

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HEATHCOTE SCHOOL**

Chingford, London

LEA area: Waltham Forest

Unique reference number: 103097

Headteacher: Mr B Hersom

Reporting inspector: Mr R Passant  
2728

Dates of inspection: 2 - 5 June 2003

Inspection number: 249102

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 11 to 16 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Normanton Park  
Chingford  
London

Postcode: E4 6ES

Telephone number: 020 8498 5110

Fax number: 020 8529 3935

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of Chair of Governors: Mr I Moyes

Date of previous inspection: 27 June 2001

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2728	Rod Passant	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion Drama	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils or students taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11041	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31218	Thomas Allen	Team inspector	Citizenship Geography	
15472	Paul Andrews	Team inspector	Music	
32166	Nasim Butt	Team inspector	Science	
10448	Michael Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	Special educational needs History	
28097	Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics	
31192	John Stewart	Team inspector	Physical education	

4351	Jeanne Strickland	Team inspector	English as an additional language English	
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Heathcote School is a mixed comprehensive school for students<sup>1</sup> aged 11 to 16. It is currently smaller than average but it is improving in popularity and growing in size. A new school is to be built commencing in January 2004. The school serves a relatively diverse community. Two thirds of the students are White–UK heritage students. The others are drawn from a range of ethnic heritages, the largest grouping being Black Caribbean or African. The school has a number of refugees on roll and one Traveller pupil, who currently does not attend regularly. The percentage of students whose mother tongue is believed not to be English is higher than in most schools. There are a very small number who are still at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of students with special educational needs is just above the average, although the percentage of students with Statements of Special Educational Needs is average. The school provides the teaching for secondary age students from the local hearing-impaired school. The number of students joining or leaving the school other than at the usual time of admission or leaving is high relative to other schools. Many of those students joining the school have often had a disrupted education in other schools because of behavioural problems. The school has also been through a period of staffing difficulties but this has now improved. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals has fallen in recent years as the school has grown in popularity but is above the national average. Although the number of free school meals, an indicator of social disadvantage, has dropped, nevertheless, a small but significant number of students face challenging circumstances in their lives. The school, too, often has to work hard to prevent tensions, attitudes and behaviour which are expressed or which occur within the immediate locality from entering the school, and disturbing its calm ethos. Students' attainment on entry to the school has shown recent marked improvement and is just below average. The attainment on entry of older students, particularly in the upper part of the school was well below average when they joined. The school is a member of two-linked Excellence in the Cities (EiC) Action Zones<sup>2</sup>, which the school feels have made a significant contribution to raising standards through their contribution to out-of-hours learning and to improving relationships with partner primary schools, which results in students' making a smoother transfer between the two phases.

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

Heathcote School has made significant improvements in recent years and continues to do so. It currently provides a sound and secure education for the students. The school is led well by the head and deputy headteacher. There is a professional culture in the school and the determination and the capacity amongst the staff to raise standards and improve the quality of education further. GCSE examination results are broadly in line with national averages and they are well above average when compared to those of similar schools. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. There is much good or better teaching. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- The school shows considerable care and concern for students.
- There are good relationships between students and staff.
- Teaching continues to improve. It is satisfactory in nine out of ten lessons and good or better in over half of the lessons seen.
- There is a calm ethos in the school.
- Students value the support they receive from staff.
- Out-of-hours learning and extra-curricular activities play a significant role in raising standards and students' sense of self-esteem.

<sup>1</sup> Heathcote School prefers to use the term 'students' rather than 'pupils'. This has been respected in the body of the text throughout the report although the term 'pupils' continues to be used in titles and documentary evidence to allow ease of comparison with other Ofsted reports.

<sup>2</sup> Excellence in Cities is a government central initiative at raising educational standards and promoting social inclusion in major cities. Excellence in Cities Action Zones is one strand. The school also receives funding to support learning mentors, provision for gifted and talented students and establishing a learning support unit.

### What could be improved

- Raise standards in mathematics to match the attainment in English and science
- Improve the overall provision<sup>3</sup> for religious education.
- Raise standards in all subjects by ensuring that:
  - assessment information is used effectively;
  - there is a rigorous learning ethos in all subjects;
  - all departments make a significant contribution to raising students' standards in :
    - speaking and listening, reading, writing, number and calculation;
    - information and communication technology (ICT)' is used by all departments to extend learning and to support literacy.

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

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

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) inspected the school in 2001 and judged that the school was providing an acceptable standard of education and that special measures no longer applied to the school. Since that report the school has continued to make good progress. The quality of teaching has improved, as have standards at GCSE and in Year 9 tests. The HMI report did not report on individual subjects and in this report, particularly in the subject section, reference is also made to the earlier report of 1998.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				<b>Key</b>
	all schools			similar school <sup>4</sup>	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	D	E	C	A	well above average    A above average        B average                C below average        D well below average   E

The trend in Year 9 National Curriculum tests is above the national trend for improvement. English shows a consistent improvement, whereas mathematics and science are more variable. Standards are below the national average in English and well below in mathematics and science. Standards are average in English and science when compared to standards in similar schools. Students made above average progress when compared to schools where students had similar test scores on entry to the school. White UK girls are performing below the school's average in the percentage gaining Level 5 or above in mathematics and, to some extent, science, whereas white boys are doing better than the average in mathematics and science. Local education authority information indicates that Black students make better progress than the local education authority average, although numbers are relatively small.

Based on the evidence of the current work seen in Years 10 and 11, standards in science are in line with the standards expected nationally, although the actual GCSE results in science in 2002 are below average. Results in German are in line with national averages, with boys doing particularly well. GCSE results, as indicated by the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades, are below average in English, geography, history, ICT, drama, art and design and music. They are well below average in mathematics, French, religious education, physical education, and design and technology.

<sup>3</sup> Provision is a summative judgement made on the quality and range of curriculum provided within the subject: the way the subject is organised, the quality of teaching and learning, the achievement of pupils and the resource provision. These judgements are specific to the subject. Whilst it is appropriate to use this judgement to compare the provision of a specific subject between different schools, it is inappropriate to use this judgement to make relative comparisons between subjects within the same school because like is not being compared to like.

<sup>4</sup> Similar schools are schools that have a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Based on the standards attained in National Curriculum tests in Year 9, students make well above average progress at Key Stage 4. Black African and Caribbean heritage students are achieving above the local education authority average. The group, which are under-performing are White UK boys and girls and, although numbers are relatively small, as a group, dual-heritage students. Whilst girls show significant underachievement in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in mathematics, their performance improves at GCSE and their overall performance is close to the national average, as is the performance of boys.

Overall, students make satisfactory progress across the school. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, as do those students with English as an additional language, because the school is very committed to equal opportunities and staff care about the students. Students identified as being gifted and talented make satisfactory progress, and they and other students gain significantly from the enrichment and out-of-school hours learning opportunities. Individual students are taking, or preparing to take, GCSEs in ICT and science early. There are also individual students taking ICT at A level. Other students take GCSEs in their community language. The percentage of students going on to further education shows significant recent increases, reflecting the school's success in raising students' aspirations.

The school sets appropriately challenging targets. It met the target for the average point score per pupil but just missed the target for the percentage of students gaining A\* to C grades in 2002. The trend for improvement in GCSE examinations is broadly in line with the national trend when viewed over five years. However, improvement in the last three years is well above the trend, given that there has been an increase of 15 per cent in the number of students gaining grades at A\* to C.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Students have good attitudes to school. They are very loyal to their school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is satisfactory. The school is an orderly community. The majority of students behave well for most of the time. Behaviour in lessons is mostly good, although there is sometimes a degree of low-level disturbance in younger classes, which slows learning.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships among students are good, as are relations between staff and students. Students report that occasional incidents of bullying are treated seriously and handled well by staff. They also reported no racist attitudes within the school.
Attendance	Satisfactory. There has been a significant improvement in punctuality.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 / 9	Years 10 / 11
Quality of teaching	satisfactory	Good

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Good or better teaching was seen in over half the lessons observed. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the HMI inspection. Teaching is good in English and science. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics. Strengths of the teaching are: good subject knowledge and understanding and the quality of relationships, which means

that they not only manage students well but that there is genuine care and concern, which ensures that all students make progress. Relative weaknesses are the teaching of basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and marking, which does not always give a clear idea to the students how they might improve. Expectations of what students can achieve are not always high enough, particularly with the younger students.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Strengths lie in science, the way the school values languages and the out of hours provision. Weaknesses lie with the overall balance, particularly because of the lack of teaching of ICT, literacy and numeracy in most subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall, the provision is satisfactory because members of staff are caring and generally supportive.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There is satisfactory provision.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, the provision for students' personal development is satisfactory. In general the whole-school ethos in supporting students is stronger than the provision for personal development planned with the subject curriculum and seen in lessons.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Child protection is excellent. The school offers a high level of care and support to its students; and this is exemplified by its procedures and practices.

Whole school arrangements to assess the students' attainment are undeveloped. As a result, procedures for monitoring the students' performance and for tracking achievement across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. The school has good links with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is led well by the headteacher, who is determined to raise standards. He is assisted very ably by the deputy there is an effective professional partnership. Management within departments is variable. All managers need to develop performance management skills, including use of assessment data. Some systems relating to performance and financial management need to be improved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is supportive and effective. Governors monitor the work of the school closely and do act as a critical friend.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school does have a good idea of its strengths and weaknesses
The strategic use of resources	The essential equipment and materials for enhancing learning are present in most departments, but the lack of access to ICT is a recurrent issue across the school

Staffing and learning resources are satisfactory. A new school is being built in January 2004 in response to the poor quality of the fabric of the school and to accommodate the rising school roll. Systems for evaluating the impact of additional funding upon its students are satisfactory. There is extensive monitoring of external funding through the EiC partnership.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parents thought their children liked school.</li><li>• Their children are making good progress in school and the school is helping their children become mature and responsible.</li><li>• Teaching is good.</li><li>• The school is well led and managed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They were not kept well informed enough about how their children were getting on.</li><li>• The school does not work closely with them.</li><li>• The quality of homework provision.</li></ul>

The inspection findings confirm that teaching is satisfactory overall and students are making satisfactory progress. The school is helping to develop mature and responsible students. Overall, the inspection judged that there is a good system for communicating and reporting to parents that parents receive good quality information on their children's progress and that the school seeks to work closely with them. The quality of homework set can be variable, as can the amount expected.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

**Standards at GCSE are close to national averages in the overall average point score and well above average when compared to those of similar schools.**

1. Standards are improving in the school. However, lack of literacy skills and the opportunity to talk about the ideas being explored in lessons are currently a serious limitation for many students. The school acknowledges this and indeed the further improvement of literacy and numeracy is a significant element in the school's application for specialist science college status.
2. Standards in listening are broadly satisfactory. However, in some classes there is sometimes a low level of disruption, where students are not giving their full attention to their teacher. Speaking skills are below average. Generally there is a lack of opportunity in lessons for students to discuss, evaluate or present their work. One-word answers are often accepted and students are very seldom challenged to give an extended response. Students tend to use an informal register; boys in particular are often unchallenged to use more formal language and opportunities to prevent 'sloppy' thinking are missed. Some good work was seen in personal, social and health education and drama lessons but sharing ideas, discussing work, debating ideas and coming to conclusions are not a strong feature in other subjects. Speaking skills are not used to rehearse ideas before, perhaps, translating them into written work. In general, subject teachers are not challenging students' thinking enough.
3. Reading skills are below average. Much of the reading undertaken in the school is of worksheets. These are often relatively undemanding and do not provide opportunities for sustained reading. Although some good practice was seen in one tutorial, in general there is not a coherent drive to improve reading skills. Across the school, students rely heavily on reading extracts to form their views and even in English lessons students do not take home copies of the book that they are studying. (The lack of consistent staffing within the English department until recently might be a contributory factor in this policy)
4. Writing skills of older students are weak. Handwriting is sometimes a mixture of print and cursive and often looks laboured, that of boys' work in particular. Work is not always shaped into paragraphs and spelling is often uncorrected. Across the school there is too much writing in brief, for example one-sentence answers scribbled into a work sheet rather than opportunities for sustained work. Because students are often not used to using a formal language register, they are answering written questions in a colloquial style that undersells their ability. Marking of work for accuracy is an issue within the school, as mistakes are often not challenged. In general, students are not encouraged to redraft their work. This lack of encouragement to adjust, alter and adapt an idea applies not just to writing but also in other subject areas such as design and technology. All too often the first idea is accepted as the final idea. Reworking, editing and refining ideas are not yet part of the school culture. The result is that trite work is sometimes praised, which gives the impression that teachers' expectations are not always high enough. Poor writing skills are limiting students' achievement. Low-level writing skills also have an impact on student's self-esteem. It is difficult to get excited about a piece of work when you know that it is bound to have spelling mistakes and you know that it looks untidy.
5. Students' standards of attainment in numeracy are generally below average. Many enter the school with weak number skills, although standards in the present Year 7 are higher than in other groups. Most make steady progress in developing these skills in their mathematics lessons, although older students still have difficulty with basic number bonds and very simple calculations. Some Year 10 students displayed very poor estimating skills when dealing with height, for example. Simplifying fractions and operations with directed numbers remain difficulties for many students. The gap between the more able students and the majority in most year groups is very

- marked. Able students show confidence in using mental methods in calculations, and there is little over-reliance on calculators.
6. Because of work done mainly in science, practical investigative skills are good. Students can develop a hypothesis in science, although their evaluative skills are weaker. ICT skills are below average mainly because of the lack of opportunity to develop their skills in a range of subjects across the school. Currently, the use of ICT to improve poor literacy skills and address the low self-esteem associated with poor literacy skills is not sufficiently developed.
  7. The school caters for the full range of special educational needs. The main category of need is literacy. Four students are hearing impaired and come from the Hawkswood School. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards their targets overall at Key Stages 3 and 4<sup>5</sup>, as do students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs.
  8. The school has an above average number of students who speak English as an additional language. At present, there are 100 in the school, but numbers fluctuate as refugees sometimes arrive in the middle of a school term or year. The majority, however, are second-generation ethnic minority UK students who have been in the country for many years, or from birth. The school ethos fosters empathy towards the skill of learning languages. This helps provide a positive climate for learners of English as an additional language. Students are encouraged to take GCSE in their community language. Overall, progress is satisfactory, in line with that of their peers.
  9. The school has identified a number of students who are designated gifted and talented. They make satisfactory progress. The out-of-hours and fast track provision in science provides extension opportunities and a number of individuals are taking GCSE and A-level examinations early. Students in the school do not deride others for wanting to do well.
  10. The groups which under perform in the school are, as outlined in the summary of the report, White UK boys and girls, although by the time they take GCSE boys' and girls' averages are close to those achieved nationally by their particular gender. Although numbers are small, dual-heritage students, when viewed as a group, also perform below the school's average. Black Caribbean and African students achieve well in relation to school and local education authority data. White UK girls sometimes hold back from answering questions or look towards each other, seeking some reassurance before replying to the teacher. However, there are no obvious reasons for their or White UK boys' apparent underachievement. The school is aware that some of these under-performing students come from strong but insular cultural traditions and it is for this reason that so much effort is given to the out-of-hours provision in an attempt to raise personal aspirations and cultural horizons.
  11. There are a number of factors that support achievement and the recent significant improvement in standards. Many of these aspects are dealt with more fully elsewhere in the report.
    - There is a corporate determination to raise standards that stems from the headteacher.
    - The relatively recent stability of staffing. Students respond to 'their' teacher and often the teacher is the source of students' motivation. When their teacher is away or absent or moves on or there is staffing disruption it has a particularly negative effect on these students.
    - Students, especially in younger classes, want to succeed and do well. Students have developed a loyalty to the school. They want the school to do well and be successful and want to be part of the community of a school of which they are proud.
    - The care of staff: they show an appropriate and professional affection for students. They want the students to succeed and genuinely enjoy their success.
    - Members of staff have professional attitudes and want to do well themselves professionally. They are very committed and work hard on behalf of the students. As a result, the school shows a very good capacity to improve further. Teamwork is beginning to be developed across the school. The quality of teaching has improved significantly and

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<sup>5</sup> Key Stage is a term used to describe a particular period of schooling. Key Stage 3 describes the period from Year 7 to Year 9. Key Stage 4 describes the period from Year 10 to Year 11.

is now often good or better and seldom less than satisfactory. Lessons are planned and structured and, overall, students make satisfactory progress.

- Fresh leadership within departments is bringing new ideas and other experiences into the school and creating a dynamic culture.
- The school is committed to equal opportunities and developing an inclusive ethos that fosters achievement for all students.
- The out-of-hours learning, which includes the extra curricular opportunities, is extending the opportunities for students to achieve success. The school appreciates that success on the athletics track or as a member of the orphanage in the school production of 'Oliver' is a powerful tool in combating low self-esteem and insularity of culture.

12. There are also factors which slow student achievement:

- The school is not fully successful yet in creating a rigorous learning culture in all lessons. In the main, this is because, as yet, students are not always encouraged to be active participants in the learning. A key feature for the school to develop is the full range of assessment. Currently, students do not always know where they stand with regard to their work and some do not know what they have to do in order to improve and indeed, sometimes, they do not know if they are improving. Assessment is not being used to accelerate learning, to motivate students, so that they bring their energies and take responsibility for completing the task.
- Currently, because of the undeveloped nature of assessment in all its forms, students are not encouraged to develop learning skills, to evaluate their progress and identify what they need to do.
- Previous learning is not always built upon, particularly in the younger classes. The students in Years 7 and 8 have significantly improved levels of attainment on entry to the school and this is not fully recognised within departments. Not all departments are aware of the standards and quality of work achieved within primary schools.

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

### **Students have good attitudes and behaviour is satisfactory.**

13. Students have good attitudes to the school and in the main enjoy their work and their learning. The school is a very orderly community where students feel secure to learn with confidence. Members of staff are very supportive and relationships between them and students are good. The majority of students display enthusiasm in lessons, have good relationships with each other and enjoy the company of visitors. The inspection team were impressed by the enthusiasm and courtesy shown to them by students, who were proud of their school and keen to show them around and to know how it was doing during the inspection.
14. Students who have additional needs are successfully integrated into all aspects of school life. Students with special educational needs are generally positive in class and work co-operatively. Like their peers, they manifest an overall enthusiasm for school life and display good attitudes in mainstream and support lessons. Relationships between this group of students and mainstream students are good.
15. The majority of students behave well at school. During the inspection week overall behaviour was satisfactory both in and outside the classroom and at break and lunch- times. In some lessons where teaching was not focused and directed, a significant minority of students demonstrated a silly or low level of disruptive behaviour. This occurs mainly when students are not fully challenged or are uninterested in the subject being taught and is usually appropriately addressed by staff.
16. Because of its inclusive policy, the school has admitted many students whose life outside school is difficult and challenging and who, as a result, sometimes exhibit disruptive or unacceptable behaviour. The school has developed appropriate strategies to deal not only with this type of behaviour but with behaviour generally. As a result of the successful behaviour policy, incidents of

bullying at school are rare but when they occur all staff deal with them immediately and appropriately. Students interviewed during the inspection week, both formally and informally, thought that school offered them a high level of care and support and they felt safe and secure within school. They also reported that there was no racist behaviour.

17. Exclusions are only given as a last resort and during the past three years there have been no permanent exclusions. The work of the school inclusion team together with the use of the inclusion room has ensured that fixed term exclusions are minimised; students who are disaffected or who have learning or behavioural difficulties are monitored and, after a time, integrated successfully back into mainstream school.
18. The school uses a number of external agencies to support its students' work such as: Child & Family Group, School Nurse, Educational Psychologist, Connexions, The 'Fugden' Family Liaison Service and Trident; all of which offer valuable support, guidance and advice, and add an important additional dimension to the school's pastoral programme.
19. Students have a good respect for school property, other people's property and their own property. The school has very little litter and no graffiti. Computers, books and school equipment are treated with care. All students are keen to earn merit marks or certificates for good behaviour and work. Lunchtimes are pleasant, social occasions where students of all ethnic groups integrate well together and enjoy each other's company and social life. The question of poor behaviour in the senior girls' toilets was raised at the parents' meeting. The school monitors the use of the toilets and takes all steps to ensure that there is no intimidating behaviour.
20. Relationships and personal developments at school are good. For example, in a very good Year 10 personal, social and health education lesson, students worked well in groups to discuss the problems of differing sexual diseases and contraception and displayed maturity and confidence in a role play situation. In a good Year 8 religious education lesson students gave their views with maturity and confidence on the creation of the world and debated sensibly the "Big Bang" theory.
21. Students in Year 10 apply, in writing, for a position as prefect and are appointed after official interviews. Year 10 students also take part in the peer-reading scheme to assist Year 7 students. Students act as librarians, operate the school tuck shop (including ordering stock), act as receptionists and student guides and help at parents and open evenings.
22. Students actually take part in charitable events including Red Nose Day and drama productions and are enthusiastic in competing for the "Jack Petchey<sup>6</sup>" Award, which is regularly awarded for 'outstanding achievement' to a pupil or staff member contributing most to the well-being and life of the school.
23. Attendance at the school at 90.9 per cent is at the national average and is satisfactory. Although the school is very pro-active in promoting attendance, some parents do not co-operate fully with the school to ensure that their children attend regularly and do not realise the negative impact poor attendance has on their children's education.
24. Students are very proud of their school and its achievements and want it to succeed.

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

**Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. There has been a qualitative improvement in teaching since the last inspection.**

25. Good or better teaching occurred in over half the lessons seen and teaching was satisfactory or better in over nine out of ten lessons. A somewhat turbulent staffing situation has now settled and this is leading to raised achievement. The changes in staffing in mathematics may well account for girls' under-performance in that subject, particularly at Key Stage 3. One student, for example, said that he had had five mathematics teachers in one year. Teaching is good in science and English and satisfactory in mathematics. Teaching is qualitatively better in Year 10

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<sup>6</sup> The Jack Petchey foundation, formed by a successful local businessman, encourages and recognises a range of achievement in East London schools through various awards.

- than Years 7 to 9 (no teaching was observed in Year 11 because the students were on examinations). Teaching improves as students get older.
26. In the lessons seen, one in ten lessons was unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3, mainly in Years 7 and 8. This tends to reflect three factors. The first is the fact that temporary teachers or less experienced teachers tend to be drafted into these year groups. Whilst these teachers are often professional and capable they have not yet formed the depth of relationship that other staff have. Relationships between staff and students are generally good in the school and allow for ease in classroom management, which is more difficult when teachers are still forming their relationship. The second factor is that teachers do not always have high enough expectations of Years 7 and 8 nor recognise what they have achieved in their primary school. (The work of the Excellence in Cities Action Zone is setting out to ensure that prior learning is built upon, as well as to smooth the actual transition from primary to secondary school.) The third reason is that there is an undercurrent of low-level disturbance in some lessons that sometimes develops into unsatisfactory behaviour in these two-year groups. Sometimes this is because not enough is expected of them. The attainment of Year 7 and Year 8 is close to, but just below, average. This is a significant improvement over the attainment of previous year groups when they joined the school. Some staff have not yet adjusted to that fact and raised their expectations accordingly.
27. There are good features in the quality of teaching. These are: the quality of relationships with the students that allow for good classroom management and are often the source of students' motivation; the overall sense of professional commitment - teachers want to do well for their students and genuinely enjoy their success and good subject knowledge. In addition, teachers are reflective, they are concerned and want to improve their professional practice. Above all they demonstrate genuine care and concern for the students. It is this sense of care that sometimes compensates for the lack of rigour in some of the systems. Lessons are planned and organised effectively and students are on task and often make good progress in the lessons, applying themselves to the work in hand. Homework is usually set, but can be variable in quality and what is expected of students.
28. These strengths are balanced by some weaknesses seen in varying degrees. The principal weaknesses have to do with the use of assessment to foster students' understanding of their own learning and what they need to do in order to improve. Marking, although often supportive (and, sometimes, given the quality of the work produced by the student, over-supportive, in that relatively non-descript work is over-praised) is seldom diagnostic or sets targets and when set they are seldom followed through. Students are not always seen as active participants in the learning process and in some lessons, for example in geography, teachers almost over-teach, giving the students the answers rather than developing the students' skills in order that they can reach the conclusion. Assessment is not only about determining where a student is but has a major part to play in planning the work so that it matches the student's needs and in helping to accelerate learning by engaging the student. By making the grade criteria overt and shared so that the student is very clear what she or he needs to do in order to improve a grade, teachers provide a greater chance of engaging some of the student's energy in the learning. Assessment has a significant part to play in developing the rigorous work ethic missing in some classrooms, where 'tasks' remain at a level of a task being set by the teacher and lacking in relevance. Where the objectives of a lesson are truly clarified to the students, so that they understand why they are undertaking a particular piece of work and why it is important to them to gain these particular skills or knowledge, they are more likely to bring their energies to bear and to want to improve, as seen in some of the best lessons.
29. The second major weakness lies with the lack of coherent whole-school drive in teaching basic skills. Currently there is somewhat limited emphasis on, or opportunities for, developing students' speaking and thus their thinking skills. Often there is a lack of pressure by the teacher on a student to extend an answer beyond a simple response and to use more formalised Standard English. Questioning is often used to check understanding rather than to extend a student's thinking or reasoning skills, to verify, consolidate or extend their view. Opportunities for discussion, explanation or presentation by students are limited. Opportunities for sustained reading and methods, such as writing frames, to help shape a student's writing are also limited. Good presentation is not always encouraged, even in those subjects where good graphic skills

are important. The motivational power of ICT and its use to support and improve literacy as well as develop subject specific learning through the use of ICT are also very limited.

30. Observation of two early-stage learners of English as an additional language in lessons suggested that they would have benefited from more targeted one-to-one or small group help, possibly some initial withdrawal for induction. One of the two had special needs support, but it was not clear to what extent his behaviour problems were linked with his lack of English. In another class, a Year 9 recent arrival with very little English was unsupported in a lesson in which he was unable to take any part. The class teacher could not give much time to checking the picture worksheet he had been given and other students could not help him. Students at this very early stage need more regular and more focused support. One other early learner goes regularly to an after-school lesson with his English teacher and is clearly enjoying the sessions and making progress. This is extra time and help the teacher has volunteered and it is not part of the whole-school programme.
31. Students at advanced stages make satisfactory or good progress generally and additional language learners are well represented among those students attaining good levels in the Year 9 tests and good grades in GCSE. There is, however, insufficient planning in lessons for the needs of the early and intermediate learners, or monitoring of their progress in subjects. Teachers are not always aware of the steps or stages their students have reached and even in English lessons there is little planning or material specific to their needs. Closer liaison with the co-ordinator is needed and the English department's suggestion that one member of the team should act as link for English as an additional language is helpful. The co-ordinator feels that, in lessons generally, students of English as an additional language need more encouragement to speak, and this observation is echoed by subject inspectors, who found speaking opportunities for most students too limited.
32. Special educational needs staff are allocated by the special educational needs co-ordinator according to need. In-class support is satisfactory in the majority of subjects but rarely strengthened by regular, formal planning between the teacher and support staff. In science, where a new head of department is pro-active and works closely with learning support assistants, the quality of support is good. The special educational needs co-ordinator sets the targets for the Individual Education Plans. The school expects departments to create subject-specific targets based on the Individual Education Plans distributed to all teachers. Students with special educational needs usually work in their class group, and are only very occasionally withdrawn for specific tuition in basic skills. In subject lessons, the teaching of students with special educational needs is variable. In most mainstream lessons seen, students made some gains in knowledge and understanding. Where lessons were most effective the students were given clear guidance on the steps required to achieve the learning objectives. For example, in a science lesson with Year 10, students were taken through the practical procedures involved in the decomposition of carbonates. The learning support assistant used scientific language most effectively to extend knowledge and understanding. In a Year 8 German lesson all students, including those with special educational needs, responded to good learning activities, by demonstrating positive attitudes and persevering in the face of difficulties with pronunciation and expression.
33. Heads of department have copies of Individual Education Plans. However, Individual Education Plans do not always provide sufficiently clear or regularly up-dated targets for students, and the range of information relating to strategies and approaches is generally limited. Teachers identify students with special educational needs in their lesson plans but, in practice, differentiation to meet the needs of students with special educational needs is patchy. Many teachers do not adapt teaching strategies or resources to accommodate the needs of students with special educational needs.
34. The learning support staff are aware of the needs of the students they are supporting but they do not always provide the help and challenge required to enable them to become independent learners. During a history lesson with Year 7, learning support assistants showed over-concern with behavioural issues at the expense of constructive learning. Learning support assistants

provide some input to pupil reviews, but this is not always systematised. Some special educational needs staff follow schemes of work but planning is inconsistent. Overall, there is insufficient liaison between subject teachers and learning support staff, and valuable opportunities for the full involvement of support staff is lost and, as a consequence, the efficacy of support is reduced.

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

**Overall there is satisfactory provision. There are strengths in science, the way the school values languages and the out-of-hours provision. Weaknesses lie with the overall balance, particularly because of the lack of teaching of ICT, literacy and numeracy in most subjects. The provision for students' personal development is satisfactory. Careers education is good.**

35. Overall, the provision for the curriculum is satisfactory. There are clear strengths. The curriculum is broad, in that all subjects of the National Curriculum plus drama and personal and social education are provided. Year 11 is timetabled for an additional session per week, which, along with the fact that the school does not close early at the start of holidays, signals a commitment to the students. Out-of-hours learning, in all its aspects, is a significant strength of the school. The headteacher attaches great importance to this feature and feels that it does play a significant role in raising standards. The EIC Action Zone supports the school in this work. One member of staff, for example, ascribed the assertive confidence of a group of students directly to the participation in overseas trips. It is low self-esteem as well as lack of technical skills that handicaps student attainment in the school. The rich out-of-hours learning opportunities are directly challenging this self-perception as well as providing reinforcement and extension opportunities.
36. The provision of extra-curricular activities is very good overall. Out of school hours learning opportunities provided through study support are excellent. Breakfast clubs, holiday revision and curriculum catch - up courses for Year 11 students and very good visits out of school hours are mainly funded through the Education Action Zone. However, members of staff throughout the school give very good voluntary support to provide a wide range of additional opportunities. The modern foreign languages department runs regular educational visits to France and Germany that have a very good impact on the standards that students achieve, especially in German. In mathematics very good clubs at lunchtime and after school are offered to help students to raise their attainment. Good opportunities are developing at lunchtime and after school for students to take part in sporting clubs and team fixtures. Provision in other subjects is at least satisfactory with open access at lunchtime and after school clubs and a limited range of trips. In science students get the opportunity to visit museums in London and the department invites a company in regularly to run science shows. There is an annual drama production, though other opportunities in English are limited. ICT has a summer school for selected students, which enables them to take an accelerated GCSE ICT course in Year 9. In music the choir and steel band perform in local festivals. Although there are coursework and 'catch - up clubs' in history the range of other visits provided is limited. Trips to galleries are limited in art and design but are provided for GCSE students.
37. Other strengths lie in the good provision for science and the value placed in the school on learning languages both in the formal curriculum through the good provision in German and also because the school actively encourages students to take GCSE examinations in their heritage languages. One student, for example, took enormous pride in the fact that he was bi-lingual in Greek and English and was learning French and German. Students who recently took examinations in Turkish, Portuguese, Urdu and Polish attained good results, although there were no speakers of these languages among the staff. The co-ordinator is also keen to promote awareness of other cultures and languages and the school takes part in multi-cultural events and festivals, such as the recent Poetry International.

38. Another very positive feature of the school is the links established and fostered by the EiC Action Zone in fostering a community of schools with the local feeder primary schools and Heathcote. These links are reflected in an overall greater awareness of the standards of work within each phase and in a smoother transition between the primary and secondary phase. The zone would acknowledge that there is still work to be done, for example, in developing greater departmental awareness of primary work, but, nevertheless, there is a clear structure and mechanism whereby the academic jolt between the two phases can be smoothed.
39. These strengths are balanced by some weaknesses. Whilst the curriculum is broad it lacks balance primarily because of the fact that ICT is not being used to foster learning and combat low literacy skills in all subjects. The school is aware of this fact and the development of ICT is a major element of the school's current submission to gain specialist status in science. The provision of a humanities course and its more complex timetabling lead to discontinuities in learning. In essence, rather than helping students, it is making learning more complicated. The proposed time allocation for religious education is also low so that it will be difficult to cover the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Setting arrangements in mathematics need finer tuning, particularly in Year 7, and, where setting arrangements are used, the school needs to assure itself that placement is by academic rather than behavioural criteria. The school has anticipated legislation by allowing design and technology to be an option rather than a compulsory element of the curriculum.
40. Lack of literacy and speaking skills along with low numeracy skills is handicapping attainment and limiting achievement. Currently the provision in developing these basic skills is unsatisfactory. All departments need to assume far greater responsibility for developing these skills and give far greater importance to students' opportunities to speak by developing opportunities for students to discuss, rehearse, present and give extended answers in formal standard English in order to help shape, refine and sharpen their ideas and the quality of their thinking.
41. The mathematics department has led staff-training activities to develop numeracy enhancement in all curriculum areas. There is a well-structured whole school policy and there has been an audit of provision and practice within each department. Good written guidance on consistent methods across a range of common topics has been made available to all staff. However, from the evidence of the inspection, opportunities for students to use and enhance their numerical skills outside mathematics remain limited despite recent efforts by individual departments.
42. Within science, numeracy is embedded in the scheme of work and students have some opportunities to use their skills in a range of practical situations. Older students are able to express their answers to calculations to a number of decimal places, for example. However, they are not confident to give answers to significant figures. Teaching appears to miss the opportunity to enhance this area of mathematics by leaving such omissions uncorrected. In Year 8, students calculate densities of different materials but are hampered in their work by their lack of understanding of how to calculate volumes. The English department provides students with interesting opportunities to use and interpret graphs in charting enjoyment levels of involvement in literature. In geography, students use their graphic skills in recording survey data in Year 8. In both Years 7 and 8, students learn about scale in map work. Older students apply work on co-ordinates to plotting unemployment statistics in Year 10, and gain experience of questionnaire design in Year 11. However, in other curriculum areas such as design and technology, there is insufficient use or enhancement of the students' numeracy skills, particularly in their early years in the school. GCSE coursework for design and technology indicates that students' use of mathematics is undeveloped and at a lower level than would be expected for their age group, as in their use of pictorial representation to analyse results. There is little emphasis on numeracy in Years 7 to 9 in ICT. The mathematics department runs a Year 7 booster class to support Year 7 students who arrive at the school with a lower level of mathematical skills.
43. Weaknesses in literacy are hindering progress and attainment in most areas of the curriculum. Although key words are used well in several subject areas, specific vocabulary is not sufficiently well developed in mathematics, music or art and design. Reading standards are below standard

in all subjects except religious education, history and science and they are poor in mathematics, art and design and information and communication technology. Standards in writing are a particular weakness. The quality of writing is unsatisfactory or poor in all subjects except science, modern foreign languages and art and design, where it is variable. Students' speaking skills are judged poor in the majority of subjects, with lack of both opportunity and expectation. They do not read aloud well and are seldom asked to talk to the class, present evidence or argue a case. Drama makes the most positive contribution. Through improvisation, presentations and the reading of scripts students gain confidence and self-esteem as they develop their skills in speaking.

44. In addition to the special focus on literacy in English, all other departments took part in training for the National Literacy Strategy and were asked to include planning for literacy in their policies and schemes of work. Most subjects now have policies, but their implementation, as with numeracy, is not yet being monitored and evaluated. There is little evidence that all departments have devised appropriate strategies for developing literacy in their subjects or that there is good, shared practice in improving writing and extending reading skills.
45. Literacy is co-ordinated by a member of the English department, working with a learning assistant. All Year 7 students who have not yet attained the expected Level 4 in English go to weekly 'catch-up' classes to work with the assistant on basic language skills. Currently 25 students at this level come out of lessons for these sessions. Although small groups and friendly encouragement help students to make progress, there is a need for closer liaison with their English teachers and more variety and pace in the use of the materials. Another strand of the catch-up provision is the peer reading mentoring scheme which provides daily reading sessions with younger students paired with older students.
46. The school is very inclusive. It does have some very troubled youngsters who join it at various stages, often with a very disrupted education. The school makes good arrangements for short-term alternative provision after a significant incident, to allow them to re-integrate. The success of this work is evidenced by the lack of permanent exclusions. The curriculum provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory; the genuine care displayed by staff somewhat compensates for the need for sharper systems. Students with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. They are taught in lessons with their peers with very little withdrawal for work on individual literacy programmes. The school has an above average number of students who speak English as an additional language. Overall, the provision for these students is satisfactory. Again, as with students with special educational needs it is the overall ethos of care provided by staff which compensates for some lack of systemised approach.
47. Overall the provision for students' personal development is good. Many students are dealing with significant personal problems and the network of support is effective. Students feel that there is someone they can turn to. Nevertheless, providing this support can make extreme demands on senior management time. In general, the whole-school ethos in supporting students is stronger than the provision for personal development, particularly the elements of spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision planned for and seen in lessons. Citizenship is taught both within the personal, social and health education programme and in subjects.
48. The school works hard to develop students' sense of self-worth and raise their sense of self-esteem. Curriculum opportunities to explore and reflect on their lives and the lives of others are more limited, although the school has considered carefully 'thought for the week' and the contribution of assemblies. Spiritual development is satisfactory. (The school has worked hard to ensure that the statutory requirements regarding an act of worship are met as far as it is practicable.) The provision for moral development is satisfactory. The school is a moral community in that students are taught to take responsibility for their actions but again the planned opportunities to explore the moral dilemmas facing them and society within lessons are limited. Provision for social development is good. There is a good range of opportunities for students to take responsibility and work together. Cultural provision is satisfactory and enhanced by extra-curricular opportunities. There is some very good practice within the school, particularly in the valuing of languages and European culture, but opportunities to develop and challenge

some students' cultural insularity, by opening up aspects of the world and developing their awareness of what is happening in it at any depth within lessons, are more limited. Clearly the modern foreign languages department plays a significant part in raising their European awareness.

49. Overall, the provision for personal, social and health education is good, although there is variability in the way it is taught. The school has an open, frank approach to sex education using resources from Exeter University. Time at registration is not always used to best effect, although some very good practice was observed where students read quietly allowing the tutor to meet with individuals. There is good provision for careers education and it was exciting to

listen to a group of Year 10 students expressing their ambitions for the future. The percentage of students going on to further education has risen from 40 per cent to 61 per cent in the past two years - a significant advance - indicating a success in raising students' aspirations.

50. Careers education is good and is well supported by outside agencies, and by a substantial library of resources for both staff and students. The careers staff are not necessarily directly involved in teaching the careers programme, as it is delivered through the personal, social and health education programme. None was scheduled for the inspection period but there are good guidance and resource materials for classroom use. The Connexions service works closely with the school, particularly at key points such as option choices in Year 9, and at the transition from school to work or college in Year 11. The careers service provides additional support for those students likely to need it throughout their GCSE courses.
51. Work experience is arranged for all Year 10 students through a nationally recognised agency. However, as yet, few subjects other than English make use of the students' experience to enhance the curriculum. The local education-business partnership provides good opportunities for Year 11 through mock interviews and debriefs. There are close links with local further education colleges, a sixth-form college and universities through the Excellence Challenge programme. Year 11 students benefit from taster courses and visits to inform their future plans. The majority of Year 9 students participate in an 'Aim Higher Roadshow'. Students in Year 8 gain practical experience in the school manning the reception desk. The school also hosts a programme of external speakers.

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

**The school offers a high level of care and support to its students; and this is exemplified by its procedures and practices. Members of staff at the school are extremely supportive and caring and, because they often know students well, relationships between staff and students are very good. Assessment procedures require improvement.**

52. Procedures for child protection are excellent. The deputy headteacher is the child protection officer and carries out her duties with dedication and professionalism. She has received appropriate training and has arranged for every member of staff to receive cascade training. As a consequence, teaching and non-teaching staff members are fully aware of the detailed child protection procedures. The child protection policy is comprehensive and links well into the Area Child Protection Committee's Code of Practice. The school has a very large number of students on the Child Protection Register and Cause for Concern list and of "Looked After" students; records of all these students are meticulously kept and their progress tracked well. Liaison with the statutory agencies and local education authority is excellent.
53. The school has an appropriate number of first-aiders, all of whom have received up-to-date training. The school does not have a dedicated first aid room.

54. Regular health and safety audits are carried out jointly with the school's health and safety officer and the site manager and, in addition, weekly informal inspections are carried out to identify possible health and safety hazards. All departments carry out appropriate risk assessments, which are well recorded. The fire alarm is tested regularly and fire drills are carried out. Health and safety procedures have improved significantly since the previous inspection in 1998 when they were described as "causing concern".
55. The school has very good procedures for the monitoring and promoting of attendance. The system of electronic recording of registration is used and students' attendance is monitored at each lesson. The school has appointed an attendance officer and home - school liaison officer, who work well together to monitor attendance, telephone parents of students on a first day of absence basis and challenge students who are late. As a result, attendance is now at national levels and students mainly arrive promptly for lessons. The Education Welfare Officer gives the school full support and liaises with staff very well. There has been good improvement in this aspect since the last inspection.
56. The school has very good procedures for the monitoring of good behaviour and the elimination of oppressive behaviour. The school has an effective behaviour policy and the reward and sanction system is effective, fully understood by students and well applied by staff.
57. There are regular case conferences about individual students and a formal annual review process. However, there is no timetable of regular meetings to review the progress of students with special educational needs between the heads of year or heads of department and the special educational needs co-ordinator. Thus, overall provision and decisions as to appropriate interventions may be insufficiently responsive. Records are kept of students receiving interventions for special educational needs. They contain ongoing evidence of pupil attainment matched against the Individual Education Plan of the pupil. Support and guidance for students with special educational needs is comprehensive. They are offered the same support and guidance as other students. The special educational needs co-ordinator organises support for National Curriculum tests and GCSEs. Where appropriate this may include making special arrangements with the GCSE boards. The special educational needs co-ordinator holds meetings with the careers counsellor to review the career objectives of students with special educational needs.
58. Whole - school arrangements to assess the students' attainment are undeveloped. As a result, procedures for monitoring the students' performance and for tracking achievement across the curriculum are unsatisfactory. However, LEA procedures to disseminate assessment information on students when they enter the school in Year 7 have the potential to provide the school with a reliable baseline from which to set targets and monitor progress. Currently, departments set their own targets for individual students and cohorts. These are not necessarily informed by national and other standardised data, although national tests and examination specifications go some way to help curriculum areas ensure the validity of their assessments. For example, in the mathematics department, optional national tests are used to assess students' progress. As students progress through the school their achievements in half-termly departmental tests are recorded centrally in departments but are not shared across the curriculum by school-wide systems. The school is aware of the need to develop substantial systems for tracking the students. Over the course of this academic year, it has introduced an interim reporting system so that there are now two points at which heads of year have an overview of the students' achievements. Similarly, Year 10 summer tests together with Year 11 mock exams are beginning to provide useful information on students' progress in their GCSE courses.
59. Results from GCSE examinations are now scrutinised and analysed within and across departments. Despite the helpful format, there is still inconsistency in the quality of the analysis and its use in adjusting subject curricula. Not all departments are yet proficient in linking grades and levels awarded for tests, homework and classwork to the targets they have set for students. At classroom level, assessment information is not universally well used to inform teachers' planning. The recently drafted marking policy is not well known to all teachers. As a result, there are few examples of formative and diagnostic marking within departments, other than within English, modern foreign languages and in science in Year 9, and too few students are clearly aware of how they can improve their work.

60. Since the last inspection, the school has not developed the link between attainment and systems to track and monitor the students' achievements. In part, progress has been hampered by problems with IT systems, and by the overload on senior managers in a small school with turbulent staffing and a restricted budget.

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

### Parents receive good quality information and it wants to work with them in partnership.

61. Parents view the school as satisfactory. A large number of parents (35 per cent) responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Four out of five parents who responded think their children like school; their children are making good progress in school; teaching is good; the school is well led and managed and the school is helping their children become mature and responsible.
62. A significant minority of parents think that they are not kept well informed about how their children are getting on and the school does not work closely with them. There were also concerns about homework. One in three of those parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed these concerns.
63. The inspection findings confirm the positive views of the parents and disagree with most of the negative views expressed. Homework is usually set but can be variable in quality and the amount expected. Overall, the inspectors judge there is a good system for communicating and reporting to parents and parents receive good quality information on their children's progress. The school prospectus is professionally produced in a parent-friendly fashion and contains all the information parents need to know to inform them of facilities available in the school. The governors' annual report to parents is similarly well prepared and contains all statutory information, although financial information is presented in a confusing style.
64. The school provides a report for parents of Year 7 students, midway in their first term, indicating how they have settled in and there is a parents' evening soon afterwards where parents can meet form tutors to discuss any concerns that they may have. A full report is provided in the spring term and another parents' evening shortly thereafter. In Years 8, 9, 10 and 11, interim reports are given midway through the year with full reports in the spring or summer term. Parents' evenings are held shortly afterwards to meet subject teachers and year tutors to discuss their children's academic or pastoral progress. The school arranges a special evening for parents of Year 10 students midway through the year to advise on progress and discuss target setting for GCSE examinations. A special Key Stage 4 evening concerned with option choices is also arranged during the year.
65. Links with primary schools are very good. A particular feature of the Action Zone, of which the school is a member, is developing the inter-relationship between the primary schools and Heathcote. The Head of Year 7 visits the five main feeder schools in the months preceding the end of the summer term and writes to the remaining 18 schools to obtain information on incoming students. When parents have selected the school they are invited to a special parents' evening to meet the headteacher and all parents receive good information about facilities the school offers, school rules and aspirations. As a result of these arrangements, students' transition into Year 7 is smooth.
66. Annual reports are of good quality and give detailed information on a subject-by-subject basis on what students have studied, grades achieved and target setting. The special educational needs co-ordinator endeavours to involve parents in Individual Education Plan targets. Parental involvement has a positive impact on the motivation and progress of these students.
67. The school is very pro-active in listening to parents' views and giving information. The headteacher holds a weekly "surgery" where any parent can drop in to discuss any item of concern. The headteacher and staff members are also available to meet parents at any time without prior arrangement. The school is in the process of developing and improving its website to aid further the information available to parents. The school has consulted parents on a variety of issues including the length of the school day, the possibility of the school's applying for Science College status and the school improvement plan.

68. A special Parenting Skills Course has been arranged by the school, which advises parents of disaffected students on how to deal with their challenging behaviour and gives parents of this group of students maximum support. The service is much appreciated by parents.
69. Parents are warmly welcomed into school for Celebration of Achievement Evenings and Graduation Evenings and are encouraged by the school to come in to help, although very few avail themselves of the opportunity to do so. Where parents do help, acting as escorts on school trips, assisting with mock interviews and helping readers, their work is much appreciated by the school.
70. The Pupil Planner is well used by parents and staff and is seen as a most useful two-way communication between home and school. These planners are signed by parents and checked regularly by teachers, in form tutor time, to ensure that parents are aware of the progress that their children are making or difficulties that they are experiencing.
71. The Parent-Teacher Association, to which every parent belongs, has a small nucleus of about 15 parents. They arrange a number of successful social functions including discos, Quiz Nights and Christmas functions and have recently raised the sum of £6,000 for school funds. The school is very appreciative of their efforts.

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

**The school is led well by the headteacher, who is determined to raise standards. He is very ably assisted by the deputy headteacher and there is an effective professional partnership. Management within departments is variable. All managers need to develop performance management skills including use of assessment data. Some systems relating to performance and financial management need to be improved.**

72. Leadership is good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together, supported by a leadership team that is developing in effectiveness. Outcomes indicate significant change in the school and ongoing improvement. The leadership has shown a good understanding of what needs to be done, mainly drawn from informal rather than formalised evaluation procedures and the need to address key issues identified in previous reports. Standards have improved and are now at the national average. The quality of teaching has also shown qualitative improvement since the last inspection. There is a calm and settled ethos and a strong sense of commitment to improvement by all staff. Staff work hard on behalf of their students and want them to do well. There is a strong sense of common purpose. This has been achieved by the headteacher's determination and a rigorous whole-school expectation that standards will improve and that all teachers will play a part. From a school of 500 students with a very low reputation the school has grown to over 750 with parents wanting to send their children to the school. The headteacher has bid appropriately for key developments to help change public perception of the school and to raise standards but these challenges, along with some other issues left over from the previous administration, together with evaluation of proposed plans for the new school and managing a turbulent staffing situation, have absorbed a considerable amount of energy. There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities reflected in the school's inclusive ethos. Nevertheless, these commitments to students who face particularly challenging circumstances also take a toll on senior managers' time. The net result is that whilst much has been achieved by the time, energy, will-power and determination of the headteacher and deputy, there are aspects of the management of the school that need to be addressed or consolidated to ensure that rigorous formalised self-evaluation and performance management procedures linked to school development planning are in place.
73. The governing body is effective and very supportive of the school. Members have undertaken additional training and bring a range of personal and professional expertise to their role. They have a good understanding of their non-executive director role and are prepared to provide appropriate challenge. They have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to be developed. They need to examine how they can monitor the work of the school in an

effective manner by developing more efficient systems – in terms of their and the senior managers' time.

74. Overall, the management of the school is satisfactory. It functions smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The match of staff to the curriculum is satisfactory. The teacher-student ratio is more unfavourable than in most schools. The induction of new teachers and of staff new to the school is good. Advanced Skills Teachers bear primary responsibility and plan a series of weekly meetings with a relevant programme, focused on making teaching more effective. The school is a Recommending Body for delivery of the Graduate Teachers' Programme (GTP) and has been monitored successfully by the Teacher Training Agency. Handbooks prepared for staff on the programme and for their mentors contain records of lesson observations and other aspects of performance, providing a comprehensive introductory package and tool for evaluating effectiveness. All new staff, including those trained overseas, benefit from a weekly induction programme, led by a range of senior staff from the school.
75. The special educational needs co-ordinator provides satisfactory management and leadership. She does not sit on the senior management team but attends senior management team meetings as required. There is scope for the introduction of clearer systems and procedures for the identification, assessment and review of students with special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator does not yet provide clear guidelines as to how special educational needs staff should apply support in the classroom. This leads to inconsistencies in performance. There is a clear need for further training to support the work of special educational needs staff, and for in-service training to raise awareness among all teaching staff of the requirements of students with special educational needs and other additional needs such as English as an additional language. There is, for these students, insufficient planning in lessons for the needs of the early and intermediate learners or monitoring of their progress in subjects. Teachers are not always aware of the steps or stages their students have reached and, consequently, there is little planning or material specific to their needs. Closer liaison with the co-ordinator is needed and the English department's suggestion that one member of the team should act as link for English as an additional language is helpful.
76. There are some weaknesses in management at departmental and whole-school level. Middle management require training in the use of national assessment data to raise standards and to make effective judgements whether the progress that students are making is really good enough given their prior attainment. The professional climate has been created along with a sense of stability to develop and make more effective use of the systems introduced to raise standards further.
77. Though the school has successfully managed its performance in recent times, it has not yet fully implemented its own approved performance management policy. The Threshold process is presently treated by the school as a discrete process with no clear performance linkage, pre- and post-threshold, between the school's developmental needs and the progression of individual teachers through the pay spine. Some teachers' objectives to date have been vague and over-general. Many teachers and senior managers have not yet defined clear student progress objectives. Success criteria for the achievement of performance objectives are undefined in most cases.
78. In parallel to, but distinct from, the performance management policy, the school has created its own system of termly monitoring of the quality of teaching. The two processes can now be drawn together; the school's established good practice in monitoring will strengthen its implementation of the performance management policy. As the school enters a new period of stability, consolidation and maturation, this should enable it to create a powerful force for continuous school improvement.
79. Turbulence in relation to funding issues and the pressing priorities of recent years, coupled with the fact that the school has grown in size very rapidly along with changes in funding arrangements, have made it difficult for the governing body's finance committee to consider strategic financial issues and to monitor expenditure effectively. Nonetheless, the school has succeeded in running a balanced budget, showing a small surplus last year. The greater stability enjoyed by the school in recent months is enabling it to make good progress towards meeting the Audit Commission's financial standards for schools and to apply the principles of best value in the

securing and the use of resources and services. Additional funding is directed well towards areas of identified need, such as funding for special educational needs and gifted and talented students, and there have been rigorous accounting and external audits of EiC funding. The school has to account to external funding agencies, showing the link between investment and raised standards. However, internal evaluation procedures at whole-school and particularly at departmental level to judge the impact of investment on the improvement in the standards of groups and individual students, in order to judge what investment works within the school, require development.

80. With the recent appointment of a business manager the school is becoming more efficient in the management of its resources. A new management information system has been installed, and the school has produced a comprehensive budget holders' manual to complement the local education authority's financial regulations for Heathcote School. Overall, the adequacy of learning resources is satisfactory.
81. The essential equipment and materials for enhancing learning are present in most departments, but it is the lack of access to ICT that is a recurrent issue across the school. This is having an unfavourable impact on standards. In English, students are not allowed to take home copies of key play scripts and novels; this discourages wider sustained reading. In physical education, the range of equipment and apparatus is good and the learning experience of students is enriched as a result. In design and technology much of the equipment is out of date; students do not have access to Computer Aided Manufacture (CAM) and Computer Aided Design (CAD) software, and this has an unfavourable impact on standards. There are also no facilities for textiles.
82. The library is managed well by a chartered librarian with two able part-time assistants. It is a popular place for study, used very well in the morning, during lunchtime and after school. As well as loaning books, the librarians prepare research packs based on annual departmental specifications; these are loaned to students to support them in their independent learning.
83. A new school is to be developed on the school site in January 2004 in response to the poor quality of the fabric and quality of much of the accommodation and to the school's rising roll. The school looks forward to its new premises.

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

84. In order to build on the evident improvements that have taken place, the headteacher, governing body and senior staff should:
  - (1) Raise standards in mathematics to match the attainment in English and science.  
*(paragraphs: 96 to 101)*
  - (2) Improve the overall provision for religious education.  
*(paragraphs: 171 to 177)*
  - (3) Raise standards in all subjects by:
    - ensuring that all subject managers are trained in use of assessment information;
    - ensuring that assessment information is used effectively to:
      - Set targets;
      - Monitor student progress;
      - Evaluate whether students are achieving well enough;
    - ensuring that students know where they stand and what they have to do in order to improve their work and that they are regarded as partners in the learning process;
    - establishing a consistent rigorous learning ethos in all subjects;
    - ensuring all departments make a significant contribution to raising standards in:
      - Speaking and listening, reading, writing,
      - number and calculation and that
      - ICT is used by all departments to extend learning and to support literacy.

(paragraphs: 1,2,3,4, 12, 28, 29, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 58, 59, 60)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	107
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	18	39	40	8	0	0
Percentage	2	17	36	37	7	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll	752
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	157

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	18
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	157

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	100

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	47
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	48

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.3
National comparative data	7.8

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	68	77	145

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30	32	33
	Girls	48	37	48
	Total	78	69	81
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (56)	48 (57)	56 (70)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (13)	28 (27)	20 (31)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	30	33	39
	Girls	49	43	55
	Total	79	76	94
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	54 (54)	52 (59)	64 (62)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	13 (16)	27 (20)	31 (28)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	45	47	92

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	16	40	43
	Girls	19	45	46
	Total	35	85	89
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	39 (31)	92 (77)	97 (84)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score	School	37.9

per pupil	National	39.8
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

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

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
503	0	0
4	0	0
40	0	0
7	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
15	0	0
8	0	0
17	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
41	0	0
6	0	0
65	0	0
3	0	0
33	0	0
0	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	36.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21

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

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	516

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	2,835,228
Total expenditure	2,771,012
Expenditure per pupil	4,550
Balance brought forward from previous year	14,525
Balance carried forward to next year	78,741

Key Stage 3	27.4
Key Stage 4	25.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	25
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	29
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	12
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	752
Number of questionnaires returned	268

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	51	10	6	1
My child is making good progress in school.	31	53	12	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	25	48	17	5	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	44	26	10	1
The teaching is good.	24	55	9	3	8
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	24	42	21	11	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	46	8	6	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	45	5	4	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	43	24	7	3
The school is well led and managed.	29	48	12	5	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	55	12	5	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	38	19	10	16

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- The improving attainment, particularly of boys at 14.
- The good entry rate for GCSE English literature.
- The commitment of teachers to students and subject.
- Good teaching, particularly in GCSE classes.
- A department well led and keen to improve.

#### Areas for improvement

- Raising standards to match national expectations in the percentage gaining A\* to C grades.
- Boys' performance in GCSE, particularly at the higher levels.
- Book resources and use of books.
- Development of extra-curricular activities and opportunities to share skills across the department.

85. Attainment in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 has varied over the past five years, but the trend overall has been upward, with results below but closer to the national average in 2001 and 2002. They compare favourably with those of similar schools. Girls did less well than boys in comparison with their national averages. Mathematics and science showed similar improvement over time, with results better in English than in mathematics. Science performs the best of the three subjects.
86. In GCSE, the department's policy is to enter all students for both English and English literature. The entry rates are very good, matching the national figure for English and ten per cent above it in English literature. The percentage of students gaining A\* to C grades remains below the national average in both examinations but the English results have shown improvement over the past five years. In 2002 there was a more marked improvement in literature, with 50 per cent of students attaining A\* to C grades compared with the national average of 60 per cent and with the school's 39 percent in 2001. A particularly significant feature of the 2002 results was the number of students gaining grades A\* or A. Nine of these higher grades were in English and five in literature, comparing well with the national picture. However, the attainment of boys was less satisfactory; of the 13 A\*-A grades, only one was gained by a boy.
87. In current work and lessons observed, students are still attaining below the national average in Key Stage 3, but are closer to it in Years 10 and 11. Weaknesses highlighted in the 2001 report included limitations in the depth and quality of written work. These remain in some classes in Years 7, 8 and 9, where there is inconsistency in the amount of regular extended writing required and produced. Good classroom displays and books or folders show some lively, imaginative writing with good use of word processing and careful presentation. In others, work is scrappy or unfinished, with too many short exercises and not enough developed writing. In Years 10 and 11, there is greater consistency in the expectation and quality of writing. In good coursework essays students show sound understanding of their literature texts and emerging skills in analysis and critical review. Some of the writing by higher-attaining students is at A grade level. There is still a good deal of lower level work, but the department's high expectations are rewarded by the effort and achievement of many students at all levels.
88. Attainment in reading is unsatisfactory overall, in spite of good, close work on literature texts for GCSE. There is a good school library and induction system, with regular visits to the library by English classes. However, there is little evidence of general enthusiasm for books, and not enough talk of books or sharing of preferences and recommendations in lessons. It is department policy that books being read in class are not taken home. This should be a serious concern to the department. It is understandable that some novels being read in Years 7 and 8 are kept for

class study, but students have not been able to take home the Shakespeare play they study for the Year 9 tests and even GCSE texts are usually collected in at the end of the lesson. For example, in the work on 'Great Expectations' in Year 10 there was limited opportunity to use the full text. Students had seen the film but in class worked only on extracts from the novel. Only those who had bought their own copies had the book at home. The good class teaching seen in Key Stage 4 should lead to extended reading outside the classroom but is unlikely to do this without book provision for all.

89. As reported in other subjects, standards in speaking across the school are at best satisfactory and more often unsatisfactory. Extended oral contributions and presentations are infrequent. In the best English lessons observed there was good response to teachers' questions and some lively discussion but in others there was not enough opportunity for students to become actively involved, argue a case or take on a role. Reading out answers or prepared contributions did not lead to animated exchange of views, particularly when the subject matter or initial exposition failed to arouse students' interest. More use of drama in English would increase students' confidence and pleasure in speaking, and there is scope for developing both improvisation and the prepared presentation of scenes from script.
90. The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in the four Year 10 lessons seen, with students responding well to appropriate material, skilfully presented by teachers who clearly enjoyed the work and could enthuse the class. Year 11 lessons could not be observed during the inspection, but examination of work folders showed that students in that year had been well prepared for the examinations they were about to sit. In Years 7 to 9, the quality of teaching as seen in lessons and reflected in workbooks was more variable. Half the lessons were good or very good, but some were unsatisfactory and two, though satisfactory, lacked variety and stimulus in content and presentation.
91. In the best lessons, teachers interpreted the schemes of work flexibly and creatively. There were brisk starters, material designed to get students thinking and asking questions, and good use of the Literacy Hour recommendations. A skilfully structured lesson in Year 8 used class reading of a novel to generate discussion on aspects of punishment for young offenders. Effective use of good material was seen in Year 10, where the subject of alcohol dangers produced some keen exploration of the difference between fact and opinion. Good interaction in a lesson on 'Macbeth' involved a consideration of Macbeth from the viewpoint of a psychiatrist, after an amusing 'Macbeth bingo' starting activity.
92. Where teaching was less successful, students, though usually compliant, were bored by tasks that did not arouse interest or appeal to the imagination. There was over-use of worksheets and exercises. Students were asked to look for 'emotive language' in a passage where other considerations were more meaningful, and to list adjectives from a passage and say how they 'made them feel'. Writing about leisure opportunities in their neighbourhood produced little beyond statements of the obvious and evident tedium. These lessons relied on task rather than teaching to get the lesson under way and opportunities to provoke thought, challenge assumptions and offer some new ideas were missed.
93. English uses information and communication technology in the classroom, though no direct teaching of skills was seen. It also contributes to students' numeracy skills, with imaginative use of graphs to analyse features of texts being studied. Two aspects of teaching that now require attention and monitoring are the consistency of marking, to ensure that all students have clear and continuing feedback on the quality and level of their work and how they can improve it. There is some excellent practice in the department on which to build. Less satisfactory overall is the provision for students learning English as an additional language. This is seldom mentioned in lesson plans and some teachers seemed unaware of the stages and needs of the earlier stage learners in their classes. There is no doubt that more advanced learners make satisfactory progress and respond well to good teaching, as do students with special educational needs. However, more thought needs to be given to helping and monitoring earlier stage learners and to closer liaison with the co-ordinator, especially for new arrivals.

94. The leadership and management of the department give a clear sense of purpose and direction. There is an excellent departmental handbook, and data and records are well used. Good relationships, teamwork and commitment to students are evident. However, staff development, and sharing skills across the department, needs improvement, as does the department's extra-curricular offer, which at present is limited. Good extra support is offered to students with their work but there are few activities to extend their range and experiences, such as clubs, performances, visits and visitors.
95. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with a significant increase in higher-level attainment. Although standards of speaking, reading and writing are still below the expected level, the amount of good work seen in all areas promises well for the future, and the English department is making a significant contribution to the success and progress of the school.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is satisfactory despite the turbulence in staffing
- There is effective teamwork among the mathematics staff
- Relationships between teachers and students are good. Students have confidence in their teachers
- There is very good provision for out-of-hours learning
- The new departmental leadership has a clear vision for future development

### Areas for improvement

- The students' attainment in GCSE mathematics remains well below the national average
- National test results at the end of Year 9 are well below average
- Some students' progress between Years 9 and 11 and girls' achievement at the end of Year 9
- The consistency of teachers' day-to-day assessment and recording of students' progress

96. Currently, the attainment of students in mathematics when they enter the school is below average. However, for older year groups, attainment was well below average when they started in Year 7. Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 show standards fluctuating from year to year from below to well below average. Attainment at the end of Year 9 at the expected Level 5 and above, in 2002, was below that of similar schools, as well as that for English and science. The proportion of the students gaining Level 6 or better was slightly higher than in 2001 but below that for similar schools. Nevertheless, the students' rate of progress was in line with those nationally with a similar starting point at the end of Year 6. Those students with special educational needs also made satisfactory progress from Year 7 to Year 9. Boys, however, achieved better than girls overall. Students from minority ethnic groups also achieved well. Because of the turbulence in staffing and in the leadership of mathematics, the department is not in a position to explain these results.
97. In the 2002 GCSE mathematics results, the proportion of the school's students achieving grades A\* to C was well below the national average. Mathematics results were also below the school average but close to those expected by the department. Based on the students' achievements at the end of Year 9, overall progress was satisfactory. The gap between boys' and girls' attainment, as seen in Year 9 tests, narrowed, and all students entered for GCSE mathematics, including those with special educational needs, were successful in achieving a pass grade. However, those students who attained average results at the end of Year 9 achieved less well in GCSE than other groups in the cohort. Again, the department has not clearly identified the reasons for the slower progress of some average-attaining students over the period of their GCSE course. Mathematics results compared unfavourably with those in science and English.

98. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Year 9 in lessons is well below average overall, and similar to that recorded in the national tests. Nevertheless, attainment ranges across the mathematics sets from average to well below average. Higher-group students display at least average numerical skills and are confident in using a range of standard methods in their calculations. They achieve steadily across all aspects of mathematics but particularly in shape and space. In a lesson on representing solids through two-dimensional drawings, students showed perseverance in responding to the teachers' high expectations, achieving above average outcomes in identifying the likely solid from the plans and elevations given. Middle-group students are mostly able to re-arrange number equalities to make meaningful mathematical sentences, though some are hampered by their limited grasp of number bonds. Students with special educational needs, and some of those in lower groups, still struggle to count accurately, for example, the number of sides in diagrams of cubes; however, most can, with help, tabulate their results and begin to spot simple patterns. For most students, however, weak literacy skills and a reluctance to think for themselves hamper their progress in mathematics. There is little evidence in students' exercise books, or in lessons, of well-founded explanations, either written or oral, for their solutions. Many have difficulty in showing the processes through which they find answers.
99. By the end of Year 11, the standards students achieve in mathematics lessons remain well below average overall. Some higher-group students, however, reach at least average standards, as in the lesson involving simultaneous equations. These students approach tasks systematically. However, a not insignificant number of this group have a hazy recall of earlier material, sometimes relying too much on half-remembered rules, as in the Year 10 lesson where operations involving directed numbers resulted in many arithmetical errors. Some able students achieve less than they should in their investigative and data handling tasks for GCSE mathematics, again because of poor literacy and interpretative skills. In middle groups, students have weak basic skills, such as estimation and tabulation. Ill-presented work and poor graphic skills limit the usefulness of exercise books as a recall resource, and contribute to the underachievement of some students. Students in lower groups and those with special educational needs continue to make steady progress over Years 10 and 11. They enhance their data handling skills and are able, for example, to calculate simple probabilities. However, uncertain numeracy skills such as simplifying fractions in the context of problem solving, sometimes hamper their work. Notably, some students in all attainment groups pay insufficient attention to the mathematical syntax of solutions.
100. The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall. In all lessons, teachers display adequate subject knowledge, are well organised, and manage students' behaviour very well. Relationships are very good. The National Numeracy initiative is positively influencing the work of the department. In the best lessons thorough planning ensures the work is well matched to the students' needs and earlier learning. The pace of lessons is brisk so that the students make the best use of their time, as in a Year 10 algebra lesson, and a Year 9 lesson on solids. Teachers take note of the need to emphasise visual skills, as well as listening and practical skills. In these lessons, students apply themselves well because of the collaborative effort between teachers and students to ensure sound learning. In the less effective lessons, teachers mostly plan the content of their lessons satisfactorily, secure in their knowledge of mathematics. However, in some lessons, students spend too long on written activities and do not benefit sufficiently from oral interactions or from work that is matched well to their needs. In many lessons, there are missed opportunities to assess and record the students' strengths and weaknesses, sometimes the result of imprecise learning objectives. Many individual students regularly receive good and immediate feedback on their work in lessons, but some students spend too long waiting for help because of teachers' focus on other individuals in the class. Marking across the department is inconsistent in frequency, regularity and quality. It is not always clear that incomplete work or errors are followed up. Teachers regularly accept work that is untidy and careless, and often fail to model good presentation in their written comments to students, and in their board work. As a result, students do not know how to improve their work.
101. Since the last inspection, progress within the mathematics department has been satisfactory. Overall, students are making steady progress and their attitude to mathematics has improved.

Teaching has improved and is now at least satisfactory. Staffing is more stable and there is presently a good match of teachers to the needs of the mathematics curriculum. The day-to-day management of the department is smooth. The leadership of the department is at a transition point. A new head of department had only just taken up the post at the start of the inspection and has the potential to develop the department appropriately, particularly because of the good teamwork within the department. However, some issues from previous inspections

remain to be improved. Attainment remains well below national expectations and below that of English and science. There is little use of ICT to enhance mathematics lessons, and some students underachieve in GCSE examinations.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Good leadership and management
- Good teaching
- Improving standards at the end of Years 9 and 11
- Good relationships in class
- Development of effective information management systems to track students' progress

### Areas for improvement

- Development of basic skills, especially literacy and numeracy, through science teaching
- Target setting to be based on rigorous monitoring of students' progress
- Level of participation by students in group discussion

102. Attainment in the National Tests at the end of Year 9 was below the national average in 2002. The average point score was well below the national average, but above average when compared to schools with a similar contextual background. The percentage of students gaining the higher Level 6, or greater, was also below average. The performance of boys was close to that of girls. The results improved dramatically in 2001, but are still higher in 2002 than they were in 2000. Attainment in science has been higher than in mathematics and broadly similar to that in English. Achievement at the end of Year 9 has been good.
103. At the end of Year 11, students' results in GCSE double award combined science in 2002 were below the national average in the percentage of students gaining grades A\* to C and the average point score per student. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. In comparison with schools with a similar background, the percentage of students gaining A\* to C was above average. In comparison with other schools, where the level of prior attainment at the end of Year 9 is within a similar range, the overall percentage of A\* to C grades was well above average in 2002 and indicates that achievement from the end of Year 9 to the end of Year 11 was good.
104. In the work seen in lessons and from the analysis of students' notebooks, the standards at the end of Year 9 reflect the test results and are below national expectations. Students have a basic knowledge of essential principles. For example, in the study of density, students understand its relationship to volume and mass, but many struggle to apply the concept to unfamiliar situations. Most students are competent in investigation work, especially in recording measurements and simple analysis. This reflects the department's thrust towards embedding investigative work across Key Stage 3. At the end of Year 11, the standards seen in lessons (Year 10) and written work, although variable, are overall in line with expectations nationally. A significant number of students, in higher sets, have gained a good understanding of difficult concepts such as the relationship between the current and the mass of copper deposited in electrolysis. In the same module, the majority of students have developed a sound understanding of, for example, chemical

reactions and word equations, and a minority struggle to grasp the basic ideas. The great majority of students have acquired a clear awareness of the approach to investigations, consider sensible predictions, measure and record observations with care. However, they do not think sufficiently widely about the results, nor evaluate the methods as a matter of course. Boys and girls are seen to work well together, and they progress purposefully, but without enough determination to ensure that their uncertainties and questions are fully resolved. This has some impact on eventual attainment reached in the examinations, and accounts for some variation between groups. Students with special educational needs make good progress in lessons because good support assistance is often provided, and teaching incorporates opportunities for individual help. For example, in a Year 10 low-attaining set, the support assistant talked through the practical task very well with two students with statements. Their understanding of practical procedures and basic knowledge about the decomposition of common laboratory carbonates clearly improved as a result of her intervention. Higher capability students make good progress especially since the setting arrangements enable appropriately demanding work to be planned. However, within the set, the more capable students do not make the progress expected if there is insufficient match of challenging tasks to students' capabilities.

105. Standards of literacy in science are satisfactory. Though considerable use is made of worksheets in Years 7, 8 and 9, some teaching strategies do emphasise the technical literacy. Insufficient attention is given to higher order questioning that encourages extended responses from students and deepens their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. Presentation needs to be given a higher priority. Diagrams and tables are not often drawn with adequate care. Numeracy skills, though embedded in work schemes, are not very explicitly promoted so that skills of simple calculation, use of equations and managing decimal places and significant figures are relatively weak and below expectation for a given age group. Opportunities for using ICT in science are insufficient and contribute only slightly to overall standards.
106. The quality of teaching, overall, is good. Two thirds of lessons seen were good, and the remainder satisfactory. Teachers have a good level of expertise in their subjects and plan lessons well to give variety of task and clear progression from previous work. Good support is given to students with lower capability and to those with special educational needs so that these groups can work easily alongside other students. Overall, expectations are high and students encouraged well to make every effort. Students respond well to this, relationships are good and learning is productive. Students are managed well to ensure good behaviour and the atmosphere is conducive to purposeful work. In some classes, however, students are not sufficiently engaged in discussion and opportunities to assess learning are not taken, particularly in plenary sessions. Often teachers explain concepts at great length without giving time for reflection or for students to effectively ask questions. There are inconsistencies in the quality and frequency of marking. In a few cases it is regular and gives encouragement, but often there is not enough guidance for students on how they can improve their level of work.
107. Leadership and management of the department are good. There is a clear focus on improvement and strategies to raise standards, which are proving to be effective at the end of Years 9 and 11. Good schemes of work have been developed for Years 7, 8 and 9 and the focus is now on later years. The department handbook provides good support for teachers, and an impressive interactive digital version is well on the way to being completed by the head of department. Assessment data are beginning to be gathered well and increasingly used to look for underachievement of students and in course planning. However, insufficient use is made of levels in assessments for the purpose of evaluating achievement. Monitoring of teachers' work is developing but it is not yet rigorous enough, especially through classroom observation, to clearly identify strengths and weaknesses. Accommodation is used well with effective display. Resources are also well managed except for the lack of ICT equipment. Members of staff contribute well to development, work effectively as a team and are supported well by able technicians. Since the last inspection standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 have shown improvement. Relationships remain good in lessons and teaching is emerging as a strength. The head of department has developed some very good spreadsheets for monitoring students' progress, so that assessment data are now used with increasing confidence. Hence, good progress has been made since the last inspection. Creating more opportunities for students to

develop their basic skills through science, and target setting based on rigorous tracking of student progress are areas for further improvement.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The standard of teaching is good
- The standard of drawing is good

### Areas for improvement

- Boys are underachieving at GCSE
- There is very little use made of ICT
- Students have limited opportunities to work in three dimensions
- The accommodation for some lessons is unsuitable

108. Recent Teacher Assessments carried out in Year 9 show that about half of students achieve a Level 5 or above. This is well below the national average; standards were particularly poor in 2001 when the figure was only 24 per cent against a national average of 63 per cent. At this stage there is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
109. Work seen during inspection shows that standards are improving. In particular, above average standards of drawing from observation and the use of tone and colour are being achieved by the majority of students. Students of all abilities are making good progress in Years 7 and 8 and current Year 9 work indicates that more students are achieving Level 5 than recent Teacher Assessment suggests. For example, some large-scale paintings inspired by surrealism show a high percentage of students able to achieve a very mature use of colour within well-composed finished work containing a high level of individuality.
110. GCSE results have fluctuated dramatically over recent years. In 2001 only 24 per cent of students achieved a grade C or above. This figure rose to 44 per cent in 2002. Each year girls are outperforming boys significantly. For example, in 2001 only nine per cent of boys achieved a grade C or above compared to 44 per cent of girls. This difference in achievement is much greater than the difference experienced nationally. Students, both boys and girls, taking art and design at GCSE are not performing as well in art and design as they do in other subjects. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 correspond to and confirm the levels being achieved at GCSE. In general the standard of work produced by the majority of boys does not improve significantly from Year 10 to 11.
111. The standards of work in the sketchbooks of higher-attaining students are very good. Colour sketches based on the study of other artists such as the Cubists show a very strong use of colour, are well composed and have a high level of finish. There is a limited range of media used, however. Research is also very thorough. The work of lower-attaining students is poorly presented and often incomplete, with little research evident. There is also little evidence of an improvement in skill development such as drawing or use of different media.
112. The standard of teaching is good. Both teachers have a thorough and professional level of subject knowledge and expertise. Lessons have clear objectives and are suitably structured with well-prepared resources and art materials. Most lessons include a specific focus on skill development. There is insufficient structured discussion in lessons and consequently students' ability to discuss and evaluate their work using an appropriate art vocabulary is poor. Students are well behaved and lessons have a good atmosphere with friendly and relaxed pupil-teacher relationships. Towards the end of some lessons, however, the attention of students begins to drift owing to exercises going on too long, resulting in the lower-attaining students' becoming chatty and off task.
113. Some lessons are currently taught in a workshop shared by the design and technology department, which provides unsatisfactory accommodation. For example, still life set-ups have to be dismantled after each lesson. Students taught in this room feel undervalued and are not

benefiting from the visual stimuli and appropriate working space available in a dedicated and well-resourced art room.

114. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory because the department has suffered from a period of discontinuity of staffing and lengthy periods of staff absence. The current temporary head of department has been in post only since January. In this time the main priority has been to improve the quality of lessons and to help students, particularly GCSE candidates, recover from a period of disruption. This has been achieved. The quality and use of sketchbooks by Years 10 and 11 have also been improved and assessment is now linked to national curriculum levels. However, many important issues, some highlighted in the last inspection, have not been addressed. In particular, the underachievement of boys at GCSE has not been tackled and there has been no improvement in the very limited use of ICT for both research and art making in all years. In addition, opportunities to work with three-dimensional media are very limited in all years. This is partly due to accommodation inadequacies, which makes it difficult to provide suitable areas for 3D work such as clay modelling.
115. The department does not have an awareness of the achievement of different groups of students and has no data or information to help plan and refine the curriculum to meet the specific needs of students within each class. Performance management of the department is unsatisfactory.
116. Visits to galleries are limited to GCSE students and there is currently no use of artists in residence or links with outside bodies. Letters to parents regarding concerns over GCSE course work have limited effect. There is limited display of students' artwork around the school. Students have benefited, however, from links with the local college on specific projects such as the production of large-scale paintings. An open door policy allows students from all years to continue their work both during lunchtime and after school.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- The very good ethos of the school, which encourages a cohesive community spirit
- Students are keen to learn and are encouraged to be active participants in their own learning
- Good subject knowledge of the staff
- A wide range of opportunities available to students to become informed citizens
- A strong commitment to raising standards of attainment

### Areas for improvement

- Management of the provision for citizenship following the recent resignation of the co-ordinator
- Monitoring of the curriculum submitted by subjects in the school audit
- Maintaining a record of students' citizenship work covered across the curriculum

117. The school meets statutory requirements for citizenship and makes satisfactory provision for all students. The subject is taught through all subjects of the National Curriculum based on an audit of citizenship strands included in the schemes of work and through discrete lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE). The standard of attainment of students by the end of Years 9 and 11 is satisfactory. There is a well-planned scheme of work throughout the school and students are given good opportunities to gain a wide range of experiences for citizenship development.
118. The students gain knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens. The school actively encourages the students to develop their understanding of citizenship through assemblies, in the relationship between staff and students, through organised activities and through direct teaching. In Year 7 the students learn about the key elements of parliamentary government in their history lessons and demonstrate its procedures in mock elections to parliament at the time of the last general election. Party candidates presented their manifestos

and returning officers replicated what happens in real life. The school offered further support by organising a visit by the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. Visits of Years 7, 8 and 10 students to the Houses of Parliament, and to Germany and France contribute significantly to their knowledge and understanding of citizenship in the national as well as the wider European community. By the end of Year 9 students are beginning to gain detailed knowledge and understanding of young people and the law, the legal and human rights underpinning a civilised society and the obligations of countries under international law. They discuss topical issues including migration and the rights of asylum seekers. Citizenship of the wider community is fostered in the modern foreign languages department during the residential visit of Year 10 and 11 students to Germany. They examine the rights and responsibilities of the 16 to 18 age group in that country and make comparisons with the United Kingdom.

119. They develop skills of enquiry and communication, for example when Year 11 students in design and technology classes gather information and discuss the influence of brand names on young people in order to influence choice. Year 10 students, similarly, carry out research on diets and their importance to physical fitness and a healthy life style. In geography lessons students survey the volume of traffic in the vicinity of the school and make recommendations of ways to improve safety in the environment. Year 10 students use census data to select relevant information in order to plot the distribution of unemployment in the wards of Waltham Abbey. In preparation for real life situations the mathematics department offers students the opportunity to discuss the use and abuse of statistics.
120. Skills of participation and responsible action are developed, as students are encouraged to become involved in the smooth running of the school. Each year group has a year group council with elected representatives and makes suggestions to the School Council. The council is run by the students for the students, independent of staff control. During the inspection the Year 9 council demonstrated mature skills in proposing ways of reducing the risk of road accidents outside the school gates by proposing that the school place a large mirror in a strategic position rather than asking the local authority to install a crossing which would most likely take forever or never happen. The students engage in a very wide range of community actions. Red Nose Day provided the opportunity to raise funds for the children's appeal as did non-uniform day for the NSPCC. Year 9 students volunteer to provide reading support for students at the neighbouring primary school on a regular basis at lunchtime. The students organise a summer party for senior citizens that coincides with the citizens' award presentation. Leaders of local businesses visit the school to conduct mock interviews for older students and the work experience programme is recognised as a successful contribution to the community and the world of work. Several students have won Jack Petchey Awards for citizenship in a wide range of activities.
121. Discussions with staff and students, analysis of work and observations at council meetings, at assembly and in lessons indicate that the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make it clear to the students when the topic contributes to the development of citizenship. This was clearly demonstrated in a Year 10 lesson on sex education when the students were made aware of rights and responsibilities as citizens of the community. Assemblies provide a good forum where teachers lead discussion on issues affecting the school community and the wider world. They generally enter and leave to the strains of a wide range of music, which encourages appreciation of the contribution of other cultures to the quality of one's life. The thought-for-the-day is a feature of tutorial periods.
122. Management of the subject is satisfactory. An assistant headteacher has assumed responsibility following the recent retirement of the co-ordinator for the subject. Systems have been well established to ensure a smooth transition. The teacher for each tutor group maintains a portfolio of certificates of achievements for each pupil that will eventually contain samples of work on citizenship. Assessment procedures and tracking of students' progress are under discussion and a temporary system is being piloted. The monitoring of attainment and teaching is not yet fully established. There is a strong commitment of the management to raise the profile of citizenship as an integral part of the education that the school offers its students.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good.
- Teachers' knowledge, planning of lessons and management of students in lessons are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Attainment of students.
- The pace and challenge of some lessons.
- The lack of opportunity to use textiles.

123. Standards on entry to the school are variable and below the national average overall. They have improved in the past two years but a significant number of students continue to enter the school with low design and technology skills. Standards at the end of Year 9 are well below the national averages. In 2002, one in three students reached the expected national standard at the end of Year 9. Overall, given their low starting point, achievement is satisfactory. Students from ethnic minority groups progress as well as, and sometimes better than other students. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress with extra help from teachers and learning assistants.
124. More than one in four students opts to take the subject in Year 10. In 2002, when all students took the subject, the GCSE examination results were well below the national average with less than one in three students obtaining the higher A\* - C grades. The proportion obtaining A\* - G grades was slightly below the national average. Students did best in food technology and graphic products. Girls performed better than boys, broadly in line with the national trend. The GCSE in child development has been discontinued. Overall achievement is satisfactory.
125. The standards of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are always satisfactory and good overall. Teachers give very good introductions to lessons and lessons are well planned. Relationships between teachers and students are good and teachers are relaxed. As a result, the control of students in lessons is achieved with a degree of ease and students enjoy most lessons. There is good emphasis on health and safety. Teachers use well-prepared workbooks and give good help to individual students during practical lessons. Students learn to design and make a satisfactory range of products using wood, plastic, metal and food materials. There are no lessons in textiles. They learn to use simple mechanisms, electronics and structures satisfactorily. However, the pace and challenge of some lessons are unsatisfactory. More needs to be done to raise the skills levels of students and to make them more aware of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of their work.
126. In a very good food lesson in Year 7 students were seen learning the characteristics of various cookers. In this lesson, a learning assistant was helping a student with a statement effectively and the technician provided good general support to all students. In another lesson in the same year students were seen learning about the properties of plywood and how to use simple hand-tools to shape it to make their individual wall plaques designs well. In a good Year 8 food lesson students were seen learning to change the appearance and colour of food by mixing and cooking. In Year 9 students were seen creating a three-dimensional drawing satisfactorily using instruments and one-point perspective, a similar exercise to one they had done in the previous year. Students' work is regularly marked at the end of each section of work and well recorded. Students keep a record of their marks and are made aware of their progress.
127. The standards of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are always satisfactory and sometimes very good. In a satisfactory Year 10 lesson students were seen learning about the markets for the toys they were learning to design and make. Students were very well managed in this lesson but rather subdued and unenthusiastic about the work. In a very good lesson in the

same year students were observed making Victoria sponges to recipes that reduced either the fat or sugar content. In this lesson two students with hearing impediment were helped very effectively by the quality of the specialist support. The standard and quality of the Year 11 coursework is disappointing and well below national expectation. Students must be encouraged to use ICT more to improve presentation of their work - it should be the norm and not the exception - and to produce accurate and well finished products. It is clear from the coursework that students do not have the underpinning skills to enable them to undertake high quality coursework. All students do the same range of work and the work involves low levels of technology.

128. The day-to-day management of the department is satisfactory. Teachers work well together but there is complacency over the need to raise standards. All practical lessons are undertaken in single periods, an arrangement which is inadequate and leads to inefficient use of time. Changes since the 1998 inspection are unsatisfactory. Many of the issues raised at the time of the last inspection remain.

## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- Standards are improving and students achieve well in lessons.
- The subject is popular and now has the necessary rigour to ensure future improvements.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

### Areas for improvement

- Developing teaching strategies to enhance further students' depth and quality of response.
- Developing assessment systems which ensure that students know how to improve their work

129. Standards in drama are improving. In 2002, approximately half the cohort took the subject and of these half gained grades A\* to C. All students taking the subject achieved a grade in the A\* to G range. Girls did better than boys, reflecting the national picture. Overall, achievement is good given the fact that students have low level of skills when they enter the school. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below what might be expected in terms of 'performance' but there is evidence that the range of drama skills is developing over time and students' co-operative and social skills are broadly average. In most classes there is camaraderie between the students and they support each other. This inclusive ethos ensures that all students, even those with additional needs, are involved and participate to the same level as their peers. In response to a First World War poem, Year 10 students were able to effectively create a 'still photograph' of a proud father saying good-bye to his son, adding the spoken thoughts and revealing the hidden tensions within the rest of the family. The work was effective, at an appropriate standard for GCSE, but its effectiveness revealed that the students were capable of significantly greater depth of response. Younger students are prepared to share their work, sustain a character, albeit with varying degrees of concentration, play out a scenario, and explore the specific dramatic technique suggested.
130. The fact that students achieve well indicates a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is satisfactory with many good features, an improvement since the previous inspection. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and manages the classes effectively, controlling over-enthusiastic or occasional silly behaviour with a quiet calm courtesy and ensuring that the classes engage with the task. Relationships are good; work is planned well and builds systematically and students achieve well within the parameters of the lesson as a result. They clearly enjoy the subject and the sense of success that they gain from it. The teacher has very successfully reversed the situation described in the previous full report and created the virtuous spiral whereby success breeds further success. The teacher has created successfully a climate and structure for students to achieve, techniques and skills are taught systematically and

students are increasing their dramatic experience. The next stage is for the teacher to build on this and develop the teaching skills to focus on extending further the students' depth of response. For example, currently, the teacher uses the technique of being a character, for example, a detective inspector addressing fellow police colleagues, the class, asking them to investigate a poem for 'clues'. Currently, the potential for this approach to 'lift' the drama into another level is only being partially tapped.

131. Drama lies outside the formal National Curriculum and unlike music and art and design does not have prescribed levels. The subject should develop its own criteria and use these and the GCSE grade criteria in an overt way to ensure that students are aware of what they need to do in order to improve their work.
132. It is evident that the negative picture of the subject in the last full inspection has been addressed well and that the subject is now in a good position to make significant further improvements. The teacher responsible for the subject is clearly committed to improving further the standards that students attain and the necessary elements are now in place on which this improvement can be built.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- A strong commitment to raising standards of attainment.
- Students are keen to learn and respond well to their teachers.
- Good subject knowledge of the staff.
- Some high quality teaching skills by some members of staff.
- A significant upward trend in attainment at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE results at the end of Year 11 over the past three years.

### Areas for improvement

- Attainment at all levels by: developing students' literacy skills, increasing the volume of work, improving the quality of presentation of work, higher expectations of what students can achieve through independent learning and the use of computers in teaching and learning.
- Opportunities for fieldwork for all year groups.
- Staffing to include specialist support.
- Arrangements for the subject under the umbrella of humanities.

133. The proportion of students attaining Level 5 and above in the 2002 assessment was below the national average and the percentage achieving A\* to C grades in the GCSE examinations was also below the national average. However, the proportion gaining a pass was in line with the national average. The trend over the past three years has been steadily upward, showing a doubling of results over this period.
134. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Overall results have improved year on year, schemes of work have been updated, teaching has improved through planning and a culture for learning has been established.
135. In the work seen during the inspection standards of attainment are below expectations at the end of Year 9. Achievement is satisfactory in relation to the students' prior attainment. There is no significant difference noted between the attainment of boys and girls. During their lesson on Italy the higher-attaining students demonstrated the ability to link cause and effect in discussing the influence of physical features on the distribution of settlement. However the volume and quality of work completed in the lesson are below expectation and not all students showed the ability to use the atlas with confidence. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced. Students in Year 7 are taught to interpret symbols on maps and understand the use of contour lines to show relief, reinforced by the building of the relief models on display. In subsequent years they study

contrasting environments when comparing quality of life in Kenya, Brazil and England. They examine the impact of natural hazards such as volcanoes, earthquakes and flooding on human activity. Insufficient use is made, however, of ICT to enhance learning but there are a few exceptions. Provision for students' cultural development is made through the study of the Maasai and Kikuyu peoples of Kenya.

136. The standard of work seen for students in Years 10 and 11 is below expectation but the students make satisfactory progress starting from a low base. They follow the examination board syllabus building on their knowledge accumulated in earlier years. For example, they extend the work done in Year 7 in preparing their case study of Bangladesh. Mapping skills are utilised in Year 11 after they spend a day gathering information in Waltham Abbey on perceptions of the 'quality of life' based on the range of shops, traffic, amount of litter and attractiveness of the environment. Awareness of global issues is fostered by the creation of a poster illustrating the effect of rainforest destruction on climate and the economy of less economically developed countries. However, the work generally lacks in depth analysis and the use of key skills of geographical investigation. Insufficient use is made of computers to enhance learning and lack of pride in the work is revealed by the quality of presentation. Whilst there is use and development of numeracy and literacy skills within a geographical context, for example in data handling, there is little evidence of annotation of maps and photographs, use of scale and fieldwork to illustrate the development of geographical skills. A common feature across all year groups is the lack of extended use by students of oral language to ask questions, express ideas or offer explanations and reasons.
137. The students have a very positive attitude to their learning, which needs to be utilised in order to raise standards further. They are very well behaved and show respect for their teachers and for one another. Where relationships are good the amount and quality of work are better.
138. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some examples of good and excellent practice. Where teaching is good or better there is evidence of good planning with necessary resources provided enabling learning to proceed at a good pace. The work is planned to match the needs of all students, including extension exercises for the higher-attaining, gifted and talented students. This was well demonstrated in a Year 7 lesson on understanding the weather, in which the students asked probing questions, showed great enthusiasm for finding out, demonstrated the acquisition of detailed knowledge and understanding by the end of the lesson and were keen to continue the exercise for homework. In line with the ethos of the school the teachers value the students and generally have a good relationship with them. Where there is room for improvement in teaching, expectations of what students can do are not always high enough and opportunities for independent learning are insufficient. There is a tendency to over-teach at the expense of learning. That is to say, there is over-emphasis on the teacher supplying the answers rather than developing the students' skills to reach their own conclusions. Insufficient attention is paid to the volume of work recorded in each lesson. The quality of presentation of work is well below expectation and too many grammatical errors and unclear statements and too much poor spelling are ignored in marking. There is little evidence of the use of computers in teaching, although some students make very good use of home facilities to enhance their work, as seen in an excellent piece of work by a Year 7 pupil on 'Flooding in Bangladesh'. The student presented an independent investigation on the human, economic, cultural and religious importance of the river Ganges using ICT as a research tool but presented in an original style.
139. The subject is satisfactorily managed within the complicated humanities departmental structure. However, there are issues that need to be addressed. Geography is taught in Years 7 to 9 as part of a humanities course with history and religious education. Timetabling arrangements feature a complex mixture of a six-week block and a two-week cycle alternating with history. This results in a degree of uncertainty amongst the students as to which lesson they will have, as well as discontinuity in their learning over a significant period of time, and this has a negative impact on standards of attainment. Although the quality of teaching offered by some non-specialists is of a very high standard, there is only one specialist geographer teaching the subject, which limits the pool of subject knowledge and the sharing of responsibilities. Opportunities for fieldwork are inadequate. There is nevertheless a strong commitment to raising standards. Over the past two

years, under present management, results at the end of Year 9 and GCSE examination results have improved significantly. New schemes of work have been produced. Further developments include the identification and purchase of new resources and the selection of a GCSE examination syllabus better suited to the pupil population. Resources have been increased and improved and systems for assessment and recording introduced, although they have not been in place long enough to bear fruit. Discussions are on-going to introduce a Certificate of Achievement as an alternative for some students. There is a positive vision for the future.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- There is a clear commitment to raise standards and develop interest in the subject.
- Teachers deliver well-structured and interesting lessons
- Teachers make good use of a variety of carefully selected resources to promote learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The overall standards of attainment
- The standards of literacy which are needed to underpin achievement
- The quality of assessment, leading to a standardised marking and correction policy.
- The information given to students about their performance.
- The monitoring of pupils' progress

140. In 2002, GCSE results were well below the national average for all maintained schools. Thirty-nine per cent of students achieved grades A\* to C. Although in terms of relative performance these results were amongst the weakest in the school and fell below the LEA average for the subject, they represented a clear improvement in percentage terms on the GCSE results of the previous four years.
141. Inspection evidence shows that students are attaining standards that are below those expected nationally by the end of Year 9. However, this represents satisfactory achievement considering their levels of attainment when they enter the school. Students have a basic knowledge and understanding of the major historical events and personalities they are studying. They appreciate that history is based on evidence. All, including those with special educational needs, can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial sources. Most students have below average oral and listening skills, and many demonstrate poor writing skills. Lower-attaining students can write in simple sentences to describe historical events but their work is flawed by poor sentence construction, incorrect grammar and spelling errors. Higher-attaining students write more extensively and with greater fluency, although weaknesses in literacy can reduce the quality of their performance. The majority of students find difficulty in adopting a formal writing style. Many are hesitant when communicating information. Low-attaining students lack confidence when dealing with fundamental concepts such as cause and change, and struggle to make effective links. Overall, students show a developing sense of chronology and the majority are beginning to use historical terms appropriately. Standards of presentation vary across the range.
142. At the end of Year 11, the overall standards attained by students are well below those expected nationally. However, their progress is satisfactory, given their low starting point on entry to the school. Students are able to use sources to support their narratives but some still find difficulty in drawing more than basic references. Whilst many students demonstrate keen interest and sound levels of motivation, which are reflected in a growing uptake in history at GCSE, others lack drive and powers of concentration. The writing and presentation skills of a significant number remain weak. Although ready to follow the instructions of their teachers, some students find difficulty in working at a brisk pace or pursuing independent lines of historical enquiry in depth. By the end of Year 11, the majority of students are still dependent on their teachers for their learning.
143. Students arrive at the school with well below average levels of literacy and few skills in the subject. Overall, they are making satisfactory progress in lessons. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs, including those students with English as an additional language, generally make similar rates of progress as their peers. Higher-attaining students, including the gifted and talented students, are making good progress when taught in set groups with others who share the potential for high achievement.

144. The quality of classroom teaching is consistently good. Teachers possess an appropriate level of subject knowledge. Lessons are carefully planned, clearly structured and well paced. Learning objectives are outlined at the start of each lesson and an attempt is made to conclude with an evaluation of gains in learning. Teachers are positive in their approach and deliver interesting lessons. Good quality resources are used to stimulate historical curiosity and help understanding, as was seen in a Year 10 lesson, where extracts from a film helped students to appreciate the horror of the Holocaust, and in a Year 7 lesson where video clips enabled students to contemplate the scale of the Black Death in Medieval England. Support is provided for slower learners through sensitive interventions and the provision of a good range of differentiated teaching materials including writing frames. Much is done to encourage students capable of high attainment through a good variety of extension tasks. Overall, positive relationships based on mutual respect exist between teachers and students, contributing to standards of classroom control that are at least satisfactory.
145. The department acknowledges the importance of skills development in lesson planning. Opportunities exist for the development of numeracy and ICT skills. However, teachers recognise that it is in the domain of literacy that many students find their most significant challenge. By encouraging students to write for a range of audiences and to read aloud in class, they are developing confidence in the use of language. Nevertheless, more could be done to help students to improve their literacy skills by incorporating regular comprehension, spelling and punctuation exercises in lesson planning, and by adopting a consistent policy in respect of the correction of written work. Many students need further guidance in checking the grammar and sense of their writing if they are to acquire the confidence to express themselves fluently. In the same way, students lack detailed diagnostic feedback giving clear indications as to how they could improve the quality of their work. Overall, students lack information about their learning and do not have sufficient opportunities to evaluate their own progress. In this important respect, the department falls short in its aim of building a strong learning ethos and a culture of achievement.
146. The head of faculty has managed the department since September 2000. There is a commitment to raise standards and to improve pupil attainment, which is reflected in a positive ethos. Appropriate priorities are being set for the future. The head of faculty recognises the requirement to improve the pupil monitoring and assessment procedures. History teachers do not set or share individual targets with students. In the same way, there are no centralised or computerised recording systems to assist with the process of monitoring student progress and analysing value-added data. Although the teachers co-operate effectively and meet regularly, there are few opportunities for them to observe their peers or to consider ideas and strategies with other colleagues. The faculty handbook is clear and well produced. Appropriate schemes of work are in place. However, there are aspects of discontinuity in the delivery of the curriculum in Key Stage 3 because history is not taught as a separate subject. The humanities area has attractive and colourful displays of students' work, which celebrate pupils' achievement. For the future there are plans to enrich the curriculum and develop cultural understanding by extending the programme of visits. There is also scope for the department to broaden the international awareness of the students by offering a selection of history or current affairs clubs during the extended day. Topics of study help towards the development of moral, spiritual, cultural and social understanding, and in the teaching of citizenship.
147. Although standards of attainment remain well below the national average, there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. The response of students to history in lessons has improved significantly.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**, but most of the elements are now in place for a rapid improvement in achievement.

Strengths
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- Actions taken to introduce discrete ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 are good.
- Teachers' shared commitment to succeed is good.
- Monitoring and development of graduate and overseas trained teachers are good.
- The collaborative arrangements to enable gifted and talented students to take the GCSE in ICT in Year 9 and other examinations in ICT early.

Areas for improvement

- Continuity and progression through the curriculum in Years 7 to 9.
- Achievement of students.
- Address the lack of use of ICT in other subjects across the school.
- The regular assessment of students' work and feedback to students on their progress.

148. Standards on entry to the school were below the national average at the time the current Year 9 students entered the school. In 2002, when ICT was only taught as a part of other subjects, standards at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average, with only four out of ten students reaching the expected national standard. It is difficult to assess the current overall achievement because, in September 2002, the school introduced discrete ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 simultaneously and standards on entry to the school have improved. Standards in Year 7 are now broadly in line with the national expectation but remain below the national expectation in Years 8 and 9 since students in these years have not received the full benefit of the changes that have been made.
149. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. Students from ethnic minority groups make satisfactory progress, and sometimes better, progress than other students. In 2001, five Year 9 students, three disaffected, were selected to take the GCSE course in ICT, as a part of a collaborative programme for gifted and talented students. The examination results were excellent with all students obtaining A\* - C grade passes. Two of these students have since gone on to take the A level in ICT in Years 10 and 11.
150. In September 2002, all students in Year 10 began the GNVQ and four out of ten students the GNVQ, Part 1, in Year 11; both at intermediate level. This course has yet to be finally examined but early indications are that standards are well below the national average, although students gain certification of the various modules that comprise the course. The opportunities for students to apply ICT in other subjects are unsatisfactory overall.
151. The standards of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are inconsistent but good overall. All teachers introduce lessons well and use good worksheets. They make particularly good use of the computerised overhead projector to demonstrate work. Their relationships with students are good and they assist individual students well to undertake practical work. In Year 7, students were seen satisfactorily learning to interpret and display data contained in a spreadsheet. Students had collected the data in previous lessons. Because the scheme of work is new and has been introduced in all years simultaneously, students learn a somewhat restricted range of ICT skills. In Years 8 and 9 students were seen in three different lessons learning to construct web pages and how to link them using hyperlinks with varying degrees of success. In two of these lessons the sequence of what students had to do and learn had not been well thought out. In the other, minor misbehaviour and disruption by a significant minority of students slowed the pace of learning. The scheme of work for years 7 to 9 needs to ensure that there is good continuity and progress in what students learn. More emphasis is needed on basic principles and understanding rather than just requiring students to undertake tasks on computers. Students' work is assessed at the end of each year for mainly reporting purposes. It should be assessed more frequently in order to inform students of their progress.
152. The standards of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are always satisfactory and sometimes good. In two lessons in Year 10 students were seen learning to create a multimedia presentation with varying degrees of success. In one of these lessons, students were learning satisfactorily to create a presentation for students in Year 6 about life at Heathcote School. In the other, students were seen using a teaching programme, developed by teachers and learning very effectively about the purpose, audience, interaction, appearance and impact of presentations. The

pace of learning over time is a problem. Students in Year 11 have taken their final examinations but have not yet completed their final course unit. Some low-attaining students in both Years 10 and 11 are finding the GNVQ course too demanding and are unlikely to complete the award. There is a need to broaden the range of learning opportunities in Years 10 and 11 to cater more adequately for these students. Graduate and overseas trained teachers are monitored, developed and guided well. All teachers share a commitment to succeed and are working well together to improve teaching and schemes of work.

153. The day-to-day management of the department is satisfactory. The head of the department has done well over the past two years to develop the new network and to introduce discrete ICT lessons and courses. Changes since the 1998 inspection have been good. More needs to be done to improve continuity and progress through the curriculum and the achievement of students. Applications of ICT in most other subjects are patchy.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **good** and there are some very good features.

### Strengths

- Rising standards with good results in GCSE German and an improving trend in GCSE French.
- Very good leadership and management over a sustained period, with a strong focus on improving the quality of learning and teaching.
- Very good provision for extra-curricular activity, notably the opportunities for travel to Germany.
- Some very good teaching in both French and German.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve the independent learning skills of all students.
- Further extend the opportunities available for students to develop ICT skills for the purposes of language learning.
- Share and extend the very good teaching practice which currently exists within the department for the benefit of all students,

154. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are higher in German than in French and they vary in both languages according to students' prior attainment levels. The percentages achieving Level 5 or better in 2002 improved and were above the national average in German, in line with the national average in French and below in Spanish. There is little difference between the standards achieved by boys and girls.
155. GCSE results in French in 2002 were well below the national average. The boys achieved similar results in this subject as they did in the average for all their other subjects and girls' results were below the average for all their other subjects, but not significantly so. Results in German were slightly above the national average overall, with boys doing nearly as well as girls despite the opposite national trend. Students achieved much better results in German than they did in the average for all their other subjects.
156. The progress made by students over time in Years 7 to 9 has been very good in German and satisfactory in French. It is partly dependent on whether or not they have been taught by a permanent member of staff. Progress follows a similar pattern in Years 10 and 11 and was a major factor in producing last summer's German results. Continuity of teaching has been less constant in French and this year the regular pattern of visits to France has not been maintained. The department has made strenuous efforts to ensure that no pupil has been disadvantaged by giving appropriate work when a specialist teacher has not been available and, where staffing has permitted, allocating an experienced member of staff to students who have spent time without a permanent teacher.
157. Staffing has improved recently and teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good overall in French and German, with most of the teaching either very good or satisfactory. No Spanish teaching was observed at

this level. Strengths include the teachers' good knowledge and subject-based skills, swift pace, good variety of activity and useful homework tasks. Very good links exist with two partner primary schools, enabling secondary staff to introduce languages to younger students and promote a high level of motivation. Teaching is less good when staff teach a language they do not know well, when teachers do not insist sufficiently on students' using the foreign language and when the teacher dominates lessons. Students do not use the school's ICT facilities often enough; examples were seen where students neither knew how to type foreign accents nor make systematic use of foreign language spelling and grammar checks.

158. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good in German and satisfactory overall in French and Spanish. Students are well disciplined and have very good relationships with teachers. Lessons contain a variety of lesson activity and students acquire very good knowledge of grammatical terminology and awareness of how it helps them learn. Assessment procedures linking work to national expectations give students a clear idea of how to improve. For example, with a group of Year 10 students, the teacher explained how the dialogue they had learned by heart would be graded in the GCSE. Motivation is high, promoted by participation in cultural events, such as the "Festival of poetry from around the world" and singing in class. A particularly good example was seen in the after hours class for Year 10 students in German where the teacher accompanied their singing of a German walking song on the guitar. The trips abroad have a strong impact on learning; students return with raised self-esteem and this has an effect on personal and academic development across the curriculum, not just in languages. As with younger year groups, some lessons in Year 10 are dominated by teachers, conscious of the need to impart large amounts of information and skill. When they play too important a role in directing learning, students do not have enough opportunity to practise speaking themselves or to develop independent learning skills.
159. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The previous head of department, recently appointed as an advanced skills teacher, has provided clear educational direction since being appointed five years ago. The high value placed by the school on language learning and on the students' own languages has resulted in very good attitudes towards the subject and good progress, especially in German. Links with parents are a particular strength, contributing greatly to the success of the overseas visits. The department conducts regular frank reviews of its progress, documented so that improvements can be measured. The subject audit is realistic and details useful action for dealing with the issues identified. The department is embarking on a programme to spread good practice so that all students can benefit. The need for students to develop independent learning skills has not been identified and, whilst some students are good at this, there is no systematic programme for ensuring that all develop these skills. Improvement since the inspection of 1998 has been very good, with progress in almost every respect.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Students enjoy the expanding range of opportunities for music making
- There is a new sense of optimism about the future development of music at this school

### Areas for improvement

The school should raise students' attainment levels in music by:

- expecting more of them;
- engaging them confidently and actively in all aspects of the learning process;
- increasing the number of students taking instrumental lessons;
- planning lessons with greater rigour.

160. Since the last inspection progress has been satisfactory overall, largely as a result of the appointment in September 2002 of an effective head of music. Progress until then was unsatisfactory, and this was reflected in the very poor GCSE results for music in 2002. It is still evident in the very low standards of attainment in Years 8, 9 and 10. Many students in Year 9 have made little progress in music during their time at the school. Only in Year 7 do standards approach an acceptable level; though only average, they are as high as standards in the current Year 9. The expressive arts programme has reduced teaching time for Year 8 music this year but the appointment of another music teacher in the near future will enable the school to remedy this from September 2003.
161. The head of department has had to make a fresh start in leading this department forward, and has made satisfactory progress to date. She has produced schemes of work, lesson plans and a music department handbook. Some aspects of the procedures defined in the handbook have been implemented. Teaching resources, and especially the electronic keyboards, have been substantially improved, much to the pleasure of many students, and students are offered a range of extra-curricular activities, including choirs, steel pan and guitar groups and very pleasant informal musical gatherings at lunchtimes. However, important elements of good practice have yet to be developed. There was little evidence, during the inspection week, of the effective assessment and recording of students' achievements, and no mention of target setting. No reference was made to National Curriculum levels. Students have little or no awareness of their progression through a coherent curriculum; they often do not know what they have to do in order to improve their work. There are many missed opportunities for the teaching of the precise and cogent use of language and for the teaching of numeracy. Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 have no access to ICT. A more rigorous approach to departmental action planning, focusing upon students' achievements and supported by the school's performance management system will enable the department to quickly address these issues.
162. Teaching is sound throughout the department. Students speak well of the impact that the new head of department has had upon their learning. They like and respect her and they value her ability to manage classes firmly, effectively and purposefully. They sense her enthusiasm and her obvious, energetic commitment to them as learners and, as a result, they are becoming more motivated to succeed in music: their behaviour and their learning are improving as a direct result of the improvement in the quality of teaching. After a brief and brisk introduction, in a Year 7 lesson, to Javanese *gamelan* music, students made good progress playing and recording a simple tune on keyboards, closely supported individually and collectively by the teacher. More able students progressed onto two part playing. A pupil with special needs was encouraged by the teacher to adopt a different approach to the task and, as a result, made good progress.
163. Where teaching was less than effective, learning objectives were unclear and not communicated fully to students and students were praised for work of poor quality and they were not provided with clear guidance for improvement. In every lesson observed, the teacher provided insufficient opportunity for students to engage in extended discussion, debate, dialogue and verbal presentation in order to elaborate and consolidate their understanding of musical concepts. The teacher's questions tended to be closed, requiring only one-word answers. This was the single most important weakness observed in the music department during the inspection, and one that can readily be addressed now that the department has stabilised.
164. Although many students enjoy their instrumental lessons and make some progress, the number of students taking instrumental lessons – around 8% - is relatively small and performance standards remain low. A rapid and substantial increase in the numbers of students taking instrumental lessons will do much to raise standards in music.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

#### Strengths

- Leadership and management of the department by the new head of department are good in many ways.
- Teaching is predominantly good and ensures that students make good progress overall, especially in Year 10 lessons.
- Lessons are well planned with clear progressions.
- Relationships are good and students work well together.

#### Areas for development

- Standards are below expectation throughout the school.
- Little use is made of new technology to support learning.
- In some lessons there is an undercurrent of low-level disruption by a minority of students.

165. The percentage of students who achieved an A\* to C grade in the 2002 GCSE examination was well below the national average. Students achieve slightly better in other subjects than in physical education. Early indications gained from the moderation of the 2003 mock examination by the examining board suggest that standards will improve significantly this year. In a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson the students achieved at a satisfactory standard overall when learning about the different components of fitness and training methods that are suitable for each component. Higher-attaining students have good knowledge of vocabulary, which they demonstrate through extended verbal responses to challenging questions. However, standards of written work in the lesson and in folders indicate that, overall, whilst standards are improving, they are still below national averages. Higher-attaining students have good knowledge of anatomy and physiology and the effects of diet on physical performance and are working towards an A\* to C grade. More than half of the students display limited knowledge and are working below grade C. In core lessons in Year 10 students make good progress and in soccer and athletics they attain standards that are in line with those expected at this age. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is a second language make progress in line with other students. During the inspection no Year 11 lessons were observed as students were on GCSE study leave.
166. Assessments made by teachers judge standards to be below the national average by the end of Year 9 and inspection evidence confirms this judgement. Students' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, given that many start at the school with low levels of physical and games skills. Although they acquire new skills in all lessons, the activities are often at an introductory level. They display good knowledge of what they have learned through question and answer but this theoretical understanding is not always matched by their own performance. When given opportunity to suggest ways for their partner to improve, as in Year 8 and Year 9 athletics, they show improving knowledge of hurdle technique. Fielding skills in Year 7 are below the expectation, with the vast majority of boys lacking accuracy when returning the ball and applying the skills in small-sided games. Girls make very good progress in Year 9 tennis when learning to volley but the skills are at a very introductory level and standards are below those expected at this age. Throughout the school students have good knowledge of anatomical vocabulary and perform stretches with good techniques in the main.
167. Teaching is at least satisfactory and is good overall and ensures that students make good progress in the majority of lessons. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. In Year 10 teaching is consistently good in core lessons and very good in the GCSE theory lesson observed. In the GCSE lesson the teacher has very good knowledge, which ensures that students learn very effectively. Tasks include analysis of a video clip to enable pairs of students to identify the elements of fitness required for the sports shown. Students are challenged to identify different training methods for different elements of fitness and are made very aware of the types of answers that are needed in the final examination. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is good or better in more than half of the lessons. Teaching is very good in Year 9 tennis because the teacher has good knowledge and sets up progressive activities using space and resources very well to ensure that the girls make very good progress.

168. Lessons are very well planned with clear objectives that are shared with students so that they know what they are about to learn. Tasks are introduced progressively in lessons. Lessons have good pace, which helps to keep students on task and enjoying the activities. Teachers have good subject knowledge that enables students to acquire new skills, though they are often at a basic level. In a minority of lessons activities or equipment are varied to enable all students to achieve at their own level. Good examples of this were in Year 9 tennis, when the higher-attaining students were given more advanced tasks and in hurdling lessons in Years 8 and 9, when equipment was varied to introduce hurdling to groups with different levels of attainment. Relationships are good and students are managed well ensuring that behaviour in most lessons by most students is good. Although there are some good opportunities for students to evaluate the performance of a partner, such as in Year 9 athletics and Year 7 striking and fielding, these opportunities are too infrequent. Demonstrations are used effectively, but too infrequently, to show quality and to reinforce teaching points. Little use is made of new technology to support learning.

169. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good overall in the majority of lessons and are very good in Year 10. In these lessons they listen well, follow teachers' instructions and answer questions courteously. Relationships are good and students work well together in pairs and in small teams. Standards of kit, an issue in the previous report, are good, with almost all students wearing school colours. They are keen, show good physical effort and try hard, though, occasionally, there was no great desire to improve the quality of their skills. For example, in Year 7 tennis, students participated willingly but without using the skills introduced and in Year 7 fielding activities there was no great desire to improve the accuracy of their returns. In Year 7 lessons there is also an undercurrent of low-level disruptive behaviour, which is more annoying than malicious but means that teachers have to continually deal with lively, chatty students who take time to settle.
170. Leadership and management of the department are good. A new head of department has been in place for two terms and is already making a good impact. Schemes of work using published QCA (Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority) models are fully in place and are being continually revised to make them more focused on school needs. Students' progress is monitored against National Curriculum levels and students have individual record cards. However, there are no systems for on - going assessment of students' progress. Extra - curricular activities are good and improving, with a range of clubs and regular team fixtures. A School Sports Co-ordinator is working with feeder primary schools and will work with Heathcote from September to increase the sporting opportunities. The issues from the previous inspection have all been addressed effectively.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- The establishment of the GCSE short course with increasingly successful results in the examination.

### Areas for improvement

- The school does not provide enough teaching time for the subject.
- Lack of clarity about departmental responsibility for leadership and management.
- Incomplete schemes of work and inadequate provision for students' spiritual development.
- Consequent low standards of attainment and lack of progress in Years 9 and 10.
- Insufficient use of assessment as a way of helping students to improve their learning.

171. The school has successfully established the GCSE short course as its provision for students in Years 10 and 11. Since 1998 the number of students entered has increased steadily and in 2002 nearly all students sat the examination. Results were well below the national average but they have continued on an upward trend. They are now broadly in line with results in other subjects. In 2002 nearly every pupil left the school with a GCSE qualification and one in three achieved grades A\* to C.
172. Attainment by students now at the end of Year 9 is well below the standard expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Most students start in Year 7 with a level of attainment that is below average but, by following a suitable programme of study for two years, they make steady progress. They learn about some of the principal beliefs and practices of Christianity and of the other religions studied. They learn about people, places and objects that are sacred and they use some of the technical terms of religion correctly. In Year 9, however, progress is poor. Lack of time for the subject and discontinuity of learning are very evident. The content and coverage of work expected by the agreed syllabus is largely missing from exercise books. Students do not develop the skills and confidence they need to explain religious texts and symbols. Examples of extended writing are rare. Students show little grasp of what might be involved in belonging to a faith community. They do not learn to use religious ideas and feelings to explore deeper meanings in life. The reflective skills expected of students by the end of Year 9 have not been

acquired. This lack of progress is found in students at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs.

173. Attainment by students at the end of Year 11 is unknown because evidence was not available at the time of the inspection. The exercise books of students in Year 10 show that most students have relevant knowledge and understanding and many write with appropriate detail and precision. The work is at GCSE standard but in quantity is far below what is needed, even for a GCSE short course. As in Year 9, students fail to make enough progress. The lack of time and lack of continuity, rather than direct failures of teaching or learning, are the cause.
174. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall. Most students show the expected degree of maturity and relate appropriately to their teachers and to each other. Most make an effort and work at a steady pace. Students' behaviour in lessons is generally satisfactory but many show a lack of enthusiasm in lessons. Teachers manage and motivate students appropriately but students rarely ask questions that show interest or evidence of independent enquiry.
175. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory overall. A good feature of teaching is that most teachers plan lessons well. They indicate to students the intended learning outcomes. Teachers generally make good use of the whole hour available in lessons. Activities are designed to enable different students to respond at different levels so that all make progress. Students have opportunities to use new technology and to retrieve information and present their work. Teachers have enough knowledge to give students the basic information but most lessons lack the challenge and inspiration necessary for good progress and high standards. Expectations of students are not always high enough. Opportunities to develop sensitivity to the spiritual dimension of life through gains in self-knowledge are infrequent with the result that what students learn about religion does not make enough of a contribution to their spiritual development. Homework is used to extend what students have learned in class but in marking students' work teachers rarely refer to the statements of attainment or to the standard expected of students at the end of Year 9. As a result, students are generally uncertain about the standard of their work and about targets towards which they should aim.
176. The arrangements for leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is uncertainty about responsibilities. The inspection in 1998 found that the teaching was poor or very poor in nearly half the lessons. As part of its response the school has decided to transfer responsibility for religious education from the humanities department to a new department of personal, social, health and religious education. It will also include the citizenship elements. A teacher from within the school has been appointed to head the new department and a qualified and experienced teacher of religious education is to start in September 2003.
177. Currently, the school does not provide enough teaching time for the subject. The expectations of the agreed syllabus are unrealisable in the time available. Also, although schemes of work exist for Year 7, in other years they are either incomplete or non-existent. These are not the circumstances in which students make good progress and achieve high standards. Gains have been made since the inspection in 1998 but improvement overall has been unsatisfactory. The establishment of the GCSE short course, with the opportunity for students to enjoy the same success as in other subjects, has been a very significant gain. The appointment of a specialist teacher offers further hope for the future. The decision to reduce teaching to two per cent of curriculum time, however, undermines confidence in the school's commitment to improvement and in the capacity of religious education to succeed in the future.