support assistants also participate in the interview when the student is assigned to them. The learning support assistants operate the "student services" under the guidance of the Vice-Principal. The students use the services to help with their every day personal problems from having lost something to not feeling well. They turn to the assistants for advice if they are reluctant to talk to their teachers or tutor about some matters. Statutory arrangements for Child Protection are in place.
53. Assessment of students' academic achievement is of a very good standard; currently its basis is the "common task" tests. The regular and constructive marking of work informs the students of what they have done well or where improvement is necessary taking into account their abilities. The Principal and Vice-Principal monitor consistency of marking at present. The school analyses the grades achieved by the students to discover whether any individuals do better or worse than expected. It provides the necessary information to all teachers to stretch those who can improve and support those who need it. The use of the assessment information for planning the curriculum and teaching is good. The school has a very well applied system of monitoring and supporting students' academic and personal development. The Principal spearheads personal guidance of students by his effective presence in all parts of the school throughout the day.
54. Teachers supervise the session 9 homework club, which students can attend voluntarily. Attendance at the homework club is compulsory for those who fall behind with their homework, and, although it takes precedence over participating in other extra-curricular activity, they come there without resentment.

55. The students benefit from the expertise of external instructors teaching some of the "short courses", for example first aid. They speak with enthusiasm of the "advanced learning days" when the curriculum is suspended for a day for a common theme. The day visit to the Belgian battlefields made a deep impression on them, both for the moving historical experience and for their capacity to cope with the challenge of a very arduous and long day.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. The school is building a very good partnership with the parents and is helping parents to support their children's learning. Their views are almost always complimentary as expressed in reply slips attached to their children's year-end achievement report. Although numbers were not high, those parents who returned questionnaires, or who attended the parents' meeting about the inspection were particularly impressed with their children's progress and their maturing, the high expectations and the interesting range of activities outside lessons, though a few felt that their children find homework too intensive. The inspection evidence supports the majority's views, and the homework is a good extension of learning. Parents are fully informed of the homework pattern, what the homework is about and how they can help their children.
57. The quality of information to parents is very good. The open evenings are well used by parents and they come to these with a view of their children's achievements. They know of their children's progress because form tutors and subject teachers make very good use of the Student Diary. The school encourages parents to use the Diary as a two-way means of communication. They also know from the Diary the interim targets their children set for themselves and agree with their tutors once a term. The parents receive a copy of the twice a year interim assessment which shows the grades awarded in each subject, homework and class work effort, and also comments from the tutor. The parents know the meaning of grades and marks as these are explained in the Student Diary, which is a treasure trove of information. The full year-end reports have similar format to the interim reports with more detailed explanation on each subject. However, targets are not always specific enough.
58. Through regular letters and other means, the parents know what is taking place and are encouraged to be involved. The Principal meets every student with their parent or carer in the term before they enter the school. He holds weekly surgeries for parents to discuss individual problems. They can consult with governors and are encouraged to talk with their children's teachers. Through the information evenings for parents, the shaping of Walton High is discussed. This led to modifying the grading system on the students' interim reports at the parents' request so they could understand their children's achievement better. The governors are considering the best format for the annual report. Walton High is within weeks of starting adult education courses for the community to enhance the learning opportunities in the area and to raise the profile and value accorded to education. The physical education department is planning to introduce health related fitness sessions for parents.
59. The parents contribute to their children's learning well. They make it possible for their children to join the extensive range of extra-curricular activities. The school endeavours to utilise the parents' individual skills in the interests of their children and the school. Some parents help during session 9, participate in educational visits, teach "short courses", help to design a web site to communicate with parents and apply their specialist skills to health and safety matters.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The Principal, Vice-Principal and staff with Leading Teacher responsibilities work as a team to provide excellent leadership and management. The vision for the school to develop as a learning centre which supports learning within and beyond the school day is put into practice in the organisation and development of Walton High. The Principal and Vice-Principal maintain a high level of contact with students, staff and parents and focus management on meeting their needs. Very good links are maintained with a wide range of contacts in universities, educational and community organisations; these links are used to develop imaginative learning opportunities. There is meticulous organisation of the day to day running of the school.
61. The aim of aspiring to excellence in ways that include all students is very well reflected in the range of opportunities to learn that are provided. The value placed on learning, tolerance and equality is represented in the "pledge card" which students carry to remind them of what is expected, in lessons, in contacts with tutors and in the role model provided by staff.
62. Cooperation within the management team is seen in the subject handbooks that set out organisation and schemes of work. The books adhere to a common format, co-ordinated and checked by the Vice-Principal. This approach underpins consistency and quality across curriculum areas. The breadth of involvement of staff in supporting school aims is seen in the regular pupil reviews with tutors and the energetic contribution of teaching and support staff to the short courses on Wednesday afternoons.
63. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities very well and has made an exceptionally strong contribution to the development of the school. They fulfil statutory duties, with the exception that they do not ensure provision of a daily act of worship. It is clear from records kept from the start of the campaign to establish the school that governors have played a key role in shaping it and have thought carefully and imaginatively about what students need. They are very active in seeking parents' views about how the school should develop. Parents were invited to a meeting in November to discuss important matters, such as what courses will be provided in Key Stage 4. More than seventy parents attended and the outcomes were circulated to all parents. At a meeting of the Personnel Committee held during the inspection, discussion ranged from concern for individual students in difficult circumstances to giving strategic support to the Development Plan. Governors monitor the development of the school through receiving reports on student performance and by some direct involvement in some of the additional learning opportunities. Each curriculum area has an attached governor and a sequence of monitoring visits has begun, with reports written by governors to a standard format.
64. A very good start has been made to monitoring performance. All teachers receive a formal observation visit from the Principal or Vice-Principal, who also review the work of a sample group of students to check progress. External advisers have reported on English, mathematics and science and a researcher from Oxford University is analysing students attitudes to learning and reporting to staff. An example of the positive approach to monitoring for improvement is the analysis of students referred for support with homework, which has led to constructive analysis of why they have problems. This has been fed back to staff so that adjustments can be considered, rather than allowing problems to continue. The school is on track to implement the new performance management arrangements. As the school grows, governors should apply measures of success to evaluate key features of provision to ensure that the present high level of quality is maintained. The Development Plan has enabled the school to reach its present stage with success and an impetus to maintain high quality provision. The demanding logistics of setting up a new school have been handled very well. The plan has served well up to now, but it does not yet include specific measures to evaluate the effectiveness of what is provided. Monitoring systems are in place, for example, the analysis of borrowing from the library or the check on attendance at study sessions. The next step should be to set targets to measure progress in each priority, using the information which is being collected so thoroughly.
65. Very good procedures exist for the induction of staff in curriculum areas and general school policy. Newly qualified teachers receive appropriate support. The match of staff to the curriculum is good and improving as the growing number of students allows a wider range of specialists to be appointed. Accommodation is of an exceptionally high standard and has a positive influence on the morale of staff and students. The planned sequence of building will allow for adaptations, for example, the study/dining area will become entirely part of the study centre to cope with larger

number of pupils. High quality learning resources are provided in every classroom, workshop or laboratory and in the library and study area. The gallery and display spaces contribute to students' learning.

66. The school makes good use of its excellent provision of new technology for administration and communications between staff. The large sums of money involved in resourcing the buildings as they are completed are administered efficiently. The school and governors seek best value in providing resources well suited to their purpose and likely to last. A good example of the pursuit of best value is the handling of the contract to supply and maintain computers. Tenders were requested and the preferred bidder was persuaded to deliver their specification at no higher cost.
67. Excellent use has been made to date of strategic resources to establish a first class centre of learning. Although costs appear to be high, this is attributable to the investment in facilities which will provide long-term benefits. Given the efficient and effective administration of the large sums of money involved in setting up a new school and imaginative use of additional learning experiences to compensate for facilities not yet available, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

At this early stage of the school's development, taking account of good progress made by students, the consistently good and frequently very good quality of teaching and the way the challenge of establishing a new school has been met, the inspection team found that there were no major issues for improvement. The governors' plan for the further development of the school deals with appropriate priorities; within those priorities, governors should assure themselves that attention is being given to:

- Improving standards in modern foreign languages, particularly in speaking the language (paragraphs 2, 8, 27, 117, 118)
- Within the generally good pace of lessons making sure students have time to reflect on and consolidate what has been learned (paragraph 23)
- Extending the strong support for literacy by providing more opportunities and support for writing (paragraphs 9, 25, 34, 84)

OTHER ISSUES FOR THE SCHOOL TO CONSIDER.

- Make sure able students understand the importance of choosing challenging tasks (paragraph 23)
- Make targets for students' improvement clearer for parents (paragraph 57)
- Establish measures of success to evaluate developments (paragraph 64)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

(Tables showing results of national tests which normally appear in this section are not shown because the students will take end of key stage tests for the first time this year.)

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3%	43%	38%	16%	0%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y8 – Y9	Sixth form
	Number of pupils on the school's roll	282
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	25	0

Special educational needs	Y8 – Y9	Sixth form
	Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	54	0

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.0
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
National comparative data	0.4

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	4
Black – other	0
Indian	4
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	3
White	256
Any other minority ethnic group	8

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	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: Y8 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y8 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	284

Deployment of teachers: Y8 – Y9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	72.3%
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Average teaching group size: Y8 – Y9

Key Stage 3	23.5
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Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	531487
Total expenditure	471516
Expenditure per pupil	3772
Balance brought forward from previous year	44251
Balance carried forward to next year	104222

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	282
Number of questionnaires returned	52

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	40	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	48	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	40	52	6	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	46	12	2	0
The teaching is good.	60	36	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	50	5	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	25	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	88	12	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	50	40	6	2	2
The school is well led and managed.	73	23	4	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	35	0	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	69	31	0	0	0

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

ENGLISH

68. The attainment of students on entry to the school is just below average for the age group judging from the results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the school's data from standardised tests and the evidence of written work produced in the early part of the first term. At that stage vocabulary is restricted and the work of many students has a high proportion of inaccuracies in grammar, spelling and punctuation. At first students write in very short sentences, adhering to a simple narrative, over-using direct speech and not creating character or atmosphere through effective use of detail. In the course of their time at Walton High students respond well to structured guides for their writing, producing work which explores the topic in richer detail. Some good accounts of the rise to power of "Napoleon" in 'Animal Farm' were seen. Students are capable of drawing information from a variety of sources and summarising effectively when researching for topics; for example, in Year 9 when writing about racism. Students understand the targets that are set for them to write more accurately and expressively and they respond well. Some gifted and talented students are identified in each class and their work reaches higher standards as they respond to the appropriate targets set for them. Reading skills develop through reading together in class and through the encouragement given to carry and regularly read a book on loan from the library. Those who need assistance with reading, including students with English as an additional language and students with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress by receiving individual attention from learning support assistants. Speaking and listening opportunities occur in all lessons and many students, who at first offer rather brief answers, manage to expand upon them with encouragement from their teacher. By the time they are in Year 9, most students are working at the level which is expected nationally of the age group, representing good progress from their attainment on entry. Targets set for students in the end of key stage tests are above average. These will be demanding, given current levels of performance; however, students are being given clear guidance as to what constitutes good work and how to improve,
69. Literacy is promoted well in the school. The library is well stocked and welcoming and accessible to students at all times. A well-organised database enables students to search for fiction and non-fiction books on topics of interest. Other subjects provide opportunities for reading and some opportunities for writing and place value on correct use of language, including subject specific vocabulary.
70. The response of students to English is good. They are ready to engage with tasks and answer questions. They listen with attention to the teacher and to each other and work well in groups, as they did when rehearsing and presenting a short scene from a play based on 'Frankenstein'. If the task or a question is not quite clear to them, they are motivated to check with the teacher in order to make progress.
71. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and often good. Teachers use well planned schemes of work to present lessons structured to provide variety of learning opportunities, using the range of very good resources available. Lessons get off to a brisk start with a clear outline given of the work to be covered. Teaching could sometimes be improved by an emphasis on the main learning points that will come from the work and a period of reflection on what has been learned by the end of the lesson. In the best lessons the focus is very clear, as when students had spent time working in groups to understand the personality of a character in a play before writing from that character's point of view. In all the lessons, teachers create pace and variety by setting times for activities; just occasionally, the time allowed for a section of the work is not enough for the students to go into sufficient depth. Teachers assess work regularly and set appropriate targets for improvement. They know their students' needs and abilities and intervene to support or they involve the learning assistants who regularly support classes. They encourage gifted and talented students to share insights with others or to take the work to a higher level. They enjoy an open, positive relationship with students and quickly adjust the work if a particular approach or question is delaying progress.
72. The curriculum, which includes drama, is well organised to provide the full range of experiences in the subject and to develop skills. Expectations of what students will achieve are set for different levels of ability. Units of work have a definite timescale yet allow scope for the teacher to adjust the pace to the needs of different classes. An interesting and worthwhile initiative to enable parents to support learning is the incorporation into each unit of relevant, practical suggestions of how parents

can assist their child. These are being prepared for publication in paper form and on the school's website.

73. Students are encouraged to develop spiritual reflection in response to literature; for example, in studying themes of loss and death in poems by Tennyson and writing about Scrooge's redemption through caring for his fellow men in "A Christmas Carol". They are encouraged to take a responsible moral view on racism through studying "The Diary of Anne Frank". Frequent opportunities for group work and listening to others read or perform work foster social development. It is noticeable that students listen with equal respect to able students who can take their thinking forward or to students who need help to develop an answer. Significant enrichment of skills related to English occurs through activities such as drama and magazine publishing in the additional short course programme. Planning is in place for a whole day workshop to study a Shakespeare text with a group of professional actors.
74. The curriculum area is enthusiastically and effectively led. The Leading Teacher contributes to the development and maintenance of whole school policies as well as to development of the subject, ensuring consistency. The subject development plan has appropriate priorities and deadlines: preparations are well underway for the introduction of the Key Stage 4 course, as well as further developments at Key Stage 3. The department's work is monitored internally and additional feedback is provided by the Principal and Vice-Principal and by external advisers. A link governor maintains a supportive connection with the governing body.

MATHEMATICS

75. Students enter the school with below average attainment levels. They make good progress through Key Stage 3 and in the work seen in Year 9 a high proportion of students are in line with national expectations, with a significant number above that level. Throughout the school students achieve similar standards across all aspects of mathematics, reflecting the balanced course they receive. The relative weakness is in investigative work but from a below average attainment at the start of Year 8, progress is made to levels approaching expectations by the end of Year 9. During the inspection the emphasis was on number work. Most students can choose the appropriate techniques and apply them correctly to get the right answers but there are some weaknesses in basic knowledge and computational skills, more evidently in Year 9, which slow the processes down. The increasing use of mental arithmetic tests is helping to improve this. Students apply what they have learnt to problem solving in everyday situations with some success but need more opportunities to enhance these skills. In Year 8, the standard of work seen is high. The majority can, for example, successfully handle percentages, squaring numbers and can calculate angles and bearings. Attainment in algebra is a particular strength, with students at all levels able to derive formulae and plot linear equations as graphs. In Year 9, average-attaining students can calculate percentages, find areas and volume and solve problems by using algebra. Lower attainers, whilst concentrating more on the fundamental operations in mathematics, also have some success in these same topics. Higher attaining students can use Pythagoras' Theorem and trigonometric ratios to find unknown sides and angles in right-angled triangles and use formulae to calculate volumes of figures such as prisms and cylinders. Students with special educational needs make equally good progress as others in their classes. There are no significant differences between the attainments of boys and girls.
76. Attitudes to learning are mostly positive. This is evident in the many examples of well-presented work seen, including a good range of thoughtful and careful investigations and displays and in the commitment and interest shown in lessons. Students are encouraged to respond and many do but in some a reluctance to put forward ideas or offer explanations arises from a lack of confidence. Concentration is generally good but better in Year 9. Some Year 8 classes show a lower commitment to the work and become inattentive. Nonetheless excellent attitudes in one Year 8 class led to a most productive lesson on number machines and sequences, with students deriving algebraic general formulae to describe the number relationships. Students are very largely co-operative with their teachers and work collaboratively and purposefully with each other.
77. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. During the inspection the teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. Lessons start promptly, with a sense of purpose, often using a short mental arithmetic exercise to quickly focus attention. Teachers' specialist knowledge is good and they are able to explain ideas and methods clearly. This is supported by very effective

use of resources such as a projected calculator, charts and mathematical games. For example, in one Year 8 class an adaptation of dominoes enabled students to gain a better grasp of the equivalence of fractions. The use of information and communication technology is well integrated into the schemes of work but it is not always used effectively as a learning resource. In a Year 8 lesson on linear graphs, the intended mathematical objectives were obscured to some extent by the computing procedures. Teachers are always ready to support students who need help when working at class exercises. Students are also helped in their learning processes by being called upon to demonstrate and explain their methods to the class from time to time. Students' awareness of National Curriculum criteria and expectations also enhances their learning.

78. Planning is a strong feature of the teaching. Lessons are well structured, with a variety of teaching and learning strategies, including appropriately matched material for different levels of attainment. Lesson plans usually have three timed phases but there are instances when the main activity is allowed to go on for too long. Intermittent teaching to the whole class proves more effective than leaving a class working at a task for up to thirty minutes without the teacher intervening. Time is usually left for a review at the end but there are occasions when it is too short to be fully effective. Expectations are high and students largely rise to the challenges, but to avoid overwhelming some students it is important to ensure that the groundwork is adequately understood. Homework is part of a well-planned system that is integrated into the schemes of work. It provides valuable opportunities to consolidate work covered in lessons but more use should be made of it to assess individuals' knowledge and understanding. The marking of books is generally good and provides some useful guidance to students. Assessment procedures in the department are very good. A comprehensive computerised system enables ready access to students' records. Their attainment is regularly monitored and analysed, so that progress can be tracked and guidance offered to students as necessary. Outcomes are used to review teaching strategies and plan the curriculum.
79. The department is very well led and managed with an over-riding objective to raise standards as high as possible. There is a clear commitment to maintaining a high profile and status for mathematics in the school. The leadership provides an enthusiasm and dedication that promotes a good atmosphere for learning.
80. Students' standards of numeracy are generally in line with expectations. There is a strong emphasis on improving numeracy skills in mathematics lessons and mental arithmetic skills are practised regularly as part of most mathematics lessons. Curriculum planning has involved meetings of all departments to discuss cross-curricular issues, including numeracy.

SCIENCE

81. Students are achieving well in science, though they start at Walton High at below average levels in science. A higher proportion of the current Year 8 students attained level four and above at the end of Key Stage 2 than the Year 9 students who will be sitting national tests in science this coming summer. These results at eleven, performance on entry and subsequent tests indicated that the proportion of students in the current Year 9 attaining levels five or six and above may be lower than in similar schools. The school, however, has set itself demanding targets of attaining well above this. The work of students in lessons indicates that these targets are well on the way to being achieved. In three-quarters of Year 9 and two-thirds of Year 8 lessons, students are attaining levels above that expected by the end of the key stage. For example, Year 9 students can use their understanding of the terms mass, weight and gravitational attraction to explain differences between masses on different planets. Year 8 students can explain the process of rusting in terms of a chemical reaction and write word equations to demonstrate this and other reactions. High ability students can plan and carry out an investigation into the circuits required for headlamps in a toy car.
82. The progress students make in science is good, based on the comparison of their attainment on entering the school and the work seen. However, different groups of students are progressing at different rates, with above average students making the best progress. Within lessons, there is very little difference between the rates at which boys and girls learn, as both are eager to improve and make good gains in learning. There is a more marked difference seen in books, with girls' written work indicating that they make slightly better progress than boys over a period of time. Those students with special educational needs are making good progress, particularly in lessons. The

progress all students make is carefully tracked by the department who keep comprehensive records of each student's attainment and use this to inform their future work.

83. The high standard of teaching is a significant factor contributing to the achievement of students in science. In half the lessons seen teaching was very good, with some excellent features. Teachers use methods which encourage and challenge all students to think for themselves and this has the effect of their wanting to do well and having an obvious enjoyment in the subject. The bright and stimulating laboratories help to keep the students' interest. In the very best lessons, students are kept occupied throughout the length of the lesson with a variety of tasks designed to increase and reinforce understanding of a particular topic. Staff know the students well and in every lesson there is a purposeful working atmosphere. Teachers make it clear to students what they are expected to know and how to behave and approach their work. In the less successful lessons, occasionally this clarity of purpose is not reinforced and this results in some students lacking application and attentiveness for part of the lesson. Students of different abilities and with specific needs are given the opportunity to choose texts and tasks at one of two levels of difficulty; this allows them to take responsibility for their own learning.
84. Each student has a comprehensive homework booklet and the science department makes good use of a range of homework tasks to build on the work done in lessons. These tasks include opportunities to write creatively about science topics in the form of a diary of a particle or a poem about a chemical element. The language of science is taught effectively, with many references to the new vocabulary using 'word walls' in the laboratories, word banks in homework planners and glossaries in the back of students' books. Other literary skills of speaking and listening are well developed through science, as there are many occasions where students can discuss ideas with their peers and report back. However, the department needs to give students many more opportunities to write their ideas clearly and concisely, a skill very important when answering examination questions. The standard of written work in laboratory books is only satisfactory, with many students not taking sufficient pride in their work, particularly presentation and the drawing of scientific diagrams. Books of both boys and girls contain unfinished and untidy work and despite pointers for improvement noted by the teacher, these have not been acted upon by many students.
85. While the department makes good use of the excellent school facilities for information technology, its use as a tool for enhancing and supporting learning in the laboratory needs developing. This would include more opportunities for all students to collect and analyse data, research topics and extend their knowledge.
86. The effective and conscientious lead teacher has a clear vision for future development of the subject in line with the aims of the school and has produced a three-year plan. There is a very good range of equipment and textbooks for the students to use both at home and at school. However, as the school grows in size and examination courses are developed, there needs to be careful and projected financial planning to ensure the department is fully equipped for the demands of the curriculum offered up to and including the sixth form. In addition, the contribution that science is making and will make to other subject areas, such as mathematics, needs specifying and documenting.

ART AND DESIGN

87. In work seen during the inspection, students attain above average standards by the age of 14. Students attain better than average standards in art key skills, especially observational drawing, use of colour and composition and control of a variety of media. Units of work provide evidence of students' good experiences of art processes; for example, research, exploration of detail and trials leading to finished pieces of work. There is very good evidence of above average attainment in three dimensions; for example, plaster pots in the style of Barbara Hepworth, or wire and paper or wire and leaf sculptures based on ideas derived from the land sculptures of Andy Goldsworthy. Knowledge of art and artists is good, and students make good use of their ICT skills to manipulate images captured with the digital camera, or scanned, and also to explore websites for information about art and artists.
88. The quality of teaching is very good. Teaching shows excellent knowledge and understanding and many creative ideas for students to work at, for example mono printing, or imaginative designs from direct observation. There is excellent teaching of basic skills and expectations are high. Planning is very effective both in translating the National Curriculum order into schemes of work and in

developing assessment procedures for the levels of the attainment target. The subject is very well led and managed.

89. The quality of learning is very good. High, average and low attaining students acquire their skills, knowledge and understanding very much better than expected. Students with special educational needs and gifted and talented students make very good progress, thanks to good support and planning, which allows for appropriate tasks for individuals. Behaviour is very good and attitudes to art are very positive. The combination of very good attitudes and behaviour and very good progress develop by very good teaching leads to above average attainment. Students' work is celebrated in excellent displays in the studios and in the gallery.
90. This very good picture takes place against a background of new and excellent facilities – art studios with good natural light, height, convenience, a splendid kiln room and a gallery at the heart of the school exhibiting not only students' work but also work by professional artists. Students have opportunities to visit other galleries and visiting artists come to the school from time to time.
91. At this early stage of the school's development it must be acknowledged that art has got away to a splendid start. There are many talented students receiving very good art education, who are capable of doing well in the General Certificate of Secondary Education over the coming two years.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. When students enter the school their standards are below national expectations. This is because many students have not had the opportunity to cover all aspects of the earlier curriculum, which has resulted in a low level of skills. All students, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well to reach standards that are in line with national expectations in Year 9. This is due to the high quality teaching. All students have good research skills and use various sources of information appropriately. This was seen when students investigated play structures. Playgrounds were visited, and play equipment was recorded with drawings and photographs. Students also used reference books and relevant web sites. These were used to create ideas and their final idea was modelled before making. Students make detailed plans of the making process and work with a range of tools and equipment. This was seen when students were making acrylic clocks and they competently used a variety of files and drills. They explained that care had to be taken because acrylic is brittle and therefore it should always be placed low down in the vice. This shows a sound understanding of materials. Students have a sound understanding of systems, and the appealing dinosaur models, with waving wings and nodding heads, were operated using pneumatics. Students continually evaluate and adjust their ideas to a satisfactory level. Students use information technology with confidence, to word process, to obtain information, to use control equipment, to cut detailed designs and to use a digital camera to record.
93. Some students have been involved in design and technology experiences through short courses and whole day focused activities. The use of the doughnut maker is an exemplary example of batch production in operation. In addition, some students have experienced assembling articles such as carburettors. These activities have contributed to the standards achieved and to the interest in the subject.
94. Students enjoy design and technology and this is seen in the efforts that they put into their homework. Students take care with the presentation of their work. For example, some students made booklets of their research and effectively used colour to illustrate. In lessons, all students have a high level of motivation, and want to succeed. This was seen when they were asked to design models by making three-dimensional shapes. Students resolved the design in groups without fuss and very quickly started the making process.
95. The quality of teaching is consistently very good and this has a positive impact on students' motivation and achievement. The emphasis on high standards is transmitted to students, who respond to these expectations. No time is wasted in lessons and a variety of activities ensures that students are fully engaged in learning. The very good resources are effectively used; for example, when illustrating scale drawings. The teacher involved students to demonstrate and this practical approach resulted in students understanding the concept of scale. There is a very good emphasis on the importance of homework, and the homework booklets set out clearly the tasks for each project. This ensures that students know and understand the task. Students' learning is enhanced

by skilful teaching and questioning, which avoids telling and makes students think. This was seen when the situation of clock hands that wobbled was explored, until the students realised that a washer was needed.

96. At present, because of the growth of the school, there is one teacher for design and technology, and only this year have students worked in the excellent workshops. The teacher is committed to providing students with a breadth of experiences and students use wood, metal, plastic and food in their projects. High status is given to students' work and there are extensive displays in the rooms and corridors. The logo to the gallery is an example of the quality of design and making of the students. Assessment does not fully encompass the National Curriculum levels. An understanding of these levels would assist students to attain higher standards. The Leading Teacher has set out clear priorities for the development of the subject and through appropriate training ensures that other staff in the department are fully involved. The department contributes to the teaching of literacy, through the compilation of dictionaries of technical terms and to the teaching of numeracy through the practical use of measure and scale. The department also contributes to students' social development through group work and encouraging students to take responsibilities. It also contributes to students' cultural development through studies of artists when creating designs.

GEOGRAPHY

97. The standard of work on entry is clearly below national expected levels at the beginning of Year 8. However, by the end of Year 9 standards of work will be broadly in line with the national average, which indicates good progress made by most students by the end of the key stage. From the scrutiny of students' work and observations in class, it is evident that by the end of Year 9, students will have acquired a very good range of geographical skills. Their knowledge of place is sound and they have a good grasp of spatial patterns in physical and human geography. There is, however, limited use of Ordnance Survey maps in topics studied to consolidate on work undertaken in Year 7. There is also need of more practice in the plotting, presentation and analysis of statistical data graphically. Standards of work produced by the highest attainers are well above average, with much good quality analysis evident. Average attainers are progressing well and producing work that is close to the national average. Low attainers are working below or well below average as appropriate and are making generally satisfactory progress, although there is too much incomplete work in their exercise books.
98. Teaching is always at least good and often very good. Teachers work conscientiously and hard in support of students and classroom management and control are very good and provide a sound base for learning. Lessons are always very well planned and prepared and are built on a solid foundation of knowledge, understanding and skill and have purposeful aims. They are well structured and have a clear focus, which provide a helpful framework for learning. There is a considerable emphasis in the development of students' self-knowledge of their learning through investigatory and enquiry approaches to study work and this is a strength. Most lessons are challenging, have brisk pace and are designed to meet students' needs. Lessons are usually practical in form and include demonstrations and textbook exercises that have a visual impact that enhances understanding and the quality of learning. Good teaching was well exemplified in a mixed ability Year 8 lesson where the teacher involved students in their own learning, using a role play demonstration of adding and subtracting people from an illustrative island base. This led to a successful understanding of the concept of how birth and death rates affect population growth. Consolidation occurred with students translating their knowledge and understanding on to a chart drawn on the whiteboard, which indicated trends in population in relation to variations in birth and death rates as shown in the Demographic Transition Model.
99. At times, however, the learning end product does not match teaching aims, as in some lessons the productivity and pace of learning loses momentum, while in others students cannot always relate their activity to the overall context of study and their own experience. Students do not develop their literacy skills sufficiently in the form of extended writing. The choice of activity that allows students to select their own level of learning for assignments undertaken in class and for homework has in practice real problems. It leads to underachievement, with some high attainers choosing undemanding tasks and much incomplete work evident in low attainers' exercise books when they have attempted work beyond their ability. This policy needs reviewing to ensure maximum challenge is provided for all students.

100. Students' attitudes to learning are positive. Most work conscientiously on assignments set and concentrate well in lessons. Behaviour is invariably good and often very good. Good relationships exist with their teachers and students relate well to each other in class. Oral work in the form of individual answers to direct questions is often very good but readiness to volunteer answers needs nurturing.
101. The department provides a good range of learning opportunities for students studying the subject. The programme of study and schemes of work are excellent as they place emphasis on levels of attainment expected for the differing student abilities in relation to what knowledge, understanding and skills they will achieve. Fieldwork undertaken at the end of Year 8 in the Isle of Wight has very noticeably influenced the level of understanding of processes in the coastal geomorphology unit studied during the first term of Year 9. This and other fieldwork planned will greatly enhance study and provide a real enrichment. Information and communication technology has been planned as a coherent programme of study linked to curriculum topics in Year 8 and 9.
102. The department is very competently led and managed by the Leading Teacher. Documentation is sound and appropriate for a school at this formative stage. There is need now to draw up the subject development plan as a 3-year operational plan fully costed and annually evaluated. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning occurs but there is need to ensure that the quality of marking is more uniform between staff. A rigorous assessment policy exists with students' work targeted to the development of knowledge, understanding and skills. Teaching occurs in a specialist room, which is very well equipped and furnished, but it is somewhat restrictive for independent resource based learning, which is a feature of the subject. Wall displays make the teaching room a colourful and attractive environment for learning. Resources are excellent and a significant factor in providing good learning opportunities.

HISTORY

103. In lessons observed and in analysis of students' work, most attain levels that are projected to be above the national average at the end of Year 9. Standards of work on entry to Year 8 show prior attainment to be below nationally expected levels in history. There is clear evidence of very noticeable improvement in standards of work over the four terms at the school and progress is very good. By the end of Year 9, students will have had a very good grounding in historical skills. They have a good understanding of events and the main people within the periods studied and in particular appreciate their significance within the overall context of study. They have a sound knowledge of chronology but this needs to be further developed. Some gifted and talented students produce work of exceptionally high standards for their age in Year 9 and higher attainers generally are performing well above the national average. There is very good challenge for these students with open-ended assignments giving considerable opportunities for developing higher skills in historical enquiry and interpretation. Average attainers also do well against prior attainment while low attainers are working to levels appropriate to their abilities. Students with special learning needs have insufficient time with learning support assistants in lessons, although class teacher support for these students is good.
104. Teaching overall is very good and is a strength. Teaching observed ranged from good to excellent. Teachers are very committed, caring and supportive of students and relationships are very good with high standards of discipline evident. The best teaching is characterised by lessons that are very carefully and imaginatively planned and is underpinned with very secure knowledge of the subject matter taught. These lessons have clear and manageable aims shared with students and tested at the end of the lesson to ensure that learning is effective. Presentation is lively, has good pace, challenge and high expectations. This teaching provides opportunities for the development of literacy skills, uses questioning skilfully and involves students in their own learning and in particular in developing historical enquiry skills. The use of a range of good quality oral and visual aids and materials makes lessons aims clearer and has a significant positive impact on the quality of students learning. This was well exemplified in a Year 9 lesson, where knowledge and understanding of Nazi Germany during the 1930's was expertly built on the personal experience, provided on tape recordings, of three persons from different backgrounds. Students working in carefully selected groups investigated and evaluated most competently the usefulness and reliability of one aspect of what it was like in Nazi Germany at that time, using these sources and information cards.

105. However, there are occasions when learning would be further enhanced by a greater consolidation and re-inforcement of the main teaching points visually on the whiteboard and the greater emphasis on learning outcomes in determining materials and tasks for low attainers in mixed ability classes. Written work for these students needs strengthening in some classes and more time given to consolidating learning.
106. Students' attitudes to learning are very positive and constructive. They work well and behaviour is always good and frequently very good. Students are attentive in class and work often with real interest and enjoyment. Many display a real pride in their work. Students have good relationships with their teachers and in many lessons a real rapport is evident. Both boys and girls respond well to teachers' questions and place great trust in their teachers.
107. A broad and balanced subject curriculum is offered. The programmes of study meet curriculum 2000 requirements very well indeed, as they identify attainment targets for students of differing abilities and emphasise what students know, understand, and can do by the end of the key stage. Information and communication technology has been appropriately integrated into the curriculum in Years 8 and 9. The subject has undertaken a very successful visit of students to Ypres in Year 9, which has been imaginatively linked with research on local war memorials as part of studies of the unit on World History since 1900. This has provided a noticeable enrichment to student studies. Other outside visits are planned as part of the learning programme in history.
108. The management of the subject has been placed under the direction of the Head of Humanities. As the department grows it will be necessary to ensure that the subject specialist curriculum needs and developments are fully met. Documentation is well thought through and has a clear focus. There is, however, need to establish a separate 3-Year Subject Development Plan that is annually reviewed and evaluated. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place and staff work closely together but this needs to be placed on a more formal basis. There is also much imaginative planning and implementation of good practice but it needs to be shared more for maximum benefit in formal subject meetings. Assessment of common tasks involves student self-evaluation in setting targets and is good. Marking of work varies but is always satisfactory. However, there is some excellent, detailed and helpful marking which provides support but also indicates what students need to do further to improve their work. It contributes significantly to students' progress in the subject. There is specialist staffing within the department. Specialist rooms are a very good teaching resource and with quality wall display, including students' work, provide a pleasant learning environment. Resources are excellent and resources, including textbooks to support learning, are well selected. Work sheets and other reprographic materials are of excellent quality and significantly enhance the quality of learning. Teaching facilities in both specialists' teaching rooms are excellent and allow for the regular use of visual stimulus material in lessons and this enriches learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

109. Students' standards of attainment in work and lessons seen in Years 8 and 9 are above national expectations. Over three-quarters of girls and boys are assessed by teachers as working at or above the expected level 5 of the National Curriculum, and evidence of work seen confirms that at least half of students in Year 9 are working at level 6; by the end of the year the majority of students should reach levels 6 and 7. Students of all levels of attainment on entry to the school, including those students with special educational needs and special gifts and talents, achieve very well over time in control technology, handling information, (particularly from Internet) and using spreadsheets to model problems. Students' understanding of the applications and effects of information and communication technology (ICT) is only just in line with expectations and requires further development.
110. Very good teaching, good computer resources and above-average lesson time help the good standards. Most students extend their classwork by practice on the computers in the cyber café, after school, and on home machines. Students are introduced to the school's network in Year 8 and discrete ICT lessons cover all National Curriculum requirements. Examples of very good student attainment include the proficient use of "if" statements in a spreadsheet of video costs, and this helps all the students' overall numeracy skills. Students can search and sort a database on local house prices, design Christmas posters using desktop publishing to import graphics into a

word file, and evaluate their projects effectively. Weaker students fail to check their work sufficiently in order to improve their standards of literacy.

111. Most other curriculum subjects offer students planned opportunities to extend their learning, and students generally use computers with confidence in several subjects, downloading information from various web sites, and, increasingly, using the Power Point program to make presentations to their peers. Lessons seen that involved ICT during the inspection included music, where students composed songs digitally, and mathematics, where teachers helped students use computers as a tool to explore number patterns and draw angles. Data-logging is well taught, so that students of all abilities meet National Curriculum requirements for science. In religious education and history lessons students use the school intranet very competently to download photographs into descriptions they have written, including an imaginative curriculum vitae for Leonardo da Vinci. CAD/CAM is beginning to be used well to design clocks in design and technology, and digital cameras are well used in art, but there were fewer examples of planned use seen in English and modern languages lessons. Use of computers in all subjects is in line with recent national research and the Leading Teacher of ICT manages both discrete ICT and monitoring of use across the curriculum very competently and with flair.
112. Students show very good interest and enthusiasm in all lessons seen involving ICT. Students use machines safely, sensibly and with integrity; they value the access they have to the computer homework club in the cyber café after school. The attitude and behaviour of nearly all students observed, including those with special needs, is very good in Year 8 and good in Year 9. Students enjoy lessons, concentrate fully on their tasks and help each other where needed. They show a mature attitude when deciding to seek further help. They monitor their own progress well, so they are aware at which National Curriculum level they are working. Higher attaining students often explore more advanced routines, whilst teachers help slower students and the majority are well motivated to succeed.
113. Teaching in lessons seen is very good. Lessons are well planned and sequenced, so that activities build on each other. Relationships between teachers and students are very good, both in discrete and other subject ICT lessons, and teachers manage students of all levels of attainment very well, including students with special educational needs and special gifts and talents. In the best lessons, teachers can apply very good subject knowledge in enthusiastic, fast-paced presentations to fire students' interest. Teachers provide tasks to match all levels of need and monitor progress regularly, so students know how to improve their work. Teachers provide regular homework, both theory and practical, and mark work constructively according to school policy, for attainment and effort. Students are encouraged to track their own progress and improve evaluation skills to develop a keen sense of audience for their presented work.
114. Curriculum time is greater than normally found and this provides good continuity from entry to the school up to preparation for GCSE. Regular lessons for all Year 10 and 11 students are planned. Teachers of all subjects are aware of ICT opportunities and school-wide ICT provision is well coordinated. The number of usable computers in the school is well above average and machines are very well maintained, giving good access to students in lessons and after school. Computer software is good and combined particularly well for academic and curriculum administration; teachers use computers effectively to register students. Student data is particularly well managed, and includes full details of progress for special needs students. Library stock is well catalogued electronically and students throughout the school are using e-mail well to communicate with teachers and download tasks. Accommodation, computers and technical support are good for current student numbers and the support of senior management and governors in overseeing future expansion plans is outstanding. There are exciting opportunities ahead, given appropriate further funding, to develop very high standards of student attainment.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

115. French is the only modern foreign language taught at present. The school has plans to introduce a second language in the future.
116. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is below average. Achievement is satisfactory considering the low attainment of students on entry and that they have only two years in which to improve.

117. Whilst attainment at Year 9 is below average, attainment at Year 8 is average in relation to national expectations. Students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Students concentrate well and work with enthusiasm and commitment, except in speaking, where, particularly in Year 9, they are often hesitant and lacking in confidence and react instinctively in English rather than in French
118. Teaching has some good features. Planning is of a high quality and includes individual tasks at the beginning of the lesson to revise previous learning and to prepare for the lesson. Lessons include all four skills and reading activity, based on authentic French materials, adds challenge. Lessons contain good pace and challenge and generate a satisfactory level of learning. However there is too much use of English in the teaching, which does not provide the best rôle-model for students. The introduction of the written word too soon after meeting new vocabulary has a detrimental effect on accent. Students do not have sufficient opportunity to practise speaking French in pairs or groups.
119. Learning is satisfactory. Students display satisfactory concentration and commitment. They respond well to tasks set and work well independently when necessary. All students learn equally well, regardless of gender or ethnic origin, but those with special educational needs do not always achieve levels suited to their ability and gifted and talented students could achieve more with greater opportunities through extension work.
120. There are considerable efforts to provide materials matched to the abilities of students with special educational needs, but their progress is unsatisfactory. In written work these students do inappropriate tasks, copying with insufficient understanding. Withdrawing groups of students from the main French lesson is not serving the interests of continuity of learning. They would benefit from opportunities to be supported in the classroom during speaking and listening activity, concentrating less on writing exercises.
121. Assessment procedures are excellent. Students understand level statements and regularly record their own levels of attainment, based on sub-divisions of National Curriculum levels. The teacher keeps records, which are used to facilitate curriculum planning.
122. There are good opportunities for students to experience the culture of France and good rôle-models of the language through the work of the foreign language assistant. There has already been a visit to France and teaching makes good use of authentic materials.
123. Management of the department is very good. The Leading Teacher has produced a good scheme of work, an appropriate development plan, has established a good resource base and has laid high quality foundations, upon which the department can build. The department is equipped to move to the next stage of its development within the expanding school.

MUSIC

124. In work seen during the inspection, attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above average. Performing, especially performing on keyboards and composing reach above average levels. The unusually lavish provision of first class, full size, touch sensitive keyboards, in which are incorporated a very large range of synthesized sounds, generates greater knowledge and understanding than expected. The dynamic range of these superb instruments, which makes really expressive playing possible to a degree not often available on school instruments, is well exploited by students. In composing students know a greater than usual range of harmonic effects, which they apply expressively in their compositions. Basic musical knowledge of composers, styles and the elements is not so strongly developed but a good level of understanding of common musical vocabulary, such as beat, time, pitch, names of notes, location of notes on keyboards, is well established. Appraisal of music heard and performed is a strong feature of the curriculum and a decisive factor in raising standards. Differentiated work for the most and least able students contributes significantly to this strong picture of musical attainment.
125. An above average number of students extend their musical attainment with additional instrumental lessons and by participating in a good range of extra curricular activities and events. Some Year 9 students are currently participating in Milton Keynes 'Oratorio', a minimalist work by a contemporary African composer.

126. The quality of teaching is very good and a major strength of the department. Teachers' knowledge and understanding and the teaching of basic skills are excellent. Planning is very good and expectations very high. Teaching methods are very good and management of students sound. The use of time, support staff and resources is very good and the quality and use of assessment is good. The subject is ably led and a strong lead given. The National Curriculum Order has been translated into outline schemes of work. Assessment arrangements to accommodate the new Attainment Target are good. The peripatetic teaching is well organised. There is a strong commitment to extra curricular work and to liaison work within the catchment and the community which is greatly appreciated and respected. Yamaha Music School makes a very significant contribution to the music provision.
127. The quality of learning is very good. High, average and low attaining students acquire their musical skills, knowledge and understanding better than expected. Students' intellectual and creative efforts are very good. Year 9 students make very good progress exploring and using devices to create tension which they use to accompany a dramatic story. Students' self knowledge is very good in that they know how they are doing and what to do to improve. Teachers' very good planning includes differentiated work for students with special educational needs and extension work for able students, who make very good progress. Students' attitudes and behaviour are generally positive and very good and it is the combination of very good student behaviour, very good teaching and equipment which work together to bring about above average attainment in a very strong music department.
128. While equipment for music is unusually fine and accommodation spacious and in almost every way adequate, there is a lack of soundproofing and sufficient small practice studios. The lack of soundproofing not only causes distraction in adjacent classrooms, but is a serious hindrance to learning when analytical listening is required. When the move to a final location is made this should be taken into account

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

129. Students' attainment in physical education by the end of Year 9 is expected to be at least in line with national expectations. This is due to good teaching and because students have a very responsible attitude and approach towards learning. Students are able to develop basic gymnastic techniques through appropriate time being allocated to consolidating learning. This means that those students who are performing above national expectations are able to plan a sequence using rolls and balances and joining movements of a high quality demonstrating awareness of body shapes and good tension. Students develop knowledge of techniques and are able to work with each other and suggest improvements. They know it is important to prepare for strenuous physical activity and perform well during warm-up sessions.
130. Students make good progress through Years 8 and 9. Good teaching makes sure that basic skills are acquired and that students work productively with one another. Good progress is being made in learning a sequence of movements in gymnastics in which quality of movement is emphasised. Some students are making good progress in basketball, where hand eye coordination is above average. Progress is common across all different groups because teachers are aware of differentiated tasks, resources and outcomes.
131. Students' attitude to learning is good. Students enjoy physical education, behave well and participation levels are high. Students concentrate and therefore remain on task. They are able to work effectively as individuals but also cooperate well as pairs and small groups, where they are able to develop sound skills of problem solving, observation and assessment.
132. The quality of teaching is good. The strengths of teaching are in good planning based on a secure knowledge of the subject, organisational skills, positive interaction with students and a commitment to developing a good moral and social ethos. The teacher is clear about learning outcomes and plans lessons, so that there are various teaching and learning styles, adequate facilities and appropriate resources. Individual students are able to work and make progress at their own level. The teacher intervenes with individual students so that they are clear about what is expected of them and how they can improve. Assessment procedures for monitoring students' progress are in place, which means that the teacher has a secure knowledge of standards. Students have the opportunity to develop evaluation and feedback skills through observation of others' performance.

133. The curriculum has an appropriate breadth and balance of activities. The department recognises the importance of enhancing the physical education curriculum through a programme of extra-curricular opportunities. The lead teacher, other members of staff and outside coaches offer a broad variety of activities with excellent numbers of students attending.
134. Leadership and management in physical education are very good. The Leading Teacher has a clear vision for the future and a commitment to continuous improvement, making sure that planning takes account of increased student numbers and their impact on teaching, facilities, resources and management procedures. The subject development plan is good and has a focus on raising standards of students' attainment. The subject has a strong philosophy of care for its students. A very good subject handbook includes systems and procedures for consistently good teaching and learning, assessment and health and safety as well as schemes of work for the activities covered within the curriculum. There are good systems for the maintenance of good indoor facilities and an appropriate number and range of resources. Outdoor facilities are restricted to a hard court area and off site playing fields. The introduction of the new on site playing fields will enhance the breadth and balance of the curriculum provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

135. In the lessons seen and from looking at students' work, attainment by the end of year 9 will meet the expectations of the local religious education syllabus and some will be above average. Students clearly understand the origins of the religions they are studying. For example, in Year 8 they understand the diverse nature of the Hindu concept of gods, and, later in Year 9, that Muslims received the revelations of the prophet Mohammed (pbuh). Students offer their views with increasing confidence, ably led by teachers. They enter into lively debates, but remain respectful of each other's views. For example, in Year 8, as students were thinking about their forthcoming visit to a Hindu temple, they discussed whether they felt able to accept the gifts of fruit that may be offered. In this they were able to relate their reactions to Christian thought and some felt that they should be aware of not giving any offence to their hosts. This resulted in above average attainment. Earlier in their work, some have considered the nature of self and examined what makes each of them unique as a person. Spiritual development is very good when they are given these opportunities to answer difficult questions. All students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress when balanced against their previous attainment. *(Note; the term "pbuh" is a customary mark of respect used when the prophet's name is mentioned.)*
136. Students are very capable when using computers and some very good work was seen in Year 9 when they used the Internet to gather information about the life and teaching of Mohammed (pbuh). The level of independent study that they achieve is good and they often use their own initiative in addition to the suggestions from the teacher. One student used the 'Ask Jeeves' facility on the web, quickly finding the answers to his questions.
137. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan carefully and offer very good challenges to students. This is especially so when providing students with opportunities for independent learning such as the computer based research on Islam in Year 9. Teachers involve students actively in lessons very well, using research, role-play, computers, discussions and group work. For example, in Year 8, students spent time in group discussion and then pooled their findings as a class. Students acquire new knowledge well because of these active methods. They increase their understanding of topics very well through discussion and development of their own ideas, bouncing ideas off one another in their lively exchanges. They are encouraged to think for themselves, and teachers seldom accept an answer without probing a little further to find out the reasons behind it.
138. The subject is managed very well with a clear vision for the future. The very good schemes of work give breadth and balance to the curriculum and the planning covers the three world religions very effectively.
139. Religious education makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They learn to examine topics that lead to some of life's difficult questions, and learn that the answers to these are not materialistically based. Students are taught to respect the views and beliefs of others and they listen to other people very well. They are encouraged to work co-

operatively together, and they learn about the faith, customs and practices of three world religions. All this enhances the understanding of their learning very well.

140. Religious education has a high profile in the school, and this is due to the expertise of the two teachers responsible for its planning and teaching.