

ERRATUM

Charles Edward Brooke Church of England Girls' School

URN: 100627

Inspection Number: 244856

Date of Inspection: 22nd – 26th April 2002

Reason for issue: To correct errors in percentages for teaching in Years 7 - 11

SUMMARY OF THE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR THE INSPECTION

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	132
	Sixth form	31
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		87

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	5	23	50	38	13	3	0
Percentage	4	17	38	29	10	2	0
Sixth form							
Number	4	10	14	3	0	0	0
Percentage	13	32	45	9	0	0	0

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

INSPECTION REPORT

**CHARLES EDWARD BROOKE CHURCH OF
ENGLAND GIRLS' SCHOOL**

Lambeth

LEA area: Lambeth

Unique reference number: 100627

Headteacher: Jane Cruse

Reporting inspector: William Baxendale
2928

Dates of inspection: 22nd - 26th April 2002

Inspection number: 244856

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: Voluntary Controlled
Age range of students: 11 to 19
Gender of students: Female

School address: Langton Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs. M. Spooner

Date of previous inspection: 29th April 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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2928	W. Baxendale	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
12775	J. Goodchild	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Sixth Form Co-ordinator	History	
8503	A. Allfree	Team inspector	Design and technology (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
30553	R. J. Fuller	Team inspector	Mathematics	
30518	M. R. Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
15051	L. Kauffman	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
27665	A. Lees	Team inspector	Music (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
30046	R. J. Parker	Team inspector	Equality of opportunity Provision for students with special educational needs	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
30563	J. Pentlow	Team inspector	Physical education (Key Stages 3 and 4) Religious education (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
6432	M. Sewter	Team inspector	Science (Key Stages 3 and 4) Biology (Sixth form)	
30648	B. Skelton	Team inspector	English	
19055	E. O. Statham	Team inspector	Provision for and standards achieved by students with English as an additional language	
4829	I. Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (Key Stages 3 and 4)	
20497	V. H. Williams	Team inspector	Geography (Key Stages 3 and 4) Media Studies (Sixth form)	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Charles Edward Brooke School is a voluntary controlled, Church of England, comprehensive school for girls, educating 838 students in the 11-19 age ranges. The sixth form is conjoint with a nearby school for boys: of the 121 students, 69 are girls from the school. There are also 5 boys on the school's sixth form register. The school occupies a split site, with two main buildings about 600 metres apart. It is over-subscribed. Having won arts college status for media arts in 1998, the school was re-designated to also include expressive and performing arts in 2001. The school serves a highly deprived part of the London Borough of Lambeth; it takes students from 52 different primary schools, but nearly all are, by policy, from its immediate area. Of the students, 25 per cent are admitted through Church membership; no entry tests are set. Ethnic minorities comprise 86 per cent of the student body. The largest representations are Black African and Afro-Caribbean, with substantial numbers of White Europeans, often from Balkan or Hispano/Portuguese origins. There are 37 different home languages and 369 students, 32 per cent of the total (30 per cent in the sixth form), share these: a high proportion. Many others also speak Creole, not recognised as an additional language. There are some asylum seekers, but the student population is reasonably stable. Well above the national average, 297 students, 35 per cent of the total have entitlement to a free school meal. Also well above the national average, the special educational needs register recognises 31 per cent of the total school population (28 per cent in the sixth form). Students appear on the register because of emotional and behavioural and learning difficulties in about equal measure. A high proportion of these students is on the school's action plus list. Only 8 students, a well-below average proportion, have a statement of special educational need. Attainment on entry is well below average with some sixty per cent of each Year 7 unable to read at the minimum standard that would allow them easily to make the best of the secondary curriculum. Attainment in mathematics and science is, among those starting the school, now nearer to average, but still below it.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good, oversubscribed school, with numerous very good features. Dynamic, very high quality leadership has created a very good curriculum that makes sure all students receive a particularly broad education, which raises their self-esteem, allows them to explore and express their individual talents well and, as 16 year-olds, obtain GCSE results that are higher than would reasonably be expected. The school benefits from and serves its local and wider communities very well. The governors allocate resources strategically to where they have most effect, for example, Year 11. The school knows its weaknesses and is working, for example, to raise the too-low standards in Years 7 to 9. The viable, growing sixth form also has weaknesses, but its quality of teaching and learning is very good. Considering the high cost of educating each student against the very substantial local indicators of disadvantage, the school provides overall good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership of the headteacher and key staff, including the site management, is very good.
- The students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is in the top 10 per cent nationally.
- The quality of teaching and learning in music, media and personal, social and health education is very good.
- The students spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The curriculum is very good; it broadens the students' horizons and produces many mature, socially very aware citizens.
- The fertile interaction with media arts and commercial organisations and the imaginative exploitation of the resources London provides brings outstanding benefits to the students.
- The very good student support centre provides security for those at risk of exclusion so they are able to cope with their learning.
- Students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make good progress.

What could be improved

- Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is not good enough in mathematics and science, especially.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory, failing to stimulate the students enough by involving them fully in what they are learning.
- The evaluation of quality by the senior leadership and middle managers is not rigorous enough.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory and too many students' punctuality is poor.
- Students with statements of special educational need do not have sufficient support from all teachers in evaluating how well they are meeting their individual targets for improvement.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS PREVIOUS INSPECTION

The school has made a good improvement since the previous inspection in May 1996. Each of the key issues has been implemented and the school has gone on improving. Standards are now higher and the specialist school status has brought very significant benefits to the students through their greater contacts with the local and wider communities. Teaching has improved in Years 10 and 11, but that in Years 7 to 9 has not done so, mainly because the school is finding increasing difficulty in recruiting suitable teaching personnel in mathematics, science and other subjects. Punctuality and attendance remain unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

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

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Standards are below national averages overall, but when the students reach GCSE the results they obtain are up to what could reasonably be expected considering their prior attainment. When 11 year-olds start the school their overall attainment is well below average. Very many students, especially those with English as an additional language and others with

special educational needs, are weak readers and writers. However, these students achieve well throughout their time in the school, helped by the extra support they receive. The 2001 national test results for 14 year-olds were in the lowest 5 per cent nationally and low compared with similar schools. The students make good progress in English but, mainly owing to staffing problems, some appear to go backwards in mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9. There are some signs of improvement in these subjects, but at a rate that is below the national trend.

The students' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good; it has improved year-on-year since the previous inspection. Starting from the low base in Year 9, they attain well in GCSE. Average point scores are in line with the national average of all schools and, compared with similar schools, are in the top 5 per cent nationally. Good teaching, extra classes after school and on Saturdays, very effective extra help and rapidly rising self-esteem and literacy standards underlie these improvements. The students have recently doubled what appeared to be demanding higher grade GCSE targets, 41 per cent did so in 2001, well above expectations. The proportion of students obtaining 5 or more GCSE passes equalled the national average and was above it for those obtaining at least one GCSE pass. Because of a fall in 2000, the trend in results over time is below the national one. Students do best in subjects such as music, where they sing and play well, media studies and drama. Recently they also did well in history, but, here too, staffing problems have affected standards adversely. Good achievement in mathematics and science goes some way to making up the leeway found in the first three years. Standards in English are near to the national average, reflecting the students' good progress. The lowest standards are in physical education because the students regard the subject as leisure time.

Based upon their attainment when they start, the sixth form students achieve well. Entry qualifications have been tightened and the standards found in Year 12 are often higher than in Year 13. The students reach satisfactory standards in GNVQ, but A-level results are well below the national average. Results in mathematics and the sciences are lower than in other subjects, mainly because the students were not up to the demands of the work in the first place. Standards in media are well up to average and the proportions of students attaining the highest grades is about average overall. Students with special educational needs do well in the sixth form; their key skills improve, so their experience prepares them well for future education or training.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. The students like coming to school and are well disposed to learning, especially in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. There are instances of immaturity amongst some of the younger students and occasionally amongst some higher-attainers in Year 10. Generally, behaviour in and around the school is such that good learning takes place.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The students' growing maturity and their interest in social and cultural matters are very good. They form close relationships amongst themselves and with the staff; these give them reassurance and security, allowing them to express themselves without inhibition and to make good progress in their studies as they talk openly about their work.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Absence rates are above the national average and the school's procedures for recording attendance are weak; poor punctuality to lessons is a major factor that undermines standards.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Unsatisfactory	Good	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.

Satisfactory overall, teaching and learning improve year by year, as students overcome their reading and writing problems and are able to cope better with the work. Much of the teaching is good and about one-fifth is very good. Students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs are taught well, so their learning is good. Teaching in music and personal, health and social education is very good; teachers involve the students closely in learning that is very often practical, arousing their interests. Teaching in media studies is also very good in Years 10 to 13. Teaching is good throughout the school in modern foreign languages and religious education. The good quality of teaching and the extra support for learning given to the students in Years 10 and 11 are the main reasons for the rapid rise in achievement and the good progress the students make. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good in these years; good teaching is a feature of nearly all subjects. Teaching and learning are closely focused on the examinations and the students learn thoroughly what is expected and how to do well, raising their confidence and self-esteem. Homework has a good impact upon learning. Thorough marking helps students to improve and in each subject the students are made consistently aware of their achievement, helping them to make good progress. The teachers have a good command of the subjects they teach and their enthusiasm often spreads to the students. Whilst literacy is satisfactorily developed across each subject, numeracy is only incidentally taught as part of the curriculum.

Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory in several subjects, but particularly in mathematics and science. This is mainly because of continuous staffing difficulties that have affected continuity and some lapses in management that have not made sure that books are marked

and that temporary or new teachers are briefed on school teaching and learning policies. English teaching is satisfactory at this stage, concentrating on improving reading and writing effectively. The inspection showed clearly that the students learn well if they feel involved with hands-on experiences. Too much teaching in Years 7 to 9 does not do so. There are weaknesses in design and technology where the students sometimes go through the motions of doing the work, but fail to learn satisfactorily. In history, teaching does not support learning well enough through good feedback. Unsatisfactory correction of work is a frequent failing in Years 7 to 9. It is because the quality of teaching and learning is not as good in these years that students achieve less well than in Years 10 and 11. Teaching fails to persuade the students to see physical education as anything more than recreation it is unsatisfactorily taught throughout the school.

The quality of teaching and of learning is very good in the sixth form. Here, the dialogue between student and teacher is fertile and the students' work is very carefully monitored to help them improve. Students appreciate the support they receive and most learn well. Undermining the quality of learning throughout the school is persistent lateness to lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. Very well devised to meet the school's aims, the curriculum provides full equality of opportunity by helping all students to make good progress and to gain in self-esteem. It gives the students a very good breadth of experience, nurturing their personal development. The curriculum makes outstanding use of London's facilities and the strong support of artistic, commercial and other educational organisations. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements, except in the provision of religious education for all students in the sixth form.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. Learning difficulties are clearly identified and trained teachers, learning support assistants, mentors and specialists from outside provide methodical, consistent carefully evaluated support. The very good range of extra help available is a strength of the school.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. The good quality of teaching helps the students to make good progress; they have equal access to learning along with all other students. Students feel secure in the school. The school provides good care and, by offering language courses in English, also helps parents.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The real strength of the school is the very good provision made in this respect. There is a distinctive atmosphere, clear expressions of standards, value attached to racial equality and the expectation that all collaborate to do well in a curriculum that accommodates diversity very well. The school exploits cultural opportunities very well and opens the students' eyes to the opportunities available to them.
How well the school cares for its students	Satisfactory. The students receive good guidance and are well supported by extra studies as part of the enterprising curriculum. The monitoring of academic standards is good: students in Years 10 to 13 clearly know how they are doing and what is needed to improve. Procedures for improving attendance are inadequate and the methods of ensuring punctuality to school and lessons poor.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Partnerships with parents are good in the main, but poor punctuality means that learning and standards are undermined. Parents view the school very well; they support activities such as celebratory tea parties and productions very enthusiastically and their responses to the governors' questionnaire were very positive.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Leadership gives the school a very good educational direction through the dynamic, far-seeing headteacher's strong commitment boldly to provide the students with challenging learning experiences. Delegation is good and the recently completed senior team has the potential to make further improvements. The school's staffing position is better than that found in many other inner-urban schools, but discontinuity and some difficulties in recruitment have undermined standards in Years 7 to 9 in mathematics, science, history, physical education and design and technology.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They support strongly its specialist school status and are seeking to sustain its denominational character by altering its voluntary control. Governors' help with special educational needs is very good.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Although the senior team monitors teaching quality diligently, there are weaknesses in the way middle managers evaluate quality. Whilst good structures are in place the rigour with which monitoring is carried out is insufficient and some unsatisfactory marking and teaching quality are not acted upon.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school applies the principles of seeking best value for money well in all its purchases. It uses the high level of funding for specific purposes well, although there is still scope for improvement in the way provision for the gifted and talented is used. Although the accommodation is sufficient for the school's needs, the split site is a major managerial inconvenience that causes duplication and wastage, induces poor punctuality and makes supervision of the students very difficult. Resources for learning have improved very substantially since the previous inspection and are now very good, especially those for media and performing arts.

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 makes sure their child works hard and achieves her best. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. • Their child likes school. • Parents are kept well informed about how their child is getting on. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of out-of-school activities.

Inspectors agree wholeheartedly with parents about the quality of education their child receives overall and that the school is very welcoming to all who work with it, using them to promote the students' learning. Whilst there are many opportunities for learning outside lessons, parents are right that the opportunities for physical activities are a comparatively few and a weakness.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

There are 69 students in this smaller than average sixth form, of whom 5 are boys. Most of the students are in Year 12. Part of the Charles Edward Brooke, Church of England (VC) Foundation, the sixth form works in collaboration with Archbishop Tenison School for boys, and is known as the Tenison Brooke Centre. Communication between the two schools is very good and relations between the boys and girls are good. Around 40 per cent of the girls in Year 11 continue into the sixth form. Students follow a range of academic and vocational courses. Whilst admission is guided by entry requirements for students for A/S and A2 courses, the school is flexible in individual circumstances. Overall, students' attainment on entry is broadly average and for the GNVQ intermediate courses it is below average. The school offers 12 A/S-level subjects leading to A2, and three GNVQ Intermediate courses. A number of students retake their A/S-level courses during a second year in the sixth form. A small number of students remain in the sixth form for a third year. Around 70 per cent of the students who commenced Year 13 in 2001 went on to higher education. The school became a specialist arts college for media arts in 1998 and although it has yet to fully develop this specialist characteristic in the sixth form, theatre studies, media studies and dance are, however, offered. The sixth form makes full use of the opportunities available in the centre of London to enrich the examination courses. Senior managers and governors have a clear commitment to the growth of the sixth form and the achievement of its students. Retention rates are average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Overall this is a good, sixth form that provides well for students who would find alternative provision hard to select. Retention rates are average. The GCE A/S and A2 average point scores have been below the national averages in recent years and the school is taking clear measures to improve this by, for example, ensuring that students no longer join courses for which they are unsuited. Higher entry qualifications for the A/S courses, especially in mathematics and science are now required. Three Intermediate GNVQ courses have proved to be successful and the school is investigating an increase in the number offered. The school is correctly seeking to develop courses that reflect its specialist status. The wide range of subjects presently offered to a small number of students results in some very small groups; however the school is committed to honour its duty to students who complete A/S-level exams and wish to complete their A2. Increasingly, parents and higher-attaining students are seeing the sixth form as a viable choice and standards upon entry were higher in 2001 than in any previous year. The cost of sixth-form teaching is subsidised to a small extent by the main school, partly because of short-term problems in staffing that the school has resolved by providing extra teaching resources. Teaching and the curriculum are shared with a nearby school for boys. Collaboration enables students to be offered a wider selection of courses than would otherwise be possible. However, administrative obstacles such as separate timetabling arrangements do affect efficiency. Teaching is generally very good and, in most subjects, monitoring and evaluation of students' achievement is good. Teachers and students are clearly partners in their learning and relationships are very good. The shared leadership of the sixth form is good. Students are valued and are well supported in their academic studies, and well prepared for their next stages in education or training. Considering the quality of provision and students' achievement, the sixth form provides satisfactory value for money.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good and teachers have good specialist knowledge of their subjects.
- Students are very well supported in their academic development.
- The school seeks to encourage students to aim for high standards.
- The school seeks to provide a curriculum that meets the aspirations of its students.

What could be improved

- Some students strive to achieve success in subjects for which they are unsuited and students completing the intermediate GNVQ course are unable to go further in the school.
- The range of out-of-school activities outside the students' academic subjects is limited.
- There is no suitable provision of religious education for all in the sixth form.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Results in 2001 were well below average. Students currently following the course in Year 13 are to be entered for the A/S-level examination instead of the A2. Teaching is good and students are showing rapid development. The school has revised its entry requirements to a more appropriate level.
Biology	Satisfactory. All students obtained a pass grade, although results at A-level were well below average in 2001. Good teaching and students' previous experience, confidence and capability on entry contribute to the level of their performance in the final examination. Revised entry requirements are more appropriate. Students show sufficient progress in line with their prior attainment.
Media Studies	Very good. Results in 2001 were broadly average in the examination. Some students who successfully completed their A/S-level in Year 12 have continued directly into higher education. Standards in the A/S-level and GNVQ courses are above average. Teaching is very good.
History	Good. Standards have improved over the last two years and are satisfactory in relation to the students' prior attainment. Teaching is very good and students work in partnership with their teachers, benefiting from the advice and support provided through very good assessment and marking.
English	Good. Results in 2001 were below average, but all candidates obtained a pass grade at A/S and A-level. Teaching is good and the high level of personal tuition and guidance enable students to achieve well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Good. Teachers provide good support for students in their studies and encourage them to persevere. Guidance in choice of course is not always realistic. However, teachers make every effort to enable the students to achieve success. Support for students on their future career paths is satisfactory. The development of students outside their fields of study is more limited. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are unsatisfactory.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good. Commitment to the development of the sixth form has arisen from clear leadership. Management is effectively developing a range of courses that meet the needs of the students and encourages ambition. The partnership arrangement enables the school to provide a wide range of courses to a relatively small number of students. Standards are monitored well and there is an effective climate for learning.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students feel their teachers are very approachable and provide very good academic support. • Students feel they are well taught and challenged to do their best. • Students appreciate the extra lessons after school and at the weekend that teachers provide. • Students say marking is informative, developmental and accurately assesses their work. • Opportunities to visit media organisations are appreciated and students feel a high level of satisfaction for the course. • Students are helped to study and encouraged to undertake independent research, especially in the business studies course. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are few opportunities for organised out-of-school activities, especially physical recreation. Students were very appreciative of those they had. • Some students feel they wasted time studying courses for which they were later found to be unsuited. • The requirement for general studies is unclear and is different in the partner school. • Support for GCSE re-sits is felt to be inadequate.

Inspectors agreed with the students' views. Students are most supportive of their school and feel that they are well supported in their academic studies. A few students are rightly concerned that they had been unprepared for the higher level of study and had not entered for appropriate courses. Some students feel, and the inspectors agree, that they have insufficient opportunity to demonstrate initiative and to take on responsibility. The inspectors agree with students that they have insufficient opportunity for out-of-school enrichment beyond their fields of study.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Standards are below average overall, but improvements reported in the previous inspection have continued. Set against the students' backgrounds and often-challenging personal circumstances, achievement is good. GCSE results are much better than the students' previous attainment suggests they might be; point scores, for example, were, in 2001 very close to the national average. The school helps students to improve at a faster rate than would reasonably be expected in Years 10 and 11. GCSE targets, set by the governors, based upon the students' prior attainment, have been surpassed each year since the previous inspection; recently, although still below the national average, the proportions of students obtaining 5 or more higher grade, A*-C, GCSEs has doubled predictions. The pattern of improvement, showing continuous annual rises compared with the students' prior attainment over the past ten years, has been remarkable. In 1991, eight per cent of the students obtained at least five higher grade GCSE passes; in 2001, 41 per cent did so. The proportions of students obtaining 5 or more GCSE grades is now in line with the national average and above it for those obtaining at least one grade. There are weaknesses, especially in Years 7 to 9, where achievement is too slow for many and some, for example in science make no discernible progress at all, a proportion going backwards. National test results at the end of Year 9 show the standards of 14 year-olds are not as high as they should be.

2. The local education authority reports substantial turbulence in primary schools, which undermines 11 year olds' overall attainment in English, mathematics and science; it is well below that expected of students of that age when they enter Year 7. Although there are variations between the subjects it does take some time before the students gain a sense of security in lessons, so standards are slow to improve. Until 2001 it was not possible to obtain precise data, as many of the 52 primary schools from which the students come did not supply relevant information on each individual's standards. The results of national tests for 11 year-olds, which the school now has for most Year 7 students, shows an overall pattern of well below average attainment. However, mathematics and science test results are nearer to average than English, where the school's own assessments, using widely-recognised reading tests, indicate that some sixty per cent of Year 7 cannot read anywhere near as well as is expected of 11 year-olds; many are more than two years behind. The high proportions of students with English as an additional language compound the situation. Weak literacy skills undermine achievement in Years 7 to 9. Having identified the problem, the school modifies the curriculum, better to help the students improve and to stimulate their interest in learning and secondary school-life.

3. Participation in the Lambeth and Southwark Literacy Pilot Scheme led to the establishment of an effective literacy management group, with representatives from different subjects, drawing up a school literacy policy to improve students' speaking and listening, reading and writing. A library forum is working well to promote the use of the library and to develop students' reading generally. An assistant head teacher co-ordinates literacy development well across the school and a member of the English department has a responsibility for literacy in Years 7 to 9. All members of the English department have received professional training in the development of students' literacy. The school has organised literacy summer schools for students about to enter Year 7 since 1997. All subject departments have identified literacy targets as part of their development plans and these have been combined into a school plan to improve standards of literacy. As a result,

standards in English do rise more quickly than do those in mathematics and science in the first three years.

4. By the end of Year 9, many students read fluently and with good expression. Standards of writing are below average and for many students below their good levels of speaking and listening. Many students in Years 7 to 9 write fluently and with imagination, but the control of grammar is not secure and students of average attainment make numerous spelling and punctuation errors. Students listen attentively and readily respond to questions with accurate and relevant answers. When given an opportunity, they can develop answers to offer more evidence or to support a point of view. Students can speak persuasively and can recognise bias in the speech of others. They recognise the need for Standard English in formal work and learn technical terms relevant to their studies.

5. By the end of Year 9, standards are, however, still well below average. Recent analyses carried out by the school and national reports on standards and achievement show the students do not make enough improvements in the three years, 7 to 9, in English, mathematics and science combined. In comparison with all other schools nationally the average point scores of 14 year-olds in the national tests are in the lowest five per cent; they are very low. In comparison with other, similar schools they are well below average overall, being average in English, well below average in science and very low in mathematics. The students' slow achievement or regression in this period contrasts starkly with achievements in Years 10 and, especially, 11, which are very good. Staffing problems have been a particular hazard in mathematics and science.

6. There are clear reasons for the discrepancies in achievement and attainment. In pursuit of its objective of doing the best for students, the school has directed resources disproportionately to those in their final years of compulsory schooling. The strategy pays good dividends, as the progress students make between the ends of Year 9 and of Year 11 is in the top 10 per cent nationally. The split site means that resources have to be duplicated and some of the exciting new resources won through specialist school status bring greater benefit to students when they reach Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Turbulence in staffing, particularly mathematics, since the time of the previous inspection has undermined standards and the school has, in most subjects, deployed its most experienced teachers for students preparing GCSEs. The incomplete senior leadership team at that time meant that the priorities of raising standards in Years 7 to 9 and improving standards and provision in the sixth form could not be fully sustained. Although movement between the two sites is kept to a minimum, many students' learning time is affected adversely: they are too often late to lessons.

7. In the first three years, students do make greater progress in English than in mathematics and science; the attention paid to literacy weaknesses bears fruit. It is in mathematics and science, especially, that standards do not rise enough. Results of national tests show regression for many in science and no clear achievement in mathematics. In mathematics, repetition of what was done in primary school without developing skills, too little practical and poor quality diagrammatic work are significant features of well below average standards. Steps to raise standards include a rigorous system of tracking achievement through half-termly tests: these are proving effective in Year 9 where the attainment of the more able mathematicians is substantially improved. Too much unsatisfactory teaching and poor marking of work are main reasons for the students' lack of achievement in science in Years 7 to 9. Standards in lessons are, however, now higher than the national test results show. Although written work is of often-poor quality, the students speak confidently about their knowledge and understanding of the different processes they study in both chemical and biological disciplines. Indications are that the results of national tests will be better in 2002 than in previous years.

8. Standards at the end of Year 9 are average in music, art and design and religious education. Achievement through these years is very good in music, because the teaching is especially stimulating, arousing both interest and confidence amongst the students; they sing and play well. The students have a good knowledge of religious expressions by the time they reach the end of Year 9, again speaking well about them, but writing less well. Average standards in art and design show in the arrangement of brush strokes to recreate celebrated artists' work, although the students do not have enough opportunities for direct observational work, so line and tone are unsatisfactory.

9. Standards in all other subjects are below those expected and well below in geography. In design and technology, drawing and graphics are closer to the expected standard than are designing and presentation. Weaknesses in literacy when they start the school also undermine the students' standards and achievement in geography. By the end of Year 9 many are catching up and have a satisfactory range of geography skills, such as knowledge of place. Map work skills are weaker and higher-attainers do not have sufficient challenge to do well. A lack of continuity in teaching also affects standards in history at this stage. These demanding students make satisfactory progress when they perceive topics to be interesting. Time to reflect on social issues, for example the slave trade, produces good achievement; excessive copying out reduces the standards of lower-attainers. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are below those expected, but improving as the students have greater opportunities for study; work designed to support learning in history or geography is often more effective in raising standards. In French, the students lack confidence when speaking, but their understanding of spoken language is satisfactory. In the best cases, they begin to use the past tense and higher-attainers produce some good work on relevant themes such as holiday descriptions. Standards in physical education are poor. Staff turnover has affected provision and unsatisfactory attitudes mean that although students have a keen competitive spirit, their skills are weak.

10. Students with special educational needs make good progress. In Years 7 to 9 they respond well to good teaching when they work in small groups to improve their reading and spelling. In Year 9 classes, when the focus has switched from literacy to preparing for national tests, they developed a good understanding of scenes from Macbeth. Although they had to struggle to read the text, they were able to discuss character and motivation in the play, and to express mature judgements about guilt and responsibility.

11. Students whose difficulties include managing their behaviour and relationships with others respond well to the variety of support that is provided. This has reduced the number of students who are excluded from lessons or from school, so raising standards. In lessons where they have no additional support in Years 7 to 9, students with special educational needs progress as well as others in the class.

12. Standards rise substantially in Years 10 and 11. Results in GCSE in 2001 were the best in the school's history. Point scores were average compared with all other schools and well above average compared with similar schools: a dramatic reversal of the situation at the end of Year 9. The school's meticulous analyses show the GCSE results were well above the local education authority average and they indicate clearly how the different ethnic groups as well as individuals, performed. Although numbers were too small to be significant, students from Chinese and Pakistani families did best. They were closely followed by those from a Black African and White European heritage who also attained GCSE pass rates that were well above the national average for 5 or more higher, A*-C, grades. Students from Bangladeshi families also performed above the school average. Underachievement was found amongst students from Caribbean and White English families, corresponding with patterns of serious absence identified by the school. Students with English as an additional language used their linguistic prowess effectively and, on the whole, did very well.

13. The very strong support the school provides is the key to improvements, not only through very close tracking of how students are doing, but extra classes and support from staff and mentors. The resultant GCSE scores are very good. Average compared with similar schools, there are comparatively few A*/A grade passes compared with the national average. In 2001, history and drama were notable exceptions.

14. In Years 10 and 11, standards in English continue to rise. Students write more accurately and this has contributed to producing the about national average GCSE results. Speaking and listening are good and the students use technical terms accurately in drama, the study of literature and media. Contrasting with some slipshod presentation in Years 7 and 8, the written assignments students produce at this age are painstaking and accurate. Careful monitoring against examination criteria helps to bring about rapid improvements in mathematics so, although standards remain below average, students, nonetheless, have mastery of a wide mathematical vocabulary and understanding, for example of factorisation. In common with other subjects, poor punctuality and absences undermine standards. Work seen in science in these years is better than the below average GCSE results show, although in 2001 the higher grade results rose by more than ten percentage points over two years before. Higher-attainers, for example, extend their knowledge of sport-related biology and lower-attainers work well on mass and gravity.

15. In music, a subject the students enjoy greatly, standards continue to be amongst the highest in the school. Students compose well, sing to high standards and have sound musical knowledge. Ethical issues are discussed at suitable depth in religious education and students have a good understanding of how religious teaching may be applied to such issues; GCSE standards are well up to average. Drama complements the school's individual arts and media character well; GCSE results are above average and the subject makes a very significant contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Recent history results were well above the national average. Currently, in Year 11, standards are about average; staffing problems have undermined learning in this subject, too. The students use historical sources confidently, but are less sure about the significance of some of the data they collect.

16. Standards are close to or below average in other subjects, but good achievement is a common characteristic, except for physical education, which the students see more as a recreational than a rigorous pursuit. Standards in art and design are close to those expected; students produce work that sustains a selected theme and they respond interestingly to different cultures through their work. Sketchbooks are used effectively to help raise standards. Similarly in design and technology, standards are close to those expected. A discontinuity in teaching, owing to long-term illness, had affected standards adversely and numerous students had not completed the coursework in time to be entered. Students use ICT to improve the impact of their presented work and handle complex construction tasks well. Achievement in geography is good compared with standards at the end of Year 9, but with no course in Year 11 and no GCSE results from the previous year, comparisons are hard to establish. Contrary to much teaching to the examination found in other subjects, the emphasis in ICT is on independence in learning. Students build upon the skills developed at the end of Year 9 satisfactorily and, overall standards are about those expected for students who follow a full course, but below for others. Understanding is satisfactory in modern foreign languages, but oral skills are weaker; students are unsure when reading aloud. Written work underpins oral work well, but standards, although improving are below average. Standards in dance are below those expected because the students have no prior experience, but there is great potential for them to rise. In physical education, students are very slow to change, too many fail to bring suitable kit and they have poor listening skills; standards are below those expected, as a result.

17. The students' confidence and maturity are helped very substantially by their personal, social and health education studies. They appreciate the many opportunities to discuss important themes and very good teaching gives them insights into the pros and cons of challenges and pleasures they find in everyday life. Their studies make very strong contributions to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the transfer of what they have learned rubs directly onto other subjects, especially in the arts, humanities and English. The school's participation in numerous initiatives that include the wider community, for example as lead school in national pilots on creative partnerships, associations with film institutes and theatre groups as well as industrial concerns stimulates interest and leads to higher standards.

18. In Years 10 and 11, where students with special educational needs are given additional support to work towards a Certificate of Achievement in English and in mathematics, they make good progress to master the necessary skills. In a Year 10-mathematics lesson students encountered a new technique which some people find easier for multiplication. They steadily increased their confidence and understanding of the method.

19. In Years 10 and 11 some students with special educational needs learn to present a convincing impression of achievement by copying work which seems to show understanding, when they have actually grasped very little. However, most students with special educational needs make good progress in most of their subjects, and very good progress in the sixth form.

20. The school's thrust to improve the students' numeracy standards is less well developed than for literacy. There is no common policy or practice, although some of the work in ICT does help students improve their statistical knowledge. Numeracy competence develops piecemeal in other subjects, but without the emphasis that low mathematical standards indicate to be advisable. Graph construction, for example in geography, is weak.

21. Subjects such as science and design and technology are making use of ICT. They have good programmes. However, the greater demand for computers through increased time for specialist ICT, diminishes opportunities for other staff to book access to computer rooms for their groups.

22. There are good opportunities for students to use ICT outside school time. There is heavy use at lunchtime and break in the ICT rooms, the libraries and the sixth form area. There are also very good Saturday clubs and effective support through activities such as the Eagle project. As a result, ICT plays a satisfactory part in raising standards.

23. ICT and the wide use of technology in media arts are good, with high quality professional equipment used to raise standards. The school is at the first stage of developing cross-curricular ICT; it is not yet fully woven into teaching and learning.

Sixth form

24. Generous arrangements for admission to the sixth form have allowed students who are not well equipped to join courses that are unsuitable; this affects standards adversely. A-level results have not improved since the previous inspection, although considering the students' GCSE starting points they are about what might reasonably be expected; achievement is good. The proportions of students staying on to the sixth form are lower than average and many of the higher-attainers in Year 11 leave to go on to study with other providers. The school has recently stemmed some of this leeching and the standards of the current Year 12 are substantially higher than are those of Year 13, or previous years.

25. Average point scores in GCE A-levels in 2001 were about the same as those of the year before and were well below the national averages. The proportion of students who gain the higher A and B grades at GCE A-level is also well below average, reflecting the nature of the intake. However, the 2001 results in English literature, art and design, French, media, history and mathematics do include an average proportion of higher grade passes, indicating that there are opportunities to do very well. The sixth-form courses are pursued in depth and with appropriate rigour. Reflecting the generous entry policy, results in mathematics and science subjects were too low, with very low pass rates in especially physics, biology and mathematics. Absences and poor punctuality undermine standards for many.

26. Results in GNVQ Intermediate courses are in line with the national average, with stronger performances in media studies and science, indicating that such studies are more suitable to the science students than are the A-levels.

27. Retention rates at A-level are improving and are satisfactory. In 2001, 83 per cent of the student body completed the Year 13 courses and 70 per cent went on to higher or further education, a rise over previous years. Retention rates for GNVQ courses have fallen year on year since 1999, but at 81 per cent are satisfactory.

28. Generally, the achievement of students who are now in the sixth form is good, particularly those in Year 12. Mathematics and science courses are popular choices, but are often beyond the capabilities of many. In mathematics, for example, too many have been unsuccessful, with very few higher-grade passes obtained by students from the school. Current students in Year 13 do not have a secure command of the necessary mathematical principles to do well and they have already been unsuccessful in the modules taken. The standards of those taking A/S mathematics in Year 12 are higher; they have a secure command of techniques that they apply successfully to complex examples in algebra, trigonometry and calculus. Standards and achievement in science subjects are satisfactory, although results in both science A2s and A/S levels are well below average and dropout rates high in Year 12. The standards of current Year 12 students are much higher than those in Year 13, partly as a result of stiffer course entry qualifications and the higher calibre of students now staying on in the school. Year 13 students have gaps in their basic knowledge of biology and their communication skills let them down in class discussion.

29. The school offers a course in design and technology in which, though numbers are small, has produced consistent successes over the last three years. Current standards in textile product design are satisfactory, with each student reaching her full potential.

30. Business Intermediate GNVQ, A/S and A2 courses are successfully run in Year 12. Achievement in GNVQ courses is good, but the Year 13 A2 is proving very demanding for candidates. Students know clearly how well they are doing because of excellent teaching that checks very regularly on their progress and provides guidance on how to improve.

31. No formal ICT lessons were inspected, but the use of ICT to raise standards is, except in history, better in the sixth form than in the rest of the school and the students' key skills are, in this respect, satisfactory.

32. Standards in media studies are above average and well up to what might reasonably be expected. The students' achievement is very good considering their starting points. Students are able to undertake detailed research work and have a very good understanding of the relationship between media theory and practice. Coursework is well presented and illustrated, for instance with video support. Standards in drama are also at least average and standards and achievement in dance are good.

33. Current standards in history are broadly average, with students gaining a good grasp of key features of the periods they study; the social implications surrounding events in modern history are particularly motivating to the students. A-level results are satisfactory in relation to the students' prior attainment and have improved over the last three years. Confusion in coursework affected the A/S results in 2001, but this is being rectified satisfactorily.

34. Standards in Spanish are above average and those in English literature are satisfactory in relation to the students' prior attainment, but are below average. Above-average proportions stay on to Year 13 than is the national average and each current Year 13 student passed the A/S examinations; this represents good attainment in light of the fact that each has English only as an additional language. Current standards in the A/S level course are above average, the students have genuine perceptions and produce well argued critical judgements.

35. The numerous students with special educational needs achieve very well in the sixth form; their key skills in language, number and ICT are satisfactory because they are well supported in their efforts to improve. Their experience prepares them well to go on to other providers to complete education or training.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

36. All students, including those from all ethnic minority groups or those with special educational needs, are fully and very well integrated into the school community. The attitudes of most students towards school are good, especially in Years 10 and 11. They are prepared to work hard and get a sense of satisfaction when they achieve success in their studies. They participate enthusiastically in the wide range of enrichment opportunities the school provides. School productions, in particular, are well supported by students. Students' attitudes towards subjects and activities do vary, mainly as a result of the quality of teaching they receive.

37. There are weaknesses in the students' attitudes to learning in Years 7 and 8, where the school's strong support regime has not had time to take full effect. The school's challenging inheritance is clear in Year 7 where the attitudes in about one-quarter of the lessons seen were unsatisfactory; they were not much better in Year 8. Linked essentially with the quality of teaching and, as a result, learning, there are particular weaknesses in mathematics and history as well as in physical education where, for example, a high proportion of students regularly do not bring their kit with them to lessons.

38. Relationships between students and with staff are very good. Students are valued for their individuality; they respond positively to this. There are many opportunities for collaborative or group work, further to develop students' social skills and they willingly share and support each other in their learning. Students are encouraged to express their feelings on a range of moral and social issues. They listen with sensitivity to the views and opinions of their peer group that may differ from their own.

39. The standard of behaviour within the school is satisfactory. The school is a socially harmonious community. Behaviour in most lessons was never less than satisfactory, and on occasions excellent. However, in 16 per cent of lessons in Years 7 to 9, behaviour was unsatisfactory. Incidences of unsatisfactory behaviour reflected the pattern of unsatisfactory attitudes identically; again, this was usually related to the quality of teaching, mainly by temporary teachers, that students experienced. A small number of students, who have emotional and behavioural problems, present challenging behaviour on occasions and sometimes the learning of other students is disrupted. Very good behaviour management

strategies have been developed by the student learning centre to support these students and help them to accept responsibility for managing their own behaviour. Excellent results occurred, for example when belligerent students were eventually coaxed into a lesson from which they then benefited enormously and from which they were equally reluctant to leave. Bullying is not an issue in this school.

40. Since the previous inspection the instances and number of students excluded from the school for a fixed term has decreased. In the current year, 26 students were given fixed-term exclusions on 38 occasions. Two students were permanently excluded. The use of social inclusion funding to set up the student learning centre and the referral room for students in Years 7 to 9 has made a significant contribution to supporting those students at risk of exclusion and reducing incidents of it. The governing body is involved appropriately when exclusions occur.

41. The development of students' initiative and personal responsibility is good. Great emphasis is placed on raising students' self-esteem through a range of enrichment activities, as well as through subjects. By the time they reach the end of Year 11 most are confident and articulate young people who are able to express their feelings and concerns in a logical manner.

42. From first entering the school students are encouraged to accept responsibility within the school community. Students volunteer to act as anti-bullying mentors, represent their peer group on the school council, help with presentation evenings and willingly offer their help to assist in the smooth running of the school. Many students represent the school through the performing arts within the community. A wide range of visits, both in this country and overseas, extends very well students' understanding of the wider community.

43. The development of students' ability to take responsibility for their own learning is unsatisfactory. In some subjects, for example geography, enquiry-based learning skills are developed throughout and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. However, this is not the case in all subjects, and students' independent learning skills are not fully developed. This affects their overall levels of attainment, particularly when preparing for examinations.

44. Attendance is unsatisfactory and punctuality is poor. For the year 2000/01 attendance was 90.4 per cent, which is below the national average. Authorised absence was in line with the national average. There has been an improvement in attendance rates since the previous inspection in 1996 when attendance was recorded as 88.5%. The lack of a computerised attendance recording system severely hampers the school's ability rigorously to track attendance and put in place effective monitoring and improvement strategies. The school has, nonetheless, identified the patterns of persistent absences by ethnic group. Students from a white English family background cause most concerns in Year 10, which year is a particular cause for concern, with students from a Caribbean family background also giving rise to anxiety. There are opportunities for students to miss lessons particularly when they are moving between sites. The staff does not always challenge students who are not in lessons. On one occasion during the inspection, only 9 out of 24 students were present for the start of the day. This low level of attendance will affect their ultimate success in GCSE examinations.

45. Punctuality to school and lessons is poor. Many students consistently arrive after the start of the first lesson. Frequently lessons start late. There are factors affecting this, such as no time between lessons to allow for travelling between sites. However, too many students display no sense of urgency and some teachers both in registration sessions and

lessons tolerate their lateness. This effectively reduces the amount of teaching that students receive and their overall levels of achievement.

46. There is no formal registration period for students in the afternoon. The school, therefore, does not comply with the statutory requirements for the registration of students.

47. Students with special educational needs show very positive attitudes to learning, both when supported individually, and in small groups. Students with learning difficulties show good attitudes when they work in classes without additional support, so long as the teacher knows the student, and adjusts the teaching to suit the special need. Other students, whose needs affect behaviour and relationships, show very good attitudes when specialist staff work with them. This is the case even when the work is very challenging, and demands that they acknowledge where their behaviour has caused problems for other people. In a Year 8 group which was developing collaborative skills by filming a media report on the trial of Damilola Taylor, students overcame their initial reluctance and rivalry to work quickly as a team to script, rehearse and record a very convincing news report. Most students are very supportive of others in their lessons who have special educational needs. In ICT in particular, those who cope easily reinforce their own learning by helping others who find the work more difficult.

Sixth form

48. Sixth form students have good attitudes towards their studies. They are motivated to learn and work hard to achieve a high standard of work. Their personal development is good but their interaction with the rest of the school is largely restricted to the one site and they have little opportunity to act as positive role models for younger students in Years 7 to 9. Relationships with teaching staff and between students are good and supportive. Attendance is unsatisfactory and monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous. This affects students' ultimate success in formal examinations.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

49. The quality of teaching and of learning is satisfactory overall. Quality improves from stage to stage through the school. It is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9; it is good in Years 10 and 11 and very good in the sixth form. The impact of homework on learning is good. Teaching quality is about the same in Years 7 to 9 as that reported at the previous inspection, though it appears better in Years 10 and 11.

50. In Years 7 to 9, teaching and learning were good or better in 48 per cent of the 73 lessons evaluated, but at least unsatisfactory in a high 16 per cent. Teaching and learning improve within these 3 years, being much better in Year 9 than in the others. One lesson in four was unsatisfactorily taught in Year 7. The students learn best when teaching involves them very closely and actively in what they are intended to do and this is not always the case in these years. The split site also means these students do not have the tempering influence of older ones, including sixth formers. Some teachers' overall management of students is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but good in Years 10 and 11. Similarly, the effectiveness of teaching methods becomes very good in Years 10 and 11 after, for some, an unsatisfactory start.

51. In Years 7 to 9 by far the best teaching (very good) was in music and personal, social and health education. Music teaching enthuses the students, gives them plenty to do actively and matches the work very well to each student's different levels of attainment, so students know they are able to achieve success. In personal, social and health education lessons, discussions on matters that interest the students and let them participate fully, occasionally through improvised drama, characterise the very good teaching. The students learn rapidly,

appreciate the acquired knowledge's contribution to their own growing maturity and, as a result, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development increases apace.

52. A general strength of teaching is the subject expertise of the teaching teams. In English teaching, which is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, lessons run well. In good, well-taught lessons, the students are made aware of what they are to do and the teachers manage them sensitively and skilfully. The main difference between such good teaching and teaching that is satisfactory at this stage is in the teachers' expectations that the entire range of mixed attainment found in classes can be met by a single activity for the whole class. A further weakness, also found in other subjects where teaching was more frequently unsatisfactory, was in the non-correction of students' written work. Marking in English is inconsistent and there is no expectation of corrections. Where they are found, low teacher expectations result in slipshod, poorly presented work.

53. Because the students are so demanding, teaching has to be imaginative and well resourced. It has to recognise the students' weaknesses in literacy and make compensation for this. In many lessons it does so, but overall, teaching is unsatisfactory in all other subjects in Years 7 to 9. In mathematics and science, it is because significant numbers of students make too little progress. The unsatisfactory mathematics teaching does not take account of what the students can do or of their understanding: lack of interest ensues because of confusion. In response to uninspiring learning experiences, some students even repeat work they did in primary school badly. The good lessons, on the other hand, have clear requirements, good dialogue and homework that could be attempted so that it reinforced learning effectively. Weaknesses in marking written work compound the unsatisfactory nature of mathematics and science teaching at this stage. In science, incomplete work is not followed up and there is no clear recognition of a student's endeavour through merited praise. Assessment does not help students to make progress. When teaching is good, students know what they are to do, questioning is crisp and pace is rapid, following detailed planning; students learn well.

54. Students with special educational needs benefit from good teaching. In small groups where students are learning to improve their literacy or numeracy skills, teachers plan very carefully. They prepare a range and variety of activities, which engage the students' interest, and encourage them to maintain their concentration for lengthy periods. The work is pitched at the right level, and students are managed firmly but kindly so that they are able to make good progress.

55. Teachers and learning mentors who support students who are at risk of exclusion use very carefully developed techniques to ensure that students are managed consistently. They plan the support that students need very methodically, and constantly re-assess how effective their strategies have been. This results in steady improvements in behaviour, so that students are able to learn more effectively.

56. Subject specialists who teach students with special educational needs take pains to include them in all of the class activities. In music, teachers prepare individual plans to match the particular needs, though this practice is not widespread in other subjects. Teachers do not yet have sufficient information about the nature of individual need, appropriate strategies to overcome them, or how much each individual might be expected to achieve.

57. Teaching and integration of ICT as a cross-curricular subject is satisfactory. The school has made a good improvement in hardware and software from the previous report, which gives students, enhanced access. However, the school does not have a clear picture, of the application of ICT in subjects across the curriculum.

58. The school is making satisfactory progress in systematically teaching literacy skills across a range of subjects, but the overall provision is inconsistent. Exercises developed from the national literacy strategy are used extensively in English lessons. In many classrooms, including art and design, French and science word walls display key words to develop students' vocabulary in those subjects, but these are only infrequently referred to by teachers. Effective teaching introduces new words and concepts systematically; for example, technical terms related to media studies. Reading skills are not taught as widely as vocabulary skills, but some examples of good practice were observed. Students have access to the Internet and to the library but the resource is currently under used. There is less effective emphasis on the development of writing skills and standards vary from subject to subject. For example, students' skills in the making notes are poor in science and ICT in Years 7 to 9. Poor writing skills are slowing achievement in geography and science. Writing skills receive a high priority and were observed to be better in French and good in religious education. Drafting skills and writing for specific audiences are well taught in English and history. Written work in personal, social and health education is of a high standard. In most subjects, especially history, English, religious education and design and technology, the inspection recorded a rapid rise in standards in the written work of students in Years 10 and 11 with more emphasis on extended writing, to develop an argument or to describe a process in more detail.

59. The quality of teaching and learning transforms in Year 10 and, especially in Year 11. Improved teaching and learning come from greater purpose in trying to raise standards and the focus brought about by the imminent GCSE. The school allocates its more experienced teachers to the upper years and there is a greatly increased amount of extra support, for example through learning mentors and the good collaboration between subject teachers and pastoral support in the setting of targets for improvement and tracking individual's achievement thoroughly.

60. Good English teaching is focused on preparing the students for the examination; marking becomes thorough and gives good feedback on how to do better. Teachers make every effort to get students to improve by providing some excellently taught extra lessons: students' self-esteem rises as their confidence in their ability to do well materialises through success. In mathematics, a transformation arises from meticulous planning and keen teaching that generates an eager response from students who really enjoy the challenges they receive. Homework reinforces learning well in this and the other subjects when it is set. Similar characteristics are found in science, work is planned for the different levels of attainment in classes and the pace of learning is good. The students are invariably aware of what they are doing and how well they are performing, so they acquire skills satisfactorily and start to make up some of the deficiencies they had in Years 7 to 9.

61. Learning follows a similar pattern and improves substantially in Years 10 and 11. After unsatisfactory acquisition of skills and understanding in the early years, it becomes good, so standards rise. In consequence, the students' interest and concentration, often poor in the early years improves to good as they are more motivated to do well in their examinations and they have better resources from which to learn. The students' knowledge of their own learning and the productivity of their work are good in Years 10 and 11, each indicators of the impressive rises in standards.

Sixth form

62. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good. In all lessons seen during the inspection the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better. Teachers have high expectations and work is appropriately demanding. Students are intellectually challenged and most work hard to meet these demands. Most teachers recognise the need to support students through the transition from GCSE to A-level, being aware that A2 courses may prove very challenging for some students and most ensure that they build their confidence with encouragement and praise.

63. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and this enables them to respond to questions and to follow lines of enquiry set up by the students. Explanations are clear and precise and support the development of students' understanding. Through skilful questioning and discussion they encourage students to develop their ideas and to raise the level of their understanding. Lessons are well planned and structured so that students clearly understand the focus of the lesson. Teachers include a variety of activities and tasks that promote independent investigation. There are good opportunities for paired and group work.

64. Marking and assessment of students' work is very good. Students value the individual support and advice they receive through tutorials and through the very good feedback on their assignments. This provides very good information about how to improve their work and enables teachers to monitor students' achievement closely. In history, for example, a feedback sheet accompanies marked essays identifying areas for improvement. GNVQ lessons, in particular, include opportunities for evaluation and reflection. In a GNVQ business lesson for example, the teacher made excellent use of student involvement in forward planning and evaluation. The teacher clearly demonstrated his commitment to releasing the personal power in his students in their learning. Teachers have good understanding of the requirements of the examinations and ensure that students are well acquainted with the criteria for success.

65. Relationships between students and their teachers are very good and students feel confident that they can approach their teachers for additional support and advice. Students following the media studies course particularly valued the opportunities provided to work with professionals in their field and most students felt that their teachers were committed to their success.

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

66. The overall quality of the curriculum is very good. Designed to meet the specific needs of the students, the curriculum fulfils the school's aims by giving them a very wide breadth of experience, nurturing their personal development and supporting very effectively any student who is at risk of exclusion from learning or from society.

67. A priority is to open students' eyes to the huge variety of experiences that their lives could offer. They participate with alacrity in the extra activities the school provides in this respect: students' growing poise and maturity demonstrate the initiatives' successes. A programme of additional events that take advantage of the capital's artistic, cultural and commercial assets supplements the main curriculum. Students visit the ballet, take part in the Lord Mayor's procession or the Thames festival, or perhaps present poems to complement a gallery exhibition. They can work with record producers, theatre and dance groups, or learn bakery skills. Because of the school's Arts College status they can enjoy stimulating media work using up-to-the-minute technology. Alternatively they can get really

excited in a mini-football tournament. There are extra classes after school and on Saturdays, and specific projects to enable gifted and talented students to reach the highest standards. Schemes such as the Eagle project raises the students' appreciation of the opportunities offered by higher education.

68. Careful liaison between year heads and support staff ensures that students with special educational needs, which may prevent them from learning successfully, are quickly identified and their needs assessed. On the basis of this assessment students may be allocated extra support from one of several different strands. There is successful coaching and counselling for those who find relationships difficult and similar individual support for students who cannot manage their own behaviour. Experienced teams come into school to work on building self-esteem and developing social skills, so that students can be confident to take the risks involved in learning. The school has won extra funds to employ skilled mentors as well as specialist teachers. Their work ranges from individual support to enable excluded students to get back into school and into lessons, through to group work to develop crucially important skills in personal relationships.

69. The very good range of extra help, which is available to students with special educational needs, is a strength of the school. Learning difficulties are clearly identified and appropriate support is designed to help to overcome or compensate for the problems. Specialist teachers, learning mentors and external specialists offering role play and motivation work together with heads of year and learning support staff to tailor support to individual needs. The support is methodical, consistent and carefully evaluated. However, there is no clear overview of how withdrawing students for the specialist sessions is affecting the make up of classes. This undermines teachers' awareness of the level of absence from lessons, and adversely affects standards.

70. Learning support assistants and specialist teachers give support in class to students with special educational needs so that they are able to enjoy the full range of subjects. In Years 10 and 11, students with special educational needs often choose to study fewer subjects, so that they can have extra support in preparing for formal examinations. This is helping to raise standards.

71. To get the students to gain maximum benefit from the wide range of experiences, the curriculum in Year 7 has a particular focus on building self-confidence and communications skills. Additional emphasis is given to expressive arts by allocating extra time to drama, art and design, dance and media studies, and extra time is spent on mathematics and English, to build the basic numeracy and literacy that underpin so much of the learning in other subjects.

72. Almost all of the issues raised in the previous inspection have now been corrected. There is a good range of choices in Years 10 and 11. The timetable is now improved, with sixty-minute lessons, better-suited to students' needs and a full 25 hours teaching within the two-week timetable, which is in line with national recommendations. No movement time between lessons means that those who have to go from site to site are invariably late. Statutory requirements are now met in physical education and ICT. However, the provision for ICT across all teaching subjects remains inconsistent and there are imbalances in the opportunities students have in following a course in design and technology in Years 7 to 9. The provision for religious education in the sixth form does not comply with the agreed syllabus.

73. All students in Years 7 to 9 have access to the National Curriculum. They are initially grouped into mixed attainment classes, organised using results from national tests at the age of eleven, as well as assessments completed during taster days before pupils come to Year

7. Classes may be re-organised during the early weeks of Year 7, to ensure that all students have the best chance to learn. Then, initially in mathematics, and later in modern foreign languages and science, students are grouped in attainment classes, allowing teachers to suit the work more closely to students' needs. There is a strong, effective emphasis on providing extra support for students who may find learning difficult because they have special educational needs and often because English is not their first or only language. Personal, social and health education is seen by teachers and students alike as a valuable opportunity to consider and discuss important personal issues. Within the excellent personal, social and health education programme there is close attention to careers and the world of work. Here, students look at the way work has changed, particularly for women, and they learn what skills employers want people to develop. Good provision is also made for drug awareness and sex education.

74. As they go through Year 9, students are helped to look at their own skills, and to develop realistic aspirations that match the school's commitment to aim high. Towards the end of Year 9 students select from a wide range of courses leading to GCSE qualifications. As well as English, mathematics, science, personal, social and health education and physical education, there are choices from food technology, textiles, design, business, history, geography, art and design, dance, drama, physical education, statistics and media. The list is assessed annually for suitability. Students are helped to make their decisions in discussion with teachers and their parents, though the breadth of the choice and the opportunity to select only two subjects does mean that some students cannot continue with some subjects that they enjoy. There are also support groups, which help students with work in weak areas, instead of taking on the full range of subjects. Such provision helps the students reach the national average in obtaining 5 or more GCSEs and perform above the national average in obtaining GCSE certification for 1 or more subjects. Courses in English and mathematics can, alternatively, lead to a Certificate of Achievement to recognise the progress made by students who find GCSE too demanding.

75. There is a good range of out-of-school activities, particularly for students interested in music. Other opportunities focus mainly on curriculum subjects – giving good additional help in Spanish or ICT, for example. There are master classes for students with special gifts or talents, which run after school and on Saturday mornings. These enable mathematicians and foreign language students to enter formal examinations earlier than normal, as well as giving English students experience of the subject beyond GCSE. There are also daily opportunities to use computer-aided learning programmes to improve basic skills; learning support is available to help with homework or research projects. The comparatively fewer opportunities for pursuing physical activities are a weakness.

76. The community makes a very strong contribution to the curriculum by supporting a variety of innovative and stimulating special events. So students can work with a carnival costume designer or with specialists in media and the arts ranging from classical scholars at the National Gallery, to record producers and technology entrepreneurs. This has a strong effect on learning because the work is exciting, immediate, and authentic.

77. There are good relationships with partner institutions. Teachers from the school take their expertise into local primary schools to help in their specialist areas, and can share their excellent media facilities with a neighbouring secondary school, which will shortly be able to offer access to a dance studio in return. There are music master classes for Year 6 pupils, and a series of media arts community conferences.

78. The excellent additions to the basic curriculum are the product of a school and supporting community that are committed to giving students the best and broadest of starts in life.

Sixth form

79. The school places great value on the sixth form, both as a secure base where students can gain further maturity and as a role model for younger students. The curriculum has been developed to meet these needs and to continue to attract students who can achieve the very highest standards. New courses have been introduced to offer different ways of learning and gaining qualifications, whilst the A-level courses have been retained. The resulting curriculum is unsatisfactory, however. The current combination of GCSE, A-level and GNVQ courses do not yet provide suitable progression routes for all students. For example, GNVQ courses are only offered at Intermediate level. Consequently, students who appreciate this approach to learning, but who cannot manage the demands of the Intermediate course, are not catered for. Similarly, those who succeed at Intermediate level can only progress by taking up the very different style of an A/S or A2 course or move on to a different provider. The school is keen to develop a particular cachet in sixth form provision, capitalising, logically, on its specialist status by offering arts and media-related courses as a priority.

80. Although spiritual development is promoted through some sixth form services in the chapel and dynamic student-led religious group activities, religious education is not available to all students, and the provision within general studies does not satisfy the demands of the agreed curriculum. There are theatre visits and a "Get to know you" bowling trip at the start of Year 12. However, out-of-school activities are predominantly linked to specific subject areas, and are not available to all students, so there is, for example, insufficient opportunity for students to travel abroad. Work experience is only available for students taking GNVQ courses and, although all students do undertake responsible community work for two periods each week, provision for social development is lower than in Years 7 to 11.

Provision for students' personal development

81. There are very good opportunities for students' spiritual development. There is a small chapel as well as a space set aside for Muslim worship, and religious texts feature amongst the inspirational displays on corridors and stairs. In assemblies, students are challenged to consider their own views and values, and this is also a key element in the support that is provided for students who are at risk of exclusion. Exploration of crucial human issues arises in personal, social and health education lessons, perceptively described by Year 10 as "more than just learning – a spiritual experience". They occur repeatedly within lessons – for example in history, where students are invited to empathise with slaves leaving home, in English where 'Macbeth' reflects on ambition and within religious studies where students learn about Ghandi and Martin Luther King. There are times of exhilaration for students involved in a digital imaging project, of emotion in an assembly on tabloid newspapers, and of fun for the Year 7 whilst promoting reading through a video film they produced. These are typical of a curriculum that accommodates diversity very well, which encourages creativity, and which enables a diverse group of eleven year-olds to mature into a society in which all sorts of people can flourish.

82. The provision for moral development is very good. There are clear expressions of standards and values on display all round the school. No student is left in doubt about what is acceptable within school, and the positive discipline code supports this with a consistency that everyone can understand. Students who have genuine difficulty managing their own behaviour are given practical guidance on how to greet someone in a friendly way, for example. They are also taught how to manage conflict, and how to distinguish facts from emotions. Lessons in personal, social and health education offer opportunities to discuss moral issues, and the activities of the school council, and of peer counsellors encourage students to express their views rationally. When students consider literature, anti-Semitism, advertising strategies, Christians at war, mobile telephones, or the protest movement,

subject teachers exploit the opportunities to develop a sense of right and wrong that runs through all human activity. Current events are subject to the same analysis in daily assemblies.

83. There are very good opportunities for social development, which have a very positive effect as students move up through the school. The school promotes racial and social equality in all its documentation and daily activity. It provides shared experiences in assemblies and community activities, and has representative structures such as the student council to give young people a voice. A very realistic mock election, enterprisingly devised by the site manager, enabled students to see how these structures work in a wider society, whilst careers education considers how women's work has changed. There are many opportunities for collaborative work – ensembles in music, for example, or peer support within ICT or media studies. The wide range of links with activities and organisations outside school has been developed to open students' eyes to the variety of ways of living that are available to them. The wall displays show how many different ways there are of making a significant contribution to society. This is very carefully managed, to the extent that students in the sixth form have fewer social opportunities, which are not related to the subjects that they are studying, so their experience is restricted.

84. Cultural development is very good. The school exploits the cultural opportunities, which are available within the capital very successfully. Links with galleries, concert venues and a record producer provide access to exciting curriculum projects. Wall displays reflect the achievements of artists and writers from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Music provides access to a multi-cultural repertoire and visiting artists and dancers broaden students' awareness. The emphasis is constantly on the rich variety of experiences that are available, and on making these accessible to every student. Within the school, regular celebrations of success very often include students reading their own work that, for example recounts prolonged visits to their countries of origin, others playing music of different derivations or discussing work undertaken during the term.

85. The specialist support for students with special educational needs makes a good contribution to their personal development, though this is not entirely planned. When students in Year 9 study 'Macbeth' they are encouraged to consider their own values alongside Lady Macbeth's. They empathise with the characters who face moral dilemmas in the play, and they learn about Shakespeare's contribution to British culture. More planned development occurs when students in the Student Learning Centre, and those supported by learning mentors are asked to examine their own behaviour. They experience dance, drama and media as part of the programme to develop their confidence and collaboration. Students use cookery to explore cultural differences. They discuss issues such as the deaths of Stephen Lawrence and Damilola Taylor to explore issues of morality and how our society functions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

86. The school's ethos is one of care and support for the individual to enable them to reach their potential in a secure and stimulating environment where everyone is valued.

87. The educational and personal support and guidance that students receive is satisfactory. The transition from primary school to secondary school is effective, although with so many schools from which the students come it is hard to co-ordinate finer details such as those relating to special educational needs effectively. Assessments carried out during transition reinforce this work well. Students in Year 7 settle quickly and feel well supported in their early days in school. Pastoral teams stay with their year group throughout students' time at school, providing continuity. Heads of year work hard to manage their year groups and tutor teams. The role of the form tutor is underdeveloped. New guidelines for

tutors were issued at the beginning of the academic year, but all tutorial staff have not adopted these, so there is an inconsistency in the way form tutors carry out their duties; this is an equal opportunities issue. For example, many tutors see their role in the morning as only marking the register and do not challenge late arriving students.

88. Students are supported in their studies through a range of extra study classes both after school and on Saturday mornings funded through special grants. Literacy classes, for example, have helped less confident readers in Year 11 to develop a depth of understanding of literary texts they would not otherwise have achieved. Students value the extra support they receive to help them expand their subject knowledge, though the number of students attending some of these sessions is low at times.

89. The monitoring of students' academic performance and personal development is good; it raises standards substantially, especially in Years 10 and 11. The school is in the process of introducing an academic monitoring programme through tutorial staff but this is not yet fully in place. Assessment data is currently being developed into a format to enable tutorial staff to check the achievement of their students. Students in Year 11 identified as underachieving are mentored very effectively by staff to help them prepare for formal examinations. Target-setting days are held twice a year. Tutorial staff receive information from subject departments and parents are encouraged to attend with their daughter to discuss targets for improvement with them.

90. Students with special educational needs are very well cared for. The specialist teachers, mentors and support assistants know the students and their needs very well. They monitor their achievement effectively and this contributes to their effective learning. Teachers in the different subjects take care to include students with special educational needs in all aspects of the lessons, but they do not have enough information about their short-term targets. Consequently they are not able to adjust the work to help students to achieve their individual priorities. Nor do they have a clear idea about what represents good achievement for each individual with special educational needs. This makes their marking and assessment less effective in helping learning.

91. Social inclusion funding is effectively used to support disaffected students. Learning mentors and the recently opened learning support centre play a crucial role. There is a limited alternative curriculum arranged for these students, such as attendance at a bakery school, for students in Years 10 and 11. However, these students miss lessons during their time there and arrangements to help them catch up on missed work are not formally in place.

92. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are poor. The school's efforts are hampered by a lack of a computerised attendance recording system. Currently a member of the senior management team adds up registers manually to produce the necessary statistics. This is an inefficient use of a senior manager's time. There are no procedures for monitoring the attendance of individuals on a regular basis. Though the school analyses attendance by ethnicity there are currently no specific strategies to improve attendance being developed from this information. Work to improve attendance, based upon the identification of particular weaknesses in Year 10 is more effective. A lunchtime group has been set up for Year 10 students by one of the attendance officers to look at the reasons why they do not attend school; the attendance of some students has improved because of this.

93. Through delegated funding the school has employed two attendance officers to replace the education welfare support previously provided by the local education authority. However, a lot of their time is spent dealing with late arriving students and helping with moving students between sites. Many tutors relinquish their responsibilities for managing attendance and punctuality to the attendance officers. This is an ineffective use of a much-needed resource to support the school in this area of its work.

94. There are no successful procedures in place to manage the punctuality of students. Many students do not arrive at school in time for registration in the mornings. Similarly most lessons start late owing to the late arrivals. On occasions twenty minutes can be lost from lessons, mainly, but not always owing to students moving between the two sites, although such movement is kept to a minimum. Over the course of the day this adds up to a considerable loss of teaching time. Not all teachers are vigilant in dealing with late arrivals who often straggle into lessons in twos and threes. The timetable does not allow time between lessons for travelling between the two sites.

95. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. Students know and understand the standard of what constitutes acceptable behaviour. Positive behaviour is rewarded and parents are invited to attend the termly presentation to acknowledge these students. The issue of bullying is effectively addressed through the excellent personal, social and health education programmes. Some students are trained to act as anti-bullying counsellors. Students report that bullying is not an issue in this school. Any incidents are effectively dealt with when brought to the attention of staff.

96. There are a number of students with challenging behaviour. If lessons are disrupted students are removed to the referral room in Years 7 to 9 where they are confronted with their poor behaviour. They discuss it with a learning mentor. Other students benefit from working in the learning support centre following a behaviour modification course. A range of strategies is employed to prevent a reoccurrence of the poor behaviour such as counselling and group work. The high quality professional expertise of the staff running these two units has significantly reduced the risk of these students being excluded.

97. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring students' welfare are satisfactory, but unsupervised movement between the two sites is a weakness.

98. The arrangements for child protection are good. The nominated person is fully trained and aware of their responsibilities. Appropriate procedures are in place for children in the care of the local authority.

99. The provision to manage health and safety is satisfactory. Regular safety audits of the premises are undertaken. The governing body is appropriately involved in the management of health and safety. A potential safety hazard to students, however, is the fast moving traffic on the road that students have to cross outside of the upper school when moving between the two sites. There are no traffic calming measures in place to slow down this fast moving traffic.

100. The arrangements for monitoring students' achievement are good. Marking does not generally reflect National Curriculum standards in Years 7 to 9, but these are recorded, as a result of formal assessment of each subject, in end of year tests. For students in Years 10 and 11, work is marked and assessed informing them of their standard relative to GCSE criteria. Assessment procedures for monitoring standards and achievement are good in English, mathematics, ICT, geography and modern languages but are unsatisfactory in history and physical education.

101. Very good work is taking place to establish whole school procedures to improve the quality of assessment and monitoring. This has begun in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 9. Frequent tests, closely related to National Curriculum standards have been introduced and the results used to track individual student's achievement as well as that of whole year groups. National test results of 11 year-olds, together with the school's assessments will be used to determine the most suitable assessments for each student. As a result of this initial work, the school already expects that significantly more students will achieve higher national test results in mathematics this year. It is planned to change the methods of assessment in other subjects when the impact of the new procedures on standards has been evaluated.

102. A school database has recently been established for all students and projected grades and targets, based on the national test results for 14 year-olds at the end of Year 9, are now provided to teachers of all GCSE subjects. In Years 10 and 11 particularly, teachers effectively modify their teaching after they have assessed students' work in order to promote better learning. Students are aware of their GCSE targets and generally know what they need to do to be successful. The monitoring and support of academic achievement is generally good but relies heavily on individual subject teachers. Standards rise, as a result.

Sixth form

Assessment

103. Within the curriculum provided, procedures for assessing students' standards and achievement are good, as is the diagnosis and provision for individual learning needs for students of all levels of attainment. The use of assessment to inform curricular planning is good within subjects and satisfactory in the school as a whole. However, the sixth-form curriculum does not yet fully meet the learning needs of the student body. Nonetheless, improvements by the extension of GNVQ courses since the previous inspection and the planning to create a niche market around the school's specialist status are good. The school is also taking relevant steps to improve its entry policy to A-level mathematics and science so as to avoid inappropriate course selection by prospective students. Curricular planning from the results of assessment is good in English to accommodate the needs, for example, of students with English as an additional language. In music, the curriculum is modified in light of students' responses and there are substantial improvements in the provision of ICT to help learning. The assessment of work is thorough, students are insistent that they know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve because marking and feedbacks are frequent and helpful.

Advice, support and guidance

104. Students receive good personal support and guidance. The head of sixth form and tutors know students well. Students feel well supported and feel free to discuss personal and academic matters with tutors of head of sixth form.

105. Attendance is unsatisfactory. The poor monitoring of attendance is not sufficiently rigorous, despite the relatively small number of students in the sixth form. Students are only required to attend for lessons and sign in and out of school. Many lessons during the inspection had numerous absences, with teachers occasionally ringing up homes to try to chase up individuals whose absence, for example in drama was undermining the ability of others in the class to work coherently.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

106. The parents' views of the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves are very good. The school is oversubscribed for entry in Year 7 and there are waiting lists for all other years. Parents strongly value the school's Christian ethos. Many families have been associated with the school for a number of years. Very few parents attended the meeting prior to the inspection and a low proportion of those eligible completed the questionnaire on parents' views. The meeting reinforced the parents' appreciation of the work of the school, but also gave insights into the problems and impediments that numerous families have in supporting their child's education to the degree they would wish.

107. The school's links with its parents are good. Heads of year ensure that on-going contact is established with parents of students who are causing concern and they are invited into school to discuss difficulties. The quality of information provided for parents is good. The prospectus that parents receive is of a very high quality. Information about the achievement of their child is satisfactory. The quality of annual reports is generally satisfactory and much appreciated by parents. Most departments ensure that parents are clear about what their child has studied, how they are achieving and what they need to do to improve their work, especially in Years 9 to 11. Parents are invited to attend the two target-setting days with their daughters each year. This gives them the opportunity to discuss with the form tutor any concerns they may have.

108. The contribution of parents to children's learning is satisfactory. Most collaborate willingly with the school to resolve difficulties when they occur. Many parents actively support the school in many ways. They support school events and are keen to attend the tea parties and presentation evenings throughout the year. Most parents ensure that both homework and coursework are completed to meet deadlines. Too many parents, however, do not ensure that homework and coursework are completed or that their child attends school regularly and punctually. As a result of this, some students are not entered for all their intended GCSE examinations and their overall achievement, attainment and ultimate success in formal examinations is affected adversely.

109. The team of staff supporting students with special educational needs maintains satisfactory links with parents. Not all parents acknowledge when their children have special needs, and some are content to let the school make the decisions. However, the special needs co-ordinator takes care to inform them about the needs that have been identified, and the support that is available. Wherever possible, decisions are directly shared with parents, either at a target-setting meeting, by telephone, or face to face at formal review meetings. In cases where the only contact is by letter, the formality of the letters may discourage parents from getting involved. Those staff who support students in danger of exclusion have close and regular links with the parents who realise how crucial this support is the students' future prospects.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

110. The exceptionally broad education that greatly raises nearly all the students' self-esteem by giving clear ideas of what it is possible for them to achieve is the direct result of the dynamic, very good leadership of an exceptionally hard-working, far-seeing headteacher. Her deputies and, significantly improved since the previous inspection, recently completed senior leadership team, support her ably. The whole staff works very well with the headteacher and also supports her strongly. The outstanding contributions of site managers and the high quality work of support staff are excellent examples of such commitment. Parents also applaud the strength of leadership in the school. The headteacher's very high quality leadership is the main spur to the students' very good spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development, an important part of which is the great care for equality of opportunity found in the school. Although there are staffing problems that have a debilitating effect upon the quality of education the school is able to provide, these are fewer than those found in many other urban schools. The school has some recruitment problems. Not all teachers can meet the demands the students make upon them and there are important vacancies in the middle management.

111. Leadership gives the school a very clear educational direction that embodies fully the Christian principles of its denominational foundation. The school promotes and realises equality of opportunity, serving very well, as a strict priority, its own immediate socially seriously-deprived and challenging area. The school's outstanding contribution to its community is thoroughly appreciated by students and parents.

112. As a result of leadership's successes in raising the school's profile locally and more widely, it has managed to be more successful than many in winning, and using well, extra resources to create the distinctive education the students enjoy. Leadership makes sure such resources are channelled where they may best serve the students as they prepare for their futures. The emphases on media and the performing arts blend particularly well with the excellent way the school develops students' personal, social and health education. Decisions to provide substantial extra help for those preparing for their GCSE examinations pay dividends. The school now outstrips its own and the local education authority targets for GCSE higher grades and reaches the national average for the proportions of students obtaining 5 or more GCSEs of any grade and exceeds that average for those obtaining a recognised grade. It is in the top five per cent of similar schools.

113. The students' growing maturity, their pride in their school, interest in and celebration of their own and others' efforts are an important part of the school's very purposeful atmosphere. Whilst there is scope for substantial further development in making the benefits permeate the whole curriculum, the steps taken to transform provision through its hard-won specialist media and performing arts status have been very effective. The strong partnership with external bodies, from the local education authority to commercial and arts-based organisations is very effective in improving the curriculum. The motto, 'success for all' and the related celebrations, which are the kernel of leadership's persuasion, work very well. The school is, for very many students, a fertile haven in which most do well, many very well.

114. The school has a wide commitment to do better and has the capacity to do so. It is aware of its weaknesses and is taking relevant steps to overcome most of them. The appointment, for example, of a senior leader to share his detailed analysis of data, such as identifying different ethnic groups' performances and patterns of prolonged, unjustified absence, is complemented by the allocation of appropriate resources to try to overcome them. An example is the deployment of the same teacher to improve the students' standards in mathematics: early indicators suggest success, particularly in Year 9. The management of attendance and punctuality is a weakness.

115. Delegation is satisfactory. All employees work to clear, reasonable job descriptions. Procedures for follow up and evaluation through a defined management structure that allies each senior leader to other management groups has the potential to be a real strength. The monitoring of the work of staff new to the school, newly-qualified teachers and those in initial training, except in the case of mathematics, is good. The school provides a good base for trainee teachers, especially of English, personal, social and health education, music and media studies. However, the incidence of unsatisfactory teaching is too great, particularly in Year 7, for the school to view current evaluation practice with equanimity. The school is good at tracking and setting targets, as well as analysing data. Weaknesses in the ways evaluations are carried out result from a lack of rigour beyond the very good performance

management system. Checks, other than those regularly carried out by the headteacher, to make sure that students' books are marked well enough and to verify the quality of teaching generally are neither frequent nor strict enough among middle managers. Agreed teaching techniques are well interpreted by nearly all, but some, often the temporary teachers, do not manage to satisfy the students' very demanding learning needs.

116. Provision for middle managers to participate in working groups to disseminate policy and to explore improvements is good. Subject and pastoral leaders, as well as those with responsibilities as second in a department have regular, minuted sessions, the outcomes of which form part of senior leadership agendas; this aspect of middle management is good. There is, however, not a clear-enough cut mechanism for evaluation to occur, so practice is uneven, although improving. The way subject and pastoral leaders carry out evaluations of the effectiveness of the work in their particular areas is patchy and undermined by vacancies, for example in history, design and technology and art and design: practice overall is unsatisfactory.

117. The leadership and management of the team that provides learning support are good. The special educational needs co-ordinator collaborates well with pastoral staff and other agencies. She gives good guidance to her specialist team, and demonstrates both commitment and expertise. The range of special educational needs in the school is very great, and this generates enormous amounts of paper work that are not effectively managed, though the team does ensure that pupils' needs are effectively met. The school does not yet have an effective strategy for involving subject teachers in supporting students to achieve their individual targets. Nor can teachers contribute consistently to evaluating the success of support strategies. Links with the very many primary schools from which the students come are not co-ordinated well enough to ensure effective continuity of support.

118. A comprehensive institutional development plan characterises the school's commitment to improvement. Wide consultation and governor involvement are integral parts of a compilation process that leads the plan to influence curriculum planning very effectively. Improvements to provision in Years 10 and 11 stem from the plan, which has clear time scales for setting things up. Regular interim and final reviews gauge impact well. The plan makes the school cohere; it is the basis of what is good professional development, covers all aspects of provision and reflects closely the school's vision and ambition.

119. Governors' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is very good. They play a good, dynamic part in shaping the school's direction, being for example, closely involved in a re-negotiation of its status to make sure it retains its individual cachet as a Church School. Improvements since the previous inspection indicate the governors' commitment to provide a better service to students. They have, for instance, overseen improved ICT facilities and have underwritten the moves to specialist status. The governors' support of special educational needs is both strong and effective. Minutes indicate a thorough debate on all matters affecting the school's development and critical debate on financial and policy issues. The governors do not, however, yet provide religious education for all students in the sixth form and aspects of the design and technology curriculum do not guarantee equality of opportunity.

120. The number, qualifications and experience of teachers satisfactorily match the demands of the curriculum. The school's strategies for appraisal and performance management are very good. Professional development training of staff is focused on the needs identified in the school improvement plan. However, changes in teaching staff and recruitment difficulties have undermined standards in mathematics, science, history, design and technology and physical education. The situation has become significantly worse since the previous inspection.

121. Learning resources are at least satisfactory in all subjects. Resources in media studies are exceptional, both in quality and quantity. They are good in the English, mathematics, science, music, history, design and technology, drama and special educational needs throughout the school. Resources are also good in ICT in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form, resources are at least as good as in the main school, and in history, ICT and design technology they are better.

122. Whilst the accommodation is satisfactory in amount, unresolved management difficulties attached to the school's highly inconvenient split site, identified at the previous inspection, remain. Although compensated financially by the local education authority, the school has to contend with a substantial waste, duplication or inaccessibility of resources. There are communication difficulties, split departments (a significant challenge in the case of art and design) and unsatisfactory achievement for students in Years 7 to 9. Slow student movement by students between the sites is a major reason for lateness being a key issue in this report.

123. In the previous report, physical education and design and technology were highlighted as areas for improvement. Since then, the gymnasium has been resurfaced and significant improvements have been made to design and technology. The accommodation for ICT is unsatisfactory, since there are no briefing areas to which students can be withdrawn to consolidate their learning. In contrast, the new multi-media studio, with the state-of-the-art-recording studio and suite, is a significant enhancement to teaching and learning, with very good opportunities for practical work. The school chapel, blessed by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the school's centenary celebrations in 1998, occupies a prominent position in the reception area and is used for many relevant community-related purposes.

124. Both very secure sites are maintained to a very high standard and are a tribute to the efficiency and excellent work and dedication of the senior site manager and his staff.

125. Day-to-day financial management is satisfactory. Value for money and best value are sought for purchases and services. The school is in receipt of high levels of specific funds such as Excellence in Cities. This funding has been used to enrich and broaden students' experience through visits and specialist workshops, particularly in the arts and media. However, there is room across all subjects to improve support for future learning, for example to develop schemes of work to support the learning of gifted and talented students. The lack of investment in a computerised attendance monitoring system has impeded the ability of the school to effectively monitor students and the achievement of some has been adversely affected. Considering the very good quality of the curriculum, the very good leadership the school enjoys and the rapid rise in standards registered in Years 10 and 11, the school is currently giving good value for money.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

126. The leadership of the sixth form is good. The headteacher provides clear direction for the school and there is a clear commitment to the development of the sixth form. The school has provided considerable financial support in order to ensure the quality of the provision is good. The head of sixth form supports the pastoral needs of the students very well, and works with a deputy head to monitor the academic achievement of the students.

127. The school works fairly well with its partner school and the task of balancing the demands of the sixth form from two schools is well handled. The academic needs of the students are foremost in the planning of the curriculum and they are consulted over the choice of subjects offered. The sixth form management supports the aims of the school, and the school's commitment to the success of the centre is clear in their response to situations that may arise that require additional financial help.

128. The sixth form council provides a very good forum for students to raise issues and work with the management in the development of the sixth form.

Resources

129. Resources for sixth form students are good. Students benefit directly and indirectly from the excellent media resources that help raise standards. Whilst library provision is satisfactory, the students do not use it thoroughly enough for independent reading, research or criticism; this is because of recurrent literacy problems from the start of Year 7 when many students cannot read well enough to do their own research. Thereafter, the effective hurry to get them through GCSEs does not place great emphasis upon independent research. Good habits of independent learning are, consequently, not universally established, although the emphasis on independent learning in subjects such as ICT is helping to improve this important aspect of learning. Computers are, nonetheless, used effectively to research information on the Internet and students' use of ICT in science is good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

130. The following areas of concern should form the basis of the governors' post-inspection action plan for further improvement.

- (1) Raise standards in Years 7 to 9 in mathematics and science by creating work that challenges and involves the students more and by monitoring more closely the ways books are corrected and noting the quality of the written work expected of and completed by the students.
(Paragraphs: 3, 5, 7, 37, 52, 53, 147, 161, 163, 170)
- (2) Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 by providing greater critical support to teachers, especially to temporary members of the staff. Analyse regularly the content of lessons to make sure that the students have suitable opportunities to be closely involved through carrying out enquiries themselves and being active partners in what is to be learned. Expand the tracking measures that are effective in raising standards in Years 10 to 13 to the rest of the school.
(Paragraphs: 50, 52, 53, 87, 89, 115)
- (3) Increase the rigour by which middle managers, especially, evaluate performance, both in teaching and learning in the classroom and by regular, even stricter scrutiny of what the students produce, especially in Years 7 to 9.
(Paragraphs: 89, 115, 116, 166, 184, 251)
- (4) Continue to work on attendance and punctuality problems by considering how to get students to cross from one site to the other in a way that does not erode lesson time and by a more effective way of taking the register and monitoring absences at any time of the day.
(Paragraphs: 44, 45, 94, 114, 164)

- (5) Increase the contributions of subject teachers to supporting and evaluating the achievement of individual targets of students with special educational needs.
(Paragraph: 117)

Sixth form

- (1) Broaden further the sixth form curriculum and make sure that courses are better tailored to the students' capabilities as they set out on them.
(Paragraph: 79)
- (2) Create situations in which the students may either enjoy through the offices of others, or their own, more recreational out-of-school activities.
(Paragraph: 80)
- (3) Comply with the requirement to provide religious education for all students in the sixth form.
(Paragraph: 80)

PROVISION FOR AND STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

131. Eighty-six per cent of the students are from ethnic minority backgrounds, mainly Black African and Caribbean. A total of 369 students, 32 per cent of the roll, have English as an additional language. There are 37 home languages represented in the school. The main first languages are Yoruba, Portuguese, Twi and Krio. There are currently 11 asylum seekers and some turbulence, as most of them leave the school before the end of their first year. Twenty-two students for whom English is an additional language have extra support. The rest of the 369 students with English as an additional language are mostly at similar levels of English as their monolingual peers, some are more advanced.

132. The school is at early stages of checking the achievement of ethnic minority students and students with English as an additional language. Records show that the 2001 results of the students for whom English is an additional language were below average in both the national tests of 14-year-olds and the GCSE examinations. Black African ethnic minority students, constituting 25 per cent of the group of students for whom English is an additional language, did particularly well at GCSE in relation to other groups. In relation to the students' starting points at the beginning of Year 7, they achieve well overall. The achievement of new arrivals to the school in Year 9 and Years 10 and 11 is very good. For example, two students who started school understanding only simple conversational English, one in Year 9 and one in Year 10, each obtained 2 Cs and a B in GCSE examinations in core subjects at the end of Year 11 in 2001. All but one of the 9 students arriving in Year 9, 10 or 11 achieved 5+ A*-G passes at GCSE, or Certificates of Achievement at the end of Year 11.

133. Teaching is good overall in all years. Specialist teaching is good from Year 7 to Year 11. Teachers are aware of students' backgrounds. Teachers plan work that meets the students' needs well, encourage independence in learning, link listening, speaking, reading and writing in tasks, give students good models of oral and written language, including 'choice of response' questions, which allow students to hear a correct answer before they choose. There are examples of good partnerships between specialist and mainstream teachers, particularly in design and technology, which benefit students. Specialist teachers provide extra helpful tutorial support and materials to prepare students for GCSE examinations.

134. There is no specialist English as an additional language teaching in Years 12 and 13, but subject teachers provide good support for the technical aspects of writing in English through the re-drafting process.

135. Where teaching is strong in mainstream classes from Year 7 to Year 11 it is because teachers analyse the language required, engage students by working closely with them, have high expectations and build well on what students have done before. The teaching is supportive of developing language across the curriculum for all students. In the classes with strong teaching, students know what they are aiming at and teachers know how to work with support staff to make the best of learning opportunities.

136. Where teaching is weaker in mainstream classes, as is the case from Year 7 to Year 9, the teaching does not build on what the students know and therefore challenge them. The teaching does not have a clear structure for students to follow and interesting examples to engage them.

137. At all ages, students, including those with only simple conversational English, participate confidently in lessons using newly acquired language. Many ask good questions of their subject teachers. Many are willing to volunteer as interpreters for other students.

138. Curriculum opportunities are good. Good collaboration ensures equal access to the National Curriculum and the head of department deploys staff appropriately in English, mathematics and science plus design and technology, the current partnership focus. The department strives successfully to prepare all students for GCSE examinations, although some coursework may be missing initially for students who arrive in the school after the beginning of Year 10. This is a strength of the school as it demonstrates a commitment to equality of opportunity. Other accreditation, such as the Certificate of Achievement, matches the needs of those who, despite best efforts, cannot be entered.

139. Aspects of subject provision where racism is tackled, in history, media studies and religious studies, contribute to the security students for whom English is an additional language feel in the school. There is good social interaction in groupwork in classes and more experienced users of English help less experienced speakers. Staff are aware of the students' cultural backgrounds and bring out the best in them. For instance, students are aware of their own development as bilinguals and would welcome up-to-date materials, for example magazines in French, in the Year 7 to 9 library. Trips to London, for example to choose books, provide students with opportunities to exercise choice as well as develop confidence and independence. The department has constructive links with the LEA central service, for example in working with interpreters and translators for induction of newly arrived students.

140. Care is good for students across the age range. Staff have the students' interests at heart. There is continuity of support in particular subjects, despite long-term sickness in the specialist team. There are helpful oral and written comments to help students improve and very helpful suggestions of strategies, linked to an individual's specific needs for subject teachers. There is good advocacy in lessons where students need more time to copy material that is about to be rubbed off the board and, unlike their peers, the opportunity to use their calculators.

141. Students' parents are supported well too. Induction meetings have been held for Portuguese speaking and West African parents. Translations of introductions to the education system are available in a range of appropriate languages.

142. The English as an additional language department is well led and managed. The staff have a clear vision of what is needed to raise students' achievement. The vision is underpinned by employment of experienced staff and departmental documentation, including a very good action plan with forward thinking targets.

143. Good practice has not spread to all teachers because of funding and site constraints. This represents a missed opportunity as specialist skills of teachers of English as an additional language contribute a great deal to the adoption of active, collaborative teaching matched to the language development needs of all students. As a result achievement, particularly in Years 7 to 9, suffers. This missed opportunity is because English as an additional language support is not targeted at the high profile projects in the school but rightly picks up on core and foundation subjects plus work in one particular department at a time. English as an additional language support provides a very solid unsung backstop for other work in the school focused on arts and media. Deployment effectively provides a range of different specialist options, including induction classes, whilst minimising disruption to learning in the mainstream.

144. Accommodation is satisfactory. Resources match needs in the different types of specialist classes and have been developed for partnership and other mainstream classes. A particular strength is the use of good quality photographs of students, which avoids stereotyped views of the groups in the school. The head of department has worked with the librarian in the upper school site library to include Portuguese text books and books on Black History. The budget is well managed and the department provides good value for the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant.

145. The previous report evaluated the quality of teaching for students for whom English is an additional language as effective and the quality of support good but too little. Now the quality of teaching has improved and is good and good support is maintained.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	134
	Sixth form	31
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		87

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	5	23	50	38	13	3	0
Percentage	4	17	32	28	7	2	0
Sixth form							
Number	4	10	14	3	0	0	0
Percentage	13	32	45	9	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	769	69
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	297	17

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	8	3
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	299	5

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	392

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	34
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	39

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.1
National comparative data	8.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001		155	155

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	74	48	43
	Total	74	48	43
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	48 (53)	31 (30)	28 (21)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	7 (14)	11 (11)	10 (5)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	81	68	59
	Total	81	68	59
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	52 (46)	44 (29)	38 (34)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (18)	13 (7)	9 (15)
	National	31 (31)]	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2001	0	144	144

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys			
	Girls	57	131	140
	Total	57	131	140
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	40 (27)	91 (85)	97 (96)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	37.2 (39.0)
	National	39.0 (N/A)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / as / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates		21	21
	Average point score per candidate		7.1 (8)	7.1 (8)
National	Average point score per candidate		17.9 (18.6)	17.4 (18.2)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / A/S examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates		21	21		0	0
	Average point score per candidate		7.1	7.1		0	0
National	Average point score per candidate						

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

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	22
Black – African heritage	7
Black – other	3
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	6
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	1
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	1
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 students excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	56.3
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	702.25

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	24.2
Key Stage 4	22.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	3 341 822
Total expenditure	3 294 203
Expenditure per pupil	3 898
Balance brought forward from previous year	48
Balance carried forward to next year	51 666

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	21

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)
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0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	838
Number of questionnaires returned	93

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	68	27	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	61	33	4	2	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	33	4	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	46	41	9	3	1
The teaching is good.	51	38	5	2	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	40	3	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	32	2	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	21	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	40	7	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	50	35	2	2	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	32	8	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	26	13	4	10

Other issues raised by parents

No parent made any extra comment about the school. The above figures, although representing a small proportion of eligible respondents, show particularly strong support for what the school does.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good.
- Good teaching of basic literacy skills in Years 7 to 9 enables students to make good progress in developing their language skills.
- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables students to achieve well and has led to improved GCSE results.
- Teachers manage lessons well and this produces good relationships with students who have a positive attitude to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching and class management in Years 7 to 9 do not meet the needs of all students in mixed-attainment classes.
- Monitoring of teaching quality and the sharing of good practice are not rigorous enough to promote higher standards in students' written work in Years 7 to 9.

146. Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards in English, which are well below average. They achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment but by the end of Year 9 their attainment in English is below the national average for that age. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and standards at the end of Year 11, while still below the national average for all schools, have improved and are close to those achieved in similar schools.

147. In the 2001 end of Year 9 tests, 48 per cent of students achieved level 5 or better. This is better than attainment in the other core subjects of mathematics and science, but well below the national average for English.

148. Results in English at GCSE have improved since the previous inspection. In the 2001 GCSE examinations three-fifths of students achieved higher grades, A*-C, in English language and well over half of all students achieved the higher grades A*-C in English literature. In 2001 they were significantly better than in previous years and were better in English than in the other core subjects of science and mathematics. Considering the proportion of students entering the school with special educational needs or with English as an additional language, GCSE results are the outcome of good teaching and learning.

149. In work seen during the inspection, standards of attainment in all years were below the national average. In Years 7 to 9 students make good progress in speaking and listening. Students listen attentively and answer questions with well-formulated answers. Oral work in most lessons observed consisted of questioning, led by the teacher, where the students' readiness to answer usually ensured a brisk pace. However, in a significant minority of lessons students were not all engaged in the general discussion and their attentiveness and achievement declined. The best lessons offered opportunities for students to investigate issues together in discussion, listening to and building on one another's contributions. Year 8 students were able to discuss and negotiate ways to begin a project on Shakespeare. Year 9 students were able to discuss with maturity the strengths and

weaknesses of their answers to a practice examination and they learned from the experience.

150. In Years 10 and 11, standards of speaking and listening are good. Students recognise and use Standard English in formal discussion and can use technical terms accurately in the discussion of literature, drama or the media, for example how retailers exploit the “pester power” of children who accompany their parents shopping. Teachers provide good examples of spoken English and encourage students to express themselves well, with reference to evidence to support answers.

151. Reading skills are below average in Years 7 to 9. Year 7 students are taught library skills, but too few make enough use of the libraries either in lessons or in their own time. The scrutiny of students’ work in English revealed that they read effectively from electronic sources and can use the Internet with discrimination. From Year 7 onwards students can summarise their reading and can recall characters and situations with an ability to offer sensible interpretations and opinions. Teachers offer very good examples of reading, but do not provide enough opportunities for students to read aloud in lessons. Year 8 students read parts of “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” in character, but some struggled to achieve fluency. Other students heard reading did so competently with good regard to sense, character and intonation.

152. Reading standards are average in Years 10 and 11. Some students read very well. Higher-attainers confidently identify bias and can evaluate figurative language. For example, in a reading club, some high attaining Year 11 students read and discussed “Pride and Prejudice” with very high levels of interpretation and understanding. Year 11 students studying Maya Angelou read sections of the poem well to introduce their presentations. Students read effectively from GCSE texts and can compare and contrast different texts, for example in the study of literature from other cultures.

153. There is an effective emphasis in Year 7 on the development of writing skills, needed because students’ writing is not as good as their speaking and listening skills and develops more slowly. High-attaining students write well and some very good quality work was seen, particularly in Year 9 and at GCSE, but middle and low attainers are insecure in their sentence control and unsure in their expression and spellings. Written work seen during the inspection showed that students of all ages write fluently on a range of tasks including literature, media studies and creative writing. Significant numbers of students in all years use ICT to produce well-organised and attractive writing. Writing skills to do with planning, audience and style are taught well in Years 7 and 8. All students, including those of low prior attainment are required to produce extended pieces of writing. Low expectations and low standards of presentation and accuracy were, however, evident in the written work of students in Years 7 and 8. In Year 9 students were observed learning very useful writing skills for the National Curriculum tests and were able to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in their own written answers and those of others. Some high-attaining students in Year 9 produce sophisticated work that is accurately written and beautifully presented. In Years 10 and 11, most students take great care to make written assignments as accurate as possible. Good teaching helps them draft and improve their written work in the preparation stages.

154. Students with special educational needs achieve well in the school. In Years 7 to 9 there is a sustained and effective emphasis on the teaching of basic literacy skills, using a variety of methods including many derived from the National Literacy Strategy. Teachers of English know the individual needs of their students well, but this does not lead to sufficient adaptation of teaching methods or of the learning experiences offered in classes containing students with a wide range of learning needs. Few examples were seen in lessons of students at such an early stage of learning English that their educational achievement was

being impeded. Where this was the case a student was receiving good support. In another example a student, engaged on an appropriately simplified task, was help by a fellow student who translated instructions from time to time.

155. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. The strength of the teaching is in the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject, the good relationships that they achieve with students and the teaching of basic skills especially literacy. What the lesson is about is clearly explained; achievement during the lesson is evaluated and praised at the end and homework is used effectively to develop or consolidate the work covered. Teachers manage students skilfully and sensitively so that a positive atmosphere encourages them to explore ideas and to venture opinions. Students learn well by listening to one another respectfully, so avoiding confrontation. Teachers are quick to praise good work and students respond well. Teachers' knowledge of students' satisfactory achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good, but is not always used effectively in the planning of lessons. A weakness of teaching is an expectation that the needs of students with a wide range of prior attainment can be met by one discussion or one activity planned for the whole class. The best teaching gave students more opportunities to work in groups on a range of related tasks suited their learning needs and pace of working: this produced good learning. Some very good marking was seen in Years 7 to 9, which combined accurate personal recognition of the student's effort and achievement with clear indication of how a particular weakness could be tackled. However, marking is not consistent across the department. All students' books contain a summary of the department's marking policy and an explanation of what is expected. However, not all English teachers follow the policy and some students do not receive a clear indication of the quality of their learning. Teachers note spelling mistakes and inappropriate expressions, but the scrutiny of work revealed no evidence of corrections. Books surveyed during the inspection revealed that some teachers' low expectations result in slipshod and poorly presented work that indicated unsatisfactory learning. Folders of finished work showed very high levels of care and accuracy.

156. The quality of teaching is good in Years 10 and 11 and is reflected in the good results that students achieve at GCSE. Teachers' good subject knowledge and effective planning have led to a very good coverage of the GCSE syllabuses so that students are thoroughly prepared in terms of their knowledge, skills of writing and understanding of how to do well. Teachers mark GCSE work thoroughly and accurately, providing students with good feedback on how to improve so that they achieve well during Years 10 and 11. Very good coursework assignments are evidence of good teaching and learning sustained over several months. Some very good revision lessons were observed during the week of the inspection and it is a waste that in some cases the absence rate meant that a high proportion of students were not benefiting as they should. Teachers make admirable efforts through reading clubs and revision clubs to offer students extra and good teaching to prepare them for examinations, but again many students do not take advantage of the opportunity. A strength of the teaching at all ages, but especially in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form is the raising of self-esteem and the confidence in their own abilities that the media and arts philosophy of the school has given the students. A few examples of the use of media techniques were observed during the inspection. There was good evidence of their use in the students' work, for example video recording of students' own scenes based on "Of Mice and Men" and a news item base on "Romeo and Juliet", reporting a fight in a market place.

157. The department is well led and has made good progress since the previous inspection. The head of English has played an important role in the school's successful development as an arts and media college. The subject has also responded well to new ideas and there is a good, shared commitment to further improvement. Good departmental planning supports very closely the educational aims of the school in celebrating achievement and raising the confidence, self-esteem and attainment of students. Day-to-day management

is effective. The curriculum is planned in well thought out programmes of study. English makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, through its emphasis on personal, social and communications skills. A good range of extra learning activities, for example theatre visits, revision clubs, a reading club and recently a visiting author and journalist is effective in raising standards. When part of a performance management scheme, the monitoring of teaching is good and good support is offered to teachers when necessary. However, evaluation of the quality of teaching of mixed-attainment classes in Years 7 to 9 is not rigorous enough to raise standards and to match the improvements achieved in Years 10 and 11. The capacity for further improvement in the subject is good

Drama

158. Provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

159. Drama is taught in Years 7 to 9 and is a popular choice at GCSE. Standards achieved in Years 7 to 9 are average. Standards achieved at the end of Year 11 are above average, with approximately three-quarters of students entered obtaining the higher grades of A*-C in the period 1999-2001. The subject is offered in the sixth form. The standard achieved in the one Year 12 lesson observed was below average. The drama curriculum is good, enriched by a drama club and the performance of some examination pieces. Drama makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students through the range of issues confronted and the need to work together to develop performance skills that are then evaluated. Teaching in the lessons seen was satisfactory, although learning in a Year 9 lesson was reduced because the students arrived late and were unwilling to settle to the tasks set them. The amount of curriculum time allocated to drama in Years 7 to 9 has satisfactory. This and the media and arts ethos of the school together offer good opportunities for further improvement in the teaching of the subject.

Literacy across the curriculum

160. Because of the great importance of this aspect of the students' education, evaluation has also been woven into the standards section of Part B of this report.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Students achieve particularly well in Years 10 and 11.
- Very good teaching in Year 11 ensures a GCSE award in mathematics for nearly all students.
- A range of after school lessons and tuition on Saturdays improves the confidence of participating students and helps raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in national tests for 14-year-olds are not high enough.
- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is not good enough for the students to achieve satisfactorily.
- Work is not marked constructively enough to help students learn from their mistakes.

161. Standards when students join the school are below average and their Year 9 national test results are very low – around two years behind other girls nationally. The proportion of Year 9 students attaining higher levels is well below national expectations. It has remained static since the previous inspection. Very substantial turbulence in staffing has been at the

root of the problems: these have been partially resolved, but only recently. Standards observed in lessons for students in Years 7 to 9 and of work in their books are overall well below average. This is because Year 7 students repeat primary school work without developing their skills; presentation of work is variable and the students' diagrams to illustrate spatial concepts, such as symmetry and for presenting data are particularly poor. Much of the work in Years 7 and 8 is unnecessarily abstract and repetitive; students repeatedly make similar mistakes without correction. On the other hand, higher-attaining students in Year 9 have rigorously completed more demanding topics such as bearings, applications of Pythagoras' theorem, factorisation of algebraic expressions and manipulation of indices to a very high standard.

162. In the most recent GCSE examinations, a third of the students achieved a grade C or better. Although this is below the national figure of 46 per cent for girls, it represents very good achievement for students in Years 10 and 11. Since the previous inspection, this proportion has improved significantly. The school has a policy of entering the highest-attaining students for their GCSE examination a year early. The expectation that they might then achieve the highest grades in Year 11 has resulted in some success. The proportion of students overall who obtain a GCSE mathematics certificate is the same as the one found nationally. Work observed in lessons and in students' books indicates that current standards are similar to those of recent years. Careful monitoring of students' work against national expectations helps the rapid achievement, which contrasts with that in Years 7 to 9.

163. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory overall, because of the significant number of girls who fail to achieve well enough. The unsatisfactory teaching fails to take into account what students can do and what they understand; this results in disinterest. A class of the lowest attainers, including those with special educational needs, was very confused by relatively complex algebra. Although the drawing of a bar chart was a repetition of primary school work for most of a Year 7 class, the students did it badly in response to uninspiring teaching. Lessons in which there is good teaching have a clear introduction and engage students' interest through stimulating oral work, developing a theme so that students' understanding increases and is then reinforced by homework. This was observed when Year 9 students were being taught how to identify the information, which is necessary to tackle a mathematical problem, before solving the problem itself. In contrast, another Year 9 class working with data were confused about what they were expected to do, resulting in poor behaviour and achievement. Students receiving help from another teacher, because English is an additional language for them, achieved better than the rest of the class.

164. Teaching is good overall in Years 10 and 11, with many very good and excellent aspects for most Year 11 students, including those with special educational needs. A strength of the best lessons is the generation of excellent dialogue between the students and the teacher. Often the students ask perceptive questions, responses to which teachers skilfully weave into their development of the topic. This technique was observed effectively ensuring that students understood factorisation of quadratic expressions. On another occasion, together with excellent planning, an eager response was maintained as students, preparing for GCSE examinations visibly enjoyed participating in the revision of the properties of shapes. They reflected the teacher's enthusiasm and demonstrated mastery of a wide mathematical vocabulary. In a lesson solving equations by trial and improvement the teacher managed a perfect blend of class teaching and individual support. The sets of examples used for lessons and for homework are very suitably chosen to support standards required for examinations. However, unsatisfactory attendance and poor punctuality reduce teaching's effectiveness in promoting the learning required for high standards overall in examinations; they were significant contributory factors to the one unsatisfactory lesson observed with older students. The teacher attempted to cater for many students who were up to quarter of an hour late, five whom had reason to leave ten minutes early and one returning from long-term

absence. The provision of extra lessons outside the normal timetable including on Saturdays is appreciated by students and contributes to GCSE success.

165. For students of all ages the use of computers in mathematics lessons is restricted by their availability and is not an integral part of their mathematical experience. Students complete a range of mathematical investigations as they progress through the school, culminating in high standards for this aspect of their GCSE work. Very good examples of this, an interesting selection of 'outstanding work' and items of topical interest, such as the introduction of the Euro, provide an inspiring display in one of the mathematics areas.

166. The head of the mathematics department has appropriately identified areas where improvement is needed. However, for the associated targets to be attained, the very good practices successfully used by teachers are not shared and used widely enough. Teachers relatively new to the school and lacking experience of the courses being taught do not receive sufficient guidance in selecting appropriate methods for helping students to learn and to achieve more. In general, the way in which teachers mark students' work is insufficiently monitored to ensure that it is effective in improving standards. However, a rigorous system to track students' achievement through half-termly test result analysis has recently been introduced and is already having an impact on the attainment of more-able Year 9 students.

Numeracy

167. The teaching of mathematics includes particular emphasis on number skills in Year 7; but students' achievement is inadequately monitored. For lower attainers a summer school is provided to establish a good start at secondary school. The school is planning to monitor the achievement these students make in numeracy and to continue to give the additional help they need. This is not yet effective. A few students with special educational needs follow a Certificate of Achievement course in numeracy in Years 10 and 11: they are taught and achieve well. The school does not have a policy for teaching and using numeracy skills in other subjects. All teachers have, however, been introduced to the benefits of a policy for promoting numeracy and further developments are to be planned in some subjects.

168. For geography lessons in Years 7 to 9, students have inadequate skills to analyse statistical data; they draw graphs and statistical diagrams inaccurately. These numeracy skills, together with the use of formulae, are satisfactorily developed for science by the time students are in Year 10. In ICT lessons students competently use spreadsheets and data is manipulated using computers in design and technology lessons. Appropriate aspects of numeracy are introduced on occasions in other subjects. Time-lines are used in religious education, students were observed engaged in discussion about the Euro in a French lesson and appreciation of number was drawn upon in an English lesson where a schedule for using computers was required.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of science and are enthusiastic about it.
- Relationships with students and their personal development are very good, and the department successfully reflects the schools' aims and values.
- Science has a positive and attractive image and makes a strong contribution to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the students.
- Leadership and management ensure clear direction and a shared commitment to science. The head of department is aware and has already identified major areas for continued improvement.
- Documentation is of good quality and assessment and recording systems are in place in Years 10 and 11.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are too low, especially those of 14 year-olds, at the end of Year 9.
- The students do not have enough experience with ICT, and its practical use in investigations is insufficient, as well.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory; particular weaknesses are in the management of classes and the marking of students' work.
- The monitoring and evaluation of attainment in Years 7 to 9 is not used effectively enough to improve teaching and to share good practice.

169. All students follow a modular course in Years 7 to 9, where science education is unsatisfactory. This is followed by double award science to GCSE at the end of Year 11, where practice and achievement are good. Although overall results in 2001 were disappointing, there is a slowly improving trend in standards.

170. Because of unsatisfactory teaching and monitoring difficulties compounded by the split site, standards are below average in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is unsatisfactory and, by age 14 at the end of Year 9, most students have not achieved as well as they should, in fact very many have regressed since they were assessed as 11 year-olds. For example, in 2001 only 60 per cent of 14 year-olds attained Level 4 in national tests at the end of Year 9, yet, as 11 year-olds, over 80 per cent these same students had registered that level of attainment. In 2001, the proportion of students attaining Level 5 and above in the National Curriculum tests in Year 9 was very low in comparison with the national average for all schools. It is also well below the national average for all schools at Level 6 and above. However, the school has identified the weakness and is taking relevant steps to improve the situation. There has been a gradual and significant improvement over the four-year period since 1998. In relation to similar schools, students' attainment at Level 5 and above is well below the average and at Level 6 and above it is below average. In comparison with other subjects' test results at age 14, the results in science are about the same as those in mathematics, although not as good as in English.

171. The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 9 during the inspection is below average, but it is generally better than is indicated by the results of national tests at age 14, and some students show average levels of knowledge and understanding. For example, as part of their work in chemistry, students in Year 9 made satisfactory progress in identifying and understanding the characteristics of chemical reactions and energy transfer. Students in another Year 9 class, showed satisfactory attainment as they worked successfully on the

structure and function of plants and in their revision of life processes. Less successful were the standards and achievement of Year 8 students as they looked at ways of keeping water warm and, for Year 7 students, their understanding of current flow and energy transfer in simple circuits was limited and short-lived. In both of these classes, some less attentive behaviour and poor concentration prevented achievement. Lower-attaining students are supported well by teachers and achieve about the same as others in the class, and there is no difference in the attainment of students with English as an additional language. Standards and achievement in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory for a significant proportion of students. Many students speak confidently about their work although some students' knowledge, understanding and skills are insufficiently developed. Written work is sometimes of poor quality and students do not take enough responsibility for their own learning, their intellectual effort is low and they do not have well-enough developed skills of recording what they know and can do in an imaginative and meaningful way.

172. GCSE science results at the end of Year 11 are below average. The proportion of students attaining GCSE higher grades, A*-C, in double science is below the national average, although the proportion gaining grades A*-G is in line with the national average; this is good considering the background and previous attainment of many of the students. Since the previous inspection there has been a steady increase in the proportion of students gaining grades A*-C and, in spite of the below-average results, students make very good progress in Years 10 and 11, contrasting sharply with the situation in Years 7 to 9. In comparison with other subjects, students do slightly better in science than they do in mathematics and not as well as they do in English.

173. Standards are average in work seen during the inspection. Some students in Years 10 and 11 achieve better standards than examination results indicate. For example, lower-achieving students in Year 10 successfully extended their knowledge and understanding about gravity and the difference between mass and weight, and they achieved well. Working on aspects of biology relevant to sport science, high-attaining Year 11 students were well supported by the teacher and also made very good progress. However, in another class of low-attaining Year 11 students, serious disruption and a history of poor working prevented learning for many students and attainment was generally poor, and below most students' capabilities.

174. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. There are examples of very good practice, but there is unsatisfactory teaching. Specialist teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of science, which they use well with students. They organise and prepare individual lessons conscientiously, often with detailed plans and lesson notes, as in a lesson on chemical reactions in Year 9, and of the detail and calculation of weight with students in Year 10. Invariably, the students knew the lesson's purposes and intended outcomes; this clearly contributed to their understanding and learning. A range of teaching and learning methods was used successfully. Whole-class questioning was used effectively by most teachers and the pace of lessons was generally good. Where the work had been tailored to suit different levels of attainment in one class, it was well prepared and presented, as in the lesson on the biological aspects of sport science in Year 10. In contrast to Years 7 to 9, assessment in Years 10 and 11 is properly organised and effective and there are regular opportunities for students to show what they can do and the tracking and recording of students' success is good. In addition to prior attainment, the results of regular marking, end of module tests, investigations and other material are successfully recorded. There are some good examples of students' work on display in some laboratories along with attractive posters and other material display. However, for some teachers there is a poor history of marking students' books and other work. Poor practice is characterised by uncompleted work, which is not followed up, and a serious lack of praise and supportive and informative comment, leading to poor learning and achievement.

175. In the main, students generally are enthusiastic about their work in science, and behaviour in lessons is often good or very good. Where teaching is of good quality, attitudes to learning are largely positive, expectations are improved and relationships are good. Older students in Years 10 and 11, and some younger ones in years 7 to 9, are keen, willing and attentive and approach work with a sense of enjoyment; they enjoy practical work and investigations, they work well collaboratively and with good concentration. Nonetheless, for many younger students in Years 7 to 9, the work ethic overall is weak. The engagement with new knowledge, skills and processes is poor in Years 7 to 9, because, too often, the teaching fails to inspire them to effort. Some take little pride in their work and books are not well looked after and, in many cases, work is unfinished, of poor quality and insufficient quantity.

176. A new, well-experienced head of department who has clear vision has been appointed since the previous inspection. Along with the acquisition of new staff, the department has made some changes that support learning well. As a result, standards are slowly improving throughout. Major curricular revision has taken place, schemes of work have been rewritten and good resources made available to support their introduction. More rigorous experiences and preparation for double award GCSE examinations for all are in place. Teachers are good role models and encourage interest in science through their own specialist knowledge and enthusiasm, inducing a change in attitude towards learning in science: much effort has been made in this area. Out-of-school support for examination preparation is in place. Extra activities, such as clubs, trips and visits all assist the move towards a more positive and exciting image. Recent relocation and refurbishment has made a positive impact on teaching and learning, and the good new laboratory helps learning. Accommodation overall is satisfactory, with further refurbishment in the offing.

177. The department is very well organised, and resources are used effectively. Teachers and technicians work successfully together and are familiar with safe working practice: daily routines reflect this. They are developing the skills of using computers for administration and lesson preparation in contrast to the weakness for many students in lessons. There remains a shortfall of opportunity to use electronic data collection and handling in students' day-to-day experience in laboratories, and tables and graphs are very often drawn by hand. There is a strong and shared commitment from all staff to improvement and a clear capacity to succeed.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The use of sketch books for research and development in Year 11 is good.
- Students' display of work around school is very good.
- Use of artist in residence and visits to galleries.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning lacks enough rigour.
- The management structure is unsatisfactory and coherence is weak.
- ICT is underused in Year 9.
- Ceramics are under developed.
- Accommodation limitations undermine the range of work.

178. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that the proportion of students achieving the higher levels, 6 or higher, is above the national average. Work seen during the

inspection shows it to be average.

179. Average standards are achieved because the teaching is always satisfactory and students' attitudes to learning are positive. Lower-attaining students, those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, make satisfactory achievement and are supported well in classrooms. Students are able to explore ideas and gain access to visual information, including images from different historical and cultural contexts. Little evidence was seen of the creative use of ICT, although students sometimes use it in research for cultural and historical information. In a Year 8 lesson on composition in landscape, the students showed the ability to arrange shapes and interpret the brush strokes of a Van Gogh painting to express movement in their own work. They experimented with colour mixing and showed some ability to create distance with scale and tonal variations. The group responded well considering the diversity of different cultures and abilities. When students use first hand observation as a basis for their work, greater perceptual depth is achieved, but they do not have enough opportunities for direct observational study, so their use of line, tone and texture is unsatisfactory.

180. The proportion of students at the age of 16 gaining higher grades A*-C in GCSE examinations in 2001 was below the national average and well below for that of girls.

181. By the time students are 16, the work seen is close to the national average. Achievement in Year 11 is good; students are able to develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work. They show some influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists. They demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. Sketchbooks are annotated and used effectively and technical language develops well. In a Year 11 lesson, students were able to speak confidently about their work and demonstrated some good knowledge and understanding. On the theme of "Beginnings" preparation studies were being developed for the GCSE examination. Individual approaches to interpretation were evident in a variety of media. Students were well motivated because of the teachers' high expectations and good presentation of different levels of work, well designed to cater for the levels of attainment found in the class.

182. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good in most lessons. This is a direct result of the teachers' encouragement and sense of urgency to complete the set tasks. Students mostly enjoy their art and design lessons and apply themselves purposefully.

183. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and sometimes good especially in Year 11 where teachers use a greater range of teaching methods and make better use of research. The department comprises two newly qualified teachers who use their subject expertise and limited experience to good effect and lesson preparation is good throughout. Introductions to lessons are satisfactory, but insufficient time is dedicated to review and reinforcement of the work of previous lessons, hindering achievement. Teachers make very good use of praise to encourage the participation of all and make good use of question and answer to ensure students are actively involved. The better teaching occurred when classroom organisation was adapted to the demands of the task and the differing needs of the students. Where tasks were less challenging, lacking in pace, or inappropriate, some students became restless. In a Year 10 lesson, a few girls were not engaged with the task set. This was mainly because the pace of work and expected outcome of the activity were not clearly reinforced by the teacher. Assessment objectives, based on the expected National Curriculum levels of attainment, are not yet fully in place and shared with all students. Homework is good and appropriate in subject matter, being used to support project work well in Years 10 and 11. There is good emphasis on procedure and care of equipment. The full potential of ICT as a learning aid has not yet been fully developed.

184. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The teachers are well supported and effectively monitored by a deputy headteacher who is also acting head of expressive arts. However, the absence of a designated head of subject to give support and direction and compounded by the split site accommodation, has an adverse effect on standards. The department makes a good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of students and the enthusiasm and concern shown by teachers is reflected by the confidence demonstrated by students. The quality of display around the school is very good. There is very limited access to computers within the department and insufficient use is made of working in clay for three-dimensional study. Literacy is being addressed within the art and design curriculum and sketchbooks reveal that students are given active support with the development of their reading and writing skills.

185. Numerous out-of-school activities and visits to galleries and museums have a positive effect upon the quality and range of students' work. The library provision for good quality reference books is satisfactory, meeting some of the elements of knowledge and understanding needed for a subject with such a wide cultural base. Improvements since the previous inspection have been satisfactory. More individual and personal approaches to study are now evident in Year 11 coursework. Annotation of sketchbooks in Years 10 and 11 is good. Gifted and talented students are now identified. There were no issues on inclusion and special educational needs; students in Years 7 to 9 now make good progress. An artist in residence project on digital imaging in Year 8 and partnership with the National Gallery have positive effects on standards.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- There are recent significant improvements in the number of students who obtain higher grade, A*-C, GCSEs.
- The good teaching in Years 10 and 11 has improved standards.
- Good specialist accommodation, including the provision of ICT raises standards.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory, mainly because the teachers do not always work in their specific areas of expertise.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not inform the students on how well they are doing in relation to the National Curriculum and how they might improve.
- The way the curriculum is structured does not allow all students in Years 7 to 9 to have an equal opportunity to learn about all aspects of the subject curriculum, so not all receive their full entitlement.

186. When students enter the school as 11 year-olds their attainment is poor. Over the last three years the standards reached by 14 year-olds at the end of Year 9 have improved steadily, but are still well below average. Though some achievement is made in Years 7 to 9 not enough students are reaching their potential, which means that the achievement of younger students is unsatisfactory.

187. When the 16 year-olds who completed the GCSE course in 2001 were at the end of Year 9 their attainment was well below average, but their GCSE results were much nearer the national average for all students, although below the national average for girls. This means that the achievement of these students is good. There is some variation in the attainment of the different ethnic groups, with those from a Caribbean background doing less

well.

188. The standards seen in the students' work and in lessons follow a similar pattern; they are below average. The design folders of younger students in Years 7 to 9 was well below average, although the standards of drawing and graphics were generally much nearer the average. For example, in clock-design work, students' drawings show a satisfactory understanding of graphical techniques and a satisfactory development of ideas through drawing. The standard of the presentation of folders was, however, well below average with written work showing a lack of care. During the inspection no groups were seen working on long-term making projects. Previously completed work done by Year 9 was on display; this was of a good standard. For example, the resistant material clock project showed students of this age were able to interpret their ideas well, use materials appropriately and finish to a satisfactory standard. Similarly the work done for the textiles "Keep it Contained" project showed competent skills in joining and decorating fabric when making bags.

189. The standards seen in the GCSE food, textiles and resistant materials courses are average. Standards were lower than they should have been because of the significant number of students who had been withdrawn from the examination course because they had not produced enough course work. In resistant materials there had been a lack of continuity of teaching, which had affected students' levels of motivation and success. In the remaining two areas teaching had been consistent, but significant numbers still had not completed the course. For example in food, twelve out of twenty five students will complete the course. A significant factor in this underachievement is the poor attendance of some students in Years 10 and 11. The standard of work of those who will complete the course in 2002 is close to the national average. In resistant materials, where students have been designing and making storage systems, design work is thorough and well presented with students handling complex construction tasks well, such as creating bent forms using MDF. Similar standards are seen in the textiles and food courses, with most students making good use of ICT to enhance presentation and to present data using computer generated graphs.

190. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teaching and learning of students in Years 10 and 11 is good, but that of younger students unsatisfactory. During the inspection some good teaching of younger students was seen; these lessons were well structured with clear objectives set and shared with students. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, students were reviewing existing products within a bag design project received clear guidance from the teacher and were effectively supported by a worksheet to help them structure their work logically. The teacher stopped students at well chosen moments to ask questions, which helped students learn more about evaluating an existing product and how to apply this information to their own work. Similarly the very good teaching of older students is built upon good lesson planning, for example, in a textiles lesson where the approach to an examination question fully involved the students in a clear and logical discussion. Student response showed that they have been well prepared by previous teaching and that they were capable of applying previous learning to an examination question. During this lesson students used specialist language and related it to their own work and showed a good understanding of how their answers were to be marked. Teachers assess the work of older students well, informing them about how well they are doing and how to improve.

191. Where teaching was good students responded positively showing good levels of interest and involvement. This was not the case where teaching was poor; for example in a Year 9 lesson, classroom routines had not been well established, and during whole class teaching students pursued their own conversations giving little or no regard to the teacher. There was no clear structure to the lesson and a strong connection was not made between the task for the lesson and the previous work or the whole project. Though the students completed the work set by the teacher no significant learning took place. Similar characteristics were seen in other unsatisfactory lessons. For example, in a Year 8 lesson where students were designing mobile phones, a lack of a clear structure meant that though

students were going through the motions of completing folder work, many had only a vague notion of where their work was leading, no substantial learning took place. The assessment of the work of younger students is unsatisfactory. Routine marking is superficial with little information given to students about how they can improve. Students in Years 7 to 9 are not aware of how well they are doing in relation to the National Curriculum and targets are not set to help them improve.

192. The most significant weakness, affecting the standards attained in Years 7 to 9 and the quality of teaching and learning is the structure of the curriculum. At the moment all teachers have to teach all aspects of the subject, even areas in which they have no particular expertise. Also all students of this age do not follow a similar curriculum, and by the time they reach the age of fourteen some have not studied any food technology, and others any textiles technology. As a result, they are not equally prepared for the technology choices in Years 10 and 11. In addition, the overall coverage of the National Curriculum is unsatisfactory because insufficient attention is given to the study of structures, mechanism, systems and control technology.

193. The head of department has been ill and away from school for almost a year. This has created some uncertainty but an acting head of department was appointed in January. Day-to-day management is satisfactory with regular meetings held and minuted. A senior manager has oversight of the department and meets regularly with the acting head of department. The regularly monitored work of the teachers in the department has helped to identify in-service training needs. Improvements have been made since the previous inspection. The attainment of younger students has improved a little and that of older students significantly. A new technology block has transformed the accommodation, which was poor at the previous inspection: it is now good. The acting head of department has identified the major weaknesses of the department and there is a shared commitment to improve. With the exception of a project currently planned in conjunction with the National Gallery that improves the teaching of textiles, the influence of the schools specialist status on work in design and technology has not been significant.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Achievement of students in Year 10 is good.
- Overall teaching is good and there is some very good teaching.
- Teachers are committed, supportive and care for their students.
- Relationships between students and teachers and their peers are very good.
- There is a very good coherent ICT programme evident over Years 7 to 11.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of work, including GCSE results, are too low at present.
- There is not enough map work and practice in the graphical representation of statistical data and fieldwork are insufficient in Years 7 to 9
- Higher attainers are not stretched enough and work does not develop higher levels of geographical and literacy skills in Years 7 to 9.
- Shortfalls in teaching resources undermine standards.

194. Standards of work are well below the national average at the end of Year 9. Most students' achievement over Years 7 to 9, given that standards are well below national standards at entry in Year 7, is satisfactory. The greatest drawback to greater achievement

for many girls is the below average literacy skills that they have on entry to the course. Some students, often-low attainers, benefit significantly from the well-structured materials and tasks provided. These students make good progress. High attainers, however, do not have the opportunity of developing writing skills further during Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, students have a sound grounding in geographical skills. Map work is very limited and there is not enough practice in accurate graphical presentation and analysis of statistical data over Years 7 to 9. Knowledge of place is generally satisfactory, except for low attainers where it is less secure. Students of all attainment levels have an inadequate understanding of spatial patterns. Higher-attainers do not have sufficient challenge overall and particularly in developing higher levels of skills in their work. Average attainers achieve satisfactorily but do not make up lost ground, as the pace of their work in Year 7 is too slow. Students with special educational needs are well integrated in lessons, but have too little learning support for their needs: when it is provided students do well.

195. There are currently no students in Year 11 studying geography, so standards of work for the end of Year 11 cannot be assessed. Standards of work seen in Year 10 show students to be working below the national average for this stage of their GCSE course. Achievement of most students over Year 10 is good when related to the standards of their work at the end of Year 9. This is because of the department's approach to teaching the subject through fieldwork and case studies; the emphases on enquiry skills and the scope and challenge provided by more open-ended assignments. Improved literacy skills also contribute to the improvement in achievement. Students generally produce more detailed and thorough work. Many are able to describe and explain a range of physical and human process quite well and are beginning to show some understanding of these processes. The best individual project work is of good quality and most students produce work appropriate to their attainment levels.

196. Recent GCSE higher, A*-C, grade results have improved from being very low to being well below the national average. No candidates sat the GCSE examinations in 2001. The trend of improvement is greater than the national trend. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades is low but is mainly accounted for by the low entry attainment levels. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the school, geography results have been below the average most years. Recent GCSE A*-G results have varied from below to being broadly in line with the national position.

197. Students' attitudes to learning are mostly positive and some girls show a real interest in their work. Most students are attentive, concentrate well in class and work conscientiously. However, in a few lessons a small number of girls with troublesome behavioural problems are too attention-seeking. However, sensible and skilful classroom management and control ensure indiscipline does not develop. Students' behaviour is usually good and often very good. Students generally form very good relationships with their teachers and trust them. Students relate well to each other when working in pairs or groups across abilities and ethnic groupings. Students' individual responses to questions are often good. Oral work is much stronger than written work.

198. Teaching overall is good and some is very good. Teachers are committed, caring and supportive of students within their charge. Very good classroom management and control, built on very good relationships with students, provide a good base for learning. Lessons have brisk pace and appropriate expectations. Lessons are well and imaginatively planned and built on a secure knowledge foundation. Considerable emphasis is placed within lessons on enquiry. Some lessons are satisfactorily rather than well taught because the teacher talks excessively, but most lessons give good opportunities for students to investigate situations and raised issues for themselves. Lesson aims are usually shared with students at the beginning and tested for effectiveness of the learning at the end of the lesson. Best learning

occurs in lessons that have a variety of practical activities that require students to involve themselves in their own learning. Similarly when visual aids, such as video extracts, computers, maps, diagrams, and graphs are used, learning is noticeably better. Where there is good dialogue, which extends the students' knowledge, there is a greater understanding of the topic taught. In the best lessons teacher's presentation was lively, enthusiastic and interesting.

199. Fieldwork greatly enriches the Year 10 and 11 curriculum and results in effective learning. It is inadequate, however, in Years 7 to 9, as there is no study of the physical landscape or an area outside the local one. Since the previous inspection, a coherent programme of ICT skills, progressively developed over Years 7 to 11 has been introduced. The quality of ICT skills observed in lessons during the inspection was high.

200. There is insufficient use made in teaching in Years 7 to 9 of local Ordnance Survey maps and local examples. At times, learning suffers when teachers do not take enough time to thoroughly place the lesson in the context of previous study; as a result, students of all attainment levels are unable to make appropriate linkages. In some lessons there is not enough consolidation and re-enforcement of the main teaching points visually on the board or overhead projector. Strategies to develop literacy skills are progressing well, but they are far less developed for numeracy.

201. The subject is well led, competently managed and has good professional direction. The work of the department is regularly reviewed and monitored through classroom observation and the scrutiny of students' work. The assessment policy is good and teachers know students' performance levels. Day-to-day marking is detailed with students informed of the standard of their work and how they can improve it further. Teaching methods and the curriculum taught are regularly reviewed and modified to ensure more effective teaching and learning. Staff work very well as a team, but have major responsibilities outside the department that restricts the administrative support they can give the head of subject. Teaching accommodation on the split site leads to problems of access for students and colleagues, time wasted in moving across sites and the need to duplicate resources. Some good quality wall displays provide an effective learning environment. Learning resources are satisfactory overall. However, there are important shortfalls such as no fieldwork budget for Year 7 to 9 and no overhead projector or television monitor in each specialist teaching room, as standard equipment.

202. There has been sound and steady progress since the previous inspection in addressing the points raised. However, in particular, improvement is still needed in raising standards of work achieved in GCSE examinations. The department has good capacity to improve standards of learning further and meet the points raised in this report.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is satisfactory.

Strengths

- The knowledge and understanding of teachers of the GCSE course supports students' understanding well.
- The choice of topics studied captures the students' imaginations well.
- Students are treated with respect and their spoken responses are valued and developed.
- Standards in the GCSE examination are rising.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is not clear enough to let teachers monitor the students' progress, or for the students to understand how to improve their work.
- Tasks set in Years 7 to 9 are not generally suited to the individual needs of students and do not involve them actively enough through using a variety of learning methods.
- Teachers do not use ICT enough to help learning in history.
- Teachers do not ensure that all students in Years 7 to 9 are working to their full capabilities.

203. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations were well above the national average. They were an improvement on the previous two years when they were well below average. These students were assessed as above average at the end of Year 9, so these results represent good achievement. There is no significance difference in achievement of any particular group of students in history.

204. In the work seen during the inspection, the standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 are below average, although a significant number achieves higher standards. Teachers' own assessments confirmed below average attainment at the end of Year 9 last year. The attainment of students in the lower years has been affected by a lack of continuity in teaching personnel and the lack of development of key historical skills. As a result, their achievement in relation to their prior attainment is satisfactory. Students achieve well when the topics are seen as relevant and the tasks are suited to their learning needs and actively involve them in their learning. Good responses and understanding were observed during a lesson based around the development of the slave trade, and students were clearly reflecting on its causes and conditions. Where the same topic was taught without this opportunity to reflect, students appeared frustrated and achievement diminished. When they have the opportunity, higher-attaining students demonstrate the ability to use sources material beyond simple observation and they compose responses to questions that show empathy with the people of the time. A very good 'interview' with Martin Luther King enabled a student to demonstrate not only knowledge of the facts but understanding of the beliefs and values that led to his actions. In many cases, however, students' responses are brief and lacking explanation or development that would demonstrate understanding. In some areas there is often insufficient detail for students to be able to make worthwhile judgements and, as a result, some work contains anachronisms. This indicates some knowledge of facts, without understanding that there have been changes in thinking over time. An example was their response to the feudal restrictions of the medieval period where students were indignant at the laws in place. Lower-attaining students spend too much time copying out questions before answering them, often leaving insufficient time to complete their answers: some do this to avoid completing their work. Many students do not make the effort to complete their tasks fully and teachers do not always ensure that they do so.

205. At the end of Year 11, students have achieved well and the standard of work is average. Some students' achievement is reduced by inconsistencies in the amount of completed work and high levels of absence. Higher-attaining and conscientious students develop a good grasp of the period studied and produce clear, evaluative responses that show good understanding of the issues raised, for example the antipathy of black Americans to the war in Vietnam. Written responses of many are too brief and do not evaluate the significance of the events studied. Oral responses tend to achieve a higher level of explanation, especially when supported by encouragement by the teacher to do so. Students have a good overview of the key features of Hitler's Germany and can recognise the appeal of his promises in the period of German depression. Higher-attaining students use sources confidently to obtain information, although they are less confident in identifying the significance of what they have read or observed in pictures. Lower-attaining students do not generally strive to develop their responses or to analyse what they write. For example in a lesson in Year 10 the class was linking inferences with sources of information, but could not explain why they had made it.

206. Students with special educational needs make good progress when the teacher supports them and tasks are suited to their needs, otherwise, these students copied out the questions or became distracted. Most students with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, however a girl in the early stages of language acquisition was not adequately supported.

207. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Although most of lessons observed were satisfactory, the support for students' achievement was weak and marking generally superficial; in some cases it was spasmodic. Teachers do not share National Curriculum level descriptions with students who are unaware of them, and there are no whole-year assessment tasks to monitor the students' achievement in the key elements of history. Lessons are clearly planned and interesting topics are chosen. The newly-introduced module on the 'black peoples of America', including work on the civil rights movement, engages students and results in their best work. Expectations are too low, however, and insufficient attention is focussed on the achievement of students. There is a lack of independent learning and students do not have the opportunity to investigate history at first hand.

208. The quality of teaching and learning is good in the Years 10 and 11: teachers are clearly focussed on the students' achievement, and courses and work are well designed to develop understanding of the period. Students are actively involved and are encouraged to develop their oral responses and to evaluate what they are studying. Marking is helpful for most groups, and students are encouraged to aim high and consider how they might improve their work. Teachers have a good understanding of examination technique and coursework requirements: support for the students' coursework is very effective. Teachers have a good relationship with their students and work well in partnership with them. The pace of lessons is good and teachers have high expectations of the written work in most groups.

209. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. There is an acting head of department at present and teachers work satisfactorily as a team to develop the new schemes of work. The department is clearly ambitious for its students and is committed to improvement. Support for the moral development of the students is very good, however there are insufficient links with art and design and literature to fully develop students' understanding of the cultural diversity present in their history topics. Although the department is beginning to consider the use of ICT, it does not yet play a part in students' learning.

210. Improvement since the previous inspection is, however, unsatisfactory. Since then the department has introduced new topics that are relevant to the students, and GCSE

results are now higher than at that time. Students are confident in their oral work. In Years 7 to 9, however, there has been no extra provision for students with special educational needs, and teaching and assessment there are unsatisfactory. Changes in teaching personnel have contributed to this and the department is attempting to manage the situation.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Improvements have occurred in full course results.
- Assessments in Years 10 and 11 are good.
- A strong planning team is well led by a deputy headteacher.

Areas for improvement

- Improve the clarity of the leadership and management of the subject.
- The teaching by non-specialists is often unsatisfactory.
- Short course results are not good enough.
- The identification of each subject's contributions to ICT lacks clarity.
- The marking of work, using the schools policy is not good enough in Years 7 to 9.

211. Students enter the school with no data to confirm ICT capability, but the good baseline assessment shows that standards are clearly below average; the department establishes its course plans for Year 7 effectively on these results.

212. Teacher assessments show that students' attainment at the end of Year 9 is below average; inspection evidence confirms this. Limitations in learning arise from a lack of specialist ICT teachers and limited time for ICT, despite improvement since the previous inspection. In addition, students' lack of knowledge of their National Curriculum levels of attainment reduces achievement because they do not know what to do to improve. Classes in Years 7 to 9 are of mixed attainment: the spread of attainment in them is a particular challenge to non-specialist teachers.

213. GCSE results in 2001 were above average for both higher grade, A*-C, and the whole grade range, A*-G, in the full course, but well below average in comparison with general national figures in the short course. In 2001 the department's administrative error, relating to student testing their designs in the short course, contributed to the low grades. This has now been rectified and standards in the current Year 11 are average.

214. The department's analysis of examination results indicates an improving trend in the full course and fewer ungraded and absent figures in the short course in Year 11. Because provision is improving in Years 7 to 9, students start examination courses with better skills and understanding.

215. Students with special needs, in all years, meet their targets because planning and modification of the units of work is good. Teachers' knowledge of students' special needs is detailed and logged separately. Where available, special educational needs support assistants are integrated well into planning so support is well directed to students with problems. For example, in a Year 8 lesson the classroom assistant gave specific help with a pocket money spreadsheet to those in need, reinforcing learning effectively. Most students with English as a second language also meet their targets and in the best cases teachers encourage peer support, which can be in a home language, so the students gradually build up skills and understanding. There is less classroom assistant support in Years 10 and 11

where the emphasis is on independent work; students are encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own learning and most do so.

216. Students who are gifted and talented are identified during Years 7 to 9. They receive extra help through school clubs and specific projects that extend their work and clearly raise standards. There are also effective catch-up classes for all students who wish to attend during the week and on Saturdays.

217. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is satisfactory overall. Students gain a good understanding of technical computer terms. Sound numeracy skills also develop when students work on spreadsheets and use a programme to plot movement. Students in Year 7 work on topics related to other subjects, such as refining an Internet search for information on the 'Black Death' in history and starting to use the school weather station to introduce data logging in geography. In addition, students learn the basic skills of creating a folder and file management in Year 8. Year 9 students move onto topics such as creating databases and developing a CV in preparation for Year 10's work experience. Student's strengthening skills, knowledge and understanding result in raised confidence and self-esteem.

218. Achievement in relation to prior attainment at the end of Year 9 is, in Years 10 and 11, satisfactory on both short and long courses. The overriding influence at this stage is independence and communication, particularly listening skills. Most students build well on the skills and knowledge from Years 7 to 9 to develop their computer competence, but too many are absent from or late to lessons; standards are undermined, as a result. Students modify and improve their work after regular assessments and good feedback from teachers.

219. Attitudes and behaviour are generally good. Teachers' use of the school behaviour policy in Years 10 and 11 helps to establish a consistency expectation for attitudes and behaviour. This is less successful in Years 7 to 9, where behaviour is unsatisfactory because non-specialist teachers lack confidence.

220. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in Years 10 and 11, but unsatisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9. In classes taught by non-specialists in these years, students' listening is poor and too often instructions have to be repeated. A lack of briefing areas to let teachers gather students together for whole class teaching and consolidation of learning aggravates the problem. In Years 7 to 9, students do not use modified National Curriculum levels and there is no 'can do' checklist to motivate students to drive up their standard of work. Marking of written work fails to match the school's policy, as there is no follow up of corrections, except in Year 11.

221. Overall planning is, however, good; it capitalises on the teachers' effective knowledge about students with special needs. This is especially successful in Years 7 to 9 where students test themselves against a levelled, computer programme. Teachers make good use of the ICT easy access handbook. Every student has a copy for personal reference, which supports learning well. Well-prepared prompts aid learning and set standards of presentation. Computer-linked projectors are used well to emphasise teaching points. Teachers clarify their expectations at the start of every lesson and plenary sessions consolidate learning, often setting the targets for the next session or the homework. Where teaching is good lessons are split into manageable chunks with short-term targets to allow all students to achieve to their full potential. Here teacher and students are true partners in learning. Teachers use a range of inspiring and challenging techniques to review and consolidate learning. For example in Year 7, where e-mail is introduced, part of the homework is to email to the teacher their understanding of this method of communication. The response from the teacher to the student by e-mail establishes that students understand the full process. In Years 7 to 9 when classroom assistants are available there is a noticeable improvement in

concentration by the lower attainers. Modified assessment and good feedback in Years 10 and 11 help students meet examination requirements.

222. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory, as no one has a whole-school responsibility for the subject. There is a good strategy team that is led well by a deputy head, but there is no user group to consolidate ICT across the school and highlight good practice worth sharing. The split site and the two separate networks impede communication. There are, nonetheless, good regularly reviewed policies that reflect the schools core mission 'Aim High'.

223. All areas for improvement in the previous report have been acted effectively upon. The department has made good progress from the previous report. Across the curriculum, application of ICT skills is planned but not yet fully in operation, except in geography and music, where there is very good practice.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Leadership of the department is good and it is managed well
- GCSE results in French have improved: results in Spanish are above average.
- Good teaching helps students to make good progress.
- The contribution to students' cultural development is good.

Areas for improvement

- The students' oral skills and pronunciation are not as good as they should be.
- The marking of students' written work in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory.

224. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 suggested that the overall attainment was below average. However, the proportion of students attaining the expected Level 5 or above has risen over the last three years.

225. In 2001, the proportion of students attaining a higher grade, A*-C, in the full-course French GCSE was below the national average for all students: it was well below the average for girls nationally. All candidates attained a grade in the range A*-G, which was good and above the national average. Higher-attaining students have the opportunity to study Spanish as a second foreign language from Year 9. Each student of the 4 students sitting the full-course GCSE attained high grades, A*/A. In addition, of twenty-three students entered for the short GCSE course, 10 attained a grade C: this represents good achievement considering the short study time they have to do it. Assessment predictions for this year's GCSE candidates show very similar pattern of success.

226. Observations and scrutinies of work show attainment in French by the end of Year 9 to be below average. Students have a sound understanding of French used in the classroom by the teachers. They extract information successfully from conversations on cassette. Students' oral skills are, however, unsatisfactory: they lack confidence and pronunciation is often approximate. Speaking is an area for further improvement. The best speaking was by higher-attaining students in Year 8, when they used the past tense confidently and with sound pronunciation. Students generally copy vocabulary and sentences into their books accurately. In work seen during the inspection, higher-attaining students in Year 9 wrote well about holidays. In some work on display used the perfect tense accurately. Higher-attaining students in Year 8 write in the perfect tense, but accents on the past participle are weak.

227. Students' overall level of attainment in French by the end of Year 11 is below average. Understanding is generally satisfactory, for example of relevant topic vocabulary on smoking or of lost articles. Higher-attaining students in Year 11 understood the foreign language assistant speaking to the class about the Euro. Speaking is weaker than understanding for many students; it remains unsatisfactory, but the range of skill is much broader. Higher-attaining students in a Year 11 class used the past and future tenses appropriately, but in another class in Year 11 students lacked confidence in reading aloud. Written work is used well to support students' oral presentations, questions and coursework.

228. In their well-presented coursework in French and in Spanish, higher-attaining Year 10 and 11 students write accurately and at length, using much of the vocabulary and grammatical constructions, including different tenses, from previous work. Average and lower-attaining students use the same range of vocabulary but they tend to write shorter passages, less accurately.

229. The achievement and rate of achievement of most students in Years 7-11 are good. The department takes an active part in strengthening students' literacy through developing, over time, a sound knowledge of the relevant vocabulary. Key words and phrases, including numbers, are displayed and used effectively in classrooms. The achievement in writing, for example, of eight students was obvious in the display comparing what they had written in Year 9 with their present high standard in Year 10. Students studying Spanish make good or very good achievement during the course.

230. Many classes contain students with special needs and for whom English is an additional language. In one Year 8 class, students worked appropriately at the same task at two levels, with different coloured worksheets. In a Year 10 lesson, good support enabled several students to make good progress in a listening exercise. Teachers know the students who are on the list of gifted and talented list and they challenge them appropriately; for instance, in a Year 8 class, one student had to answer the same question as the rest of the class, but using the past tense in an extended sentence. Native speakers take their examinations early, for example, a girl in Year 8, with an A* grade in GCSE, is making very good progress for A/S-level.

231. Students' behaviour and attitudes are good overall. They work well independently or collaboratively. They respond well to reciting words and phrases in chorus. They are generally good listeners to each other and to the cassette, although in a Year 10 class of higher-attainers some were talkative between tasks and reluctant to listen to others presenting their oral topic, thereby impeding the rate of achievement of the class and their own productivity.

232. The quality of teaching in Years 7-11 is good overall. Teachers use the foreign language effectively in most lessons. Some, but not all of the work is set using the foreign language; in several lessons, particularly with higher-attaining students, French would have been more appropriate. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is satisfactory, but is an area for further development. In a Year 9 class, for instance, students learnt how to develop pronunciation of certain words, and in a Year 10 class students were encouraged by the teacher to read aloud in order to improve their pronunciation and oral confidence, but too many students are uncertain when speaking.

233. Lessons are well planned. Teachers begin every lesson with revision, so that past work is consolidated. The purposes of the lesson appear on the board, helping students to focus. Different activities and skills are introduced well, so sustaining interest. Lessons usually, but not always, end with an evaluation of what has been learnt. In a good lesson with lower-attaining students in Year 9, for example, the teacher began with effective questioning

and oral revision for ten minutes, then used pictures from magazines to encourage students to give their opinions about fashion. Students responded to the recapitulation at the end of the lesson with a good show of hands to answer the questions.

234. Teachers' expectations are high, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Relationships are good. Teaching methods are effective: good use is made of the overhead projector and of flash cards. Conversations recorded on cassette improve listening skills. In many lessons, students recite in chorus to consolidate their pronunciation or new vocabulary, but they do not speak enough on their own. Students often answer questions but they are rarely taught how to ask them. In a Year 10 Spanish lesson, students revised daily routine sentences with reflexive verbs and the time, but they did not combine the two elements by the end of the lesson. Homework is set regularly to extend or to consolidate the work of the classroom. Written work is marked regularly and helpfully, in the main. Teachers help students by putting in corrections, especially the accents in the perfect tense, but students in Years 7 to 9 do not respond appropriately by completing corrections or by redrafting their work to improve its accuracy.

235. The leadership and management of the department are good, as are relationships within it. Monitoring of the teachers is effective, particularly of the newly qualified. Teachers have given good support to a colleague covering an absence. The department makes a good contribution to students' cultural development. Assessment is used well to provide students with target levels and grades: examination predictions are very accurate.

236. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The proportion of students attaining Level 5 by the end of Year 9 is increasing. The department is committed to high achievement and has a good capacity to improve.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards in music are rising.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall.
- Instrumental tuition and out-of-school activities improve the learning of a considerable number of students in the school.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 are too tentative at present.
- There are insufficient computers for students to use for composition at all levels.

237. The teachers' assessments in 2001 for the end of Year 9 found standards to be well below average. The judgement of this inspection is that students in the current Year 9 are achieving average standards. This represents very good achievement because students start Year 7 with differing and limited experience of music. At present, teachers lack confidence in using the level descriptors, explaining the discrepancy between their assessments and inspection judgements.

238. Students in Year 9 sing and play well. For example, in Year 9 lessons, students play 12-bar blues sequences in a variety of ways. All students learn to sing 'Raggmopp'. Although the first attempt to combine keyboards and voice results in some loss of confidence it is only a matter of time before this is established successfully. A sampled tape recording of class drumming using African and other drums has a dynamic energy and drive in its interplay of quite complex rhythms. It makes a considerable impact on the listener. Students

have a flair for creating music and the standard of improvisation for a substantial number is imaginative and confident.

239. In the GCSE results in 2001, 12 out of the 14 students taking the examination achieved a higher grade, A*-C, and all students achieved a grade. The average points score was better than for most subjects in the school. Numbers taking the examination are too few to make comparisons with national averages reliable. Standards seen in Year 11 lessons and heard on tape are well above average. Students compose well using a variety of techniques such as ground bass. Keyboards are mainly used for this but some students use computers. Many students sing well achieving a high standard. Unprepared compositions show awareness of shape and structure and are quickly confident. They listen well, recognising important features in the music, backing this up with sound musical knowledge.

240. Students enjoy music greatly. Their enthusiasm is evident in all their activities, especially singing. Numbers of students choosing to do music at GCSE are increasing. Enthusiasm extends beyond the classroom into instrumental lessons and a wide range of out-of-school activities. In all these activities, students learn through working together. They teach and help each other in paired and class work listening to each other well when rehearsing.

241. Teaching and learning are very good overall. In the lessons seen, the teaching was never less than good and some was excellent. A particularly good feature of the teaching is the ability to give each student appropriately challenging but achievable work to do. In Years 7 to 9 this is often achieved quickly through teachers' demonstrations, developing and building on what the students already know and can do. In Year 10, parts of differing difficulty are written out for the students to play, resulting, for example, in inspiring performances of Pachelbel's 'Canon' and Haydn's 'Surprise Symphony' slow movement heard during the inspection. In this lesson it was evident that the head of department's vision for developing high quality instrumental lessons in the school is bearing fruit. The ensemble here consists of flutes, clarinets, violin, cello and a double bass as well as keyboards. Lessons are very well planned and prepared for. Objectives for the lessons are clear to students and the lessons are briefly reviewed at the conclusion, giving the students a clear sense of direction, which enables them to work hard with purpose. Individual and paired work are very good: students apply themselves very well to the task, making good progress. Teachers monitor the students closely during this time giving very good advice, setting small targets and moving them forward, particularly in Years 10 and 11 where, in addition, the examination criteria for assessment are regularly used and known by most students. In Years 7 to 9 the assessment used in the classroom is less well developed. Teachers at present lack the confidence to apply the new National Curriculum level descriptors to students' work to enable them to take more control of their own learning. Very positive management of all students enhances all work. Student's excitability and enthusiasm are used well in lessons.

242. The work in the classroom is based on a very interesting, regularly-reviewed scheme of work. The school's commitment to and investment in instrumental teaching is resulting in a wide range of bands, choirs, and ensembles. Most are recently formed but there is a firm plan for their development. Cultural provision in music is excellent. The students enjoy workshops with composers, musicians, and other artists through excellent partnerships established with the school. For example, students in Year 8 are busy on a three-year project with the National Gallery to explore an artistic interpretation of Titian's 'Bacchus and Ariadne', and then Hogarth's 'Marriage à la Mode' over the next three years. The long list of other contacts with professional musicians and artists is rich and varied. The range and quality of the students learning opportunities are excellent.

243. Very good improvement since the previous inspection is the result of the clear vision

of the head of department, her dynamic energy to translate this into action and the financial support and commitment from the school. Resources and accommodation have been improved and far more students are learning to play a very wide range of instruments. Standards are rising. There are too few computers to develop composition at all stages, however. The head of department is ably supported by a part-time assistant and by an extensive and committed peripatetic team of instrumental teachers, many recently appointed. This time and support is used well and flexibly to great advantage in the school. For example, the expertise of one of these teachers is used extensively in the classroom to support student's learning, particularly in composition and, as needed, to serve the scheme of work. Music is immeasurably enriching the lives of the students. It provides very good enrichment for spiritual, moral and social development.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- The introduction of new examination courses is a good step forward.
- The commitment of the staff is a spur to improvement.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient emphasis on peer evaluation, planning and the roles of officials and coaches.
- Assessment requirements are not met.
- There are no routines of participation in appropriate clothing. Schemes of work are not working documents.

244. Standards, as seen in lessons of students' work, at the end of Year 9, are below average. Although the students do take part in small games situations and show a keen competitive spirit, skills, such as ball control, are weak. They are rarely asked to evaluate the work of their peers. Dance is considered as part of the National Curriculum course in Years 7 and 8, although it is run as a separate department throughout the school. Students in Years 7 and 8 show some natural rhythm in dance but co-ordination and timing skills are weaker in set routines.

245. Standards in the physical education course for all are, at the end of Year 11, below average. Students who regularly take part in activities show average standards, but a large number does not regularly take part and has standards well below expectation. Students are able to lead parts in warm-up sessions, if asked. The GCSE course was introduced in 1999 and the first results in 2001 were below the national average. Standards in GCSE dance were below the national average in 1999 and above in 2000; there were no candidates in 2001. Current Year 10 students have no background in dance and skills are below average but they show the potential to raise those standards to average by the end of Year 11.

246. A large contributory factor to the fall in standards since the previous inspection has been the continual turnover of staff, so continuity and progression have been lost. Another major contributory factor is the unsatisfactory attitude of the students to physical education. Students have not established a routine to bring appropriate kit to the lessons and expect to participate in inappropriate dress, footwear and with jewellery; they do not put into practice hygiene and safety issues associated with the subject. In lessons seen in Years 7 to 9 it was rare for more than half the students to have their kit and in Year 11 only one or two students had suitable kit. Students are also very slow to change and prepare for lessons. Students have poor listening skills and regard physical education as a recreational rather than a time of learning.

247. Overall the teaching of physical education is unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference in teaching between Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Staff knowledge of all aspects of physical education is satisfactory but, although lessons are carefully planned, the plans are not carried out in practice. Organisation of the activities is too slack and there is little time spent on developing the technical skills to improve individual and team performance. In a GCSE theory lesson, the aims of the lesson were clear and students had good attitudes to the subject, the weakness was in a misunderstanding of how the students learn and consolidate understanding of the information, so the long-term recall of the students is hindered. Examination questions are insufficiently used to consolidate the application of the knowledge learnt.

248. The teaching of dance in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Strengths within dance in Year 10 are the high expectations, good pace and good challenge given to the students.

249. The curriculum provided in Years 7 to 9 now meets the National Curriculum requirements, but the time allocated to the subject is below the national average. In addition, the spread of lessons means that some students get 3 lessons in one week and none in the other. This does not help a routine to be established and does not support the healthy lifestyle aspects that physical education is meant to promote. Out-of-school activities within physical education are restricted by the number of staff involved; this means that relatively few students participate. A relatively small number of students experience competitive match situations, however some, such as the Year 10 football team, have achieved success locally.

250. In line with National Curriculum requirements the department has moved over to using National Curriculum levels for assessment. However, students do not fully understand their level and what they need to do in order to raise the quality of their work to the next one. Currently, incomplete assessments in dance do not follow the National Curriculum criteria and, owing to staffing difficulties, no previous years' assessments are available. The facilities for physical education have been improved since the previous inspection and so now they can provide for the needs of the National Curriculum. There is also a good display of dance photographs, showing a mixture of student participation and professional performers.

251. The leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. The acting head of department has worked hard to rectify Year 11 GCSE theory shortcomings, has started to sort out the paperwork and has been given support to understand the National Curriculum requirements, but key weaknesses remain, especially in establishing acceptable routines in the lessons. The schemes of work are not yet complete and do not show clear steps from one year to the next; they are not easily used as working documents.

252. Changes since that previous inspection include the addition of dance so that the National Curriculum requirements are met, the introduction of GCSE courses in dance and physical education and an advanced course in dance. Accommodation has also been improved but the dramatic fall in standards and the current unsatisfactory curriculum experience of the students means that improvement is unsatisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- There are good, steady improvements in examination results.
- Students achieve well, especially in learning from religion, giving their own views and applying issues.
- Aspects of teaching especially the use of question and answer techniques to develop answers of depth are good.
- The teamwork and sharing of ideas within the department raises standards.

Areas for improvement

- The provision of religious education in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements.
- There are too few constructive comments on written work that would help students raise their attainment levels even further.
- Students with weaker literacy skills do not have enough extra help.

253. The standards seen of 14 year-olds are average. The standards of 16 year-olds are above average. The 2001 results of students following the full GCSE examinations were well above the national average for all students and for girls and those following the short GCSE course were above the national average. Although the number of students obtaining grade C or above is high in both courses, the number of students obtaining A and A* grades is below the national average. These results have risen steadily over the last few years.

254. Students at the age of 14 use a wide range of appropriate technical terminology; they have a good basic knowledge of world religions and discuss a relevant range of topics and issues. This was seen in Year 9 classes studying the importance of Israel to the Jewish faith and the current political situation in that geographical area. Students are able to give examples to show their understanding of issues. Oral work in lessons is good, but many have weaker written skills.

255. The students following the GCSE course study the topics at a suitable depth and by the age of 16 have a good understanding of religious teaching and how it can be applied to a range of ethical issues. This was seen in Year 11, when students were considering the Christian view of war and pacifism. Students from a non-Christian background are able to choose the most appropriate world religion for them. The amount of time allocated to religious education has not been improved since the previous inspection but, despite this, standards have improved. The dedicated teamwork of the staff and the provision of supplementary lessons for those following the full GCSE course have achieved this.

256. The students enter the school with a wide variation in religious understanding and in literacy skills. There is a policy of inclusion for all and students in all classes achieve well in Years 7 to 11. Good behaviour and their positive attitudes to religious education also contribute to the students making good progress: they work efficiently, are happy to contribute to lessons and respect is shown for each other's views.

257. The quality of teaching and of learning is good there being no significant difference between Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Strengths within teaching that enable effective learning to take place are the good use of questioning techniques to encourage students to develop their answers and not be satisfied with a brief comment. Good teacher-student relationships ensure that students feel confident in expressing personal views and a variety of methods is used to stimulate and maintain interest. Suitable work for a range of students is

provided through different worksheets for different groups, although students with weaker literacy skills do not have the benefit of the extra support they clearly need. The good teaching produces good learning. Weaker aspects in teaching are the loss of pace in the last 5 to 10 minutes of the lessons and some missed opportunities for a wider use of resources in lessons. The marking of the students' books gives positive encouragement and care in correcting spelling, but the use of constructive comments so that students know what to do to raise their attainment level is inconsistent.

258. The leadership and management of the department are good; although procedures for monitoring the work of students are informal they are effective because of the close teamwork of the staff. The accommodation is satisfactory although the shared use of a classroom on the upper school site does inhibit learning in that wall displays are not available as a resource base for the students. Time-lines are used so that numerical ideas about the passage of time are understood, although numerical skills such as graphs and pie charts are rarely used in lessons. The use of ICT has improved since the previous inspection and is still developing; students use ICT in some lessons and use Internet research for homework and in assignments and projects.

259. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. All the positive aspects mentioned in the previous report have been maintained, teaching has improved and standards have risen. However, the libraries do not yet provide an effective research source for the work. The department has a very good base from which to progress further.

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

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

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

GNVQ Intermediate level

Qualifications	No in final year	% gaining qualifications		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Science		25	NA	50	NA		
Business and finance		39	NA	31	NA		
Media, Communication and Production		65	NA	21	NA		

GCE A level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	10	50	87	20	43		5.8
Biology	9	11	88	0	34		5.3
Chemistry	10	70	90	0	43		5.9
Physics	7	43	88	0	40		5.7
Design and Technology	3	100	91	0	30		5.4
Business Studies	6	67	92	0	32		5.5
ICT	4	100	86	0	23		4.6
Art	5	100	96	20	46		6.6
Media Studies	9	89		22			
Geography	1	0	92	0	38		5.7
History	2	100	88	50	35		5.5
Sociology	1	100	86	0	35		5.32
English Language	7	100	95	29	37		5.91
French	6	67	81	33	38		5.59

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was mathematics and biology. Lessons were sampled in chemistry, and science at GNVQ intermediate level. In chemistry 10 students were entered

for the GCE A2 in 2001. Seven students were entered for physics A2. Results for both were below average. Of the students who followed the GNVQ Science course, half achieved a merit, three-quarters of all students achieved a qualification. In the GNVQ science lesson seen teaching was good, in chemistry lessons it was very good.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Frequent marking and weekly monitoring of Year 12 A/S students' work, compared with national standards underpins their learning.
- The context and style of GNVQ teaching engenders enthusiastic student participation.

Areas for improvement

- The school does not make sure that a high proportion of students embarking on an A/S course has the potential to succeed.
- Unsatisfactory attendance and poor punctuality undermine standards.

260. The inspection covered A-level mathematics. GCSE re-sit mathematics and the numeracy component of the GNVQ science course were also inspected. In addition to lesson observations, discussions were held with teachers and students. For the two Year 12 A/S students this was in-depth with detailed analysis of their work. Most students from the school embarking on an A-level mathematics course in recent years have not been successful. In the joint sixth form, students from Charles Edward Brooke School recorded one higher-grade pass in 2001 and one of a lower-grade the previous year. The students currently in their A2 course have been unsuccessful in some of the modules, which they have taken to date. In consequence, the school has belatedly proposed that they should just re-sit the two pure mathematics modules, which together with a statistics module could enable them to achieve A/S-level mathematics.

261. The work completed by the two female Year 12 A/S students shows rapid development, building on GCSE techniques, giving students clear exemplars and ample practice of examples. They have a good understanding of a range of techniques, which they are able to apply to more complex examples, drawing on their knowledge of algebra, trigonometry and calculus. Students in the second year of the sixth form studying A2 still do not have a secure command of all the necessary GCSE mathematics principles and A2 pure mathematics techniques. They were hesitant in contributing to a review about correlation in a statistics lesson and felt the need to make notes about very elementary principles. Careful questioning from the teacher, however, led them to calculate the equation of a regression line and to understand how to attempt further problems of an appropriate standard.

262. The quality of teaching observed is good. Work is thoroughly marked and assessed relative to course expectations. Study so far has been of pure mathematics; each topic has progressed rigorously to a good A2 standard and the course, as a whole is co-ordinated well by the two teachers

263. Very good relationships between GNVQ students and their teacher help to promote focussed discussion, which develops their understanding and application of numeracy skills. Learning is satisfactory; students are resourceful and show confidence in their approach to scientific investigations involving handling data. They are familiar with the use of database software and research using the Internet as well as traditional sources. An example observed was the preparation of the analysis of dietary requirements for different lifestyles.

264. GCSE re-sit students are intended to study independently and have one lesson a week, which for some clashes, on occasions, with their A/S studies. The teaching observed is appropriately directed at revision and practice examples befitting higher-grade GCSE success.

265. Overall the good teaching and student relationships with teachers are less effective than they could be in promoting very good learning, due to the high proportion of student absence and students' poor punctuality.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Teaching is good with some very good practice.
- Students are managed well and assessment is positive and supportive.
- Teachers' specialist knowledge and understanding are very good.
- Attitudes are positive, and students are interested and concentrate well.

Areas for improvement

- Standards are below average in Year 13.
- There is a lack of spontaneity and appropriate level of debate and discussion, particularly in Year 13.
- The effective and confident use of study skills in biology is underdeveloped.

266. Biology was inspected in the sixth form and it was possible to observe three lessons during the period of the inspection. It was also helpful to talk with students and teachers from Years 12 and 13 and to look closely at their work. Chemistry is also taught at A/S and A2, and Science at GNVQ Intermediate level, and it was possible to observe some teaching of these subjects in the sixth form as part of the overall inspection. The number of students in these mixed gender groups is typically between 8 and 10. Standards and achievement in these other lessons is satisfactory.

267. Students' examination success in post-16 biology has been below the national average for a number of years. In spite of a slight improvement in A-level examinations in 1999, with one pass at the higher grade, results remain well below the national average, although with very small numbers such comparison is not significant. Overall, the proportion of successful candidates in the A/S examinations in 2001 was well below the national average. The drop out rate is relatively high and only one student in three remains to complete the A2 course. Of the total of 18 students who started the A/S course in 2000, 12 left during the year or after poor success at A/S in 2001. Six students (5 girls and 1 boy) continued in January 2002 to complete the final two terms of the A2 course. The present Year 12 group has both boys and girls and, with 10 students, is of reasonable size.

268. The standards of work seen during the inspection are average, and student levels of achievement are satisfactory. However, for most students in Year 13, their earlier experience and success in biology has been poor and some concepts are not firmly established. For Year 13 in particular, key skills are insufficiently developed and note-making is weak. Communication skills are sometimes poor and they have little experience of cogent discussion and debate and there is some lack of spontaneity and confidence in their response in lessons. On occasions, there is insufficient understanding and experience of mathematics (statistics) in science and of data collection and manipulation. For these

students the entry requirement was a CC grade in double award science at GCSE, and for many students this has not prepared them well for the academic challenge and rigour of A2 work. Entry for this course in 2002 will be stricter and students will be required to have at least a BB grade in double award science. Standards on entry are already rising and some present Year 12 students entered with AA grades in double award science at GCSE.

269. In lessons the quality of teaching is good. Until recently, Year 13 students were taught jointly with another teacher from the partnership school. Since January 2002, the teacher at the Charles Edward Brooke School does all of the teaching with this group and with Year 12 students. The teacher's expectations are high, and students try hard to meet these. Subject knowledge and understanding are very good, as are relationships and the management of the students. Time and resources are used effectively and the range of teaching methods is wide and, as a direct consequence, students respond well. In the lessons seen, preparation is good and gives rise to learning, which at least matches the students' prior attainment. Students are attentive and work productively in lessons and make satisfactory progress. Students in Year 13 followed well the material on plant growth substances and presented their own research to the whole group with confidence and accuracy. Working individually, they also tackled the practical investigation safely with enthusiasm and well organised and informed preparation. With generally higher grades on entry, students in Year 12 demonstrate that their study skills are better developed and adult levels of confidence are increasing. For these students, skills include those of practical investigation, the competent handling of apparatus and equipment, confidence in written work and being able to follow detailed instructions. In their lesson on the structure and composition of the blood, Year 12 students engaged in a stimulating discussion about the oxygen dissociation curve for haemoglobin and the loading tension of oxygen. In the course of the discussion, the teacher developed good links between molecular biology, biochemistry, physiology and adaptation. The regular assessment of work and supporting commentary is satisfactory and, with the present good teaching, students' efforts and attainment have improved.

270. The quality of students' work varies although learning is generally good. They take a keen interest in practical and demonstration lessons and the quality of work is in line with national A/S standards and they make sufficient progress. Students in Year 13 show increasing understanding of the effect of light on plant growth and the mechanism, nature and effects of plant growth substances, but their grasp of statistical techniques related to prediction and hypothesis in practical investigations is weak. In spite of stimulating and engaging presentation, some students have difficulty in making useful notes for personal study, and most are copied word-for-word from the teacher's exposition. Lesson observations and work scrutiny also indicate underdeveloped skills of organisation and presentation in their written work. In contrast, students in Year 12 are only a little way into the course yet most are successful in using these skills and in taking a greater responsibility for their own learning.

271. Leadership and management of the subject are good and there is evidence of a clear direction to its development. Recent attention has been given to improving the teaching provision and regular assessment, recording and reporting are effectively carried out. Most students use ICT in the writing up of their assessed practicals and other assignments. However, it is generally limited to students' own devices of word-processing or simple interrogation of the Internet for information to support project work and private study and there is little evidence of students' serious use of ICT. Because of small numbers in the group in Year 13, it is difficult to generate the challenging and stimulating environment required to trigger and enable appropriate levels of personal development and increasing responsibility. With good teaching and good technician support, the organisation and management of biology at A/S and A2s are effective and supportive. In spite of some poor earlier experience, students are reasonably confident in explaining a range of concepts to non-specialists and

interested adults. Standards and achievement are satisfactory, and in line with students entry grades.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

No subject was selected as the focus of the inspection in this area, however work in design and technology was sampled. No other subject taught in the sixth form falls into this area.

Design and technology

272. Design and technology was sampled in the sixth form. In recent years the number of students entered for A-level design and technology have been very low which makes comparison with national averages unreliable, but over the last three years all candidates have obtained A-level passes. Currently there are no students in Year 13. In 2001 four students started the A/S-Level product design with textiles as the material area, and two students will complete the course. Standards are satisfactory and students are reaching their potential.

BUSINESS

273. Although no subject was inspected fully in this area, two Year 12 Intermediate GNVQ Business classes and one A/S-level class were sampled. Students are achieving average GNVQ examination results. Students following the A2 course are finding it very challenging, however there is no Advanced GNVQ course as an alternative. Teaching is excellent and students are involved in the planning and evaluation of their work. Students have individual tutorials to check their achievement and to guide their development. They are highly motivated and are achieving well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

274. This was not a focus for the inspection. ICT is part of the key skills teaching in sixth form. No formal lessons were observed, however a voluntary lesson in key skills was seen; the students' capability and application were very good. Students with special educational needs were very well supported. The teacher's comments were clear and encouraging, enabling students to cope with the course. Sixth form students achieve well in key skills in GNVQ because the short-term targets are manageable.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was media studies. No lessons in art and design are taught to the sixth form at the school. One dance theory lesson was observed. Teaching is excellent and the students' achievement is good. One drama lesson was observed in Year 13. Students were preparing for their A/S-level examination production. Teaching was satisfactory although in this lesson there was very limited teacher involvement, resulting in lack of evaluation of students' work.

Media studies

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

Strengths

- Standards of work are improving.
- Students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall; it is well planned with good integration of theory and practice.
- The quality of leadership is very good and courses are very well and effectively managed.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent.
- Opportunities for students to visit media organisations and work with expert professionals have greatly enriched their studies.

Areas for improvement

- Establish a separate media studies department within the school
- Continuity of learning is disrupted by the intermittent attendance of some students.

275. Students follow courses in media studies at GNVQ Intermediate level, GCE A/S and A2s. In recent years the number of students entered for A-level course has varied but usually provides a viable teaching group. There are currently eleven students on the GNVQ Intermediate level course, sixteen students on the A/S-level course and five students on the A2 course. Retention rates have improved and are now above the national position on all these courses. Three students who successfully completed the GNVQ Intermediate level course in 2001 now study on the A/S-level course. However, with students able to gain an A/S-level qualification at the end of Year 12, some are proceeding directly to further education rather than continuing to take the A2 course at school. Of ten students completing their A/S-level course in 2001 only five remained at school to study the subject at A2.

276. GCE A-level pass grades at A-E have been broadly in line with the national position. In 2001, of nine students entered on the A2 course eight were successful in gaining a grade A-E of which two students obtained the higher A and B grades. Recent results on all courses indicate very good achievement since students often started the courses with average or lower attainment in GCSE. There are no significant variations in standards by gender or ethnicity.

277. The evidence from the inspection confirms that standards of work are in line with or above the national average on all courses. They are in line on the A2 course and above the national average on the A/S-level and GNVQ Intermediate level courses.

278. Scrutinies of work and lesson observations show very good and consistent achievement by most students on all three courses. By the end of Year 13, higher-attaining students demonstrate a very good understanding of the relationship between media theory and practice which informs planning and research. They undertake detailed research and develop a wide-ranging knowledge of media products and institutions. Production work and displays show a very good grasp of critical theory. Average attaining students recognise that planning and research are important processes in media productions. They show a clear understanding of genre in their work. The practical skills of lower-attaining students are often more advanced than their analytical and written skills. They often make good contributions to collaborative work and work hard on tasks.

279. Written course work on the A/S-level and A2 courses is generally of good quality and well presented. It is usually effectively illustrated with pictures, posters and video productions. Students show good communication and ICT skills but application of number is underdeveloped in the presentation of work. Literacy limitations are evident on the GNVQ Intermediate level course and at times this impedes achievement. Practical work on all courses is of high standard. A wide range of media is available and used and good skill levels are evident in work produced. The best project work is outstanding and displays productions that are innovative, gripping and polished and which well reflect the needs and tastes of target audiences. While the level of evaluation varies within courses it shows progression over time. Critical analysis is better developed than synthesis. Standards of work in relative terms are higher on the A/S-level course than on the A2 course but during the inspection the level of absenteeism was high and this could impair overall standards of performance in external examinations.

280. Teaching overall is very good and some is excellent. Teaching on the GNVQ Intermediate level course is good and often very good. Lessons are very well planned and presentation is structured and focused so that students clearly understand what they are doing. Learning is consequently very good with students fully involved. In a GNVQ lesson students made quite competent presentation, to their peers, of their preparation for a documentary film. Some students used a well-prepared storyboard to support their planning and explained its significance very well. Valuable social skills were developed and the oral presentation helped to develop their confidence. The teacher expertly analysed, with the help of the group, the presentations in a positive and helpful manner and from the analyses produced a checklist of criteria against which documentaries should be assessed.

281. Teaching sampled on the A/S-level course is very good and sometimes excellent. Strengths of the teaching are the teachers' secure subject knowledge, very good organisation and lessons that aim to develop students' self-knowledge. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent with a suitable blend of good humour and academic rigour. In a lesson on textual analysis using videos of chat and discussion programmes, students evaluated the main features of media presentation very well. There were very skilful and effective interventions by the teacher to extend students' knowledge and understanding of the topic. During the lesson there was some excellent teaching and learning, as students were guided through the critical analyses of a series of programmes.

282. Teaching on the A2 course is better planned, and consolidated in some lessons than others, but teaching overall is good and in some lessons very good. Expectations are high and work appropriately demanding. Teaching is intellectually challenging, always explaining the need of subjecting ideas to critical scrutiny. However, opportunities are missed to re-enforce visually on the board the main points of discussion to ensure that there is whole class understanding and to place them in a wider context of learning so that students can develop skills of synthesis. Emphasis in lessons is suitably placed on independent learning aided with teacher guidance and support. Work assignments are regularly marked and students are given good comments and judgements on the standard of work produced. Students find marking of their work to be very helpful, as it informs them of how they can further improve work standards. Students expressed a very high level of satisfaction with their courses. Most found them stimulating and interesting and staff extremely helpful and supportive. Opportunities to visit media organisations through work experience and other arrangements have greatly enriched their studies. The chance to work with expert professionals in the field of media has helped to raise the standards of their work.

283. The quality of leadership on all courses is very good. These courses are very well and effectively managed. Strategic and curricular planning is thorough, imaginative and set the stage for consistently very good teaching. Planning leads to a broad range of teaching

methods and ensures that students gain experience of an appropriate range of media. Students benefit from enthusiastic and highly committed teachers and media technical support staff that work together impressively as a team. Accommodation and resources are excellent and include a state of the art recording studio and digital editing suite and a spacious well-equipped GNVQ media studies base. There is no separate media studies department to recognise the impressive developments made in recent years and their prestigious place within the school and wider community. Media studies have the potential to make an even more distinctive contribution in permeating the whole of the school curriculum unrestrained.

HUMANITIES

History was the focus subject within humanities. No students are following the geography course in the sixth form at present. In 2001 one student completed the A2 course. A/S religious education has been introduced this year, and one lesson in Year 12 was sampled. Teaching was good and the students were very well supported in their studies. Standards in work seen are broadly average. There is, however, no provision for religious education for all students in the sixth form and in this respect the school is not meeting statutory requirements.

History

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

Strengths

- Students develop their essay writing skills through the re-drafting opportunities presented.
- Teachers provide very good marking and assessment that inform students well.
- Teachers have a very good working relationship with their students.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not have enough opportunities to work with other sixth form groups.
- Students have too narrow a range of external resources.
- ICT is not used to improve learning in history.

284. A-level results have improved over the last three years and are satisfactory in relation to the students' prior attainment. Numbers of students following the course have fallen and are too few for comparison with national statistics. However, results in the last two years are commendable, all students achieving at least a pass grade.

285. Students were entered for the A/S examination in 2001. There was some confusion over the coursework that resulted in students re-submitting their work this year, and re-taking some modules in order to improve their grades. Consequently, accurate records of results are not available. Most students who followed the course in Year 12 have chosen to continue into Year 13. Only one student from the school is part of the Year 13 class, more form part of the Year 12 group, which is larger.

286. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work show that current standards are broadly average. Students are gaining confidence in their knowledge, for example of the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Nazi Party, building upon their GCSE work. They have a good grasp of the key features of the period and higher-attaining students can evaluate their significance. They identify the effect of events in other countries on the depression in Germany, and its part in the downfall of democracy. Higher-attaining students are able to identify different motives and viewpoints, however most tend to limit themselves to single

viewpoints unless directed otherwise, for example in their work investigating 'Who killed the Weimar Republic'. Lower-attaining students fail to follow through their arguments, stating rather than explaining their reasoning. Essays are well structured and thorough, including quotation in support of their reasoning, particularly those that have benefited from redrafting. Lack of confidence results in an over dependence on the text book and facts by some students in Year 12. By Year 13 students are becoming more confident and thus more analytical; coursework is thorough and well researched.

287. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge and this supports clear explanations and, thus, students' understanding. Information teachers give to students is concise; students are subsequently encouraged to carry the investigation of ideas further themselves. In this way they become less dependent upon the teacher and gain confidence. Relations within the lessons are good and students are encouraged to become partners in their learning. A relaxed yet businesslike atmosphere prevails and students respond by adopting a mature and focussed approach to their studies. High expectations on the part of teachers and students are resulting in very good rate of achievement. Good support for the development of essay writing skills and the use of mind maps to support comprehension are resulting in good achievement in the development of key skills. ICT is not generally used as a learning aid, however, and there are very few opportunities for students to attend lectures or investigations that would develop their understanding, and enable them to benefit from communication with a wider range of sixth formers from other establishments. The monitoring of achievement is thorough and the detailed marking and advice feedback sheets that accompany essays give students clear pictures of their strengths and weaknesses. This is resulting in steady improvement in standards.

288. Leadership and management of sixth form history are good. Communication between the two teachers, one from each partner school, is good and both attend parents' consultation evenings and have a common format for reporting. There is a clear commitment to raising standards and the course, which was in the early stages of development at the time of the previous inspection, is well established.

289. Students speak well of the way they are taught this year. Students in Year 13 were less satisfied with their experiences when in Year 12. A change in teaching personnel this year has resulted in students feeling well supported and more confident in their studies. They particularly appreciate essay feedback sheets. They receive help whenever they feel they need it and appreciate the work of their teachers. They would like to have the opportunities to discuss and work with a wider range of students.

290. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection when the school was working towards developing a viable history course. The subject has a good reputation amongst students and results are improving. The A/S-level has been introduced and, after some early problems, it is enabling students to achieve success in Year 12, increasing their confidence for A2.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English language. One Spanish lesson was sampled. Spanish is taught as an after-school activity on two days per week. There are four candidates for the A/S course, one student from Year 10, one from Year 11 and two from Year 12. Two of the students are native speakers. Over time, the students have acquired the relevant vocabulary necessary to read and write about a range of diverse topics. Students are on course to achieve their predicted grades, which are above average.

English

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and good teaching results in good progress by the students.
- Teachers and students enjoy good relationships so that students benefit from a high level of personal tuition and guidance.
- Students' coursework is marked well so that they are able to improve the quality of later assignments.

Areas for improvement

- Independent learning and study skills, including use of library resource centre and the Internet are not used sufficiently used to improve learning in English.

291. In 2001, A/S-level examination results were satisfactory in relation to the prior attainment of the students. All seven candidates achieved a pass grade and one student achieved a grade B; all continued into Year 13. Standards achieved in 2001 at GCE A-level were good. All 7 candidates achieved a grade and a quarter of students entered gained the higher grades of A or B. Students achieve well in relation to their other subjects.

292. Standards in the Year 13 A2 group are below average, however these students were observed achieving well in a lesson discussing works by Waugh and Eliot, although English was an additional language for each student and there were occasions when weaknesses in their use of idiom revealed this. Students are well taught; concentrate well and receive good individual support. Observations of students in lessons and analysis of samples of their work confirm that the standards currently being achieved on the A/S-level course are good. Coursework assignments on "Hamlet" show sustained effort, which is developing genuine perceptions into well-argued critical judgements. It was clear from their work that good teaching in the discussion and preparation stages had continued as good personal support as they were drafting and writing their essays, leading to work of a very high standard. Lessons observed on "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" included discussion and role play illustrating that students could build on one another's ideas and that their judgements were based in a good understanding of historical context, critical values, genre and the appropriateness of Chaucer's style for his comic and satirical intentions.

293. The quality of teaching is good overall; in a quarter of the lessons it is very good. The subject is popular and attracts viable numbers of students-currently five in Year 13 and 11 in Year 12. They are well taught, with all of the A/S students who completed Year 12 continuing their studies with A2 in Year 13. The teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and organise lessons that engage the interest of the students and promote high standards and quality. Most lessons contain a variety of activities, for the whole class, or for pairs and small groups. Written assignments are accurately marked and students receive very good advice on how to improve the quality of their work. Relationships with students are well managed so that students confidently venture opinions and test their developing ideas.

294. Students learn well. Boys and girls were observed achieving well and working effectively together. When interviewed students are very positive about their teaching and about their achievement. A benefit of their media and arts experience is that they are confident in discussion and in role-play activities. A Year 12 GNVQ group discussed issues related to contraception in a lively and mature way. Another group was confident enough to attempt reading Chaucer with a good attempt at an "authentic" pronunciation. Good habits of independent learning have not been established. Work scrutinised during the inspection

included some background material downloaded from the Internet. However, none of the students interviewed used the library regularly for personal reading, for research or for the literary criticism which would extend the scope and rigour of what had been covered in lessons.

295. The academic leadership of the subject is good and work in English is well managed. Curriculum planning is good. Teachers are appropriately qualified and are well deployed. Assessment of students' achievement is accurate and frequent so that their personal targets are frequently revised. Progress has been good since the previous inspection and the capacity for further improvement is good.