

INSPECTION REPORT

KINGSFORD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Beckton, London

LEA area: Newham

Unique reference number: 132058

Headteacher: Ms J Deslandes

Reporting inspector: Mr C Sander
4151

Dates of inspection: 12th – 16th May 2003

Inspection number: 249270

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 students: 11 to 16 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Kingsford Way
Beckton
London

Postcode: E6 5JQ

Telephone number: 0207 476 4700

Fax number: 0207 473 9696

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr J Cocking

Date of previous inspection: The school has not previously been inspected.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
04151	Mr C Sander	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught? What should the school do to improve further?
12682	Mr J Griffin	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
17453	Mr C Edney	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20421	Mrs E Raitt	Team inspector	English English as an additional language Education inclusion, including race equality	
01407	Mr P Scott	Team inspector	Science	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
10679	Mr M Aston	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Citizenship	
31680	Mr P Redican	Team inspector	Art and design Special educational needs	
20588	Mr I Hodgkinson	Team inspector	Design and technology	How well is the school led and managed?
01994	Ms H Olds	Team inspector	Geography	
20649	Mr J Flinn	Team inspector	History	
14851	Mr G Laws	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31660	Ms M Young	Team inspector	Music	

32930	Mrs J Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education	
20719	Ms A Fraser	Team inspector	Religious education	
07636	Dr A Sinha	Team inspector	Community Languages: Mandarin	

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Limited
National Westminster Bank Chambers
Victoria Street
Burnham-on-Sea
Somerset TA8 1AN

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Kingsford is a community, comprehensive school for boys and girls between the ages of 11 to 16. It was established under a private funding initiative (PFI) in 2000, moving in September 2002 from temporary buildings to its purpose-built premises at Beckton, approximately six miles from the city of London. There are extensive facilities for community use. Currently, there are 996 students in Years 7 to 9. Each year group is much larger than in the majority of schools nationally. It is already similar in size to the national average and is oversubscribed. Just over half of the students are known to be eligible for free school meals, a very high proportion and above the local average. Kingsford is a multilingual community. More than half of the students speak English as an additional language, well above the national average and broadly in line with the average for schools locally. Fourteen per cent are at an early stage of language acquisition. The proportion of white British students, 39 per cent, is well below the national average but higher than in other local schools. Black Afro-Caribbean students form the second largest group, 28 per cent, and the third largest group are Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students, 20 per cent. The proportion of students with identified special educational needs, 28 per cent, is above average, as also is the number with statements, four per cent. Twelve per cent of the students are refugees. The school has resourced provision for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties. It is involved in the national initiative 'Excellence in Cities' and several local arrangements including the Safer Schools Partnership. It was awarded the national Sportsmark in 2002.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Kingsford Community school provides a good quality of education. The very good leadership of the headteacher has encouraged and supported all to contribute very effectively in meeting the significant challenges involved in establishing a new school. Good teaching sets high expectations so that nearly all make good progress and achieve well. The school contributes much to the personal and social development of its students. Relationships are extremely harmonious. Standards are lower than those expected nationally at Year 9 but compare well with what the students could do on entry to the school. Unit costs are higher than those in the majority of schools nationally, reflecting the additional costs of establishing a new school and the high level of additional needs. When these costs are compared with the provision and performance of the school, it gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides very good leadership so that the school fulfils its aims very well.
- Students achieve well at Year 9 and particularly so in information and communication technology (ICT) and Mandarin.
- Students learn well because lessons are planned carefully, expectations are high and the quality of teaching is regularly monitored.
- Relationships, including race relations, across the school are extremely harmonious and respectful and the partnership with parents is very good.
- Teachers care very well for their students so that social development and attitudes to school are very good.
- The school provides a very good range of additional activities within its extended day.

What could be improved

- The standards of students' written work.
- Attendance, particularly the amount of unauthorised absence.
- The role of the leadership team in the strategic development of the school as it grows and expands.
- The organisation of the timetable, including the time given to geography, history, art and design and French.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the first time that the school has been inspected. It has developed well since it opened nearly three years ago. The move to its permanent site has provided an extensive range of excellent facilities and the staff demonstrate increasing confidence and effectiveness. Standards are higher in this year's Year 7 and there have been fewer students leaving and joining the school after the start of the school year.

STANDARDS

At the time of the inspection no students had yet taken National Tests at Year 9. No data are therefore included in the table below.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
End of Key Stage 3 tests	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Standards on entry to the school are well below those in the majority of schools nationally and many students join the school other than at the start of Year 7. When the work of students in Year 9 is compared with their National Test results at the end of primary school, their achievement is good. Many achieve well because lessons are well planned and their teachers' high expectations give them the confidence to do better. Those who speak English as an additional language make very good progress in the early stages of language acquisition. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. At the time of the inspection no students had yet taken National Tests at Year 9. Formal assessments by the teachers indicate that standards overall are below those that students are expected to reach nationally. The work seen during the inspection confirms these assessments and standards are broadly in line with the school's suitably challenging targets. Approximately half of the students are reaching the standards expected nationally. Two-thirds of students do so nationally. Standards are highest in ICT, Mandarin and physical education and most students do better in those subjects and activities that do not rely so heavily on the printed word. Standards in English are well below the nationally expected level because many students' written work is very weak. They are below the nationally expected standards in science and mathematics. Standards in numeracy are better than in literacy and contribute to more rigorous and accurate work in science and design and technology.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Many show a very good level of interest and involvement in the additional activities provided before and after school. Nearly all are proud of their school and what it offers them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. The students move around the school in a generally orderly manner but this requires a higher than usual level of supervision. Most are respectful and polite in lessons. A small minority sometimes misbehave. Exclusions are relatively few and occur only when absolutely necessary. There were no permanent exclusions in the last complete school year.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Harmonious relationships, particularly across the diverse number of minority ethnic students, are very strong and based on adults' good example and high expectation. Most students work well with each other in lessons and their social skills are particularly strong.

Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Many attend very regularly but a very small number are sometimes absent for no good reason. Rates of unauthorised absence are well above average and are adversely affected by local circumstances, including arrangements for refugee students. Despite some improvement this year, attendance remains well below the national average. A small but significant minority of students arrive late for school.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Years 7 – 9
Quality of teaching	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.

In almost two-fifths of the lessons seen during the inspection the quality of teaching was good. It was very good in just over one fifth of lessons. It was less than satisfactory in approximately five per cent of lessons seen. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and science is good. Where the best teaching and learning occur, the strongest features are the very good planning, the very good relationships that support the very skilful management of students' attitudes and behaviour, the high level of expectations and the good additional support provided to those who have special educational needs or who use English as an additional language. As a result, the school meets well the needs of all its students. Most skills in numeracy and literacy are well taught but many students' progress continues to be slower because their writing skills remain poor. Nearly all students learn well when the lesson is divided into a series of short activities; they have the opportunity to work in a small group for part of the lesson and are encouraged to respond to questions or take part in short discussions. Teaching and learning are less than satisfactory when the behaviour of less competent students is not well managed or the pace of the lesson is too slow to sustain their interest or too rushed to support their understanding. Some, particularly the less competent, learn less well because they do not remember what they have learned previously and they find it difficult to organise projects and homework on their own.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The additional opportunities within the extended day contribute very well to students' social development. Strategies to develop numeracy and literacy are good. There is not enough time given to some subjects and the lessons are too long for many less competent students. Some statutory requirements for ICT are not currently fully met.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Students have good access to the curriculum, and are taught with their peers for the great majority of the time. However, in English, mathematics and science, teaching methods are not always active enough, and there are not enough support assistants in some of the classes. These factors restrict progress to a satisfactory level.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Skilled, specialist staff provide sensitive linguistic and pastoral support so that those at the earliest stages of learning English make very good progress. More attention needs to be given to the development of students' written English once they speak their additional language fluently.

Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. It is well emphasised in the school development plan and in the schemes of work in several subjects. Moral and cultural issues are well covered in English and religious education as well as in displays on the corridors and through links with the community. Provision for students' spiritual development is good and particularly so in religious education and drama. Provision for students' social development is very good and a significant strength of the school. Provision for citizenship is good.
How well the school cares for its students	Very good. There are very good arrangements to monitor behaviour. The school is very supportive towards its students and listens openly to their views. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory with good procedures for each teacher to record their students' progress. The monitoring of attendance is insufficiently rigorous to bring about significant improvement.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very good leadership so that the school fulfils its aims very well. Learning area managers monitor the quality of teaching rigorously but supportively and subject co-ordinators plan schemes of work well. The assistant headteachers contribute much to the day-to-day management of the school but need to be more fully involved in its strategic development as it grows and expands.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. They have a sound grasp of their statutory responsibilities but the school does not currently provide a daily act of collective worship for all students. It monitors the work of the school with increasing confidence through its committees but does not yet contribute fully to planning its longer-term development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Standards and the quality of teaching are monitored very well and reviewed regularly. The school development plan does not yet include enough measurable outcomes to support rigorous evaluation. Overall, the school applies the principles of best value well.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The specialist facilities in the new buildings are very good and ICT is used well. Some shortages, outside the control of the school, remain in the provision of textbooks in some subjects and the library has not yet been completed. The teaching and support staff are well deployed and sufficient to meet the needs of the National Curriculum.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The school's high expectations of its students. ▪ The students like coming to school. ▪ The good progress made by students. ▪ The good teaching. ▪ They can approach the school comfortably and with confidence. ▪ The leadership and management of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The behaviour of a minority of students. ▪ Homework arrangements. ▪ Lunchtime arrangements and the provision of lockers.

The findings of the inspection confirm the very positive views expressed by many parents about the school's provision and performance. It has established the foundations of a strong partnership with them. Some parents expressed concerns about homework and the behaviour of a small minority of students. Overall, inspectors found these features to be satisfactory, but where learning was unsatisfactory in lessons it was usually because behaviour was not well managed. Provision for homework is satisfactory overall but some students are insufficiently motivated to complete it. There is considerable concern among parents about 'teething problems' associated with the lack of lockers and lunchtime arrangements. The school has been working on these issues. Progress is slower than expected because of a need to clarify the complex contractual arrangements associated with the PFI under which the school was established.

PART B: COMMENTARY

- *All young people are referred to as 'students' in this report because that is the practice at the school.*
- *There are students currently in Years 7 to 9 only.*
- *In this report the word 'competent' refers to those students whose work is broadly in line with the standards expected or usually seen nationally. On entry to this school they comprise approximately one third of the students.*
- *The phrase 'more competent' refers to those whose work is higher than the standards usually seen or expected nationally. They comprise a little less than one fifth of each year group on entry to the school.*
- *The phrase 'less competent' refers to those whose work does not yet reach the standard expected nationally or is lower than that usually seen in other schools nationally. They comprise about half of each year group on entry to the school.*
- *Approximately half of the students have identified special educational needs.*
- *More than half of the students speak English as an additional language. Approximately one eighth of the students are at an early stage in using English competently.*
- *The word 'standards' is used to define how well the students at this school do when their work is compared with what others nationally are expected to know, understand and do at ages 11 and 14. Occasionally the term 'work' is used instead. Comparisons and evaluations are expressed in terms of the standards usually found, or expected nationally.*
- *The word 'achievement' defines how much progress and improvement the students at this school have made over time. It indicates whether the students are doing as well as might reasonably be expected and whether they are working hard enough. It usually refers to how well they are doing at age 14 compared with what they were able to do when they started at the school at age 11. Evaluations are expressed in terms such as 'very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory'.*

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Standards on entry to the school are well below those usually found in other schools nationally. The available data need to be treated with great caution because the school did not receive national test results at the end of primary school for almost one third of its current roll and some students included in the data are no longer at the school. The incompleteness of the data is most marked in the current Year 9. Overall, the profile of standards on entry over time is significantly lower than the available data would suggest.
2. Approximately one-fifth of the students join the school other than at the start of Year 7. The proportion is higher than this in the current Year 9. Many of these students have previously experienced gaps in their education, some because they are refugees and a smaller number because they have recorded poor school attendance or have been excluded from other schools. There has been a pattern of some more competent students leaving the school.
3. Overall, the school roll is now more stable. It is oversubscribed and the data much more complete for the current Year 7 whose standards on entry are higher than those in the current Year 9.

4. At the time of the inspection no national test results had been recorded because the oldest students are only just completing Year 9. However, the school has started to analyse the performance of its students through its own formal assessments. Whilst these data must be treated with a degree of caution they do indicate that in English, mathematics and science approaching one half of the students are reaching the standards expected nationally at Year 9 compared with approximately two-thirds of students nationally. These assessments also record that the school is on line to achieve its realistic but challenging targets at Year 9 this year.
5. The school's assessment data point to standards broadly in line with local averages for English and mathematics and above them in science. Within the school's formal testing arrangements just over half of the girls in Year 9 achieved the nationally expected standard, Level 5, in English but only one third of the boys did so. The boys, and particularly the Black Caribbean boys, achieved less well than the girls. The boys outperformed the girls in mathematics and particularly so in science.
6. The school's overall assessments for the boys and the girls are confirmed in the standards seen in lessons. Overall, these were lower than those that students nationally are expected to reach at Year 9. Standards were highest in ICT and Mandarin and higher than students nationally are expected to reach at Year 9. They were broadly in line with nationally expected standards in physical education. Generally, most students achieved higher standards in those activities where there was less need to use or respond to the written word.
7. In mathematics and science, standards are below those found in most schools. They are well below in English because standards in writing are much lower than in reading and in speaking and listening. The difference in the performance and progress of different groups of students was much less evident in lessons. Nor was this strongly evident in the students' work that was analysed during the inspection. Overall, less competent students sometimes made less progress because they found it hard to concentrate for the full length of the 100 minute lessons and there was sometimes an insufficient variety and number of activities to sustain their interest. As a result, their learning was less than satisfactory because their attitudes and behaviour sometimes deteriorated.
8. Overall, despite the challenging circumstances faced in the last 12 months, including the move to new buildings, achievement is good. The findings of the inspection confirm the views expressed by the large majority of those parents who completed the questionnaire or attended the meetings prior to the inspection. There are early indications in the school's own assessments of rising levels of achievement, particularly amongst the less competent in English and the more competent in mathematics and science. In work seen during the inspection, achievement was good in mathematics and science and satisfactory in English. However, the achievement of some white students is unsatisfactory. The Indian girls achieve better than the Indian boys in science.
9. Several features of the school's provision support well the students' achievement. These include the well-managed use of the national strategy to develop students' oral and reading skills, the good support provided by the teaching assistants, the very good planning of lessons and the high expectations of the teachers. The good teaching of numeracy skills brings rigour and accuracy to many students' work in science and design and technology and this helps them to achieve well. Factors that restrict students' achievement include weaknesses in writing accurately and at length, their difficulty in remembering information over time, insufficient rigour and precision in the

teaching of skills, for example in art and design, and a lack of depth in research in design and technology.

10. Standards of literacy are well below those found in most schools nationally. Standards in speaking and listening are broadly in line with those that students are expected to reach at Year 9. Standards in reading are wide-ranging; the minority of more competent students read confidently but a significant number do not choose to read sufficiently challenging books at Year 9. Overall, standards are below those that students are expected to reach at Year 9. Standards in writing are well below those usually found nationally at Year 9 because many students' written work contains too many technical errors and only the minority of more competent students can write at length and in a range of styles.
11. Standards in numeracy are below those found in most schools nationally. Approximately half of the students make numerical calculations confidently and accurately. Numeracy skills are well applied to raise standards in science through accurate calculation. In design and technology there is planned provision with numeracy opportunities identified in the scheme of work and strong emphasis on using numerical skills to improve accuracy of working. Data-handling techniques are well used in history lessons to represent facts and information. More competent students in art and design lessons were seen applying knowledge and understanding of ratio when doing portrait work.
12. Those students who speak English as an additional language make satisfactory progress over time. Many of those who are at an early stage of language acquisition make very good progress but this tends to slow once they gain a satisfactory grasp of the spoken language that enables them to converse socially. Whilst many continue to achieve well in practical subjects or where activities in lessons rely less heavily on reading and writing, at other times their progress is slower.
13. The large number of students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall in meeting the targets set in their individual educational programmes, for example, in increasing their spelling ages. Students with statements of special educational needs make satisfactory progress in the objectives set at their annual reviews, which include improving reading ages and comprehension skills. Their positive attitudes towards their work, particularly in the smaller withdrawal groups, support this progress. Many make good progress in developing practical skills, for example in physical education, music, and design and technology. This is because students participate fully and confidently in the practical activities. In English, mathematics and science, however, their progress is no better than satisfactory. This is because methods are not always active enough, and there are not always enough support assistants for the high numbers of students with special educational needs in some classes. In addition, support assistants sometimes do too much for the students, such as answering questions for them.
14. Overall, gifted and talented students make good progress, and achieve well in the great majority of their subjects. For example, in ICT, they are entered for the GNVQ qualification as part of an accelerated programme in Year 9. In mathematics and science, the majority of students made better than expected gains in their National Curriculum levels in recent 'mock' tests. Additional opportunities to participate in public performances contribute to the good progress made by gifted and talented students in music.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

15. Students' attitudes to school are very good overall. Most are proud of their new school and like attending. However, there is a small minority who do not and this is reflected in the well below average attendance. A good indication of the enthusiasm of most students for school is the high level of participation in many of the wide range of additional activities that the school provides as part of the 'extended day'. Most students express a very good level of satisfaction with what the school provides. They are very positive about the fair way they are treated by staff, whom, they confirm, support them very well. For example, a group of Year 8 students speaks of 'staff who are strict but friendly and whose supportive comments make you confident'. Many parents speak very positively about the optimistic outlook that most students have been given by their teachers. The very good relationships amongst students, the new buildings, clubs, sports and computer facilities all contribute significantly to students very positive attitudes towards school.
16. In lessons, students' attitudes towards their work are good. In most lessons, they listen well and show good levels of interest, concentration and determination to complete set tasks. However, a minority of students' attitudes are too passive to promote good learning and progress on a regular basis. Students respond particularly well when expectations are high, tasks are demanding and they are able to engage in a variety of practical activities. Their enthusiasm for practical activities is clearly evident in design and technology, drama, physical education, art and design and practical science lessons. When students were asked about the things that they would like to see improved, they mentioned most frequently a lack of involvement in some lessons and the behaviour of a very small minority of students. Inspection evidence generally supports students' concerns in these areas.
17. Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Throughout the school day, nearly all students behave sensibly. In corridors, at break times, lunchtimes and between lessons a generally orderly atmosphere prevails, although this requires a higher than usual level of adult supervision. In over 90 per cent of lessons observed, behaviour was at least satisfactory and it was good or better in around 70 per cent. The picture was more positive in Years 7 and 9 than in Year 8. In the small minority of lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, inattentive and sometimes disruptive behaviour is a key contributory factor. Where teaching is good, in contrast, cases of disruptive or even inattentive behaviour are very rare because the students are very well managed. Most students take good care of property and resources and help to keep the school in an attractive condition.
18. The school takes its responsibilities for social inclusion very seriously and works hard to maintain students in full-time education, including admitting and retaining students close to permanent exclusion. During the week of the inspection, 24 students, most of whom are prone to challenging behaviour, were involved in off-site provision, aimed at improving their motivation towards school. Exclusion is used only when absolutely necessary. Nevertheless, the challenging behaviour of some students, who are unable to conform to the school's expectations of behaviour, leads eventually to exclusion from school. In the current and previous school years fixed-term exclusions have been relatively few. Fixed-term exclusions, which involve students of all ethnic backgrounds, are primarily for physical abuse and repeated defiance. There were no permanent exclusions in the previous school year although three are under consideration by governors currently. Students in all year groups indicate that nearly all boys and girls get on well, incidents of racism are very rare and very well handled when reported to staff. Whilst students say that there is some bullying, especially as students settled into Year 7, incidents are taken very seriously and are very well handled when reported to staff. As a result, bullying is relatively rare as students move through the school, and

not a significant factor in students' life at school. The substantial response to the parental questionnaire reflects the mixed picture in relation to behaviour. Parents express the view that whilst most students behave sensibly, the behaviour of a small minority has a significantly negative impact.

19. Relationships between adults and students and among students are very good overall. Adults act as very good role models. Teachers value students' work and most effectively praise effort and good work. For example, students in all year groups speak positively about the support they get from teachers and the fair way in which they are treated. As a result, in nearly all lessons students are comfortable expressing views and asking questions of their teachers. Very good, harmonious relationships among students, irrespective of ethnic background and including those with special educational needs or who use English as an additional language, are a very positive feature.
20. Students' personal development is good overall. Their social skills are particularly strong and they converse well with each other. Nearly all students work comfortably and effectively in pairs and small groups. Students relate very well to each other and nearly all show respect for their teachers. They are confident that there is someone they can approach to share concerns and seek guidance. Students mention the positive support provided by teachers, especially the form tutors, and the fair way in which they are treated, as two of the main reasons they like school. This support also provides students, particularly those with special educational needs, with the confidence to express their own views and ask questions of their teachers. The majority are also confident when speaking to visitors to the school. Students participate effectively in decision-making through the elected year and school councils. For example, requests for a wider range of lunchtime food and revised serving arrangements, discussed by the council, are being implemented. They also show significant initiative in organising and raising money for a range of charities. School council members are justifiably proud of their contribution to school life and speak very positively about the openness and responsiveness of adults, including the headteacher, to their suggestions. Nonetheless, there is a small minority of students who show a lack of responsibility and self-discipline, for example in ensuring they get to school on time.
21. The attendance rate is unsatisfactory. Whilst it has risen to nearly 90 per cent in the current year, it is still well below the national average. Local circumstances, beyond the control of the school, contribute to this. For example, some refugee students may leave the school but are required to remain on the roll until their new school is confirmed. A very small number of parents may from time to time keep their child off school for no good reason. As a result, the unauthorised absence level, whilst reduced significantly in the current year, at 2.8 per cent is still well above the national average. Truancy is not a major factor in the unauthorised absence. Analysis of absence into a variety of categories is not yet part of the school's practice, partly because it has only recently introduced electronic data processing of attendance information. Punctuality is unsatisfactory. A small minority of students, in all year groups, arrive late for school. Nearly all students get to lessons promptly during the day, due in significant part to close supervision at school.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

22. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In two-fifths of the 149 lessons and part lessons seen during the inspection it was good and very good in a further fifth. On three occasions, in science, geography and French it was excellent. Teaching and learning were less than satisfactory on eight occasions, approximately six per cent of the lessons seen.

23. The school has faced a catalogue of significant challenges since it opened just less than three years ago, including:
- the annual recruitment of significant numbers of new staff as the school has grown in size;
 - the much higher proportion than usual of newly qualified teachers and those qualified overseas but new to this country;
 - the high proportions of students with special educational needs, previously interrupted education or who, on entry to the school, are at an early stage of acquiring English as an additional language;
 - the later than planned move to the school's new permanent buildings and some associated delays in the availability of material resources.
24. Despite this, the quality of learning and teaching is good overall because of several very good features:
- the attitudes and behaviour of nearly all students are invariably very well managed in lessons because routines are well established and relationships are positive;
 - schemes of work are very well planned and show a good grasp of the requirements of the National Curriculum;
 - teachers invariably plan their lessons very well so that most students are clear about what they are going to learn;
 - nearly all students respond well to their teachers' very good level of expectation;
 - learning support assistants frequently provide good additional support;
 - there is good provision for additional lessons.
25. Nearly all of these features were admirably illustrated in the sustained good teaching in French and Mandarin.
26. The good quality of provision owes much to:
- the very good leadership of the headteacher in ensuring that the values and policies of the school are implemented in its practice;
 - the very good leadership and management of the learning area managers, particularly in the development of schemes of work and the encouragement of teamwork;
 - the readiness of nearly all to look, listen, share and learn from each other;
 - the guidance and support provided through the regular monitoring of lessons, well linked to very good induction procedures and well-planned staff development.
27. Where teaching and learning are less than satisfactory it is usually because:
- the behaviour of less competent students is not well managed and students do not listen carefully;
 - the teacher talks too much, does not plan the use of time well and the pace of learning is either too slow to sustain students' interest or too rushed to support their understanding;
 - students do not remember earlier work and there is insufficient emphasis on consolidating what they have learned previously;
 - the students do not organise work for themselves, leaving projects or homework incomplete.
28. The findings of the inspection confirm the views of those parents who responded to the questionnaire, in particular their appreciation of the high level of the teachers' expectations of their children. There were a small number of occasions when a minority of students' unsatisfactory behaviour spoilt the learning of others, confirming the concerns of some parents, but, overall, nearly all showed a good level of motivation and a desire to learn. Arrangements for homework are broadly satisfactory. Homework

is well used in history but is sometimes not completed, for example in design and technology. The view of some parents that frequent changes of teacher have had an adverse effect on standards is confirmed in the case of art and design but not in the case of English.

29. Clarity, vitality and variety are the consistent features of the very good planning in the best teaching seen during the inspection. The students invariably learn well when the framework of the lesson and what they will learn is well described to them at the start. They learn best when the lesson is divided into a series of short activities, there are very well managed opportunities for them to respond orally, particularly through discussion with each other, they are encouraged to think for themselves and ample opportunity is provided at the end of the lesson for them to go over what they have learned.
30. Nearly all students respond well and with increasing confidence to their teachers' very good level of expectation. This lies at the heart of the very good management of attitudes and behaviour in many lessons. Relationships are positive as a result, and most are keen to learn. This was well illustrated in the students' obvious enjoyment in learning French. They learn best when such expectations are expressed through the clear definition of what is to be learned at the start of the lesson, regular encouragement is given thereafter and the range of questions is both challenging and well matched to involve everyone in the lesson. These were features of the majority of lessons seen during the inspection. On such occasions, for example in mathematics, the more competent students confidently explain and discuss their work. Very occasionally, for example in art and design, some students' attitudes are unsatisfactory at the start of the lesson and this diverts the teacher's attention from managing the learning of the majority to addressing the misbehaviour of the minority. On a small number of occasions in science, some lack of accuracy in the teacher's use of spoken English and the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of some students meant that they did not learn enough in the lesson.
31. The range of methods used is satisfactory. The best teaching in English, mathematics, science, ICT, geography, history and music includes a crisp start and a very good variety of activities that enable all students to get actively involved in the lesson. Such a series of short tasks helps nearly all students to concentrate well, to sustain their interest and to deepen their understanding. However, in all of these subjects there is sometimes not enough time given to reviewing what had been learned at the end of the lesson. The very effective sequencing of tasks is a strong feature in the best planned lessons in textiles and food technology and includes effective opportunities for students to review their work at the close of the lesson. As a result, the students build up their knowledge and understanding in well-defined steps, apply it with confidence and made good progress. Where learning is less effective, the lesson is dominated by the teacher talking and the students have no opportunity to make decisions or exercise initiative. The longer than usual lessons, many lasting 100 minutes, present a significant challenge and require highly skilled teaching methods to sustain students' interest, concentration and the overall pace of their learning. Many less competent students struggle to maintain good pace in their learning in the second half of such lessons.
32. Overall, the teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. The quality of learning is invariably good when there are well planned and managed opportunities for the students to respond to questions that challenge them to think or to learn in small groups or pairs. This was a good feature in the best teaching, for example, in English, mathematics and history. Most students speak more confidently and read more accurately than they write. However, their lack of confidence to speak in French slows their learning. Many features of the national strategy to raise standards in literacy at Year 9 are well applied but much more attention needs to be given to improving the length, range and accuracy

of students' writing. Nearly all teachers introduce the key words at the start of the lesson. This is particularly effective in science where students who use English as an additional language quickly grasp and use the specialist vocabulary with confidence. However, it is much less effective in music. Numeracy skills are well taught and applied in mathematics, science and design and technology, bringing accuracy and rigour to the students' learning.

33. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory overall. The 'progress planner' provides a potentially very good framework to record students' progress and effort. Records are generally very well maintained by each teacher but they are not yet being used with sufficient rigour to plan different types of work for different groups of students in lessons. Overall, the teachers' 'teaching and learning file' provides a very good record of planning but the links to assessment are much less well understood and applied. There is insufficient attention given to tracking the progress of different groups of students, particularly by gender and ethnicity, in each subject.
34. Resources are used well. Good features include the effective use of display in textiles rooms to set standards and share achievement. There is a good range of resources in history where the readiness to use pictures and artefacts as well as the printed word is particularly helpful in supporting the learning of those who use English as an additional language. Interactive whiteboards are particularly well used in ICT and French. The use of ICT in science and mathematics is currently unsatisfactory. There are insufficient resources for listening exercises in French and a wider range of text books is needed in history to meet the needs of all students, including those with special educational needs. The allocation of just one lesson per week in French in Year 7 and the shorter than usual time allocated to geography, history and art and design limits the depth and range of learning in these subjects.
35. The large number of students who use English as an additional language learn well. The quality of additional support is very good and, in the best provision seen during the inspection, the teacher sets a series of short tasks and works closely with the support teachers.
36. The quality of teaching and learning for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. Support assistants provide good support in the majority of subjects, and their relationships with the students are good. In the best lessons, there is a good match of methods and resources to the needs of individual students. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on poetry, the support teacher provided large print versions of the poems, and highlighted key words and phrases on card. This helped students to pick out accurately examples of oppression in the poems. ICT is also used well to support students' learning, for example, by providing students who have specific learning difficulties with laptop computers. However, in some lessons, the support teachers have to talk across the class teacher, and they try to explain things to students while the class teacher continues to give instructions to the class from the front. Because of this, support teachers have to speak very quietly, or pause in the middle of an explanation. This means that discussions cannot develop briskly, and the pace of learning is no better than satisfactory. In addition, in some classes there are not enough support assistants to help the large numbers of students with special educational needs.
37. The quality of teaching and learning for gifted and talented students is good. In the great majority of subjects, extra work is planned to extend their performance, and challenging tasks are set. For example, in a lesson in science, the teacher fully extended all students with a barrage of thought-provoking questions, which demanded a very good command of technical language. This produced good learning. However, in a small

number of lessons, for example in design and technology, activities in lessons are not always challenging enough to meet the needs of these students.

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

38. Overall, the quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. It has several strong features and some areas for improvement. Most parents agree that the curriculum provides a good and interesting range of subjects and activities. Considerable and careful thought has been given to developing a curriculum that emphasises the links across a broad range of relevant activities. However, the original framework of five 'learning areas' has proved to be only partially successful and is to be revised for September 2003.
39. The allocation of time to some individual subjects is unsatisfactory. To increase the time allocated for the teaching of the basic skills of numeracy, literacy and ICT and also for physical education, the time for teaching some foundation subjects, including geography, history, music and modern languages (French and Mandarin), has been reduced. Whilst this successfully supports the school's priority to improve students' basic skills it results in lower standards in those subjects that get less time in the timetable. The timetabling of double lessons of 100 minutes duration for most subjects is excessive and has adverse consequences for students' learning, particularly the concentration span for the least competent students.
40. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, except in some aspects of ICT, including its application in several subjects of the National Curriculum. This is because ordered equipment necessary for teaching aspects of control technology has not yet been supplied. This deficiency is of particular concern in science and design and technology. Religious education meets the requirements of the Newham Agreed Syllabus.
41. The school has placed considerable emphasis on adopting and assimilating successfully the principles and practices of the national strategy in Year 7 to Year 9. The introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies have been effective in influencing the planning of teaching and learning in most subjects. Many useful ideas from the literacy and numeracy strategies have been included in the well-planned schemes of work in most subjects. For example, there are clear procedures for setting individual student targets to raise standards, transition and extra-teaching units are provided and teachers have attended planned and systematic professional training. The school is starting to establish good foundations to link its curricular provision to its assessment procedures. Providing professional training for the recently arrived overseas qualified teachers in this curriculum initiative is proving a challenge to the school and this is largely being provided within subject departments. This is an issue because some recently appointed unqualified teachers from overseas have a limited knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum and related initiatives.
42. Planned opportunities for enriching the curriculum are very good. This is a strength of the school. Through the extended day and extra-curricular activities, the school provides a wide variety of activities. These well-organised activities take place in time beyond the school day, at lunchtime, at weekends and within school vacations. Additional time for study and help is provided in several subjects through support and homework clubs. The school's very good facilities are respected and used well by the students to enrich their learning experiences beyond the statutory curriculum. There is high participation in organised events but this is not as prominent in areas where students have a voluntary involvement. The school library has not, as yet, been put into use whilst books and materials are awaited. This means that in all subjects of the curriculum, facilities for research and independent study are significantly restricted.

43. At the heart of the well-defined school's aims is a firm commitment to the principles of equality of access and opportunity and social inclusiveness. These aims emerge in practice to meet the needs of individual and groups of students. The curricular needs of the more competent students, including those who are gifted and talented, are well met through teaching group arrangements which provide for 'fast-track' groups from Year 7 onwards. Those students who have been identified as gifted and talented receive planned extended and enriched curricular support through close co-operation between the school and local education authority (LEA). Overall, the curricular provision for students with English as an additional language is good. The needs of individual students, including refugees, who are in the initial stages of English language acquisition, are well met through the effective use of learning assistants who work closely with subject teachers in planning the learning experiences.
44. Assemblies and the annual Lifestyles week, as well as extended day activities, enhance this good provision. The equal opportunities policy currently being ratified by the governors includes a race discrimination policy and clauses to underpin the multilingual character of the school as well as to cater for vulnerable young people. The good mixture of male and female staff from a range of ethnic backgrounds, who themselves speak a number of languages, means that the students have good role models to follow. This works well in physical education where male and female teachers teach both the boys and the girls well. All newly qualified teachers are trained in equal opportunities when they join the school. The school has only recently begun to gather data on the achievement, the attendance and the rewards and sanctions for different groups of students. It needs to develop this and use it to modify the curriculum and teaching in order to raise further students' levels of interest and achievement. For instance, although oral skills are relatively strong, many students' writing skills are weak, preventing them from gaining as much as they might from the curriculum.
45. Students with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum, and are taught with their peers for the great majority of the time. The school is committed to including students with special educational needs as much as possible. The curriculum is adapted, where necessary, by the creation of a small number of withdrawal groups; for example to help improve literacy skills or students' anger management skills. These are effective because of the high levels of individual attention that students receive. Outside agencies are also used well, to support behaviour, or to provide speech therapy. In addition, the school is currently running a number of initiatives aimed at students who have behavioural difficulties or who are at risk of exclusion. For example, the 'flexible learning initiative', in partnership with a local gymnasium, is improving students' attitudes and behaviour. These initiatives are imaginative, although it is too soon for the impact on standards and students' achievement to be clearly seen.
46. The curricular provision for gifted and talented students is good. The planned programme of opportunities is extensive. It includes summer schools in physical education and the creative arts, an Easter revision school for Year 9 students, and attendance at motivational lectures at a local university. In addition, the provision in the schools extended day is strong, and students visit theatres, join a debating society and take part in musical events.
47. Links with the community and partner institutions are good. The school places great emphasis on the support that the community can give to the school to help it enrich the curriculum further. A very wide range of involvement with the community already exists and this is developing further as parents and local people recognise the centrality of the school in linking all aspects of the rich and diverse cultures that make up the school and the community. The wider curriculum is benefiting from this enrichment, which is further strengthening the already strong extra-curricular and extended curricular provision.

48. Overall, the provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good. This cross-curricular theme permeates all activities in the school, within and outside the planned curriculum. Outside the planned curriculum the ethos of the school caters for a range of experiences to meet all the developmental needs of the students. Within the planned activities, drugs awareness, sex education, careers education, health education and citizenship are taught by class tutors. The recent development of citizenship within the planned PSHE curriculum has successfully addressed the needs of the students and the provision is good. In other areas, the provision is satisfactory and the school, in preparation for extension of the course into Years 10 and 11, is currently planning the appropriate teaching units.
49. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of the curriculum make a good contribution to students' personal development. It is a strong feature of the provision for English, drama and religious education but there is insufficient emphasis on the students' cultural heritage in design and technology. The encouragement of social development is a particular strength across the curriculum. There is a clear commitment to nurturing knowledgeable, caring and thoughtful members of the community. All students are encouraged to play a full part in the life of the school. Their views can be aired at year and school councils. They appreciate that their opinions are respected and that they can influence decisions, as when arrangements for break and lunchtime were revised following submissions by the council. Kingsford is also represented in the Newham Youth Parliament.
50. The school organises a series of 'non-timetable' days to address important issues, such as the environment and 'rights and responsibilities'. Involvement in a project organised by King's College has resulted in four classes being surveyed about moral issues. Their views will be assessed again in two years time. This has helped to heighten awareness of issues that shape a civilised society.
51. There is good provision for students' cultural development, including the provision to study Mandarin. Displays of students' work in the main corridor consider very sensitively living conditions in Brazil and the emotions experienced by refugees. Time for reflection is often provided in lessons, for instance when considering euthanasia in religious education and family conflict in English. In an assembly 'peace' was interpreted in a rap presented by two boys in Year 9. Richard House Hospice is the school's 'adopted' charity.
52. The 'Life Skills' programme provides the main platform for exploring challenging issues. Throughout the school, students respond sensitively to topics such as 'the generation gap' and 'human rights'. In a stimulating lesson the school's police liaison officer led a valuable session with students in Year 9, exploring the differences between a 'crime' and an 'offence'. A key question in this session revolved around the moral issues raised when switching off a life-support machine. Another Year 9 group showed real maturity as they responded to a very well prepared discussion about paedophilia. Mutual respect was evident throughout.
53. In a very strong extra-curricular programme there are ample opportunities to be involved in a wide range of activities, including sport, music and ICT. Large numbers of students participate in 'celebration evenings' when they share their talents and cultural heritage through fashion and art displays, and through performance in music and dance. In such activities, Kingsford fulfils well its aim of 'guaranteeing excellence through opportunity and diversity'.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

54. Arrangements to promote and ensure students' care and wellbeing are very good. The school, primarily through the active year and school councils, has very effective means of hearing about the needs and concerns of students. It responds openly and quickly to their views, which rightly gives students the belief that their views are valued. This contributes to students' very positive views about their care. The school has very good induction arrangements for students entering the school in Year 7 with the result that they quickly feel secure and confident. Care of students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language is very good. The stages of development are well defined in the case of those at an early stage of language acquisition. Effective links are in place with a range of outside agencies. Procedures for child protection are very good. They are very well led and managed by the headteacher who very effectively ensures that all adults in the school know the procedures.
55. Procedures to ensure students' health and safety are good overall. Students are given clear guidance on safe procedures for using tools and machinery, for lifting equipment and handling chemicals. Appropriate controls are placed on students' use of ICT with regard to e-mails and use of the Internet. The governing body gives due consideration to health and safety matters. Risk assessments are in place for trips and visits. A range of other practical requirements is carried out through PFI contractors, such as fire alarms testing, fire drills and the checking of portable electrical equipment.
56. The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The positive behaviour policy, supported by a system of commendations and certificates, provides a coherent basis for promoting good behaviour. There is a highly effective daily emphasis on recognising good behaviour and attitudes. For example, positive phone calls and notes to parents are integral features which students and their parents value very highly.
57. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good overall. There is a clear and escalating series of sanctions to deal with inappropriate classroom and playground behaviour that are applied consistently by most staff. The school works hard and involves parents as much as possible in order to prevent such behaviour recurring. Teaching and ancillary staff consider that they are very well supported by the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team in applying the school behaviour policy. Measures to prevent bullying and racism are very effective. However, the school recognises that further work is needed to fully address the needs of the small number of students who present very challenging behaviours.
58. Procedures to monitor and improve attendance and punctuality are broadly satisfactory overall. The education welfare officer is effectively involved in helping to resolve the significant number of cases where there are persistent attendance difficulties. The school identifies and monitors closely the attendance of a larger cohort of students. Students get certificates in recognition of significantly improved and full termly and annual attendance. However, there are important weaknesses in the management of attendance. Whilst the raw attendance information is now processed electronically, it is not presented or analysed to establish the attendance patterns of different groups of students. As a result, the school does not have a sufficiently good understanding of the profile of non-attendance to target precisely a range of effective actions. Appropriate measures are in place to address lateness, which, whilst significant, is reducing.
59. Procedures to monitor and support students' personal development are very good. The needs of students are very well known by form tutors and year co-ordinators. The monitoring system, including the academic counselling day which students and parents attend, systematically recognises good attitudes to work and other achievements. This recognition and reward provides students with frequent and public confirmation of what is good in their lives and helps raise their self-esteem. Parent-teacher consultation

evenings provide regular updates on successes and areas for further improvement. The assembly programme, supported by the personal, social and health education provision, give students very good opportunities to reflect on the lives and needs of themselves and others. The school council provides students with good opportunities to raise and help address a wide variety of issues. The school runs a very good range of sports, music, homework and computer clubs. Parents are justifiably very positive about the school's part in making students more confident, mature and responsible.

60. Annual reviews for students with special educational needs are carried out efficiently. Teachers, parents, students and support assistants are involved, and attendance by parents is good. The school further promotes parental involvement, for example, by encouraging parents to come in and work alongside their children to support their attendance and promote more positive attitudes. Procedures for identifying students with special educational needs are thorough, clear and well understood. Individual educational programmes are written for them, and they contain good summaries and advice for teachers. In some cases, for example, in literacy, targets are very clear, and methods to measure success are sharp and easily understood. However, in some individual educational programmes targets are not precise enough and it is hard to see how much progress has been made. In addition, the reviews of students' targets are not all up to date.
61. Clear procedures are used to identify students who are gifted and talented, and challenging targets are set in their individual educational programmes. Progress is regularly checked, and students have regular tutorial sessions where they discuss their progress with their tutors.
62. Satisfactory procedures are in place for assessing and tracking students' progress. The school has provided training for staff and has implemented a 'progress tracker' for recording assessments and monitoring progress. Targets are set in Year 7 for all students, using data from primary schools and standardised tests that are administered shortly after entry to the school. Regular assessment takes place and progress is monitored against the targets that are set. Evidence from inspection would indicate that these procedures are working well in the core subjects where students are tested at half termly intervals. The results are converted to National Curriculum levels and progress is compared against the target level. In some other subjects the procedures for assessment are less well developed and there is evidence from several learning areas that assessments are not moderated and, in some cases, are imprecisely related to National Curriculum objectives.
63. The school regularly reports assessments to parents through reports and parents' evenings and an action planning review day which is a distinctive feature of assessment arrangements at the school. The school is aware of the need to make greater use of ICT in managing assessment and is taking steps to address this issue. The analysis of assessment data using gender and ethnicity is also at an early stage of implementation. There is insufficient monitoring by senior managers of the implementation of assessment procedures across all learning areas in the school.
64. There is some use of assessment data by learning area managers in curriculum planning. This aspect of assessment is, however, not widespread.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

65. A very good partnership has been established with parents. The approachability of staff and the quality of information to support students' progress are key strengths in what the school provides. The great majority of parents are positive about the school and contribute effectively.

66. Nearly two-fifths of parents replied to the questionnaire and over 80 attended the main pre-inspection meeting. Nearly all confirm that their children like school and make good progress. They consider that the school has high expectations and helps students become more confident, mature and responsible. They are positive about the teaching and nearly all students' attitudes and behaviour. Nearly all feel comfortable about approaching the school with suggestions, questions or concerns. They are positive about the leadership and management. They are very positive about the information to support students' progress and the range of activities outside of lessons. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views.
67. Some parents expressed concerns about homework and the behaviour of a small minority of students. Overall inspectors judge these features to be satisfactory, whilst recognising that there is an issue with a small minority of students' behaviour and with the setting of homework when, in a small number of cases, there has been a frequent change of teacher. There is considerable concern among parents about 'teething problems' associated with the lack of individual storage lockers for the students and lunchtime arrangements. The school has been working on these issues. Progress is slower than expected, due in considerable part to the web of contractual arrangements associated with the PFI under which the school was established.
68. Links with parents make a very good contribution to students' learning. For example, parents can visit to see the school in operation on a number of days in the autumn term. Students have well-used student planners which provide a clear outline on set homework and act as a good routine method of communication between school and home. Parents are fully involved where there are concerns about students' progress, behaviour or attendance. They also get a significant number of phone calls and notes recognising good work and attitudes. This has a very positive impact on the partnership and students' all round development. There are well-planned opportunities for parents and carers to contribute to the review arrangements of those students with statements of special educational needs.
69. The quality of information to support students' progress is very good overall. Interim reports, containing clear information on attitudes, behaviour and subjects, are issued prior to the academic counselling day that is led by form tutors and involves both parents and students. A separate consultation evening is held with subject teachers following the issue of the annual reports. Some use is made of interpreters at these events, for parents with very limited knowledge of English. The quality of students' written annual reports is very good. Reports convey a clear sense of what and how well students are doing and give a clear indication of the progress they are making. Areas for improvement in attitudes and in most subjects are another positive feature. As a result, parents have more updates than is usually the case on progress or concerns. School-related information is of good quality overall. Regular newsletters, supplemented with many other letters and notes, keep parents well informed. The governors' annual report clearly informs parents on the work of governors. The school recognises the need to identify and provide an effective range of written information in other languages.
70. The level of parents' involvement in their children's learning is good. Discussions with students indicate that most have somebody at home who checks that homework is done. Most parents respond positively to individual requests to discuss issues, such as student behaviour and attendance. Academic counselling meetings are well attended. Parental attendance was high at the annual achievement evening and the 'Lifestyle Celebration' events, when the music, dance and food of a variety of cultures were sampled. Parental attendance is high at meetings, such as Year 7 induction, Year 9 options and at the governors' annual meeting with parents. Parent governor positions

are promptly filled, a good indicator of parents' wider support for school. Parent governors have led the relaunch of the parent staff association as well as the compilation of the governors' annual report to parents. However, a minority of parents do not fulfil their key responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly or to inform the school in the event of absence.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

71. The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher, in post for just over a year following a difficult period for the school's leadership, provides very good leadership and management by defining the school's educational direction very well. As a result, the school's aims and values are very well reflected in a coherent approach to planning, and in the outcomes that have been achieved so far.
72. The school has worked particularly successfully in realising its vision of providing an education which meets the needs of individual students and which offers equal opportunities to all. The further vision of creating a harmonious community whose ethnic and social diversity is celebrated as a rich educational resource has also been firmly established. Targets set for academic performance in national tests at Year 9 meet statutory requirements and provide a sufficient degree of challenge; practice test results indicate that the school is well on course to meet these targets. Targets for attendance, however, have not been achieved and pose a key challenge for the school in the future.
73. In realising the school's aims and objectives, the headteacher is particularly sensitive to, and supportive of, her relatively inexperienced staff. There is a high degree of consistency in the methods used by teachers to ensure good practice in teaching, learning and the management of students. Such consistent practice is the result of clear expectations being given to teachers, supported by rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning - including lesson observation and checking students' work - and by the good professional development given to staff. The very effective role played by the school development team, which consists of learning area managers and year co-ordinators, is central to ensuring that expectations of good quality in teaching, learning, and the support for students are met throughout the school. Learning area managers in particular, charged with responsibility to monitor the work of teachers and subjects and to monitor the progress of students, are able, through regular meetings with the school leadership team, to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. Regular evaluations of the school's performance are informed by such appraisals, so planning for school improvement benefits from the detailed understanding of needs at the classroom level built up by the learning area managers. The school, therefore, has a good awareness of its strengths and weaknesses, and takes effective action to address those weaknesses.
74. The school development plan provides a well-defined agenda for action, and is well linked to the school's aims and values. It accommodates both the need for change and opportunities for further development. It places particular emphasis on promoting good learning and teaching through effective curricular planning and identifies strong links to professional development of staff. It places insufficient emphasis on measurable outcomes and concentrates more on the completion of tasks. As a result, there is more emphasis on monitoring that tasks are completed, and less on the rigorous measuring of the impact of new developments on students' progress and on the quality of education. The broad areas of activity provide a suitable set of priorities but there are a large number of associated tasks which may be too many to monitor and evaluate effectively. Subject development plans vary considerably in quality and precision, and again often lack precise measurable outcomes which make it difficult to assess the real impact of the work done. Not all subject development plans link fully to the school's

development priorities. The school recognises the need for improvements in the quality of development planning and is preparing relevant training for staff.

75. A relative weakness in management lies in the leadership team's capacity to make strategic improvements in the school's performance based on precise and measurable outcomes, in terms of students' performance and the quality of education provided. Its role needs to be redefined to meet the needs of the school as it grows and expands. The school's ability to use data to track students' performance and attendance and to improve the curriculum, for example, lacks some depth and detail in interpretation. The use of new technology to help in recording and processing such information is in its early stages of development; the use of ICT for administrative purposes does not therefore match the effectiveness of its use for teaching and learning. The headteacher's ability to delegate successfully key strategic activities, such as the school development plan and the strategy for performance management, is constrained by the relative inexperience of the assistant headteachers. The recent involvement of a former headteacher as a temporary deputy headteacher is an indicator that the school and LEA appreciates the need to boost the level of management experience on the leadership team and share some aspects of strategic management with the headteacher.
76. The management of individual subjects is good overall and benefits from teachers and subject leaders working closely with learning area managers on matters of teaching and learning quality. There is particularly effective leadership and management in the English and languages learning area, which is characterised by very consistent practice in the classroom and a high level of co-operative working between teachers. Very good management of ICT has ensured effective training of staff to meet the needs of the curriculum. In design and technology, geography, history, mathematics, physical education and science, leadership and management are at least good, and the main overall strengths lie in the quality of planning and monitoring of the work of each subject.
77. Leadership and management of the provision for students with special educational needs are satisfactory. The new Code of Practice is in place, and is well understood by the staff. The school is aware of the requirements of the Disability Act 2001, and there is good access to all parts of the school. However, the quality of teaching and learning is not monitored sharply enough, and progress made by students is not yet collated or analysed to inform future planning of the provision.
78. The quality of leadership and management of the provision for gifted and talented students is good. The organisation and planning of the provision is good and the initiative has been positively promoted. While the quality of teaching and learning is regularly monitored, observations do not always focus sharply enough on the impact that the teaching has on the gifted and talented students.
79. The governing body satisfactorily discharges its responsibilities. It is fully representative of the community it serves. Under new leadership, it has carried out an effective self-review, leading to the identification of the additional skills needed to match capabilities to needs. Governors have begun to work effectively with the new headteacher, based on open exchange of information and views. As a result, key governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have an adequate grasp of their major statutory responsibilities which they are discharging appropriately with the help of recently introduced committees. However, they are not yet discharging their key strategic leadership role effectively. This is particularly important for a school facing significant challenges associated with its rapid growth in size.

80. Involvement in setting the broad strategic direction, through the school development plan, takes the form of reviewing the school's draft plan rather than as a full partner in its creation. As a result, the plan lacks external perspective and is not sufficiently clear on priorities and target outcomes. The governing body has not yet established effective practical measures to hold the school to account, in relation to identified areas for improvement. As a result, its monitoring tends to be too passive, as it is not guided by pre-defined target outcomes.
81. Financial management is good. The PFI has presented the school with significant challenges in financial management, some of which have, unavoidably, diverted attention away from strategic planning to addressing more immediate, day-to-day matters. The school has very little control over the costs of site facilities and this restricts its application of the principles of best value in some financial decisions. However, the headteacher and governors have defined well the major expenditure priorities of the school in line with the school development plan, providing additional funding from the main budget for special educational needs and to support those who use English as an additional language. The balance brought forward from the last complete financial year, nearly six per cent, is higher than usually recommended. However, a significant proportion of the income stream lies beyond the direct control of the school and much of the balance is accounted for within the PFI arrangements. Expenditure is monitored on a regular monthly basis and reported to governors each term. The school has responded promptly to the small number of technical issues identified in the most recent auditor's report in March 2003. As yet, the school has not established sufficiently rigorous arrangements, linked to measurable outcomes, to evaluate the impact of major expenditure. Overall, the school is establishing good foundations upon which to apply the principles of best value in reviewing its provision and achievements. It applies diligently the local and national comparisons of performance and is alert to how well it is doing in comparison with other schools. It is particularly alert to the need to consult both students and their parents about how well it is doing and has put in place suitably challenging targets for performance in national tests. It has not yet established sufficiently detailed and rigorous targets to improve attendance.
82. To date, the impact of performance management is good overall. Lesson observation and feedback, including student feedback, are well established for all staff. The practice of focusing eligible individual's objectives around key elements of the school development plan is well established and effective. As a result, these staff are working directly on the school's priorities for development, thereby also creating a greater sense of common purpose. Identification and provision of associated professional development has been a particularly positive outcome. The school accepts that further work is needed to develop outcome-based targets in order to improve the impact of performance management on students' progress and key school priorities.
83. Induction arrangements for the large number of new staff are very good. Newly qualified teachers and the significant number recruited from overseas are very well supported through systematic monitoring of their teaching and well-planned professional development. However, this is currently an unsatisfactory feature of the provision for geography. The learning support assistants have had a comprehensive programme of recognised training.
84. There is an appropriate match of teaching and support staff to the demands of the curriculum. The contributions made by administrative and other staff are valued by the headteacher and her teaching staff.
85. Accommodation is very good overall, creating a positive environment for learning. The main accommodation provides a pleasant, bright, clean, well resourced and spacious

learning environment. The dozen modern science laboratories and ten computer suites are real strengths in the provision. Access for disabled students is very good, including desks of adjustable height. The playground area is adequate in size and other outside facilities are substantial. The lack of lockers is a source of concern to parents and students, who justifiably complain about the strain of carrying their resources and equipment around with them throughout the day.

86. The provision of computers is well above average and very good use is made by teachers and sometimes by students of the interactive whiteboards that are located around the school. Delays in commissioning ICT equipment in the science and design and technology areas are contributing to current problems in delivering National Curriculum requirements. The range of software available to support the use of ICT across the curriculum is currently inadequate. The range of resources is narrow currently in geography because of lengthy delays in the delivery of ordered stock. The delays in stocking and opening the new school library are being overcome by arrangement with a local community library that is providing support for students in the school. Pictorial resources are well used in history but there is an insufficient range of textbooks to meet the full range of students' needs.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

87. Since it opened just less than three years ago the school has established firm foundations for its further development. In order to build upon its successes to date the headteacher, governors and all staff should:

1. Raise the standards of students' written work by:
 - empowering a member of the leadership team to direct language development across the curriculum;
 - identifying strengths and weaknesses in each students' writing on entry to the school;
 - defining clearly in schemes of work the writing skills required in each subject for each year;
 - including these as key objectives in schemes of work;
 - providing well-structured reading, listening and speaking activities to prepare for writing activities in lessons
 - developing students' greater awareness of the structures of language, in particular their ability to use increasingly complex sentences as they get older;
 - providing opportunities for drafting and the completion of different types of extended writing for different purposes across all subjects;
 - giving more emphasis to developing the writing skills of those students who use English as an additional language once they are orally competent and confident.

Paragraphs: 1, 4, 7, 9, 10, 12, 32, 44, 92, 94, 104, 107, 109, 111, 113, 127, 138, 144, 147, 148, 171, 179, 180, 182.

2. Increase attendance and reduce the amount of unauthorised absence by:
 - setting challenging, progressive targets to improve attendance for each tutor group, year group and the school as a whole;
 - monitoring attendance rigorously by analysing data according to type of absence, gender and ethnicity;
 - using the results of this analysis to identify the actions to take to produce improvement;
 - identifying and making links with secondary schools in similar circumstances that have made significant improvement in attendance;
 - communicating information about attendance levels and targets on a regular basis to all those associated with the school.

Paragraphs: 21, 58, 70, 72, 126.

3. Define and develop more fully the role of the leadership team in the strategic development of the school as it grows and expands by:
 - identifying and communicating the role and responsibilities of each assistant headteacher in leading specific aspects of school improvement associated with standards and targets;
 - promoting opportunities for the assistant headteachers to demonstrate leadership and initiative;
 - providing opportunities for the assistant headteachers to gain greater technical understanding of assessment.

Paragraphs: 74, 75.

4. Revise the organisation of the timetable by:
 - reviewing the current length of lessons and the number of lessons each day;
 - increasing the time for geography, history, art and design and modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9;
 - considering the patterns of movement across the school when constructing the revised timetable;
 - considering when particular subject lessons occur during the day to ensure an equitable balance across subjects and years.

Paragraphs: 34, 38, 39, 122, 128, 132, 144, 152, 155, 160, 173.

In addition, the inspection team recommends that the governors consider the following issues for possible inclusion within their action plan:

1. The setting of sharper, more measurable outcomes to inform the evaluation of the school development plan and subject development plans.
2. The provision of a daily act of collective worship for all students.
3. The application of ICT in each subject of the curriculum in order to meet statutory requirements.
4. The use of assessment to inform curricular planning.
5. The monitoring of progress by different groups of students according to gender, levels of competence and ethnicity.
6. The behaviour in lessons of a small minority of students, particularly in Year 8.

THE WORK OF THE DESIGNATED UNIT FOR STUDENTS WITH PROFOUND AND MULTIPLE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

88. Students who are educated in the resourced provision for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress. They make good gains in their skills in literacy and numeracy, and improve their skills in forming letters, and in learning to sequence stories and events. They make good progress in a number of subjects, including music, where they learn to identify different instruments and gain experience of making music. In addition, they make good gains in their social skills, by learning to interact positively with their peers and adults. For example, they eat together every day in the dining hall, with guidance from their teachers and support assistants. Individual educational programmes give useful advice to teachers and are used to track progress, but reviews of targets are not always up to date.
89. The quality of teaching and learning for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties is good. Strengths of the teaching are seen in the good relationships between staff and students, and in the close matching of work to the needs of individual students. In addition, the brisk pace in the best lessons is well managed by the teacher. For example, in a lesson on basic skills, students were studying a story called 'The Witches'. The teacher had broken the lesson down into short sections, and used teaching aids, such as a black glove, to help focus students' attention on certain aspects of the story, thereby helping them to remember details and answer questions. The teacher moved the lesson on from section to section, alternating oral work with writing tasks. These strategies were successful, the pace was brisk, and students made good gains in their skills of recall and comprehension.
90. Students have good access to the curriculum, spending approximately half of their time in lessons with their peers. Support assistants work very effectively, helping students to get involved in lessons and learn well. Basic skills are taught well to small groups of students. This is successful because the teacher can match the work carefully to each student's needs and can adapt the lessons, moving on to new topics or staying longer to concentrate on previous work where necessary.

91. The quality of leadership and management is good. Teaching and learning are monitored, and additional, informal monitoring is frequent because teachers and support assistants work together regularly, or drop in for short periods to see how lessons are progressing. In addition, the school makes very good use of the services of outside agencies. For example, the LEA advisers are working very closely with the school, helping to plan for the expansion of the current provision that was not a feature of the school as originally planned. They also work alongside staff from the unit in lessons, helping to develop practical and successful approaches to teaching and learning.

PROVISION FOR ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Overall, the quality of provision in English as an additional language (EAL) is **good**.

Strengths

- A rich web of support systems takes very good care of students from the moment they start at the school.
- Students at the earliest stages of learning English make very good progress.
- All students make good progress in practical subjects of the curriculum.
- Students' personal development is very good; they become confident young people.
- Skilled staff provide sensitive linguistic and pastoral support.
- Leadership and management are good; the department contributes significantly to the inclusive ethos of the school.

Areas for improvement

- Improving literacy among students at the intermediate stages of learning English.
- Developing the analysis of standards and achievement throughout the school so as to further improve the curriculum and teaching for EAL students.
- Increasing attendance at extended day activities.
- Extending the links between school and students' homes and the community.

92. The rich web of support systems means that students with EAL and those from minority ethnic groups are readily welcomed and very well included in the life of the whole school. This is a major factor in students' very good personal development and in their very good progress in the earliest stages of learning English. Students make satisfactory progress over time in the curriculum overall. It is good in mathematics, physical education, design and technology, music and ICT, mostly practical subjects. This is also the case in religious education, where there is active learning, oral work, plentiful visual aids, and tasks adapted for the different language needs of the students. However, in subjects where there is a lot of reading and writing, students who have the oral skills to socialise well and who can understand the content of lessons tend to think they do not need further specific help with English. As a result, they stay on a plateau and their residual difficulties with reading for understanding and writing effectively inhibit them from achieving all they can. In geography and English they often fail to complete work.

93. On the other hand, learning in lessons is good overall. Students benefit from the challenges and level of language in mainstream lessons and from being in classes with students of similar potential. Teachers are aware of students' language needs but are not always sure how to address them. However, they are helped by the skilled learning support staff and other students, who between them speak a good range of languages and can often interpret for students and check that they have understood concepts, for instance osmosis and cell transport in science. EAL teachers also work with class teachers to devise tasks and worksheets, as in history where students make good

gains in knowledge of topics and are enabled to complete their written work. Sometimes EAL teachers and the class teacher teach as a team. This was effective in a Year 7 English class where insisting on good habits of listening, structured preparation for writing and a discussion on bullying arising from the class novel were directed by two teachers.

94. Learning by EAL students is less successful when the class teacher talks for too long and thus prevents the EAL support staff from working with individuals or groups. Generally, across the curriculum there are too few speaking and listening activities in groups to help all students amass and refine ideas. At present, with the library not in use, there is too little suitable research material. Sometimes teachers speak too fast and are inclined to give more than one instruction at a time, which is confusing for EAL students as well as many others. Visual aids are not always easily legible with labelling in large, clear lettering. Overall teachers give insufficient attention to the accuracy and fluency of students' writing.
95. The care of EAL students is very good. The links with students' homes, the skilled and thorough assessment on entry, the welcome club, the support from student 'buddies' and the information used by class and form teachers are of high quality. Twenty-six teachers attended an enlightening session after school in the inspection week on the needs of refugee students. These activities are augmented by the good range of extended day activities, for instance reading clubs, a homework club and an international project for refugee students who are sharing their experiences through e-mail and video with young refugees being educated in other countries. However, these are not always as well attended as the staff would hope. The school has only recently begun to analyse students' levels of attainment by gender and ethnic group, starting with Year 9. It is well aware that it must now do this for all years in the school and use the data to modify the curriculum and teaching methods to suit the learning needs of all groups of students, including those at each stage of learning English as an additional language. The department is also keen to extend its links with students' homes, especially in cases where students are vulnerable or underachieving.
96. Leadership and management of the provision for EAL and minority ethnic students are good. The department makes good use of help from outside agencies. The enthusiastic, multilingual team makes their base a happy port of call for any students needing support. Funding is used appropriately. Evaluation of the department's strengths and priorities is good and it has the capacity to go from strength to strength.

COMMUNITY LANGUAGES: MANDARIN

The provision for Mandarin is **very good**.

Strengths

- Mandarin imparts a multicultural dimension to the school's overall curriculum.
- Competent and enthusiastic teachers, including three native speakers, provide consistent opportunity for learning the language.
- Senior management's commitment to Mandarin is enormously beneficial to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Greater independence and ownership of learning by the students.
- Further integration of ICT for extension and enrichment activities.

97. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Years 7, 8 and 9 are generally higher than those that students might reasonably be expected to reach at Year 9. They make a promising start in Year 7 and build on their knowledge of the subject in Years 8 and 9. Achievement is good.

98. Most students develop a good grasp of Mandarin. They demonstrate an understanding of the basic grammar of the language and their Mandarin vocabulary is increasing steadily. They listen and respond to simple classroom instructions and take part in short dialogues on familiar topics. Their pronunciation of Mandarin words and phrases normally demonstrates their feel for the language. Students' written work is developing well too, with most being able to copy the basic Chinese characters. Some can copy phrases and a few are able to write unaided phrases and sentences. The more competent students in Year 9 read sentences confidently and produce new sentences accurately. Students' handwriting develops satisfactorily in Years 7, 8 and 9 and they undertake a variety of written tasks involving Chinese characters.
99. Most students are learning Mandarin well. They show commitment to the subject through sustained engagement in lessons, through completion of homework and through displaying a positive attitude to the subject. They take care of exercise books and worksheets. Relationships between students and teachers are very good but too many tend to wait for their teacher to tell them what to do. Few examples were observed, moreover, of collaborative work, group work, research and project-based work. A few show negative attitudes towards the subject, hindering their learning and progress. Some exercise books are not cared for nor their contents duly valued.
100. Teaching in Mandarin is good, with some very good features. Teachers are competent and enthusiastic. They provide very good role models to the students. Lessons are well planned and they are delivered with a variety of suitable activities and resources to motivate the students. Integration of ICT in teaching has added to the interest and clarity of presentation of lessons. Teachers provide a great deal of exposure to the target language, which results in an appropriate ethos for pupils to practise the language. Teachers' skilful control of the language materials taught in lessons, both in terms of vocabulary and grammatical structures, builds students' confidence and allows ample scope for them to practise with familiar language materials. The pace of learning is generally appropriate, except in the case of some less competent students who sometimes find the pace too brisk. Good class management, high expectations, and generally very good relations combine to create the right dynamic for learning to which most respond well. Individual support and supervision during lessons and over time, consistent marking of work and positive feedback facilitate good progress by all groups of students, including those with special educational needs or who use English as an additional language.
101. Teaching, however, sometimes suffers from an imbalance between teacher input and students' ownership of their learning. A culture of greater independence, through the use of dictionaries, current magazines, and the greater use of ICT, for example, is likely to give lasting skills to students. On occasions, lesson planning and delivery tend to be too mechanical to allow for sufficient enjoyment in learning the language for communicative use.
102. The opportunity to study Mandarin extends significantly the cultural and linguistic horizons of all students. It combines the excitement of a modern language with the variety of the Chinese culture. Besides extending the choice for modern languages, Mandarin enriches the multicultural dimension of the school's curriculum. The provision for Mandarin benefits from the unequivocal commitment by the leadership team to this subject. National and international contacts have contributed to the quality of provision in Mandarin. Additional appropriate learning resources, further development of the schemes of work and lesson plans, particularly to increase students' independence and ICT-linked activities, are likely to enhance further the good quality of learning.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	149
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	73

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	30	62	45	6	2	0
Percentage	2	20	42	30	5	1	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y9
Number of students on the school's roll	996
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	501

Special educational needs	Y7– Y9
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	43
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	279

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	511

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	78
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	50

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	7.6

National comparative data	7.8
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National comparative data	1.2
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	380	14	0
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	16	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	54	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	53	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	68	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	58	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	22	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	87	7	0
Black or Black British – African	180	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	12	4	0
Chinese	9	0	0
Any other ethnic group	5	2	0
No ethnic group recorded	33	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	65.6
Number of students per qualified teacher	21.6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	23
Total aggregate hours worked per week	764

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y9

Key Stage 3	25.68
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2002/3
	£
Total income	3,518,035
Total expenditure	3,470,818
Expenditure per student	3,467
Balance brought forward from previous year	159,938
Balance carried forward to next year	207,155

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	62
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	8
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	4
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	995
Number of questionnaires returned	368

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	41	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	55	39	5	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	38	11	4	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	43	13	5	3
The teaching is good.	43	48	5	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	52	38	6	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	38	2	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	22	2	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	41	45	7	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	44	48	2	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	47	5	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	37	6	2	8

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Students speak and listen well.
- Students have a sympathetic understanding of characters, relationships and themes in their class texts.
- Students behave well and work very well with each other.
- Teachers' emphasis on social, moral and cultural topics makes a very good contribution to the students' personal development.
- Very good leadership has created a strong team who are working effectively to develop the curriculum and the students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the standards of students' writing.
- Improving the achievement of boys and of students in identified ethnic groups.
- Using ICT resources and the library to stimulate interest in reading and writing.
- Assessing students by ethnicity and gender as they move through the school so as to identify and deal with underachievement early.
- Incorporating more drama and active learning in lessons so as to interest all students.

103. On entry to the school, standards in English are well below average. When the current Year 7 entered the school, boys were doing better than boys had done in the previous two years, but standards were still below those of the girls. The school's own assessments at the end of Year 9 are well below the standards expected nationally but broadly in line with those found locally. The boys, except for Bangladeshi boys and white boys, did significantly less well than the girls overall, whereas in mathematics and science the boys outperformed the girls. Indian girls did particularly well.

104. Achievement at Year 9 is satisfactory. Although students make good progress with their oral and reading skills, their writing lags far behind. However, challenging stimulus materials in all years for all students, good teaching and effective support by learning support staff mean that students are generally learning well in lessons. In lessons, the boys and girls and different minority ethnic groups reach similar standards.

105. Speaking and listening are their strongest skills, often in line with what is usually found nationally. Most students explain themselves clearly and fluently, and they enjoy reading aloud. Year 7 and Year 8 students speak more distinctly than Year 9 students. In response to sources from various cultures, Year 7 were enthusiastic about the characteristics and purposes of fairy tales, Year 8 talked sensitively about a girl's feelings of isolation and about family responsibility and Year 9 about gender stereotyping and racial and political discrimination.

106. In spite of the library not yet being available to students, they keep up their personal reading both at home and at the start of every lesson. Generally their choice of books is suitable for their age but a number in Year 9 are still choosing reading that is more suitable to Year 7. By contrast, the challenging, culturally diverse class novels and poetry stimulate all students, including those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, to understand characters, relationships and issues, many reaching standards only just below those that are usual for their age. In

Year 9 all show a personal response to their class reading; for example, to instances of oppression and the apathy of those who are not being oppressed in Benjamin Zephaniah's *To do wid me*. The more competent apply their general knowledge to discover layers of meaning. All appreciate the characteristics of a number of genres; for example Year 7 appreciate characteristics and the purposes of fairy tales. Most less competent students try to work out meaning from clues in the text. Altogether, these interesting resources and related tasks and the inclusive ethos contribute very significantly to the students' personal development.

107. Writing is much the weakest aspect of students' English and is overall well below the standard expected nationally at the end of Year 9. The best writing is lively, using engaging detail and imaginative imagery. The more competent students in Year 8 have written sincere love poems. Much other writing expresses students' ideas well and they write appropriately for different purposes, but many find it difficult to develop their thoughts and to include interesting detail. Partly because of the over-rapid pace in some lessons, a few students find it difficult to get started even on a short piece of writing, and a significant amount of work in students' exercise books is unfinished. Grammar, spelling, the range of vocabulary, variety of sentence structure and the quality of handwriting are well below the standard expected.
108. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The support from Year 7 onwards given by teachers using materials from the national strategy for Years 7 to 9, the challenge of participating in lessons with students who have a range of competence, and specific support in class, as well as some specially devised tasks, are good. However, there is too little active, hands-on learning, insufficient group work and too little use of ICT to thoroughly engage these learners.
109. This applies to all students, including EAL students, whose progress is satisfactory overall. Because teachers are aware of their needs and because of the skills of the EAL support team, as well as their immersion in mainstream classes, these students make very good progress in the earliest stages of learning English. However, many stay on a plateau when they reach the stage when their oral skills enable them to socialise well and when they can cope with understanding the content of the lesson. Staying at this stage, at which writing still poses difficulties, inhibits some students from achieving all they might. Indian and Pakistani boys in Year 9 have particularly low writing skills. Current strategies are insufficiently robust to address this issue. Gifted and talented students make good progress because they have higher levels of literacy; they are suitably challenged by the English curriculum and by many extension activities in class.
110. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All the lessons seen were at least satisfactory, half were good and one seventh were very good. The best lessons are well planned to stimulate the students' interest and well paced, without being rushed, to develop a good range of skills. With skilful questioning the teachers make students think and they use individual, pair and group work in order to involve all the students. All learning benefits from the consistent routines and the well-planned curriculum. All teachers manage their classes very well. Their good knowledge of English, their high expectations of students' behaviour and understanding and their enjoyment of the subject and their classes mean that the relationships between the teacher and the class and between students are almost invariably good. Students rise to the considerable challenges and they like English lessons. Teachers consistently set out the aims of the lesson but they do not take sufficient time at the end to review with the class what they have learnt. Sometimes the class teacher effectively shares the teaching with a support teacher.

111. In the less successful lessons the pace is sometimes too hectic because the teacher is concentrating more on the material to be covered than on the learning of the particular class. This results in rushed reading and writing. In some lessons the teacher reads or talks for too long so that students lose concentration and support staff have too little chance to help. Occasionally, the most passive students are not brought into discussion. Instructions are not always clear, and marking is sometimes insufficiently helpful about what students could do to improve their work. Generally the English team needs to help students to acquire a richer and more accurately spelt vocabulary.
112. Leadership and management are very good. Inspirational leadership, sharing out responsibilities to the whole team and a very good programme of support and ongoing training of teachers have created an enthusiastic and effective team, eager to go on developing their skills. Day-to-day management is calm and efficient. Evaluation of the team's work is very astute, resulting in appropriate schemes for improving students' achievement. For instance, teachers make good use of the assessment records for their classes; they now need to further develop assessment by ethnic group and gender through all years of the school so as to identify and deal with underachievement early.

The contribution made by other subjects to students' competence in literacy

113. The school is well up-to-date with implementing the literacy strand of the national strategy for Years 7 to 9. The staff are well aware of the need to improve all students' language skills. Speaking and listening are the students' strongest language skills and are best developed in drama, religious education and mathematics. In other subjects students do not use oral activities often enough for amassing and refining ideas. All subjects encourage students to use precise, subject-specific vocabulary. With the library not yet in use reading is underdeveloped, which affects standards in design and technology and music in particular. Science, history and design and technology ask students to write for different purposes, for instance, in science a letter to a friend explaining how to avoid food deficiency illnesses, and in history writing about people's imagined feelings. In French and Mandarin, students are conversant with parts of speech, which helps them when discussing grammar, and their spelling and punctuation are regularly corrected. In other subjects, however, there is too little emphasis on writing for different purposes, accurate grammar, varied sentence structure, correct spelling of common words and neat handwriting.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Performance skills are good at Year 9.
- Most students are very well motivated and enjoy their lessons because the teachers set high expectations.
- The very good scheme of work provides an increasing level of challenge as the students get older.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' personal, social and spiritual development.
- Excellent facilities are well used.

Areas for improvement

- The structuring of activities in lessons to meet more fully the needs of less competent students.
- Students' skills in evaluating their own work during and at the end of lessons.

114. Drama is taught as a separate subject within the learning area of physical education and the creative arts. Standards at Year 9 are lower than usually found nationally because the evaluation skills of the less competent students are significantly lower than their performance skills. Most students have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the basic performance skills. Some more competent students show confidence and good self-discipline when they present their work to others.
115. Students achieve well over time because the scheme of work is very well planned to cover a range of dramatic skills as well as contributing greatly to students' personal, social and spiritual development. The excellent facilities produce a very good response from nearly all students.
116. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the five lessons seen it ranged from very good to satisfactory. In the best teaching, a group of more competent Year 9 students gained much from the very good planning of the lesson in which the intervention by the teacher to improve their performance skills was skilfully balanced by her confidence to let them take the initiative and develop their own ideas. Questions were used very well to probe students' understanding and critical response to what they were doing. Good features across all the teaching seen were the consistently high expectations of behaviour and attitudes, the setting of clear objectives and the opportunities provided for students to express a view about their efforts at the end of the lesson. Overall, the pace of lessons is good but time is occasionally lost when students arrive late. Sometimes also, too long is spent on the 'warm-up' activities and insufficient time is left to close the lesson effectively.
117. The scheme of work provides a very good framework for the planning of lessons. However, insufficient attention is sometimes given to setting a series of tasks with a short time scale so that the less competent students sustain the interest and increase their understanding throughout the lesson.
118. The quality of leadership and management is good. There is a very high commitment to establishing drama as a subject valued by all students and teamwork to create and review work is very good. Progress is monitored regularly but there is insufficient attention given to the evaluation of skills as well as effort at the end of each lesson. The facilities are well managed. The success of the subject is reflected in the large number of students who have chosen to study drama at GCSE next year.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Good teaching that focuses on how students will learn successfully.
- Effective monitoring of teaching and good support for teachers.
- Students achieve well.

Areas for improvement

- The management of the learning area, in particular planning and review.
- The use of ICT in the teaching of the subject.

119. Standards on entry to the school are well below those usually found nationally. A large number of the current Year 9 students joined the school after the start of Year 7. Standards are higher in the current Year 7, the record of national test results more complete and numbers on roll have remained more steady. However, the school's own

standardised tests indicate that standards at Year 9 remain lower than those usually found in other schools nationally. Standards are even across all aspects of the subject. In the work seen there was no difference in the standards of boys and girls or different ethnic minority groups in the school.

120. Standards are below those that students nationally are expected to reach at Year 9 because a significant number of students do not retain over time the knowledge and understanding they acquire in individual lessons. As a result, they do not subsequently recall fully, or confidently apply them when solving problems. Most can apply mathematical methods immediately after they have been demonstrated by their teacher but are less successful when required to apply them subsequently and on their own. More competent students have a good understanding of statistical terms and representations. They use the sine, cosine and tangent ratios to find missing sides and angles of right-angled triangles. They can express numbers in standard form and write the upper and lower bounds of a number. Competent students can find areas of two-dimensional shapes. They are able to solve linear equations and inequalities. Less competent students understand negative number. They can substitute numbers into simple expressions. Without using a calculator they are able to work out percentages of quantities.
121. The achievement of the majority of students at Year 9 is good. Students who speak English as an additional language achieve well and students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The school's own formal assessments indicate that over time the boys' achievement is higher than the girls'. While minority ethnic groups achieve well there is significant underachievement of white indigenous students. Gifted and talented students achieve well.
122. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. In over half the lessons seen it was good or very good with one lesson judged unsatisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and they plan lessons carefully using the National Numeracy Strategy for students in Years 7 to 9. The three-part lesson is fully implemented and effective starters are used to ensure good quality learning early in the lesson. Good learning results when teachers share learning objectives with students and review their progress in the lesson against these objectives. Other features of good teaching and learning include good variety of short and interesting tasks using different learning styles; good lesson pace without rushing the work and high expectation reinforced through praise. As a result, students are involved in their learning. They willingly answer questions and are prepared, when asked, to explain and discuss their work. They show interest in the subject, complete tasks set and produce written work of a reasonable quality. In the best lessons seen, teachers consistently challenged students to explain their answers and reasoning to the rest of the class. For example, in a very good lesson with a Year 9 top set the teacher effectively questioned and encouraged students to think about their work using well-structured paired and class discussion. In this lesson all students contributed and were actively involved in analysing, interpreting and criticising statistical data. In contrast to this, in the one lesson where teaching and learning were unsatisfactory a significant minority of students were not engaged because the teacher was unsuccessful in managing their behaviour and attitude to the work. Lessons are always timetabled as double periods and in some lessons seen, concentration declined towards the end of the period.
123. There is insufficient use of ICT. Students use computers when doing statistical investigation and interactive whiteboards are also used in teaching but further development of the use of ICT, particularly by students, during the lesson would further improve the quality of learning.

124. Leadership and management are good. Teachers work well together as a team and are well supported by each other and the head of the learning area. There is very effective monitoring of teaching and learning through lesson observation. Newly qualified teachers and those new to the school are very well supported and given very good guidance. The mathematics curriculum meets statutory requirements and meets well the needs of all students. Schemes of work are being developed to take full account of the national strategy for students in Year 7 to 9. There are good procedures for assessing standards and tracking progress. Assessment data, however, is not used for curriculum planning. While there is a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the learning area there is insufficient attention to detailed planning and review of the curriculum and its organisation.
125. Since the school opened, the National Numeracy Strategy for students in Years 7 to 9 has been implemented well. The quality of teaching and subject knowledge of teachers has improved. The school's professional development strategy to promote the development and application of numeracy across other subjects has a good impact, particularly in design and technology and science.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Students' achievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Good teaching, which includes high expectations and effective lesson planning, together with students' positive attitudes ensure students make good progress in learning in most lessons.
- Planned opportunities to use and extend skills in numeracy help students to learn science more effectively.
- Very good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Improving standards at the end of Year 9, especially those of girls.
- Providing opportunities for students to improve their standards in writing.
- Using ICT more extensively to help improve learning.
- Shortening the duration of lessons to raise students' levels of concentration and application.

126. Standards on entry to the school at Year 7 are well below the national average. Students make good progress and, by the end of Year 9, they are achieving well. However, standards remain below those that students nationally are expected to reach at Year 9. They are similar to those in mathematics and better than those in English. The achievement of the boys is much better than that of most girls. The school's formal assessments at Year 9 indicate the minority ethnic boys do better than the girls, except that the Indian girls are doing much better than the Indian boys. Underachievement by a few boys, who have a good level of competency upon entry to the school, results mainly from poor or sporadic attendance. More competent students, including those who have been identified as gifted and talented, make good progress because they are taught in identified groups, receive good support and are keen to complete work that provides additional challenge and is well matched to their potential. Students with special educational needs make steady progress in their learning and achieve satisfactorily. Those students who speak English as an additional language at different levels of competence all make good progress because the learning support they receive is better managed and matched more closely to their individual needs.

127. Students' work seen during the inspection shows that overall standards in science are below expected levels. The students' use and application of number is good because teachers provide opportunities to interpret and display numbers and place a strong emphasis on accuracy. The students' use and interpretation of graphical data is good. A significant weakness to sustained progress by most students is their poor writing standards and lack of confidence in expressing themselves in extended writing. Written work is conspicuous by its brevity and range, although when work is structured with a requirement for one word or short responses the work can be prolific, particularly in Year 7. This means that skills in scientific recording are usually good but report, extended and biographical writing are weak. General spelling is weak although words of a scientific nature are spelled much better because key words are displayed and emphasised in all lessons. Responses to teachers' questions are good amongst most students, except those at an early stage in learning English as an additional language. Reading, overall, is sound, if sometimes hesitant, particularly when lengthy scientific technical language is involved. With less competent students, facts and ideas are not retained well without regular recapitulation and repetition. In experimental work, students show a high level of respect for equipment and materials, which they use with confidence when reading, for example thermometers, measuring cylinders and stop clocks accurately. The youngest students have a good understanding of 'fair-testing' in science whilst students in Year 9 have more than a rudimentary understanding of the identification and control of scientific variables. Most students have weak skills in observational and diagrammatic drawing and this affects further the presentation of work, particularly that of the less competent students. Students show good skills in using computers, however insufficient opportunities for their use are offered to extend their learning in investigating and recording observations. This is partly, but not wholly, because the school awaits the delivery of ordered equipment for use in investigative science.
128. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. The strongest feature of all the teaching is the very good quality of planning which pays close attention to what students are going to learn rather than that which teachers are going to teach. Well-constructed schemes of work, suitably matched to the competencies of students, ensure that the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum are met fully. Where the teaching is most effective a wide range of activities are planned for each lesson to maintain students' interest and fully use the excessively long periods allocated to most lessons. Where learning is very effective, very good or better teaching shows teachers to have wide subject knowledge, a comprehensive understanding of the scientific ideas and high expectations whilst using time and resources efficiently. In an excellent Year 8 lesson, students learned exceptionally well because their maturity and desire to learn matched closely the exceptional planning, preparation and expectations of the teacher. All aspects of teaching have been substantially influenced by the good practice described in the national strategy for Years 7 to 9 although insufficient emphasis is placed on plenary work to consolidate learning effectively. In a small number of unsatisfactory lessons information and explanations are presented with insufficient accuracy and clarity. As a result, the students' understanding is unsatisfactory.
129. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The aims of the school are fully incorporated into the clear vision in which the subject is developing. They are evident in a carefully formulated subject development plan, which identifies areas for attention, and these are appropriately prioritised, timed and measured against success criteria. The capacity to be successful in the immediate future will largely depend upon attracting, recruiting and retaining teachers with suitable experience and strong subject expertise. Within the existing constraints, innovation and change is being managed exceptionally well with shared teamwork and a capacity to motivate and influence teachers featuring prominently. Inspirational teaching from the few experienced teachers is shared and teachers readily accept delegated responsibilities even though

most are temporary appointments and on short-term contracts. The monitoring of most aspects of teaching and learning is very good. Closer attention to the quality, regularity and consistency of marking is an issue to be addressed. Procedures for assessing students' standards and progress are usually good but curricular planning does not always benefit from these outcomes. Teachers frequently observe their peers. This means that the newly qualified teacher and the six trained but unqualified teachers are well supported both within and outside the subject area. In just over two terms there has been good progress in establishing the subject in very good accommodation in the new school. With close attention to eliminating the identified constraints the subject is well positioned to make further improvements in teaching, learning and in raising standards.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The colour work of many students is bright and bold.
- Card constructions are imaginative and well made.
- Lessons are well planned.

Areas for improvement

- Standards in drawing and painting.
- Behaviour management in some lessons.
- The time allocation for the subject is less than that usually found nationally; students do not have enough time to fully develop and practise their skills.

130. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are well below those usually found in schools nationally. At Year 9, standards remain well below those that students nationally are expected to reach. Despite this, achievement is satisfactory because many students make steady gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject. Their colour work is bright and bold, and they learn to use chalk pastels to create lively pictures. These are based on the study of fruit and vegetables, such as apples and oranges, and show a growing knowledge and understanding of the principles of composition. Students' construction work in card and paper is well made and imaginative, with family pets or favourite sports used as starting points. Competent students use charcoal and chalk effectively to draw masks or figures from observation. These show a growing willingness to use materials vigorously, and effectively explore light and dark tones. The drawing skills of less competent students, however, are weak, especially when using pencil, and their line work is rather laboured. Their painting skills lack sensitivity, and paint is often applied rather crudely to the picture surface. In addition, too much of their work is on too small a scale, and their broader handling skills are not fully developed as a result. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress overall, as do those with English as an additional language. This is because the support provided is effective enough to allow them to make progress similar to that made by the great majority of students.

131. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Students learn most effectively when methods used are well planned and active, so that they can engage physically with the materials which are easily to hand. For example, in a lesson on making constructions, students worked vigorously with card, coloured paper and tape, and concentrated well for this part of the lesson. Students also learn effectively when teachers give good individual advice, for example on choosing colour combinations to achieve pleasing effects. Teachers are also very encouraging, and praise students when they produce work of a high standard, and especially when students try hard to

succeed. This helps to maintain positive attitudes. However, there are weaknesses in behaviour management in some lessons, and on these occasions students do not listen to instructions properly, or try as hard as they could. While this sometimes leads to unsatisfactory behaviour and attitudes, in the majority of lessons it has the effect of reducing the impact of the good subject knowledge and good planning. For example, in a lesson on collage, the lesson was well planned in small sections, the introduction was very clear, and all materials were easily to hand. However, the students were rather noisy at the start of the lesson, and did not listen properly. The teacher then had to spend too much time trying to manage their behaviour. As a result, levels of concentration and engagement did not rise above a satisfactory level, and learning was restricted to a satisfactory level overall.

132. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is established, and the assessment procedures devised by the school are very good. However, current teaching staff, who have been recently appointed, are still trying to build positive relationships with students. This is why behaviour management is not always as effective as it could be, and why learning and achievement are restricted to a satisfactory level overall. In addition, the time allowed for teaching the subject is less than that usually found nationally, and this means that students are not getting enough practice in painting and drawing to fully develop their skills.
133. Improvement since the opening of the school has been satisfactory. The curriculum has been thoroughly planned and organised, and assessment procedures are in place. However, learning, and achievement are currently restricted to a satisfactory level.

CITIZENSHIP

The overall quality of provision for citizenship is **good**.

Strengths

- The development of resources to support teaching and learning.
- The involvement of local, national and international initiatives in planning activities.
- The attitudes of students to fresh ideas and the growth of their independence and interdependence.

Areas for improvement

- Identification of opportunities within the general curriculum for citizenship to engage students' curiosity and investigation.
- Consistent assessment policy.
- Breadth of the curriculum.

134. Standards at Year 9 are broadly in line with those that students are expected to reach nationally. Most students have a good understanding of the three elements of citizenship and can engage in good quality debate and reasoned argument. Many are enthusiastic about participating in the activities fostered by the very good resource packs available to support specific issues within the provision for life skills. Students' achievements in citizenship are good.
135. In the life skills lessons observed that often focused on citizenship issues, the standards of teaching were always good and frequently very good. Lessons are well prepared by teachers and their co-tutors. The result is manifest in good student participation and active learning. In one class, students engaged in a role-play exercise on crime which was very convincing in terms of the enthusiasm that individuals played out their parts. The good quality of provision is also reflected in the wide range of visiting speakers from the local community, participation in local initiatives such as the Healthy Schools challenge and opportunities to exercise responsibility in school.

136. The programme of study offers students a good range of opportunities to consider sets of values and beliefs and to evaluate codes for weighing up what is right and what is wrong. The nature of the programme of study allows students to think through the consequences of their own and other's actions. The school fosters a sense of belonging to a strong community with inclusive values.
137. Students' progress is reported to parents but a consistent assessment strategy is yet to be put in place. Provision for citizenship is managed well by a small team of teachers who are proving effective in supporting the good programme of study. From September 2003, a co-ordinator will be appointed to develop this area of study further.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good; lessons are often very well planned and classroom activities well managed.
- Students learn to make good use of number to make their work more accurate.
- Students make good progress in learning about how the stages of solving a design problem link together.
- Students make good progress in acquiring practical skills.

Areas for improvement

- Students' design ideas are not based on sufficiently detailed research and investigation.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to draw on the rich cultural heritages of the school and local community to develop their design ideas.
- Assessment systems do not give sufficiently detailed information about how students are making progress.

138. Achievement at Year 9 is good. Overall, standards on entry in Year 7 are well below average, and for a significant minority their designing and making capabilities are very low. Literacy standards too are weak and this constrains students' abilities to write in the forms required for their design work. Over time practical skills develop particularly well, so that, by Year 8, students demonstrate sound competence in working with a range of tools, materials and equipment. They are helped in this respect by their good application of number through measuring, weighing and estimation which gives their work accuracy and some precision. Aspects of design work also develop well, particularly in understanding the stages which need to be completed in developing a solution to a design problem. Most students can offer precise design specifications for their work which show an awareness of some of the constraints they must work within. A significant minority at Year 9 are able to offer sound evaluations of products by measuring against specifications. All students are able to annotate work to show how designs have developed, but literacy weaknesses constrain the quality of their comments, and more generally keep overall standards below those seen in schools nationally. Students' design ideas are also not based on sufficiently detailed research and investigation to offer adequate depth of understanding of the needs of consumers and constraints which face producers. As a result, standards at Year 9 are below those that students are expected to reach nationally.
139. The quality of teaching and learning is good. During the inspection, all teaching seen was at least satisfactory; two-thirds of lessons were good or better, of which a quarter were very good. Strong features of the teaching are the quality of lesson planning and the management and organisation of students' work and behaviour during lessons. Most lessons have very clear objectives for learning which are very well explained to

the students at the start of the lesson. The best lessons, most often in textiles, begin at a brisk pace through an effective short 'starter' activity which makes the students focus very quickly on what they are learning. The 'starter' is then followed by a series of activities which gives the students some clear short-term goals while reminding them how each activity contributes to the quality of the whole project in the longer term. These very good lessons close by looking closely at the work done by the students and allowing them to discuss how their work measures up to the objectives for learning set out at the start of the lesson. The sharing of students' work through weekly wall displays are a further strong feature of textiles lessons, since this both celebrates student achievement and sets the standard for good quality work; it motivates students and raises their expectations. The teaching of numeracy is particularly well integrated into lessons in resistant materials and food technology. By using number in the context of designing, drawing or making products, students learn to improve the accuracy of their work. Teachers also offer students good guidance on how to write for different purposes and develop their skills in annotation and the evaluation of their work, as well as developing a satisfactory technical vocabulary. Teachers have good specialist knowledge and skills, and this enables students to develop sound practical skills; food technology lessons offer some especially engaging presentations. Students are mostly well motivated in lessons and apply themselves well. They do, however, require close guidance by their teachers and lack independence in their learning, too often leaving projects or homework incomplete.

140. Students with special educational needs learn well; the department recognises the additional needs of statemented students and offers targeted support and appropriate methods to help them make good progress. Those for whom English is an additional language also mostly learn well and make good progress, although the rotation of classes between teachers for short modules means that sometimes new teachers are not sufficiently aware of their students' needs. Theory and design work is insufficiently challenging for the more competent students in some lessons. There are no clear patterns of different rates of performance for different ethnic minority groups or between boys and girls.
141. Leadership and management are good. Good leadership has ensured that a clear focus has been kept on good teaching and learning in the subject in spite of the many management difficulties associated with the move to a new site. The teaching team, including the subject teaching assistant, is energetic and well motivated and benefits from well-organised technical support. There are, however, weaknesses in assessment procedures which make it difficult to interpret and to track students' progress. The current assessment system for marking and assessment of work does not make clear what students can or cannot do, and what they need to do to raise the standard of their work. Reports and target-setting are therefore too often only related to attitudes and behaviour, and trends in performance in the subject cannot be properly analysed. The subject curriculum does not offer enough opportunities for students to draw on the rich cultural heritages of the school and local community to develop their design ideas. It is also presently constrained by the technical and institutional problems which have prevented large amounts of computer control and other equipment in the school from being commissioned and brought into use.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Students' achieve well at Year 9.
- Lessons and field studies are very well planned to meet the diverse learning needs of students.

- The subject is very well led and there is a clear sense of purpose in its well organised documentation.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough time allocated for geography to allow students to write at length in lessons.
- Further professional support to extend the good teaching and learning throughout the department for newly appointed teachers.

142. Standards on entry to the school are well below those usually found nationally and approximately one-fifth of the students join or leave the school after the start of Year 7. Achievement at Year 9 is good but standards remain below those that students nationally are expected to reach.
143. Students gain a good knowledge and understanding of geography in Year 7 from a study of the River Thames and a fieldwork visit to the City airport. More competent students make a positive contribution to oral work and readily complete more challenging exercises to explain why London is a city of 'Fame and Fortune'. However, the majority of students are less competent and read aloud with some hesitancy or struggle with their atlas skills to find the source of the River Thames.
144. In Year 9, the small minority of more competent students begin to apply their skills very well. They interpret a picture of a seaside resort effectively to explain compatible and non-compatible tourist activities and demonstrate a good knowledge of geographical connections. Approximately half of the students do not reach these standards. Geographical skills are applied satisfactorily but until recently the use of ICT has been limited. Students respond eagerly to question and answer sessions but the content and presentation of written work is often weak. In Years 7 to 9, there are too few opportunities for students to write at length in class. Too little time is allocated for geography within the timetable.
145. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. It was good or better in half the lessons seen and very good or better in a third of the lessons. One lesson was unsatisfactory where the challenging attitudes and behaviours of some less competent students reduced the learning opportunities for others. However, one lesson was excellent. A significant feature was the detailed lesson planning. Many interesting activities were smoothly integrated to match the competencies of the group and promote rapid and outstanding learning. In the better lessons, clear targets are set and the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject retains the interest of students well. Occasionally, too little attention is given to the interpretation of the lesson plan and the collation of materials to support students' learning sufficiently. These students make too little progress within the lesson. Additional support for students with special educational needs and for those who use English as an additional language is effective.
146. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The learning area manager co-ordinates geography most skilfully. Subject guidance is very clear and the inclusive policies have a positive impact on learning. A very good programme is established for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. Longer-term planning is at an early stage of development. Marking and assessment is thorough. Some groups of students have not performed as well as they should due to temporary and less experienced teaching. Resources are more dependent on worksheets than usual as the full range of resources has not yet arrived in the school. Similarly, access to the library and ICT has been restricted.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching encourages students to be involved and interested in the learning activities.
- Well-planned lessons have a clear historical focus.
- The good use made of evidence to support students' understanding of historical events.
- The inclusion of students of all abilities in discussion activities.

Areas for improvement

- The introduction of visits to support students' understanding of events in history.
- Widening the range of resources to support investigation tasks.
- The development of additional tasks in order to raise the attainment of the most able students.
- Detailed comments on students' work so that they know how to improve.

147. Standards at Year 9 are below those that students are expected to reach nationally, because the low standard of many students' written work limits the expression of their ideas when working unaided. However, they achieve well because learning in lessons is good. Many students' work indicates good gains in historical knowledge and understanding because teachers plan lessons that enable all their students to understand and complete a range of assessed tasks. Records of students' marks indicate improving standards by the end of Year 9. This represents a positive improvement from the well below average standards in history shown by many students at the start of Year 7. The progress of students with special educational needs is good as a result of the additional support they receive. Students with English as an additional language make good progress because carefully targeted questions are used to ensure that these students are fully included in all lesson activities. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. More competent students make good progress but few achieve the higher levels because insufficient time is provided for them to complete a variety of additional tasks.

148. The quality of teaching and learning is good. A wide range of lesson activities is provided which support students' interest and involvement in the subject. Both boys and girls of all abilities enjoy the subject and want to do well. Starting in Year 7 teachers encourage students to understand how and why individual events have occurred so that by Year 9, students develop a sound knowledge and understanding of historical events. This enquiry-based approach helped Year 8 students to understand an individual event related to child labour in the nineteenth century because the teacher had already prepared them through a discussion about the development of the Industrial Revolution. Well-planned and structured learning activities include a focus on developing students' ability to discuss the causes and effects of different actions and their impact on historical events. This type of approach enabled students in a Year 9 lesson to develop an awareness of the causes of the First World War and through written work provide a description of important events. This supports the development of students' thinking skills but many students need extra help to work through this kind of activity, with the result that the standards in written tasks and tests remain lower than those achieved in discussion tasks.

149. Students with special education needs are fully included in all learning activities. As a result of carefully structured questions and the very good in-class support provided by support assistants most are able to develop a sound understanding of individual topics. For example, in a lesson about life in the medieval period, focused teacher questioning enabled one girl to provide evidence about the role of women. Students develop the

ability to recognise the events within individual time periods and to put them into the correct sequence. In a task about Charles I, students show that they have the ability to place events into the appropriate time sequence. However, many students' ability to correctly sequence events over longer periods of time without the teacher's assistance is less well developed.

150. Teachers make good use of a variety of written documents and pictures and this successfully develops students' awareness and understanding of historical events. This approach was effective in a lesson about the medieval period where students considered a range of source materials and then recorded their findings and views about the role of women. This very good focus on the use of a range of historical evidence challenges students to use evidence to test an idea before they form their own judgement. The range of textbooks and worksheets is currently insufficient to fully meet the needs of students at different levels of language development or less competent students needing learning support. However, good use is made of visual materials linked to worksheets so that students learn in a carefully structured manner and this ensures that all students understand and make progress in each lesson. The use of visual materials, including the use of First World War artefacts, is supporting the understanding of students with English as an additional language because teachers link the images to clearly structured questions. In a lesson about the United Nations this approach enabled one student to identify one of its roles having first looked at a range of posters displaying the features of the organisation. From Year 7, students are taught to consider the impact of bias when they look at first-hand evidence. The consequent development of a range of investigation skills makes a positive contribution to students' learning and understanding.
151. Good use is made of ICT to support understanding. The positive use of group and paired work enables students to work together to investigate historical evidence but most of the tasks are teacher directed with little opportunity for older students to develop their own style of research or presentation. Marking is regular, with some clear comments recognising accurate work but with few indications about how to improve and reach a higher mark. There are very good subject strategies to raise literacy standards through encouraging students to understand and use historical terms accurately and to write answers in a planned and structured manner. Poetry is used effectively to promote a feeling for the events studied with students showing good understanding about the events in 1066 through the creation of their own poems.
152. Recent reductions in the length of time for each lesson and the low overall time allocation for the subject make it difficult for teachers to provide learning activities that fully support students across the ability range. Many students complete additional work in their own time and this is supporting the improving standards in the work seen. Students in Year 7 have constructed model castles at home and this task has supported their understanding of the use and development of castles. More competent students have carried out in-depth investigations about important world leaders with their work showing that, by Year 9, the skills of historical research and the presentation of findings are firmly in place. However, in lessons there is insufficient opportunity for more able students to complete additional tasks or to use resources that enable them to work at a higher level than the rest of the class. As a result, few students achieve the highest levels by the end of Year 9. Some visits have occurred but the school has not been able to provide support for recently planned visits and this, together with the limited study of the history of the local area, affects adversely students' progress.
153. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Provision is planned most thoroughly and promotes very positive attitudes towards the subject. Teamwork is a very strong feature, with newly appointed teachers quickly taking responsibility for developing individual sections of the course. The monitoring of teaching and learning is

well managed within a planned programme of direct observation and the sampling of students' work.

154. Over the last three years history has become a subject that involves and interests students and their positive approach in lessons is contributing to improving standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are above those usually found nationally at Year 9.
- Good achievement in the GNVQ course for Year 9 students.
- Teachers' knowledge and their effective teaching skills.
- Leadership and management of the ICT learning area.
- Monitoring assessment and progression.
- Schemes of work and lesson planning.

Areas for development

- ICT support for newly appointed teachers.
- Standardisation of marking and setting of homework.
- Professional development programme for subject teachers in ICT skills and their application.
- Implementation of cross-curricular ICT for all year groups to cover the statutory elements of the National Curriculum for ICT.

155. Standards are higher than those expected nationally at Year 9 because students cope well with new ideas and respond well to the teachers' expectations. They were broadly in line with those recorded in the good GNVQ results obtained this year. Progress in the subject is good with students from different minority ethnic groups, even those who have not been in the country very long, achieving good results and fulfilling the objectives set for lessons. In Year 7, students are able to contribute to discussion about aspects of a recognised logo in terms of its marketing power and then proceed to design one of their own to incorporate features considered important by the rest of the class. Discussion of this kind contributes to the development of literacy skills, particularly for those students who are less confident in the use of English. In Year 8, students understand the key elements of a database system, can create one of their own and write about its special features using the Internet as a resource. Students are not encouraged to make their own notes and there is too much reliance on the teachers' handouts. The lengthy lessons of 100 minutes duration are inappropriate for the less competent and younger students.

156. The quality of teaching and learning is good, ranging from satisfactory to very good and reflecting the mix of experienced and recently appointed staff. The experienced teachers are very confident in their teaching methods, variety of styles and activities. As a result, the less confident students are motivated to produce good work and the more competent are stretched with extra tasks and rise to the challenges set. The use of interactive whiteboards by a number of teachers was a strong feature of many lessons observed. Teachers were confident in their use and coupled with extensive knowledge of the subject matter engendered high expectations of the students. Teachers have a good relationship with students and are sensitive to intervention during practical sessions. Instead of providing solutions to problems, teachers offer alternative ways of approaching problems and offer hints to encourage creative thinking. Students make

good progress in most lessons and efforts are made to ensure that the less able students and those with English as an additional language achieve maximum benefit. Teaching staff are aware of the possibilities of a 'digital divide' and provision is made for students without access to computers or the Internet outside school to use the extensive school facilities, for example, after school or in the lunch break.

157. The experienced specialist ICT teachers show a good level of planning and preparation and are well organised. In lessons, clear objectives are set and there are opportunities for students to work either collaboratively or independently. Peer support is encouraged and students with special education needs are included in all class activities. Although computer room arrangements are not always ideal for students to see whiteboard images and display opportunities are limited, teachers encourage students to produce work for others to see on the classroom walls.
158. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning is satisfactory in most subjects but in some subjects is not fully compliant with the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. It is good in French, history and English. French teachers are collaborating with ICT teachers to develop cross-curricular work supported through additional time allocated to ICT. This is supervised by a variety of teachers but currently is focused more on the ICT skills than the support for the modern languages curriculum. Little use is made of ICT currently in mathematics and science although plans are in hand for developments in this area. It is used insufficiently in music to meet the needs of less competent students.
159. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the timetabled ICT lessons, but is unsatisfactory when ICT is used across the curriculum. Similarly, the monitoring of students' progress, assessment and target setting in ICT lessons is good but current procedures do not track students' standards and progress in their application of these skills in other subjects of the curriculum. The school has made significant progress in a number of areas since its recent opening in the new buildings. There has been considerable investment to provide a wide range of high quality resources, and in terms of the student-computer ratio; 1:2, the school is well above the national average. Technical support is good but there are still a number of day-to-day minor problems of hardware reliability.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership.
- Lessons are planned well and taught well.
- Teachers and students work together co-operatively to raise standards.
- The imaginative use of ICT in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Timetabled provision in Year 7.
- Standards in speaking and listening.
- Assessment procedures.
- The provision of resources for listening activities.
- Planned reinforcement of key structures from topics taught earlier in the course.

160. In Year 7 students have only one lesson of 50 minutes each week. As a result, they do not build sufficiently solid foundations for their future studies. Despite the good

teaching, that is a strong feature in the subject, standards at the end of Year 7 are well below what is expected nationally. Throughout the next two years, the time allocation is doubled and students are stimulated by a dedicated team of teachers to make good progress in lessons so that achievement at Year 9 is good. Nevertheless, standards are still below those expected nationally at the end of Year 9, since there is not enough time to recover from their inadequate start.

161. Sustained good teaching is the most important feature of provision. A team of relatively inexperienced teachers is promoting high expectations. Planning and organisation are admirably supported by a very effective learning area manager. In many lessons the interactive whiteboard is used with panache. For example, Year 9 students did not want the lesson to end when tackling a set of questions using the 'Who wants to be a Millionaire?' format. Teachers know their subject well and share learning objectives with their classes. Above all, work is planned within well-defined parameters to ensure that every student, of whatever their level of competence, is able to experience success.
162. Students are usually keen to learn. They respect their teachers and join in enthusiastically. They are prepared to have a go' knowing that they need to make mistakes if they are to learn. They listen carefully to the contributions of other students and generally play a full part in the lesson.
163. Students in Year 7 experience real difficulties. They learn new material but then have to wait a full week until they can consolidate what they have learned. In one lesson, the teacher carefully planned revision of previous material and systematically introduced new structures. Despite the frustrations experienced by students, the resilience displayed by their teacher ensured that the objectives of the lesson were fully covered.
164. In Years 8 and 9, students tackle much more complex structures. More competent students in Year 8 are beginning to offer opinions and give reasons. The less competent students are using language with much greater confidence and enjoy their work. In a memorable lesson with a group that contained a range of ability, students were totally enthused as they practised how to ask for - and give - directions to a particular location. A good lesson with a Year 8 class, where several students had learning difficulties, benefited from the pace and variety injected by the teacher using gesture and mime to good effect.
165. A high level of challenge is maintained in Year 9, where past and future tenses are introduced. An insistence on accuracy is a fundamental priority in all lessons. Questioning that involves the full range of students also contributes to the improving standards shown. In a good lesson, attention to detail ensured that a group of more competent students learned quickly how to form the future tense. In presenting a very good lesson covering the same material with a less competent group, the teacher ensured that the specific needs of individual students were met. Students know they are valued and respond accordingly. Students with special educational needs achieve well. There are no significant variations in the progress of different ethnic groups or between boys and girls.
166. Nearly all students show very positive attitudes because activities are carefully organised and enthusiastically presented in lessons. However, many students do not readily retain information and there are insufficient opportunities to reinforce structures covered in previous modules. Speaking remains the weakest element although accents are often good since teachers are excellent role models. In a Year 9 lesson, with a part-time teacher of the language, the heavy emphasis on written work did not allow students to practise structures orally. The provision of resources for structured listening exercises is unsatisfactory. Independent reading is not yet an established feature. Few students are able to manipulate language or produce extended pieces of

writing or engage in sustained dialogues. The assessment scheme is not rigorous enough, particularly in speaking where procedures are too informal.

167. The teachers have developed a distinctive style, reflecting an ample scope for individuality within the agreed lesson structures. The sharing of expertise generally creates a vibrant atmosphere where two out of every three lessons is good or better. The wisdom of the learning area manager combines very effectively with the enthusiasm of the recently qualified co-ordinators to create a forward-looking, ambitious environment for learning.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Good teaching is enhanced by teachers' high expectations and clear demonstrations.
- Students achieve well, especially in musical skills of performance and composition.
- Students' attitudes are good and they are keen to do well.

Areas for Improvement

- There is a need to develop and extend students' understanding and use of musical language.
- Continue to review schemes of work to ensure that students are fully involved in evaluations of their own work.
- Extend and further develop the use of ICT, especially for the less competent students.

168. Standards at Year 9 are below those found nationally. The assessments undertaken by teachers for these students, and work seen in lessons and on recordings, confirm an overall picture of standards below those expected nationally. There is little difference in the standards attained by different groups of students, however, boys are generally more willing to perform in class and to answer questions. Girls generally lack confidence in front of their peers and the less competent sometimes lose concentration. On these occasions their progress and the standards achieved in lessons are less than expected.
169. Students' prior musical experiences are varied before Year 7. A few are able to produce sophisticated well-crafted pieces using contrasting musical textures, however for the majority their compositions are brief and many struggle to maintain an ostinato pattern and combine instruments and musical textures effectively. As a result standards are below those expected for students at the beginning of Year 7. However, progress is often good in lessons and some more competent students are able to use rhythms precisely to create 'mood music' pieces. All students are able to play accurately and understand three note chords, however, lack of correct finger technique means that few can play them successively with attention to musical detail.
170. For students in Years 8 and 9, the previous staffing instability and consequent disruption to learning means that for many their skills and knowledge have not developed as would be expected. However, all students, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, currently make good progress. A few more competent Year 9 students attain above expectations in the area of composition and performance. They display a good understanding of ensemble awareness, use complex rhythmic patterns confidently and are able to apply musical knowledge to improving their practical work. This was seen in a lesson for Year 9 students where two boys applied the rules learnt in the previous lesson to ensure that their melody flowed easily and harmonised correctly with the given chord pattern. Their application in the lesson was good and they were determined to succeed and do their best. However, these students were unable to discuss easily the reasons for their choices using musical language, as this skill is less well developed. Generally all students, including the more competent, struggle to discuss and describe the music to which they listen and play, but work hard to succeed and produce practical work to the best of their ability.
171. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It was possible to observe only a small number of lessons and additional evidence was drawn from students' other previously completed work. Teachers are committed and enthusiastic. Demonstrations are of a high quality and explanations clear so that students know exactly what is expected of them in lessons. Students are taken through practical situations in small steps and their understanding of the task is checked regularly. Objectives are shared with students and teachers employ friendly but firm control, linked to good pace that results in students making good progress in lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and select suitable activities and resources that appeal to students. Students are competent and knowledgeable users of the various keyboard sequencing and recording facilities. Although lessons are planned carefully to reflect the needs of all

students, the ends of lessons are often rushed and students are unable to reflect and review their learning. The impact of the National Strategy for Literacy is limited. Although key words are identified, they are not used sufficiently well by either teachers or students to ensure musical language is improved.

172. There is a small number of extra-curricular clubs which provides opportunity for students to rehearse and explore various types of music. More are planned and those who attend display good attitudes and enjoy the social occasions afforded by these groups. Links have already been established with Newham Academy of Music and other organisations; enabling students, especially those who are gifted and talented, to take part in workshops and recitals with professional musicians.
173. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear commitment and determination to improve and raise the profile of music within the school and the local community. At present students receive less than average time for their lessons and this means that there is limited time for students to compose and practise their performing skills. Accommodation is good, although the practice rooms are situated at a distance from the main teaching rooms and the soundproofing is limited. Despite overall good resources, there is currently a lack of computer equipment and software, especially for the less competent students. The schemes of work have been written during the last year and are still being refined. There is a need to include opportunities in lessons for students to assess their own work on a regular basis. Data collection is thorough and this is enabling the department to track the progress and standards of different groups of students. However, the department is well aware of the priorities needed in order to develop the subject and some of these are being implemented this term.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Both leadership and management are good.
- Assessment procedures are rigorous and consistent.
- Students are aware of their levels and what they need to do to improve.
- The generous time allocation and excellent facilities.
- The very well planned 'extended day' programme.

Areas for improvement

- The sharing of good practice in teaching skills across the department.
- More opportunities for gymnastics and dance.
- Students' skills in evaluating their own performance.

174. Standards on entry to the school at Year 7 are below those found in most schools nationally because most students' performances lack the required degree of fluency. They demonstrate a satisfactory quality of control and co-ordination in their work. Achievement is good so that at Year 9 standards are broadly in line with those that students nationally are expected to reach and higher than this in games. For example, in a cricket lesson at Year 9, many demonstrated much greater fluency in their work and a good level of competence in the required skills. No differences were observed for different minority ethnic groups. The more talented students are well catered for, particularly in the provision for games, and achieve well.

175. Standards are not higher still because the very strong emphasis upon games results in an unsatisfactory range of opportunities in other aspects of the subject. The students

acquire and develop their skills in games but need greater opportunity to evaluate and improve their own work. Their written work shows a good knowledge of fitness and health but sometimes, for example in a Year 7 athletics lesson, opportunities are missed to apply this knowledge and deepen understanding.

176. Many make significant gains in skills because the time allocated to the subject in the timetable is greater than in many schools and well used. The excellent facilities support the provision of a very good programme of extended day activities. Over 70 students from all minority ethnic groups within the school, both boys and girls, attend the cricket club. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. The department plans good use of resources to support their progress but specific tasks are sometimes insufficiently matched to their specific, additional needs.
177. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Half of the lessons were good; one was very good and two were unsatisfactory. The quality of learning was highest in a Year 7 basketball lesson because the teacher's explanations and demonstrations were very good and the students had well-planned opportunities to select and apply the appropriate pass. Their learning was very well confirmed in the excellent plenary session with which the lesson closed. The quality of learning was good on several occasions because the students responded positively, showing genuine appreciation for the good skills and subject knowledge of their teachers and a readiness to answer questions and apply the advice given. A lack of rigour and unsatisfactory use of the time available characterised the two occasions when teaching and learning were less than satisfactory. For example, a significant number of girls in a Year 8 class did not know the correct terms to describe stick-handling positions in hockey and errors of technique were not noted or corrected by the teacher. On the other occasion, also in Year 8, the unsatisfactory use of time in the lesson provided for no demonstration by the teacher and too little time for practical activity. As a result, the quality of learning lacked depth and precision.
178. The quality of both leadership and management is good. The department has made good progress since the school opened. The shared enthusiasm of the teachers promotes a positive ethos that reflects well the aims of the school. However, the links between the subject development plan and the school development plan are not clear enough. There is regular monitoring of the quality of teaching by direct observation but there is currently insufficient opportunity to share good practice. Both long-term and medium-term curricular planning are very good

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Achievement at Year 9 is good.
- The thorough planning of lessons that supports good teaching and learning.
- The good contribution to students' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment to raise standards.
- The emphasis on writing skills.
- The monitoring and evaluation of learning.

179. Standards on entry to the school at Year 7 are well below those usually found nationally. They rise subsequently but remain below the standards usually found

nationally at Year 9. Many achieve a level of knowledge and understanding at Year 9 in line with the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The small minority of more competent students achieve standards higher than this. Standards remain below those usually found nationally because, although they can talk well about their work, most do not possess the necessary writing and research skills to demonstrate and develop their ideas fully. The boys and the girls achieve broadly similar standards. The boys are more competent at oral work but the girls' written work is better. Overall, achievement is good.

180. Most students respond well to the high expectations of their teachers. They sustain interest because of the variety of tasks and the good use of time in lessons. Clear explanations establish very good foundations in understanding. The attention to oral skills and group work is good. Students make good gains in specialist vocabulary and can support their answers with facts and reasons. In a Year 9 lesson, on leadership in the Roman Catholic Church, they used their thinking skills to identify similarities and differences between the Pope, a bishop and a priest. Lesson objectives are graded and work matches the competence of the student. In class, support for students with special educational needs enables them to meet the basic lesson objective. Students with English as an additional language make rapid progress in the early stages but like others in their lessons are limited by weaknesses in their writing skills. Extension tasks challenge well the more competent students. Homework is set regularly and is an activity that all can attempt. It makes a good contribution to consolidating and extending students' learning. The tasks often involve research using the Internet and this motivates students, as does the opportunity to wordprocess and use commercial software to present work. Assessment is underdeveloped. There are not tasks for every unit of work to assess knowledge and understanding so students do not know precisely what it is that they need to do to improve their work.
181. Students come to lessons eager to learn and are very courteous. They show an obvious pleasure in religious education and behave very well. Teachers take every opportunity to develop students' self-worth by valuing their efforts and respecting their views. There are opportunities for reflection on the meaning and purpose of life. They consider contemporary moral and social issues surrounding birth, marriage and death. In a Year 7 lesson on the parable of the Good Samaritan students explained that in the Christian teaching everyone is a neighbour. The study of aspects of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam increases students' cultural awareness and understanding of how belief influences lifestyles.
182. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the lessons observed it was always good. Teachers have created visually stimulating classrooms that encourage learning. They have good subject knowledge and plan and prepare lessons very well with plenty of opportunities for the students to participate. They break up learning into easy steps, which helps students to understand. Clear explanations and focused questions, together with good use of the plenary session towards the end of the lesson, all help learning. However, there is not the same emphasis given to writing as to speaking and listening. Although students have writing frames and opportunities to write for a variety of purposes, there is a lack of emphasis on the basics such as capital letters, full stops, noun and verb match and common spellings.
183. Since the school opened, the department has developed well. It has a full scheme of work with detailed lesson plans for the agreed syllabus and is developing a bank of exemplars to complement it.
184. Leadership is good and gives a clear direction to the subject. The support for teachers helps ensure good teaching and learning. Monitoring and evaluation have focused on teaching but not yet sufficiently on how learning can be more effective. Nor is there any

monitoring of how different groups of students are achieving. There is a shortage of textbooks and dictionaries and the need for all classes to benefit from use of the interactive whiteboard.