

INSPECTION REPORT

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S GIRLS' SCHOOL

Barnet

LEA area: Barnet

Unique reference number: 101348

Headteacher: Mrs K Webster

Reporting inspector: Mrs W Hola
4359

Dates of inspection: 3rd – 7th March 2003

Inspection number: 249560

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of pupils and students: 11 to 18 years

Gender of pupils and students: Female

School address: High Street
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Postcode: EN5 5RR

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs A Rowland

Date of previous inspection: 3rd February 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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* Members of the inspection team looking at the provision in Years 7 to 11 and the school as a whole.

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	16
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	24
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	26
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	28
PART D: THE SIXTH FORM	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	34
The school's results and students' achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	37
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	38
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	40
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?	41

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	42
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	44

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School is an average sized comprehensive community school for girls aged 11 to 18. There are 1091 pupils, including 193 students in the sixth form. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 10.3 per cent and this is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs (SEN), 9.4 per cent, is below the national average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational needs. Pupils come from many different social and ethnic backgrounds reflecting the very wide diversity of the area. There are some signs of deprivation but, overall, pupils' backgrounds are slightly more advantageous than in the nation as a whole. Many ethnic groups are represented, with 64 per cent white, ten per cent Asian (mostly Indian and a few from Pakistan or Bangladesh), two per cent black Caribbean, four per cent black African, two per cent Chinese and the rest from other ethnic groups. About a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language, a high percentage, but only a few do not speak it fluently. The main home languages of these pupils are Gujarati, Greek, Bengali and Farsi and a total of 38 languages are spoken. There are 28 refugees, mainly from Iran. The school is increasingly oversubscribed, with roughly three applicants for each place. Standards on entry are above average overall and selective schools in the area affect the ability profile. The school is a Beacon School and is a member of a Network Learning Community. The school has 'Investor in Careers' status and the 'Sportsmark'. The school received the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) achievement award in 2002 and is seeking to acquire Arts Specialist status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School is a very good school. Pupils achieve well in their academic work, and their personal development is very good. Pupils aged 16 have reached standards that are, overall, well above the national average. Examination results in the sixth form are broadly in line with the national average. The quality of teaching and learning are both very good. Leadership and management are very good. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Relationships are excellent and the school provides very well for pupils' personal development; pupils have pride in, and very positive attitudes to, the school.
- Pupils make good progress in most subjects and attain standards that are above average for 14-year-olds, well above average for 16-year-olds and in line with the national average in the sixth form.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers employ a wide range of teaching techniques to make lessons interesting and enjoyable and engage pupils of all abilities.
- The school provides a wide range of activities and resources beyond lessons through clubs, trips, visits, exchanges and research projects and these enhance the quality of teaching and learning.
- Leadership and management are very good at all levels with a strong focus on supporting and developing the curriculum, resources and staff so pupils are enabled to achieve their best.

What could be improved

- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is currently satisfactory in terms of developing pupils' technical skills but is not yet being used sufficiently well across the curriculum to support learning in all subjects.
 - The quality of accommodation has many shortcomings even though staff and pupils work hard to achieve a pleasant and vibrant learning environment.
- In addition, against the background of very good leadership and management:
- The school should continue to develop the management and use of statistical information, particularly in relation to data on pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.
 - Governors should confirm that all necessary risk assessments are carried out.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in February 1997. School improvement since then has been good. Standards have risen for pupils aged 14 in line with the national rate of improvement. GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than that nationally from 1998 to 2002. The school's results in the sixth form have also risen steadily over this period. The school has addressed well most of the key issues for improvement given in the previous report: the curriculum and its delivery do indeed provide challenge for pupils of all abilities and teachers' expectations are high in most cases; the school has broadened the range of GCSE options and continues to explore ways of providing the most appropriate learning experiences for each pupil at this stage; provision for ICT does now meet requirements for pupils aged 14 to 16; procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are now very good; middle managers are generally very effective and they continue to receive good training for further development; provision for pupils' spiritual development is now good. Two issues from the previous inspection have not been fully addressed: firstly, the school does not provide a daily act of collective worship, although assemblies are of very high quality; secondly, although provision for religious education is very good across the main school and in the sixth-form examination course, the requirements for religious education in the sixth form have not been met.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	-	C	-	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Year 9 (pupils aged 14): Results in national tests for the last three years have been above average in mathematics and science and well above average in English. Pupils' progress in these three core subjects shows some marked differences; progress in English is very good and in science it is similar to that in other schools but, for mathematics, progress in previous years has been considerably less than could be expected. Inspection observations show that the current rate of pupils' progress in mathematics is generally satisfactory. In the other subjects, progress continues to be good. Standards in other subjects, based on inspection observations and on the school's own records, are generally above average.

Year 11 (pupils aged 16): The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C has been consistently above average since the last inspection in 1997. In 2002, 66 per cent of pupils attained five GCSE grades A*-C, compared to 55 per cent nationally for all pupils and 59 per cent for all girls nationally. A lower than average proportion of pupils achieved five or more grades A*-G. In 2002, the proportion obtaining the high grades A* or A, 14 per cent, was similar to the national figure for all pupils but lower than the national figure of 16 per cent for girls. Results in most subjects in 2002 were significantly above those nationally except for mathematics, geography and physical education. Relative to pupils' performance in other subjects they took, the highest results were in English. Pupils' overall achievements are good at this stage.

Year 13 (students aged 18): The A-level and AS-level average point score in 2001 was similar to the national averages for all maintained schools and for all post-16 providers. The vocational results were

above average. In 2001, with the exception of history and mathematics, results in all A-level subjects were at least in line with national averages; results in biology were exceptionally high and they were above average in business studies, chemistry, theatre studies, French and geography. In 2002, results in A-level examinations continued the upward trend with virtually all subjects seeing a 100 per cent pass rate. National comparisons were not available at the time of the inspection, but school results in 2002 were best in mathematics, sociology, geography, design and technology, psychology, chemistry, art and design and religious studies. The school's own analyses show that students' progress is good overall and particularly good in mathematics, design and technology, psychology and sociology.

Standards throughout the school in literacy, numeracy and ICT are above average. Pupils and students are articulate and, because in so many subjects they are required to present their views and engage in discussion and debate, they are skilled in listening carefully and responding clearly, thoughtfully, fully and sensitively. Pupils and students make very good progress in developing their personal, learning and key skills.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils express pride in their school. They engage readily in discussion about their work and appreciate the efforts of staff in helping them to achieve their best.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils' bright and positive behaviour throughout the day contributes to the cordial atmosphere in which learning and recreation flourish. Instances of poor behaviour are very few. Pupils are very courteous and considerate.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils work with each other supportively and harmoniously. They have and take many opportunities to show initiative and responsibility. The school council operates very successfully. There are very high levels of mutual respect throughout the broad mix of cultures that make up the school community. Instances of exclusions are very low.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance in 2001/2002 was well above the national average for the school as a whole. The school's current system for recording attendance in the sixth form has some shortcomings so that overall attendance figures are unclear, although individual students' attendance is kept under good review.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

In virtually all lessons, teaching and learning are at least satisfactory: in over half of lessons they are very good and occasionally excellent; in another third they are good. Teaching quality is broadly similar for each key stage. In the three core subjects, teaching is stronger overall in English and science, where it is a mixture of good and very good, than in mathematics, where it is satisfactory overall and ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Teachers generally have excellent subject knowledge. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Their lesson planning, teaching methods, use of resources and homework are very good. They manage pupils extremely well because relationships are so strong and

because they set interesting tasks. Teachers conduct lessons in many different ways to keep pupils of all abilities engaged, meeting their individual needs very well. Only in a few lessons is learning impeded by weaknesses in managing pupils or because tasks set are undemanding or not explained clearly enough. Most pupils work hard and are helped to have a good understanding of their own learning. Literacy and numeracy teaching is good. ICT skills are taught well but these are not applied greatly across the curriculum. Students who speak English as an additional language, or have special educational needs, are supported very well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Statutory requirements are met except for the provision of religious education in the sixth form. The curriculum meets the needs of most pupils; the school is rightly considering how to broaden further the provision for pupils aged 14 to 16, particularly for lower attainers. A very good and wide range of activities exists beyond lessons: clubs, trips, visits, exchanges and research projects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Individual needs are carefully assessed and addressed with very good monitoring of provision and progress. Learning support assistants are deployed well and are effective.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Pupils are very well supported and integrated so that most make very good progress in learning English. Specialist staff and classroom teachers work in very effective collaboration to support these pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development	Very good. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programmes are well planned and effective. Many subjects contribute very powerfully to developing pupils' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, for example in art and design, English and religious education. In a few subjects, opportunities to contribute are missed or not recognised. The many extra-curricular activities also play a huge and valuable part in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory overall including strengths and weaknesses Arrangements for child protection are very good. Pupils are known and supported very well as individuals. The policy for ensuring health and safety on trips and visits is very good but the school does not check that all necessary risk assessments are undertaken.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher, senior and middle managers, together with all staff, work very effectively to ensure that pupils are enabled to achieve their best. The headteacher plays a central and very effective role in quality assurance. A determined and well-co-ordinated approach exists to school improvement in which staff development plays a key part; staff are invested in, encouraged and supported.

Aspect	Comment
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are very well informed and understand clearly the strengths of the school as well as where it can develop. Their good and varied links with the school and with the local community contribute to their effectiveness as critical friends and in shaping the school's future.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school works very effectively to monitor and evaluate pupils' achievements and the quality of provision, particularly teaching. It takes effective action for improvement. This is all done with good involvement of staff and governors. Parents' views are not sought in a systematic way, although most parents are very supportive.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial allocations are appropriate. Staffing levels are good. Learning resources are generally good, although access to ICT is limited for many subjects. Accommodation is barely adequate. The building is clearly showing its age and requires considerable attention at a high anticipated cost. Best value principles are applied as required. The large balances carried forward accrue mainly from income from lettings and have been designated for future building improvements.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress. • Teaching is good. • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly one fifth of parents (based on the questionnaire) feel that they are not kept well informed about how their children are getting on. • About a third of parents do not feel that the school works closely with parents.

Inspectors agree with the above positive comments from parents, based on 323 returned questionnaires. Parents also praise the school for the way it welcomes new pupils and helps them to settle quickly, feel happy and secure and develop their confidence. Inspectors confirm these views. Some parents expressed concerns about teaching in a few areas and these were borne out. The school has addressed parents' concerns about the way they are informed about progress and these arrangements are now good. A significant minority of parents did not feel well informed about extra-curricular activities. Inspectors found that the weekly newsletter to parents is helpful and informative, although fuller information could be given about 'out-of-hours' activities.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School is an average sized comprehensive community school for girls aged 11 to 18. There are 1091 pupils, including 193 students in the sixth form. The size of the sixth form is average. It has grown steadily since the last inspection in February 1997 when there were 154 students. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is rising and currently 9.5 per cent; this is above the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs in the sixth form is well below average. The school has a wide social and ethnic intake, with 53 per cent white, 17 per cent Asian (mostly Indian), two per cent black Caribbean, ten per cent black African, one per cent Chinese and the rest from other ethnic groups. About a quarter of pupils and students speak English as an additional language, a high percentage, but only a few do not speak it fluently. Their main home languages of these pupils and students are Gujarati, Greek, Bengali and Farsi and a total of 38 different languages are spoken. There are 28 refugees, mainly from Iran. These figures for the whole school are reflected in the nature of the sixth form as well.

Fifty-six per cent of the school's Year 11 pupils stay on into the sixth form and 18 join from elsewhere. Students' attainments on entry are broadly average. For most courses, a minimum of an average point score at grade C or above is required. Some courses, including the GNVQ Intermediate Programme, have their own entry requirements. The good range of mainly academic and a few vocational courses is reasonably well suited to the students' abilities and aspirations; the school is exploring the question of further widening and enriching the sixth-form curriculum. The school has some collaborative arrangements in the sixth form with Barnet College, for German, and with the local education authority central music service. Retention rates are above average. In 2002, 80 per cent of students continued into higher education; this figure shows a rising trend in recent years and it was 74 per cent in 2000.

The school is a Beacon School and is a member of the Network Learning Community. It has 'Investor in Careers' status and the Sportsmark'. The school received the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) achievement award in 2002 and is seeking to acquire Arts Specialist status.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School is a very good school. Students make good progress and are successful in this very effective sixth form. The school provides very well for their needs, in terms of the courses offered and in the guidance students receive concerning their academic and personal development. Results have been improving steadily over the last few years. In 2001, examination results in half of the A-level subjects taken were above national averages and, in most others, results were average. Students achieved higher than average results in the vocational qualifications taken. Teaching and learning are very good. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Good value for money is achieved and the sixth form is cost effective.

Strengths

- Students generally make good progress on their courses.
- Teaching and learning are very good overall because students are given challenging tasks and required to learn in many different and stimulating ways.
- Excellent relationships exist between students and between students and teachers. Students' attitudes are very positive; they appreciate their teaching and also the many other extra-curricular opportunities provided.
- Students receive high quality academic and personal support, primarily through the very good mentoring programme. They develop very well as mature young adults, are very effective role models for younger pupils and are prepared well for life beyond school.
- This successful and growing sixth form is very well led and managed.
- Links with local commerce and business are excellent and enhance the overall quality of provision.

What could be improved

- The use of ICT and, for some subject areas, library provision.
- The accommodation, as described in the main school report.
- The provision of religious education in the sixth form.

In addition, against the background of very good leadership and management:

- The school should continue to develop the management and use of statistical information, particularly in relation to data on students' progress and attendance.
- Governors should confirm that all necessary risk assessments are carried out.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
English literature	Very good. Teaching is very good. Standards are currently above average and achievement is also very good because of challenging teaching strategies, good quality marking and students' positive attitudes.
Mathematics	Good. Standards are now above average and students achieve well. Good teaching motivates students to succeed. The use of ICT in learning and the analysis of performance data could be improved.
Biology	Very good. Students achieve well because very good teaching challenges them and provides interesting learning experiences. Standards are well above average. The use of ICT could be improved and also library provision.
Business studies	Very good. Very good teaching helps most students make good or better progress. Standards are average. Excellent links with local business and industry enhance learning. The use of ICT could be improved.
Chemistry	Very good. Teaching is very good. Standards are above average. The numbers taking the subject are increasing and most students make good progress towards the targets set for them. The range of sources for reference is too limited.
Geography	Good. Teaching is good and students' achievements are good. Although leadership of the subject is satisfactory, the management of the subject is unsatisfactory, particularly in relation to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. The use of ICT is limited.
Information and communication technology	Good. Standards are average and students achieve well overall. Teaching is good. Students grasp theory well and develop excellent attitudes.
Theatre studies	Very good. Standards are well above average and students achieve well overall and very well in practical work. Good teaching, students' mature attitudes and very good extra-curricular opportunities contribute to these outcomes. The accommodation is satisfactory for sixth-form students but, because they have priority, some younger pupils have drama in the school canteen.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Sociology	Very good. Standards are above average and students' achievement is very good. Very good teaching leads to high and rising standards. Relationships are excellent. ICT is not easily available in lessons. Students do not make enough use of industry and the community, nor do they read or research widely enough.

It was not possible to observe lessons in all the courses offered in the sixth form. Lessons in psychology, religious studies, history, French and personal, social and health education were sampled. Of the lessons and work sampled, provision was very good in psychology and religious studies and elsewhere it was satisfactory or good.

In 2001, results in biology were exceptionally high and they were above national averages in business studies, chemistry, theatre studies, French and geography. In 2002, the school's examination results were best in mathematics, sociology, geography, design and technology, psychology, chemistry and art and design; national comparisons are not yet possible for 2002.

The school's own analyses show that students' progress is particularly good in mathematics, design and technology, psychology and sociology at A-level and in the AS-level religious studies course.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Students receive good evaluations and guidance from teachers in most lessons about the quality of their work and how to improve it. They are very well prepared for their examinations. Students' work and progress are very carefully and thoroughly monitored and discussed with them through an effective mentoring system. Guidance for future courses, study or career opportunities is very good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. A very effective team of senior staff and tutors, led by the head of sixth form, contribute well to ensuring that students make good academic progress and take opportunities to develop many other skills. Together, and with support from governors and the school leadership team, they have strengthened the overall provision and effectiveness of sixth form, increased the number of students on roll and enhanced the view of the sixth form in the local community. They play a vital role in creating a very positive ethos amongst sixth-form students who speak with great appreciation about how they are treated, taught and supported.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form (based on the students' questionnaire)	What they feel could be improved (based on the students' questionnaire)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel treated as responsible young adults. (94 per cent) • They are taught well and challenged to do their best. (91 per cent) • They enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise other students to join it. (89 per cent) • The choice of courses suits their talents and aspirations. (89 per cent) • Teachers are accessible to help if difficulties are encountered. (88 per cent) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advice given by the school and/or careers advisers on what to do after leaving school. (45 per cent) • The range of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses provided outside of main subjects studied. (42 per cent) • The information students receive about their progress in relation to the qualifications they hope to get. (32 per cent) • The help and encouragement to study and research topics independently. (24 per cent) • The way that work is assessed so that students can see how to improve. (23 per cent) • The advice given on what to study in the sixth form. (21 per cent)

Ninety-one students, roughly half, replied to the questionnaire. The inspection confirmed all their positive views. Students' views during the inspection did not support their negative responses in the questionnaire. Those spoken to during the week of inspection are very satisfied with the information and advice they received prior to enrolment and the choice of courses available. This has resulted in little need for students to change courses after they start and few who do not complete their studies. Evidence during inspection confirms the views of students interviewed that careers guidance is very effective. Inspectors found that students know what levels they are expected to achieve and are given suitable guidance about how to improve. The quality of marking is often very good, with well-founded, evaluative comments that support learning well; inspectors found, however, that this is not consistent across all subjects. Students are helped well in most subjects to study and research independently but more could be done in some subjects and in the provision of some new books and periodicals in the library.

A good range of activities is provided beyond the courses studied. If an activity students are interested in is not offered, then they are encouraged to set it up. Students show much initiative in organising a range of school events and some run clubs for younger pupils.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Relationships are excellent and the school provides very well for pupils' personal development:

- **Pupils have pride in, and very positive attitudes to, the school because they feel listened to, supported and encouraged from the moment they join the school.**
 - **Pupils are confident, articulate, courteous and considerate.**
 - **Pupils respect and celebrate each others' cultural backgrounds and work together in great harmony.**
1. Relationships in the school are excellent amongst pupils, between pupils and staff and also amongst the staff. All members of the school community have a very strong commitment to the school. Many teachers, support staff and governors have worked in or supported the school for some years and speak positively about their work, in spite of the many demands placed on them from within and without the school. Student teachers seek employment in the school, having had a positive experience whilst on a teaching placement. Teaching and non-teaching staff collaborate extremely well to serve the pupils and respect each others' work. Most importantly, pupils themselves demonstrate high quality relationships in so many aspects of their work. Pupils' very good, bright and positive behaviour throughout the day contributes to the cordial atmosphere in which learning and recreation flourish. Instances of poor behaviour are very few. Parents feel that behaviour and relationships are very good. This essential platform of excellent relationships enables the school to succeed in providing very well for pupils' personal development and also for their very good learning. The staff are fully aware that relationships have to be nurtured; they do not take excellent relationships for granted and work constantly to ensure that these high standards are maintained.
 2. Pupils speak with pride about the school. They say they enjoy coming to school and parents also express this view, with only very few exceptions. Attendance is well above the national average for the school as a whole. Members of the school council, with representatives from all years and convened by sixth-form students, are unanimous in stating that one of the best features of the school is that staff listen to their views, not just those expressed by the school council, but at any time. For example, the school council suggested improvements to lunch arrangements and to the toilets, and the school responded positively to these requests. Those toilets that have been refurbished are indeed very smart and pupils are extremely appreciative. Many pupils feel that their tutors, heads of year and other teachers are readily available to support them at times of difficulty. Staff are very willing to give time to pupils and students for personal and academic advice. The school has very good formal arrangements for academic mentoring but advice is also given beyond these times.
 3. Pupils make an excellent start at the school because of the outstanding arrangements for their induction and throughout the first crucial year. The head of Year 7 maintains this post year after year and she has developed great expertise in the role. She has forged close relationships with partner primary schools and arrangements for the transfer of pupils are very good. The head of Year 7, with the team of tutors, sets high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and also sets the tone in terms of how pupils and staff are to work

respectfully with each other. Already, in the first year at the school, pupils learn that their views will be listened to if they, in turn, respect the views of others and make their views known calmly and courteously. Pupils are encouraged to speak. They do so in year group assemblies, for example, formally through presentations, but also in being asked if they, as well as staff, have any notices to give to the whole assembled year group. Parents, in written comments and at the parents' meeting, expressed their appreciation of the way in which their children were made to feel welcome into the school, enabled to settle quickly, taught to respect others, work hard and conduct themselves with confidence and grace.

4. The very good start made by pupils in Year 7 is sustained and is supported by all staff and, in particular, by the subsequent heads of year and the tutor teams. From Year 8 to Year 11, heads of year move up the school with their year groups. In the sixth form, tutors generally work with their groups for a year at a time under the overall guidance and leadership of the head of sixth form. These 'pastoral' arrangements are very effective in making sure that all pupils and students are included and supported properly and can benefit from the school's very good overall provision. Pupils do sometimes present problems and all efforts are made to solve them. Temporary exclusions are made rarely and reluctantly. After several years of no permanent exclusions, one permanent exclusion was made recently.
5. Pupils are confident, articulate, courteous and considerate. They are encouraged to give presentations in lessons, sometimes brief and impromptu ones and, at other times, prepared pieces that have been developed by individuals or groups. Such activity occurs most often in English lessons but also elsewhere, in sixth-form geography, for example, when students in groups presented their arguments about how given sites should be developed in inner-city Glasgow. They are often asked to evaluate each other's work publicly and do so very impressively, with great courtesy, pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of their peers' efforts. They learn too to receive praise and criticism in the manner intended, which is to be supportive, helpful and encouraging. Pupils are confident in 'having a go' because a climate has been established in which pupils do not feel awkward if they make a mistake. In a few lessons, confident pupils and students dominate and the reticent are not drawn in by the teacher. Instances of poor behaviour are rare but do exist.
6. When moving around the school, most pupils are very considerate to each other, staff and visitors. They offer their assistance, hold open doors and address each other politely. The school gets off to a brisk start in the mornings and most lessons and activities start promptly.
7. Pupils are involved in many charity events and this too demonstrates their care and consideration for many people and issues. They are quick to respond when a school member needs help and support and also when a local or national call for their help is made or suggested. Another positive feature is the extent to which pupils from different years work and support one another, for example in the 'big sister' scheme. In particular, sixth-form students engage in a number of activities with younger pupils. They run clubs, drama, for example, and are generally very good role models both in their academic and personal achievements.
8. Pupils respect and celebrate each others' cultural backgrounds and work together in great harmony. This school reflects the multicultural nature of this part of London and relishes the opportunities that such a racial mix brings to enhance learning. In many subjects,

activities are drawn to reflect the backgrounds of the school's pupils. Most subjects contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, although in some areas, opportunities are missed because they are not properly planned for. Many of the fine, well-kept notice-boards celebrate this diversity, for example in the 38 languages spoken in the school and in the outstanding displays of pupils' and students' art work and posters for 'International Women's Day'. The assembly themes, planned across the whole year, together with the 'thoughts for the day' are also drawn from many faiths and cultures and provide very good opportunities to present the different practices and beliefs. Assemblies also deal with topics such as 'Successful British Women' or 'Women in the Crimean War' in which valiant and inspirational deeds by women from different cultures or tiers of society are presented and considered. These and many activities enable pupils to learn about, respect and celebrate the diversity of society so that, in their conduct with each other, pupils also grow in and show respect. Pupils and students from a wide range of backgrounds work together well.

Pupils make good progress in most subjects and attain standards that are above average for 14-year-olds, well above average for 16-year-olds and in line with the national average in the sixth form.

9. Results in Year 9 national tests for 14-year-old pupils for the last three years have been above average in mathematics and science and well above average in English. Pupils' progress in these three core subjects shows some marked differences over the period 1999 to 2002; progress in English is very good and in science it is similar to that in other schools but, for mathematics, progress has been considerably less than could be expected. Inspection observations show that the current rate of pupils' progress in mathematics is generally satisfactory and in the other subjects continues to be good. Standards in other subjects, based on inspection observations and on the school's own records, are generally above average.
10. The trend in results for 14-year-olds has been rising in line with the national rising trend. Over the last three years, results in English have fluctuated; they have risen in science but dropped slightly in mathematics. These test outcomes related closely to inspection findings in that the quality of teaching in English and science is better than that in mathematics. Overall, of the three core subjects, results in English are strongest, based on average point scores which take account of the performance of all pupils.
11. The percentage of 16-year-old pupils attaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C has been consistently above average since the last inspection in 1997. In 2002, 66 per cent of pupils attained five GCSE grades A*-C, compared to 55 per cent nationally for all pupils and 59 per cent for all girls. A lower than average proportion of pupils achieved five or more grades A*-G and the school can account clearly for these results as a small group of girls experienced a range of specific problems and were supported appropriately by the school. In 2002, the proportion obtaining the high grades A* or A, 14 per cent, was similar to the national figure for all pupils but lower than the national figure of 16 per cent for girls. In the view of the school, with justification, the existence of selective schools in the area reduces the proportion of the most able pupils in the school and, consequently, the proportion of top GCSE grades. Results in most subjects in 2002 were significantly above those nationally except for mathematics, geography and physical education. Relative to pupils' performance in other subjects they took, the highest results were in English.

12. Pupils' overall achievements from ages 14 to 16 are good compared with other schools whose results for 14-year-old pupils were similar. Compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils' achievements at this stage are very good. In current work, pupils' progress is generally very good because they have the right attitudes to work and because very good teaching maintains their interest and motivation.
13. In the sixth form, A-level and AS-level average point scores in 2001 were similar to the national averages for all maintained schools and for all post-16 providers. The vocational results were above average. In 2001, with the exception of history and mathematics, results in all A-level subjects were at least in line with national averages; results in biology were exceptionally high and they were above average in business studies, chemistry, theatre studies, French and geography. In 2002, results in A-level examinations continued the upward trend with virtually all subjects seeing a 100 per cent pass rate. National comparisons are not yet available but school results in 2002 were best in mathematics, sociology, geography, design and technology, psychology, chemistry, art and design and religious studies. The school's own analyses show that students' progress is good overall and particularly good in mathematics, design and technology, psychology and sociology.
14. Standards throughout the school in literacy, numeracy and ICT are above average. Pupils and students are articulate and, because in so many subjects they are required to present their views and engage in discussion and debate, they are skilled in listening carefully and responding clearly, thoughtfully, fully and sensitively. Pupils develop well their skills in the use of number and various graphical representations in mathematics lessons and also in subjects such as design and technology, science and geography. Pupils' skills in using computers develop well in the discrete ICT lessons but the extent to which they then make use of these skills across the curriculum is limited, partly because access to computers is often difficult and also because teachers' own skills are very variable. Pupils and students make very good progress in developing their personal, learning and key skills, particularly those of working collaboratively and in communicating ideas orally as well as in writing.
15. The school enables pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language to make good progress. Provision for these pupils is very good. Individual needs are carefully assessed and addressed with very good monitoring of provision and progress. Learning support assistants for pupils with special educational needs are deployed well and are effective. Pupils with English as an additional language are very well supported and integrated so that most make very good progress in learning English. Specialist staff and classroom teachers work in very effective collaboration to support pupils with English as an additional language.
16. The previous inspection report stated that 'higher attaining pupils make insufficient progress in some lessons within a number of subjects'. This is no longer the case. Higher attaining pupils make good progress along with others. The school has a new and good policy and action plan for gifted and talented pupils. Very good teaching throughout the school as a whole takes account of the needs of able pupils and, in the main, provides suitably challenging tasks for them. In only a few lessons seen during the inspection were able pupils lacking in challenge.

17. Examples of lessons, seen during the inspection, where very good or excellent progress was made, include:
- A Year 8 history lesson in which pupils used a range of sources well to seek to understand and explain what could have led to the 'Death of a King' after the Civil War; pupils applied a range of skills, related knowledge and used deductive processes very well in seeking to understand why a nation should put its king to death.
 - A Year 11 music lesson where pupils' compositions showed a secure understanding of notations, structures, devices and styles leading to high quality outcomes.
 - A Year 13 sociology lesson in which students showed a high level of understanding of the links between the loss of community and crime and engaged in a very lively debate on related issues.
18. The many fine art displays around the school show clearly how pupils make very good progress in art and design from Year 7 onwards as well as their very wide range of learning experiences.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Overall, teachers' subject knowledge is excellent, as is their management of pupils. Teachers employ a wide range of teaching techniques to make lessons interesting and enjoyable and engage pupils of all abilities.

19. Teaching and learning are very good overall at each of the three main stages of the school. In virtually all lessons, teaching and learning are at least satisfactory: in over half of lessons they are very good and occasionally excellent; in another third they are good. In 88 per cent of lessons seen, teaching is good or better and this is higher than the national average. In the three core subjects, teaching is stronger overall in English and science, where it is a mixture of good and very good, than in mathematics, where it is satisfactory overall and ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. In only a very few lessons is teaching less than satisfactory.
20. Teachers generally have excellent subject knowledge. Moreover, many teachers are very skilled in setting and using the knowledge and skills of their subjects in meaningful and interesting contexts: in art and design, for example, pupils develop their art skills whilst also dealing with subjects such as the environment and human emotions and perceptions. Very good use is also made of pupils' own knowledge, for example in a Year 8 religious education lesson, as part of a series on 'rights of passage', on how the birth of a child is celebrated in Islam.
21. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve; they are aware of pupils' attainment levels at the start of a key stage or a course and what can be expected, given nationally available average rates of progress. Not all teachers, however, undertake full, retrospective evaluations of progress made in order to improve teaching for the future. Some heads of department do this very well for their teams or for themselves; it is undertaken particularly well in English, design and technology, mathematics and psychology.
22. Teachers' lesson planning, teaching methods, use of resources and homework are very good. A key feature in developing teaching methods in the school is the encouragement teachers are given to research and experiment. The school has a tradition of classroom-based education research and experience in supporting staff in this research. Between 1996 and 1998, all staff were trained in research techniques. The school supports teachers

in taking up 'Best Practice Research Scholarships' and is a member of the 'Network Learning Community' linked to Cambridge University School of Education. Research projects include questions such as 'Can music help to develop thinking skills in history?' and investigations into whether applying the 'Multiple Intelligencies' theory to teaching and learning in A-level courses is effective. Over recent years, staff development days have covered many issues relating to using a range of teaching and learning styles; the positive impact of that professional development is clearly visible in many lessons. The impact of the 'National Strategy for Key Stage 3' is very clear in the ways in which teachers structure their lessons. The best teaching uses good strategies for lesson plenaries, for example, often involving pupils and students in summarising the lesson and devising their own assessment activities to check each others' knowledge and understanding.

23. Many teachers require pupils to learn through talking and explaining – it is not unusual to find pupils or groups of pupils at the front of the class, reading out loud from texts, presenting their arguments or conclusions, reading out their work and having it criticised by other members of the class, explaining why another piece of work is of high quality or where it can be improved. These are features of many good lessons in the school and were seen in most subjects, though less frequently in mathematics than elsewhere.
24. Essentially, teaching and learning are very good because teachers show their own enjoyment of their subjects and of learning. They also show their like of the pupils and students and are very comfortable with them. A clear example of this was seen in music where excellent teaching enthused pupils to take part not only in lessons but also in the many extra-curricular activities offered. Most teachers are very skilled in never allowing moments of confrontation to arise because they diffuse tension very swiftly and gently. Only in a few lessons is learning impeded by weaknesses in managing pupils or because tasks set are undemanding or lack clarity; such instances occurred in mathematics, geography and French.
25. Literacy and numeracy teaching is good. ICT skills are taught well but these are not applied greatly across the curriculum. Pupils' different learning needs are addressed well in both setted and mixed-ability groups. Students who speak English as an additional language, or have special educational needs, are supported very well. Pupils of all ability levels are given appropriately challenging work. Teachers are encouraged to continue to learn through attending courses and sharing good practice.

The school provides a wide range of activities and resources beyond lessons through clubs, trips, visits, exchanges and research projects.

26. The quality of teaching and learning is greatly enhanced by the school's provision of activities and resources beyond the classroom in extra-curricular activities. Pupils and students are encouraged to establish and run activities of their interest; this they do and, in doing so, develop their personal skills, for example in organising events and working collaboratively. A very full timetable exists of activities before school, during the lunchtime and after school on all days. Before school, pupils may use the computer rooms and there is also a facility for early morning readers, although this is not generally well attended. Lunchtime and after-school clubs are mostly related to physical education and music and also include a mathematics club and a spelling and literacy club.
27. The library is a very good resource for learning and for general interest. It is open every lunchtime and also on most days after school. Pupils and students make good use of the

library at these times, particularly lunchtime; they are very appreciative of the work of the librarian who works tirelessly and with dedication to encourage reading by suggesting books of interest to individuals, maintaining lively, topical displays and setting the tone for a vibrant but studious atmosphere. In some subjects, particularly in the sixth form, library provision is barely satisfactory; in biology and sociology, for example, the stock of texts and periodicals should be extended. Other activities include clubs for homework, German, philosophy, environment, public speaking and debating and drama. Some clubs are run by sixth-form students and pupils are encouraged to set up clubs or activities for themselves. For example, a group of pupils recently worked very well to enhance the school grounds with some planting.

28. Pupils go on a good range of educational visits to theatres, museums and galleries, for example to the Imperial War Museum. They enter poetry and art competitions, meet authors in a local bookshop and go on language exchanges. A group of pupils in Year 10 acted as a focus group for the Barnet Community Health Council and a group of Year 9 pupils presented their work on Students as Researchers at the National College for School Leadership. Pupils from a Year 10 business studies group recently took part in the Barnet Business Challenge. Students in the sixth form have the opportunity to engage in trips such as trekking in the Atlas mountains or skiing in Vermont, USA. These and many other examples contribute to the richness of provision and demonstrate the school's support for pupils and students who wish to broaden their experiences in education.
29. Pupils, as well as teachers, engage in research work. Groups of the more able students in some years have been trained as researchers and these students work with others in their year on specific projects. A group of Year 9 pupils, for example, is currently researching 'what makes a good lesson'. Through such projects and others, the school has set a climate of investigation and encouraged pupils to pose and answer their own questions and this contributes positively to the overall very good quality of teaching and learning in the school.
30. Parents appreciate what the school offers pupils beyond the taught curriculum. Based on responses to the parents' questionnaire, about three-quarters of parents feel that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons, about three in 20 disagree and two in 20 do not know about this. This suggests that the school has not communicated clearly enough to parents the good range that is available. Inspectors found that the weekly newsletter to parents is helpful and informative, although fuller information could be given periodically about 'out-of-hours' activities.

Leadership and management are very good at all levels with a strong focus on supporting and developing the curriculum, resources and staff so pupils are enabled to achieve their best.

31. The headteacher, senior and middle managers, together with all staff, work very effectively to ensure that pupils are enabled to achieve their best. Pupils and students have a strong sense of the extent to which staff will help them to succeed and they express an appreciation for the many opportunities the school gives them to develop. 'They really want us to do well and not just academically', and 'I stayed here because I knew that they would do their best for me', are comments from pupils and students.
32. The headteacher plays a central and very effective role in quality assurance. She is clear about what constitutes high quality teaching and learning and also about what constitutes

high quality leadership and management. She works very effectively with her senior team to take a consistent approach to supporting and developing middle managers in their roles. The school calendar is well planned and demonstrates the regularity of monitoring and evaluation meetings which are undertaken in a spirit of mutual information exchange focused on evaluating what works well in terms of leadership and management and what needs to be improved. Members of the senior leadership team each have a link with a year group and one or more subject departments and this formal arrangement contributes very well not only to the good communication systems in the school but also to the school's systems for ensuring consistency of practice in applying agreed policies and procedures.

33. A determined and well-co-ordinated approach exists to school improvement in which staff development plays a key part; staff are invested in, encouraged and supported. The staff's commitment to the school is not accidental but a tribute to the enjoyable teaching and learning that has been developed over the years and sustained by staff through mutual encouragement, support and a willingness to develop. The school works very effectively to monitor and evaluate pupils' achievements and the quality of provision, particularly teaching. It takes effective action for improvement. The evaluation of pupils' progress is undertaken well, for example through the headteacher's annual meeting with heads of department to review examination results. This process is not yet supported with an efficient system of managing performance data; pupils' performance information is held in too many different forms and this limits both efficiency and the school's capacity to interrogate it rigorously or quickly.
34. Heads of department work effectively and the leadership and management of subjects are mostly good and sometimes very good. Particular strengths exist in English, music, art and design, design and technology, sociology and business studies because of the success in enabling pupils and students from across the ability spectrum to achieve well and learn with enthusiasm. Heads of year are very effective, as well as heads of subjects, in meeting the school's aims: setting high expectations of pupils' and students' work and behaviour; developing a sense of self-confidence and self-esteem; valuing each pupil and student as an individual; enabling girls to respect other people and to value their diversity; and in encouraging their contributions to the school and wider community. Together, all staff, teaching and non-teaching, succeed in meeting the school's aims as summarised above. All work in close collaboration, evidenced not only in the school's ethos and examination results but in the small examples of communication, such as the sensitive, prompt use of the internal radio communication system between caretaking, administrative and teaching staff to signal and deal with any concerns.
35. Governors are very well informed and understand clearly the strengths of the school as well as where it can develop. Their good and varied links with the school and with the local community contribute to their effectiveness as critical friends and in shaping the school's future. They keep the school under good review and ensure that planned improvements take place but they have not responded fully to all the key issues from the previous inspection, particularly in relation to the provision of religious education in the sixth form. Governors were surprised by some parents' views, expressed in the inspection questionnaire and at the meeting with parents. Parents are generally very supportive of the school but their views are not collected nor considered in a systematic way.
36. Governors and staff are fully aware of the problems in relation to the aging building that is difficult to maintain. The school works to ensure that it manages financially within its basic budget allocation. Financial planning, whilst ensuring that current pupils are properly

provided for in terms of resources, takes account of the fact that major sums may have to be spent in the near future to ensure that the site and building are thoroughly safe and secure and fit for purpose. For this reason, a higher than average financial carry forward exists and this has accrued mainly from income from lettings; the school site and sporting facilities are shared with the community to mutual benefit.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is currently satisfactory in terms of developing pupils' technical skills but is not yet being used sufficiently well across the curriculum to support learning in all subjects.

37. Pupils in Years 7 to 10 are taught to use ICT well in the discrete lessons provided. In these lessons, they develop the knowledge and understanding of the potential and limitations of computers and other new technologies and, to some extent, are given tasks to explore that set the use of ICT into meaningful contexts.
38. The extent to which these skills are then applied to other areas of the curriculum is too varied and limited for three main reasons.
39. The first reason is that access to computers is often difficult. Most computers are used in the timetabled ICT lessons. Although the school has designated some computers as 'bookable' by teachers and departments, in reality, these machines are often in use by classes whose course requirements most demands this. Bookings need to be made in advance and this is certainly helpful in some respects so that teachers can plan their series of lessons appropriately. The possibility of spontaneously making use of a computer to deal with a query or demonstrate very briefly a specific point is extremely difficult.
40. The second main reason for ICT not being used as regularly as it could be is that some teachers still lack the necessary confidence and expertise. The national training programme for teachers has not yet been completed, although completion is expected very shortly.
41. Thirdly, although many teachers are aware of the subject-specific possibilities of using ICT to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, some others are not. This is a matter for subject leaders as well as senior managers. Scrutiny of subject schemes of work showed that few of them contained explicit references to the use of ICT other than the names of a few software programs or websites. Many departments make appropriate recommendations to students about Internet websites of interest for students to explore in their own time and this is certainly helpful. Scrutiny of pupils' and students' work reveals limited use of ICT other than in subjects such as music and drama.
42. The school's accommodation limits the number of ICT computer suites that can currently be installed without having a negative impact on other curriculum areas. For an increase in ICT suites, teaching rooms would need to be re-designated resulting in an increase in the number of teachers who do not have a regular or permanent teaching room and this, whilst possible, may not necessarily be desirable by staff or the school. The school has not yet begun to invest in any major way in interactive whiteboards or small laptop computers and data projectors that could be used relatively easily in many rooms.

43. All in all, provision for ICT, both in terms of hardware and infrastructure and also in terms of the expertise of the staff, limits the ways in which ICT can be used easily and effectively to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.

The quality of accommodation has many shortcomings even though staff and pupils work hard to achieve a pleasant and vibrant learning environment.

44. The school buildings are generally showing their age and are in need of serious repair and improvement. The buildings are certainly not suitable for use by pupils, staff or visitors with mobility difficulties in view of the many split levels and stairs. Accommodation is limited for, and restricts development in, ICT and drama. The school swimming-pool has been out of action for some time and this has clearly had a negative impact on provision for school swimming as well as for community use; it is currently undergoing repair.
45. In March 2002, the local education authority undertook a building survey. The report received by the school in October raised serious concerns. Some improvement work has been undertaken, for example the removal of asbestos from the swimming pool ceilings. Apart from the removal of asbestos, it would appear that the premises as a whole need re-wiring. The report also identifies a number of health and safety hazards such as defective timber windows. Many hazards were graded in the report as being in the most serious category and at risk of imminent failure. This is very worrying indeed. The cost of repairs is given as extremely high and this presents governors with a problem – they should establish quickly the nature and extent of the threat to pupils' health and safety, given the high level of concern raised by the report.
46. In spite of the above worries and difficulties, the staff have worked very effectively to create a pleasant and vibrant learning environment in most parts of the school. The notice-boards in general spaces and in corridors are of an exemplary high quality and show the richness of provision, curricular and extra-curricular, in the school. Art displays, in particular, enhance the learning environment as do the many displays of work and information about activities in and out of school and of general interest. In a few areas, biology, for example, displays are not used to their full potential to stimulate learning.

Against the background of very good leadership and management, the school should continue to develop the management and use of statistical information, particularly in relation to data on pupils' attainment, progress and attendance. Governors should confirm that all necessary risk assessments are carried out.

47. The school collects many data sets on pupils' academic performance. Analysis is carried out well but not efficiently as it might be. This is because, in most cases, data sets are not linked to each other and are also held in many different locations not easily accessible to all staff who need the information the data can supply. The recently appointed deputy headteacher has been charged with creating coherence in the school's systems for the collection, storage and use of data. This is a necessary task as currently, too much time is spent performing manually what should be done speedily using available technology.
48. The last inspection report stated that the school was involved in developing 'value-added' analysis. The use of such analysis is not yet commonplace, although some heads of department understand it and make use of it. Overall, however, teachers do not make sufficient use of nationally available statistics to benchmark the school's performance and evaluate fully how well each department or class is doing so as to be absolutely sure that

all pupils and students learn as much as they are capable of learning. In this successful school, where pupils' and students' attainments and achievements are high, this point is not a major issue for the school but should be addressed within the school's action plan in response to the inspection.

49. Attendance data in the school are also gathered and analysed without sufficient use of ICT, thereby wasting valuable and expensive time, often that of the heads of year. In addition, attendance data for the sixth form are difficult to interpret and analyse as the rationale behind the compilation lacks clarity and limits the extent to which the school can embark on identifying trends in sixth-form attendance and taking any necessary action for improvement, should this be required. With the exception of a few, well-documented cases, there is no clear evidence that shortcomings in attendance have a negative impact on pupils' or students' achievements in the main school or in the sixth form. There is, however, a question of cost-effectiveness in the deployment of staff whose time might be used more appropriately in responding to analyses rather than undertaking them.
50. No visible health or safety concerns were identified during the inspection. The school does not, however, check and confirm that risk assessments are carried out as required in all those parts of the school where hazards exist in relation to use of hazardous equipment or chemicals, for example.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to secure the further development of the school in its determination to secure excellence in all that it does, the headteacher and senior staff should:

- (1) Improve the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum for teaching and learning by:
 - (a) continuing to improve access to ICT facilities by developing hardware resources, in both computer suites and in classrooms, such as interactive whiteboards, laptop computers and data projectors;
 - (b) ensuring that all teachers have developed their own ICT skills to a sufficiently high standard and can use ICT confidently for their own professional and administrative purposes;
 - (c) ensuring that all teachers are at least adequately trained in the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in their subjects.

(See paragraphs 14, 25, 39, 40, 41, 42, 59, 71, 92, 101, 104, 121, 130, 136)

- (2) Continue to work with the local education authority to ensure that the school is safe with none of the serious causes for concern given in the local education authority buildings survey report of October 2002; continue to strive for improvements to the overall quality of accommodation, particularly for ICT and for the sixth form.

(See paragraphs 36, 44, 45, 93)

- (3) Check and confirm that all risk assessments are carried out as required and that staff are fully aware of what constitutes a potential hazard and, therefore, where and when these risk assessments are necessary.

(See paragraphs 83, 88)

- (4) Continue as planned to bring coherence into the school's systems for collecting, compiling and analysing data on pupils' and students' performance and attendance so as to make the extraction of information efficient and available to all those who need it.

(See paragraphs 33, 47, 49, 65, 82)

- (5) Continue to develop the knowledge and expertise of heads of department and other staff in the use of 'value-added' measures and indicators so that the school's effectiveness can be fully evaluated and improved where necessary.

(See paragraphs 21, 48, 56, 69, 79)

The above actions for improvement apply to the main school (pupils in Years 7 to 11) and also to the sixth form (students in Years 12 and 13).

For the sixth form, in addition to the above five points, the school should:

- (6) Continue to develop the existing very good library provision to enhance materials, text books and periodicals, for subject such as biology, chemistry and English so that students can more readily engage in independent study.

(See paragraphs 27, 72, 92, 104, 111, 140)

- (7) Devise and implement arrangements for meeting the requirement to provide religious education of all sixth-form students.

(See paragraphs 75, 88)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	35
	Sixth form	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	2	18	10	3	2	0	0
Percentage	6	51	29	9	6	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	1	20	18	3	0	1	0
Percentage	2	47	42	7	0	2	0

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

Information about the school's pupils and students

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils and students on the school's roll	898	193
Number of full-time pupils and students known to be eligible for free school meals	86	18

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils and students with statements of special educational needs	12	0
Number of pupils and students on the school's special educational needs register	108	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils and students
Number of pupils and students with English as an additional language	255

Pupil and student mobility in the last school year	No of pupils and students
Pupils and students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils and students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	17

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.4
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	0	180	180

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	158	130	138
	Total	158	130	138
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	88 (77)	73 (76)	77 (76)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	48 (44)	53 (48)	44 (40)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	153	129	150
	Total	153	129	150
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	85 (89)	71 (77)	82 (69)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	36 (52)	41 (51)	59 (37)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	n/a	176	176

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	116	160	172
	Total	116	160	172
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	66 (75)	91 (97)	98 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	45.8
	National	39.8

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

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

Year 2001

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	n/a	60	60
	Average point score per candidate	n/a	17.1 (17.8)	17.1 (17.8)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9 (17.1)	18.0 (18.0)	17.5 (17.6)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	n/a	60	60	n/a	0	0
	Average point score per candidate	n/a	17.1	17.1	n/a	0	0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	n/a
	National		81.0

Ethnic background of pupils and students***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils and student on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	608	21	0
White – Irish	14	0	0
White – any other White background	98	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	12	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	24	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	77	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	12	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	16	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	11	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	19	1	0
Black or Black British – African	54	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	6	1	0
Chinese	21	0	0
Any other ethnic group	55	6	0
No ethnic group recorded	50	5	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	68
Number of pupils/students per qualified teacher	16.2

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	447

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.6
Key Stage 4	21.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001-02
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	£
Total income	3,202,000
Total expenditure	2,860,361
Expenditure per pupil (1065)	2,686
Balance brought forward from previous year	133,638
Balance carried forward to next year	475,277

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	27.1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	27.2

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1091
Number of questionnaires returned	323

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	46	46	5	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	47	47	2	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	50	5	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	50	12	5	3
The teaching is good.	33	58	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	39	21	7	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	42	8	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	38	4	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	26	42	23	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	37	47	6	1	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	46	5	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	39	12	3	10

Other issues raised by parents

Comments in the parents' meeting and in parents' written comments praise the school for the way it welcomes new pupils and helps them to settle quickly, feel happy and secure and develop their confidence both academically and socially. Some parents expressed concerns about teaching in a few areas, (mathematics was mentioned in particular), and these concerns were borne out in that occasional shortcomings in teaching were observed in the subjects parents had identified. Those parents who did not feel that they were kept well informed about how their children were getting on were mainly parents of current Year 9 pupils; most other parents are satisfied with the information they receive. A significant minority of parents did not feel well informed about extra-curricular activities. Inspectors found that the weekly newsletter to parents is helpful and informative, although fuller information could be given about 'out-of-hours' activities.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

51. Students' attainments on entry are broadly average. In 2002, 56 per cent of the school's Year 11 pupils stayed on into the sixth form and 18 per cent of Year 12 joined from elsewhere. For most courses, a minimum of an average point score at grade C or above is required. Some courses, including the GNVQ Intermediate Programme, have their own entry requirements. Retention rates are high. In 2002, 80 per cent of students continued into higher education; this figure shows a rising trend in recent years and it was 74 per cent in 2000.
52. Current standards of work are above average overall. Students in this sixth form make good progress on their courses and achieve well.
53. Results in A-level examinations have been improving steadily over the last few years. In 1999, 2000 and 2001, the average point score has been close to, and slightly below, the national average. The gap between the school and national figures for average point scores has been narrowing. The 2002 average point score went up again, quite considerably from that in 2001 and, although national comparisons were not available at the time of the inspection, the school's 2002 average point score was above the national score for 2001. The 2002 A-level results are also much higher than those at the time of the previous inspection, based on examinations taken in 1996; although direct comparisons are not entirely valid because of changes to the examination system, the average point score in 1996 was 12.5 and in 2002 it was 18.1, clearly a significant improvement. (The national average point score in 2001 was 17.4)
54. In 2001, examination results were above national averages in half of the A-level subjects taken, where national comparisons are possible and, in most others, results were average. The school's results in biology were extremely high compared with national results. Results were above national averages in business studies, chemistry, theatre studies, French and geography. For art and design, English literature, design and technology and sociology, results were in line with those nationally. Results in mathematics and history were well below average; results in these last two subjects showed a considerable improvement in 2002. Students achieved above average results in the vocational qualifications taken.
55. In 2002, results in A-level and AS-level examinations continued the upward trend with all subjects, except biology and physics, seeing a 100 per cent pass rate. The weakest results were in physics and the best in mathematics. Although national comparisons cannot yet be made, subjects other than mathematics, where results were good in 2002, are sociology, geography, design and technology, psychology, chemistry, art and design, biology and religious studies. Only a very few students were entered for French, German and physical education and most got an A grade. The school's own analyses show that progress for this cohort of students is good overall and particularly good in mathematics, design and technology, psychology and sociology.
56. The school aims to improve sixth-form results year on year and has been successful in this aim. Specific numerical targets are not set in the sixth form for the cohort as a whole nor for subjects. They are set, however, for individual students and these include some

challenge for many of them. Most students meet or exceed their own targets that are related to their GCSE performance and based on progress measures that are frequently used nationally. Generally good rates of progress mean that most students achieve well. No significant differences in attainment or in achievement were found during the inspection between different groups of students. The school makes some use of scatter graphs in analysing students' progress but, as yet, such analysis is at a basic level. Attainment and progress are monitored for students from minority ethnic groups but not routinely for students in other groups, based on attainment on entry, for example. Based on lesson observations, students of all abilities make good progress in most lessons – this was not the case at the time of the previous inspection when some higher attaining students did not achieve as well as they could. A few exceptions do exist, however, in business studies where higher attainers are not fully stretched in some lessons.

57. In the work seen during the inspection, standards matched those as displayed in the 2001 examination results except for English and theatre studies where current standards are now higher; they are now above average in English and well above average in theatre studies.
58. Examples of lessons, seen during the inspection, where very good or excellent progress was made, include:
 - A Year 13 sociology lesson in which students gained in understanding of the links between the loss of community and crime and engaged in a very lively debate on related issues.
 - A Year 12 psychology lesson on memory in which students in groups conducted experiments to test under what conditions participants could best remember a sequence of letters; students then engaged in a well-argued discussion about why some of their results did not concur with accepted theoretical outcomes and this contributed to very good progress.
 - A Year 12 GNVQ business studies lesson where students gained a very good knowledge of break-even through several case study examples where they had to draw and interpret graphs, and use spreadsheets well to produce cash flow forecasts.
59. Standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT are generally good. Students are articulate and, because in so many subjects they are required to present their views and engage in discussion and debate, they are skilled in listening carefully and responding clearly, thoughtfully, fully and sensitively. Students have good skills in numeracy; only in a few instances are students impeded by weak numeracy skills, in the vocational business studies course, for example, for lower attaining students. Most students on the vocational information technology course have previously taken a GCSE course in ICT but some others have not and these students lack some basic skills, in handling spreadsheets, for example. This lack holds back their learning to some degree, although good teaching meets their needs and enables them to catch up well. For most students, their skills in ICT do not develop significantly beyond those acquired in earlier years. For example, the good presentations students make in lessons are rarely supported by the use of computer programs designed for this purpose, although some good instances occur in English, for example. Students make very good progress in developing their personal, learning and key skills, particularly those of working collaboratively and in communicating ideas orally as well as in writing.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

60. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. They are proud of their school and most clearly enjoy greatly the education they receive. The significant minority joining the school at the beginning of Year 12 settles quickly and well into sixth-form routines. Very few students drop out of courses once started. This is, in part, attributable to the good advice offered in Year 11 and to students new to the school as well to the very good teaching that engages students' interest.
61. The very high esteem in which students hold members of staff results in students working hard to achieve what is expected of them if not more. They are very appreciative of the help and support staff give and, as a result, most co-operate fully in the good learning experiences provided in taught courses and the very good and wide range of enhancement activities. Students generally approach their work in a very conscientious manner and their finished products show they take pride in its presentation. A few, usually lower attaining students, are less well motivated and this is reflected in the standards of work they achieve in relation to what they are capable of.
62. Most students develop very well their skills of independent learning. They usually respond very well where expectations for such learning are high. They develop independence in learning progressively during their time in the sixth form. For example, in English, they show well-developed critical and analytical skills and present and justify arguments effectively. In vocational courses, students take a high degree of responsibility for what is achieved and show a dedication to producing their best. A few of the less able students are somewhat lacking in self-confidence and this has an adverse impact on their ability to work independently.
63. The relationships that students have both with their teachers and each other are excellent. There are very high levels of mutual respect throughout the broad mix of cultures that make up the school community. This has a positive influence that permeates school life and has a significant impact on how students respond to school.
64. Most students feel valued as individuals, resulting in a growth in self-esteem. It enables them to share views and opinions with the confidence of knowing that they will not be criticised for being different or to disagree objectively. This is particularly evident when they assess and evaluate each others' work, as was seen in a Year 12 religious education lesson. Such peer evaluations contribute to students' good achievements. Where this is required, students collaborate and work together well, so that the sharing and discussing of work enhances its overall quality. This ability to collaborate is particularly effective in the activities they engage in outside of lessons, for example in the mature way in which they manage the school council and various fund-raising activities. Students initiate and run competently a range of activities outside of lessons such as the dance club. Some are involved in a successful 'Young Enterprise' scheme. They show considerable care and concern for younger members of their community when they mentor pupils in the main school. The overall growth in maturity evident amongst students in the sixth form prepares them very well for life beyond school.
65. Accurate overall figures for attendance are not available in the sixth form. Students in Year 13 are required to register in their tutor groups at the beginning of morning or afternoon sessions on six negotiated occasions each week. In practice, some attend more registrations than this and, on paper, obtain attendance levels of more than 100 per cent.

There is, however, a significant minority of students that individually have much lower levels of attendance at registration. In Year 12, attendance is below what is expected and is currently running at 89 per cent. The school correctly identifies that the current Year 12 had a history of poor attendance when in the main school; this was linked to unauthorised absence. Levels of unauthorised absence are not analysed in the sixth form as a whole and so no figures are available; registers are kept in most lessons and students' attendance is followed up assiduously for individuals where necessary. Students feel that a check is kept on their attendance and expect to be held to account for it. The discrepancy in the effectiveness of monitoring individual attendance and that of students as a whole is unusual and is an issue for the school to address.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

66. Teaching and learning are very good overall because, in most lessons, students are given challenging tasks and required to learn in many different and stimulating ways.
67. Teaching was very good and occasionally excellent in just under half of lessons seen during the inspection. In most of the other lessons, teaching was good. Teaching was satisfactory in three lessons and less than satisfactory in one. The quality of teaching in each of the nine subjects inspected in detail included a mixture of good and very good; it was excellent in a chemistry lesson where high academic challenge was combined with a very engaging teaching strategy using a card game that resulted in students making considerable progress in not just chemistry but in working collaboratively and in developing their powers of argument. The overall quality of teaching, in the subjects focused on, was very good in English literature, biology, chemistry, sociology and business studies and it was good in mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT), geography and theatre studies.
68. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are excellent. Teachers generally convey a love of their subject, plan lessons very well, use very effective teaching methods, generally employ time and resources very well and make very good use of homework. Teachers' management of students is excellent. All this results in students being encouraged and inspired to do well and leads to learning that is very effective in virtually all aspects: students make very good progress in acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding; they work very hard and show very good interest and concentration; they generally have a good knowledge of their own learning. Students who speak English as an additional language, or have special educational needs, are supported very well.
69. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve; they are aware of students' attainment levels at the start of a course and what can be expected, given nationally available average rates of progress. Students of all ability levels are given appropriately challenging work in most lessons; a few higher attaining students, however, are not always sufficiently challenged in business studies, for example. The school has a relatively new policy for 'gifted and talented' pupils and students. The section of the policy relating to provision in lessons is already generally well embedded in practice because the very good teaching that exists addresses to a large extent the stated aims and ensures that students 'will be offered, encouraged and challenged by tasks and opportunities which are predicated on an assumption of high achievement and personal autonomy as a learner'. Not all teachers undertake full retrospective evaluations of progress made in order to improve teaching for the future. Some heads of department do this very well for their

teams or for themselves; it is undertaken particularly well in English, design and technology, mathematics and psychology.

70. The strong research culture in the school, in which teachers, pupils and students engage in a wide range of research on aspects of teaching and learning, has a positive impact on teaching methods because most teachers reflect on best practice and seek always to improve their own effectiveness. For example, a wide range of external resources from the local community, business and commerce is used in business studies: good use is made of writing frames in business studies and elsewhere to support report and essay writing; discussion as a means of learning is used extensively, for example in theatre studies, geography, English, history, religious education and chemistry; students' personal research activity is promoted in English and on the vocational ICT and business courses; peer evaluation is commonplace through public presentation, discussion and evaluation of students' work – a particularly good example of this was seen in a religious education lesson on Islam. Most teaching exhibits high-quality questioning skills, drawing out students' learning through carefully framed and targeted questions. Some very good examples of this occur in English.
71. The skills of ICT are taught well in ICT and business studies lessons but these are not applied greatly across the curriculum, except in some subjects, English, music and theatre studies, for example. The reason for this is partly because access to computers is often difficult and also because teachers' own technical skills and understanding of how ICT can be used in their subjects are very variable. Students are not generally taught to develop their ICT in the sixth form to a higher level than that previously acquired, for example through a general or key skills course. Nevertheless, where specific new skills in numeracy, literacy or ICT are required, these are taught in sufficient detail so that students' learning may proceed unimpeded.
72. Teaching and learning are supported with very good resources in general. Teachers encourage students to make use of the library in many subjects, most notably in English. Library resources are limited for sociology, chemistry and biology. Most teachers provide very good materials for use in lessons and for independent study, including homework assignments that are set regularly and support learning very well.
73. Students generally understand their own learning well because teaching makes clear to them what they have achieved, what their next steps are in learning and what they need to do to improve. Students on the vocational ICT course have a very good knowledge of these things because the course expectations and success criteria are shared with them so well. Marking is generally good; it is of particularly high quality in English, and satisfactory but inconsistent in mathematics.

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

74. The school provides a good range of learning experiences for its students, mainly in the academic curriculum and also in a few vocational subjects. In addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, the following are offered at AS- or A-level: business studies, media studies, psychology and sociology. Vocational courses are offered in business and information and communication technology (ICT). In general, this provision meets well the needs, interests and aspirations of the students at this sixth form and their parents and is very responsive to local circumstances.

75. The school's sixth-form curriculum takes account of the other post-16 provision in the area which is wide-ranging, offering considerable choice; there is a sixth-form college, a further education college and many selective or other non-selective schools with sixth forms. The fact that this sixth form caters for girls only appeals specifically to some students and parents and, on the other hand, is a disincentive to stay for others who feel that mixed education is desirable, particularly after five years of a single-sex system. Most Year 11 pupils spoken to during the inspection indicated an intention to stay on into the sixth form because the courses on offer met their interests. Some others expressed regret that courses such as law, or vocational courses other than business ICT are not available. The school is exploring the question of further widening and enriching the sixth-form curriculum whilst recognising that other local providers cater well for many interests, particularly in vocational courses. The school has some good collaborative arrangements in the sixth form with Barnet College, for German, and with the local education authority central music service. The school does not provide religious education in the sixth form, neither as a discrete course nor as part of another general course nor in any other form, such as a conference event or cycle of seminars or lectures; in view of this, statutory requirements are not fully met in the sixth form.
76. There is a well-balanced and comprehensive course in personal, social and health education which covers and provides good advice and guidance for students' further or higher education and future careers, as well as encouraging students to look at wider issues in the United Kingdom and further afield. The course covers very well personal and health-related issues; a very good session was seen during the inspection, relating to women's health that enabled students to pose specific questions of interest or concern in this area. Provision for careers education is very good.
77. The school provides a very good range of enrichment activities for students. These included typing and wordprocessing, a Young Enterprise scheme, the ASDAN Universities Award course and Community Placement opportunities in which students can support younger pupils in the school in a variety of ways or take up placements in the local community. In many subjects, there are trips, study visits, fieldwork and excursions related to the work. Links with local commerce and business are excellent and enhance the overall quality of educational provision, not just for business studies courses but also elsewhere, in providing, for example, interview practice for students. Groups from the school travel to a variety of world destinations for interest and recreational purposes, for example trekking in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco or skiing in Vermont. There is a good games programme, and students have a good choice of physical education activities. Drama and music make a very important contribution to the life of the school. Sixth-form students are involved in the school drama productions and run a drama club for younger pupils. These enrichment activities are a strength of the school.
78. Provision for students' personal development is very good although, in many subject areas, it is not planned for overtly; it is rather a consequence of very good teaching that understands the importance of caring for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development alongside their academic development. Enrichment activities in the sixth form contribute enormously to this area overall as do many subjects, chemistry and religious studies, for example. In some other subjects, such as geography and English, opportunities are missed to promote some aspects of students' personal development. The school does not set out to provide a daily act of collective worship. Assemblies at this school are of very high quality. They are very carefully planned, often with involvement of

pupils and students and include 'thoughts for the day' and many other elements that contribute powerfully to students' personal development. There is often a well-conducted, quiet time of reflection on a given theme. Because such occasions are not provided daily, the school does not meet statutory requirements. The school assemblies serve extremely well in setting a very positive ethos in the school and convey clearly the school's values and aims.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

79. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. The head of sixth form maintains very good records of students' attainments on entry to the sixth form, their predicted grades, their target or expected grades and information about how each student is progressing towards those targets. This information is compiled through good liaison with subject teachers or heads of department. Teachers contribute very well to keeping a close check on students' achievements to ensure that each one is learning as much as she is capable of. They diagnose carefully what each student needs to make good progress. Course content and lesson plans are adjusted as necessary to take account of students' needs, based on a good analysis of performance data, although not all departments have yet developed or implemented fully value-added analyses that would assist in adjusting provision where necessary.
80. Some students expressed the view, in questionnaires prior to the inspection, that they do not feel they are given sufficient information about their progress; inspection evidence cannot support this view. It confirms the views of those students spoken to during the inspection, who state that they have very good access to guidance both from their form tutors through regular, individual tutor sessions and from subject teachers. Those expressing views during the week of inspection speak very highly of teachers and their accessibility outside of lessons. They know what levels they are expected to achieve and are given suitable guidance about how to improve. The quality of marking is mostly very good, with well-founded evaluative comments that support learning well. Students are usually up to date with their course work and value the planning that ensures work is required in a steady flow rather than all at once. They are aware that their teachers monitor deadlines for the receipt of work and this encourages them to ensure it is completed on time. Where there are high expectations of them to evaluate their own work, or that of their peers, using subject-related criteria, this supports their understanding of how well they are doing very effectively. Academic reviews provide good opportunities for students to discuss progress with their subject teachers and what they need to do to improve. Annual progress reports are usually of a very high standard and provide an effective evaluation of what students know and can do and the progress they have made. Targets set for students are usually well founded; sometimes, however, the focus on improvements needed to study skills is made at the expense of identifying specific subject-related work that needs improving to raise standards.
81. Educational support and guidance provided for students in the sixth form is very good overall. Students receive high quality support, primarily through the very good mentoring programme. Students are well known to staff and this, together with the very positive relationships, ensures they enter Year 12 with confidence and settle very well. Those spoken to during the week of inspection are generally very satisfied with the information and advice they received prior to enrolment and the choice of courses available. Despite concerns expressed by some students in the questionnaires completed prior to the inspection, evidence during the inspection confirms the views of students interviewed that

careers guidance is very effective. It ensures that, where students know the career paths they wish to follow, the courses they are advised to take meet their needs. There is a comprehensive programme of guidance and support throughout Years 12 and 13 that prepares students very well for the world of work and for making necessary choices. It includes good information about university courses, together with support with applications and consideration of the arguments for and against taking a gap year. For those wishing to go on to vocational training or employment, there is also very good advice. All students in the sixth form have the opportunity for a practice interview with someone from the business world and this gives them confidence when applying to university or for employment. Students on vocational courses have excellent opportunities for relating what they are learning in school to the world of work through the school's well-developed links with business and industry.

82. Procedures for registering students in the sixth form ensure the school has suitable records of who is on the premises in the event of an emergency. In Year 12, the requirement for students to be present for registration at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions, together with effectively planned study arrangements, supports them well in developing good study habits. The school has recently introduced swipe card registration in conjunction with the 'Connexions' project to support changing the pattern of attendance that fell below the national average for this cohort when in the main school last year. To date, however, levels are still declining. Attendance levels of individual students are reviewed each half term and, where the school has concerns about standards achieved, this is followed up suitably. There are no effective systems in place for establishing overall attendance levels of Year 13 and for identifying patterns and trends amongst the various groups that make up the sixth-form community. This reduces opportunities for developing strategies to improve standards achieved.
83. No discernible health and safety concerns were raised by the inspection team. The conduct of risk assessments in department areas is the responsibility of heads of department. The monitoring of these checks is not currently undertaken systematically and the school should check and confirm that they are carried out to its satisfaction.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?

84. Parents' views of the school are generally good. The school has established good links with parents, through parents' consultation evenings, the weekly newsletter that is much appreciated by parents, through the many concerts and school productions that are well attended and praised, and through contact with individuals as required. The school's prospectus is detailed, well presented and a good source of information. The school works well to foster good partnerships with parents, although it does not seek out parents' views systematically where this is appropriate.
85. Responses to the parents' questionnaire from parents of sixth-form students were generally very positive. Parents say their children like coming to school, that they are taught well, expected to work hard and helped to become mature and responsible. They are usually comfortable about approaching the school with problems and concerns. Evidence during inspection confirms these positive views.
86. Students' views are mostly positive. Their views as expressed during the inspection were considerably more positive than some of those expressed in questionnaires. Students

spoken to during the inspection and those returning questionnaires consider they are treated as young adults. They value the sense of community in the sixth form and feel safe in the school environment. They agree with the view of inspectors that the school provides very well for their personal development, ensuring they grow effectively to become positively contributing members of society; for example through running the school council, taking part in Young Enterprise, mentoring pupils in the main school as well as acting as role models for those aspiring to enter the sixth form.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

87. The leadership and management of this successful and growing sixth form are very good. A very effective team of senior staff and tutors, led by the head of sixth form, contribute well to ensuring that students make good academic progress and take opportunities to develop many other skills. Together, and with support from governors and the school leadership team, they have strengthened the overall provision and effectiveness of sixth form, increased the number of students on roll and enhanced the view of the sixth form in the local community. They play a vital role in creating a very positive ethos amongst sixth-form students who speak with great appreciation about how they are treated, taught and supported.
88. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well. A few years ago, governors and senior managers took a strategic decision to build up the sixth form and this has been achieved in many respects. The work and determination continue as the school is not yet satisfied that, in spite of the current success of the sixth form and its cost-effectiveness, all has been done to make it outstanding. The school intends to continue to develop curriculum provision, to enhance facilities for students within the current constraints of finance and accommodation and to increase further, but not too much, student numbers. Governors' decisions in this respect have been reflected in appropriate financial allocations to the sixth form which is no longer, in the view of the head of sixth form, subsidising other parts of the school; neither is the sixth form drawing funds from the main school. Governors have not responded fully to the key issue from the previous inspection relating to the provision of religious education in the sixth form. They have also not checked that all risk assessments are carried out.
89. The improvements in the sixth form that have taken place, and continue to be planned for, are based on very effective diagnoses of its strengths and weaknesses. As in the main school, a determined and well-co-ordinated approach exists to school improvement in which staff development plays a key part; staff are invested in, encouraged and supported. School development planning in aspects other than staff development, in relation to the sixth form, is articulated verbally but has not been included overtly and clearly within the whole-school development plan; this shortcoming is being rectified for the 2003-04 plan, currently being compiled.
90. Leadership and management of subjects in the sixth form are generally very good; there are some shortcomings in the management of geography, although leadership there is sound. Heads of department, as in the main school, work in good collaboration with each other and also with senior managers through an effective structure of links that ensure consistency of practice in applying school policies and practices to a high degree. The structure is effective also in contributing to staff development not only for heads of department but also to their teams.

91. Sixth-form courses are cost-effective. In Year 12, the numbers of students in a few subjects are about 20 and, on most courses, there are fewer. Where numbers are small, in music, for example, sensible and effective arrangements exist for collaborative work with the Barnet Music Centre. A similar arrangement exists for German with Barnet College. Such arrangements are examples of the school applying well the principles of best value. A similar arrangement exists for German with Barnet College.
92. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is very good. Teachers are experienced and very effective and, as a result, the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good leading to students' good overall achievement. Support staff are very effective in their administrative, supervisory or other support roles. Teaching and non-teaching staff work in very effective partnership. Learning resources are good. Access to computers is limited for some subjects and restricts the nature of work in those areas; it also limits the possibilities for teaching to develop expertise in the use of computers for subject-specific learning. In a few subject areas, sociology and biology, for example, limited resources in the school library restrict the development of students' independent research skills and their chance to read widely about the topics being studied using text books and periodicals; this is not the case in English where students make very good use of the library.
93. The accommodation, as described in the main school report, has shortcomings. The inspection report for the main school raised concerns about the age and condition of the school building and these concerns apply to the sixth form as well. Accommodation for sixth-form students is cramped, particularly in terms of the provision of social areas. Study facilities in the library are pleasant and reasonable in size for the numbers of students currently wishing to use it. The room for the vocational business course is an excellent base for those students. Extension of facilities within existing accommodation presents the school with difficulty. Of greatest concern, however, as with the main school, is the content of the recent local education authority survey which pointed out some serious and potentially dangerous issues, for example in relation to electrical wiring and aged window frames. These health and safety matters need urgent attention. In spite of the above concerns, the building is pleasant, embellished with many high quality displays that demonstrate the vibrant nature of the school and sixth form in particular. Staff and students alike have worked effectively to create a pleasant learning environment.
94. Governors and staff are fully aware of the problems relating to the aging building that is difficult to maintain. The school works to ensure that it manages financially within its basic budget allocation. Financial planning, whilst ensuring that current students are properly provided for in terms of resources, takes account of the fact that major sums may have to be spent in the near future to ensure that the site and building are thoroughly safe and secure and fit for purpose. For this reason, a higher than average financial carry forward exists and this has accrued mainly from income from lettings; the school site and sporting facilities are shared with the community to mutual benefit.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001. (National comparisons for 2002 were not available at the time of the inspection)

GCE A-level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	6	83	96	33	46	6.00	6.57
Biology	14	100	88	79	34	8.15	5.25
Business studies	8	88	92	38	32	6.30	5.50
Chemistry	14	93	90	36	43	6.10	5.90
Design and technology (product design)	14	100	91	36	30	5.29	5.38
English literature	32	100	95	25	37	5.63	5.91
French	5	100	89	60	38	6.60	5.59
Geography	9	100	92	44	38	6.20	5.74
German	1	100	92	100	40	10.00	6.53
History	12	58	88	17	35	3.50	5.45
Mathematics	8	38	87	0	43	1.75	5.80
Media studies	13	100	n/a	8	n/a	5.70	n/a
Physical education	4	100	92	50	25	7.50	5.09
Physics	3	100	88	33	40	6.00	5.67
Sociology	26	85	86	37	35	5.26	5.32
Theatre studies	8	88	n/a	63	n/a	6.30	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus of the inspection was on mathematics, biology and chemistry. Physics is also available as an A-level course. Few students have taken physics in recent years, three or fewer, and results have been very variable, including some high grades. In 2000 and 2001, there was a 100 per cent pass rate in A-level physics but in 2002 this dropped to 60 per cent.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and sometimes very good so that students achieve well.
- Students show very positive attitudes to learning and their interest in and concentration on their studies are very good, essentially because they are very clear about what is expected of them.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and management of students are very good. The organisation and planning of the courses are undertaken carefully and effectively.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.

Areas for improvement

- Attainment data is not yet used fully to check on students' achievements.
- Students rarely use ICT in their studies.
- Marking of students' work is satisfactory but could be more helpful in indicating how students can improve.

95. Standards are currently above average and students achieve well in mathematics courses. Retention rates are high because good teaching and learning result in committed students who also state that they value the usefulness of the mathematics qualification.
96. In 2002, all students who were entered for the A-level examinations passed at the higher grades A or B. The 2002 average point score, which is a measure of the performance of all students, was well above the national average of 2001 (2002 comparisons were not available for the inspection). In 2001, it was well below the national average so that the results in 2002 represent a very good improvement.
97. The number of students entered for the AS-level examinations in Year 12 was very low from 1998 to 2001. Thus, patterns of performance are difficult to discern, except that the percentage of passes at the higher grades A and B was low compared to the national average. In 2002, most students achieved a pass at grades A to E.
98. Students may take a mathematics course at GCSE level, with a view to improving the grades obtained in Year 11. Some of these students struggle with items such as directed numbers and collecting together algebraic terms. Overall, though, success in these retake courses has been good over the last few years, which is an improvement from the time of the last report.

99. Teaching is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers present their lessons extremely fluently. They show a very good command of the subject and course requirements and are able to deal very confidently with students' questions. For example, when students discussed exponential growth and decay, one posed a question about the use of integration and the teacher picked out and emphasised the key relevant points which students need to understand. Teachers help students in a very caring manner, building very strong working rapports with their groups in all lessons. They promote and supervise some very good collaborative learning, as was seen in a discussion on the change of sign required for a change in the direction of movement. Teachers' expectations of students are high and the students respond very positively indeed. Teaching methods are sound, although they do not include many opportunities for independent research. The marking of students' work is completed reasonably regularly; there are some helpful comments by teachers on how to improve but, overall, these are limited. Students state that they have extremely high respect for their teachers. Relationships are very good throughout, as at the time of the last report.
100. Students' learning is good. They contribute very well during lessons. Students concentrate very intently in lessons and always show a very high level of interest in developing their mathematics even though they find mathematics the most time consuming subject. They know how well they are doing on the courses and have some knowledge of their target grades. Students use confidently their good algebraic skills to manipulate equations, and make sensible links between different parts of the mathematics courses. They show good understanding when forming and using differential equations, for example. In the decision mathematics course, organisation of options and planning shortest routes are handled well in Year 12, where students show good understanding and very good numeracy skills. Students in Year 12 state that there is a huge jump in understanding and pressure from the GCSE course in Year 11, but all students, except one, plan to extend their mathematics to A-level. Students' work in lessons and in their folders shows good progression and achievement. An increasing difficulty of problems tackled is seen in written work. Students take very good pride in their files of written work and different sections of the syllabus are very well organised.
101. The head of department was appointed from September 2002 and is beginning to provide good leadership and management of mathematics. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning take place, but this has not yet resulted in closing the gap between the average and very best practice. Teachers do, however, share enthusiastically their expertise. Some analysis of examination and test results is completed, and this process can be extended to include value-added calculations and analysis of the work of different groups. Some occasional good use of laptop computers takes place but, overall, the use of ICT is very limited. The match of staffing to the curriculum is very good, with almost all the mathematics teachers taking post-16 classes. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good; lessons are well structured with concepts introduced in a way that helps students build up their knowledge and understanding.
- A good range of teaching strategies is used to meet the needs of all students.
- Biology has good leadership and there is a commitment to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT and books and materials for extended reading.
- The learning environment, which is limited in its display to inspire teaching and learning.

102. A-level examination results in 2002 were well above the national average with 41 per cent of students being awarded A and B grades. The proportion of students gaining A-E grades was slightly down on the previous year but the average point score of 80 was well above the national average. When account is taken of students' GCSE grades at the start of the course, these results represent good achievement. Based on A-level results in 2001, performance in biology was very high compared to that in other subjects. It was not as high, relatively, in 2002. Retention rates are high.

103. The standards reached by Year 13 students, as seen in lessons and in written work, demonstrate above average standards with very good understanding of concepts and ideas including current work in histology. They understand well, for example, the individual structure and function of the different types of cells that make up bones and muscles. In work on breathing and the use of the kymograph, students are confident in the measurements and calculations involved. The standard of work from students in Year 12 is comparable with that of Year 13, and well above the national average overall. The Year 12 students examine confidently sets of data from an osmosis investigation and re-organise it effectively so that it can be interpreted. Anomalous results are successfully identified and a clear hypothesis produced for how they occurred. In a lesson on the structure and function of the digestive system, students were able to identify well tissue layers and an ulcer on a stomach wall. This also enabled them to understand the problems arising when seagulls ate moles, for example. Overall, the achievement of students currently studying biology is very good.

104. Teaching and learning are mostly very good and lessons are well structured. Lessons start promptly with teachers immediately challenging students by seeking responses to questions designed to make them think about their previous work and provide a good basis for the current lesson. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of biology and the examination requirements. They also use many good teaching strategies that meet the needs of students' different learning styles. The accommodation is under almost constant usage but is lacking in good displays to support the subject. Good use is made of available resources but ICT is not made sufficient use of by teachers or students, although the use of the Internet and wordprocessing is encouraged. Photocopied sheets provide useful additional information that supports concepts in the lesson and include questions that test students' understanding. The biology department has a good range of textbooks but there are insufficient additional books or journals to provide opportunities for extended reading.

Comments by teachers in students' books are supportive and provided useful advice on how to improve.

105. The very good teaching and learning result from work in biology being well led and managed. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. There is a clear vision for further developments, courses are well organised and documented and there is very good monitoring of teaching and the curriculum. Staff are well qualified and there are enough of them to meet the needs of post-16 biology. The staff work well together and have a commitment to improving standards.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Teachers are enthusiastic and have very good subject knowledge.
- Teachers are willing to try new methods and to learn.
- A stimulating environment for learning has been created.
- Technical support is very effective.

Areas for improvement

- The range of sources for reference is too limited.
- Systems for tutorial support are not sufficiently well thought through.

106. Results in the 2001 A-level examinations were above average when compared with those of boys and girls in all schools. However, compared with girls only in all schools, results were average. Results at AS-level in 2001 were above average. The 2002 results are similar to those in 2001. Standards have improved well since the last inspection, especially between 1997 and 2000 when they were well above average. The variable results to a large degree reflect the changing population in the classes taught. The range of ability on entry is wider than usual. Numbers are large and increasing. A significant number of students join from other schools. Virtually all students successfully complete the courses and their achievement is good.

107. Current standards, as seen in lessons, are above average overall. All students make good progress, achieving well in relation to the targets set for them, based on their GCSE results. Those doing both chemistry and biology make very good progress and some read widely. However, students' written work overall shows too little use, independently, of both reference books and computers. Attitudes are very good and relationships are excellent. Students work extremely well together and show very high levels of respect and tolerance even when working under pressure, for example when doing an assessed practical examination. Girls from all backgrounds have realistically high aspirations to become, for example, forensic scientists, pharmaceutical chemists and medical practitioners. Students' personal development and relationships are excellent and arise out of, and contribute to, the very good overall provision in chemistry.

108. In Year 12, there is some above average attainment but most of the written work examined during the inspection was of an average standard. All of the students collect numerical data very well when using traditional methods of chemical analysis. Most use well their knowledge of reaction pathways in organic chemistry to write down the steps, in a safe

sequence that need to be taken to produce a new product. Most can also use their knowledge of structural formulae to predict what is most likely to happen when reagents are caused to react. However, a few students need help when recalling facts from earlier work at GCSE and when they are required to make accurate use of new and unfamiliar concepts to solve problems. Most are better at following instructions than they are at making theoretical connections and identifying limitations in the usefulness of current theories.

109. In Year 13, students show high levels of competence in analytical chemistry. They are able to understand and to discuss issues such as pollution, disease and molecular biology that appear frequently in newsprint. Their experimental reports are good because they make good use of the data they have collected. Computers are not used enough to support such work, neither do the students compare and evaluate sufficiently well the sources of information they have used.
110. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching has some excellent features. In the best lesson, the teacher combined a high academic challenge with card games involving thinking and speaking, competition and co-operation, when matching complex words and definitions, initially publicly and then privately, to write answers about proteins on an examination paper; all done in the space of one hour with outstanding management of students throughout this activity. In another lesson, the teacher selected 'Rolling Stones' music very appropriately to introduce a discussion about getting the product that you want with minimal waste. Such teaching motivates students very well. In all lessons, teachers' very good subject knowledge, experience of examinations and real-life science ensure that work is interesting. One exciting demonstration very safely and effectively produced more than a few appreciative gasps of awe and wonder. Students' work is accurately marked. However, the system for providing tutorial support has not been sufficiently thought through; for example, teachers' comments are not always acted upon and this adversely affects progress for some students.
111. Leadership and management are very good. New innovative methods are the result of recent and effective professional development and training and reflect the teachers' willingness to learn from one another and innovate to improve learning. The students follow the good examples they see and do likewise. Technical support is very effective. The range of reference material for students' own reading and research is limited. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

A course in design and technology is offered. Numbers of students on this course have been growing in recent years from seven in 2000 to 17 in 2002. A-level results in 2001 were in line with the national average and included a 100 per cent pass rate. In 2002, results went up with an increase in the proportion of students obtaining high grades A or B and maintaining the 100 per cent pass rate. Based on the school's own value-added analysis, students achieve very well on the design and technology course. This course was not inspected in detail.

BUSINESS

Business studies courses are run at A-level and intermediate GNVQ and all of these courses were inspected. A new full GCSE business course has just been introduced in Year 10, and

some Year 11 students are taking a short business course, not previously offered to current post-16 students.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching, including excellent subject knowledge and relationships, helps students achieve well.
- GNVQ and A-level students develop very good attitudes through well-planned lessons and very good assessment systems.
- Excellent links exist with local business and industry.

Areas for improvement

- A-level students do not use ICT enough as computers are not easily available in some lessons.
- Higher attaining students are not always fully stretched in some A-level lessons.

112. Results in A-level in 2001 for the eight students entered were above average overall, with the percentage of top A and B grades above both school and national averages. All students passed, results showing a rising trend from previous years. In 2002, all students entered passed, although the percentage of top grades was lower than in 2001. Students achieve well in business studies over time, with several lower attaining and average attaining students performing significantly better than predictions based on their GCSE point scores on entry to the course.

113. Results in the new AS-level examination in 2002 were very encouraging. All but one of the 12 students entered passed, and more students obtained top grades than in 2001, where results were in line with the national average overall. Based on students' GCSE point scores, results show good achievement overall for students of all levels of attainment.

114. In 2001, results in the GNVQ intermediate examination were broadly in line with national averages, with six of the eleven students entered completing the full course successfully in a year, although no student obtained a merit grade. In 2002, the completion rate improved significantly, with 16 out of 20 students entered passing, and the quality of work was also better, with one student obtaining a merit grade. Results reflected very good progress by most students, with some achieving much better results than predictions based on their GCSE point scores on entry.

115. On all courses, students achieve well over time, and sometimes very well, both in GNVQ and A-level. Overall, standards in business courses are in line with national averages. In a very good Year 13 lesson, students developed very good knowledge and skill in assessment of examples of last year's coursework. Coursework projects were well linked to local businesses visited, or to students' part-time jobs. In a good study of how a large local shoe company could improve staff turnover and morale, the students evaluated survey results effectively with a series of graphs showing staff time at work and time spent socialising. GNVQ students gained a very good knowledge of break even through several case study examples where they had to draw and interpret graphs, and used spreadsheets well to produce cash flow forecasts. Their wordprocessed assignment work was very well

linked to their regular work placements. Higher attaining students analysed data about changes in numbers employed in different industrial sectors very effectively, although some students tended to produce too many unnecessary graphs.

116. Teaching and learning are very good overall on all courses. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and relationships with students keep them well motivated, involved, and interested in their tasks. Where teachers note problems in students' understanding of business, marketing and financial concepts, they explain and reinforce key terms very clearly. GNVQ lessons keep all students fully involved because they have to participate in presentations about their work placements in local businesses to enrich their coursework assignments, and this improves their key skills of communication, use of ICT and number. In A-level lessons seen, a small number of students were content to let others answer questions in class. Higher attaining students were generally well stretched but there were times when opportunities could be given to them to compare different motivational theories. Teachers make excellent use of visits to local retail businesses and speakers to help students understand how businesses operate. GNVQ students take part, successfully, in local competitions and Young Enterprise companies where, in school, they make and sell products to make a profit, for charity. They have an excellent base room. Because there is no base room for A-level business studies, opportunities for these students to use computers to present and analyse data are generally insufficient.

117. Leadership and management of business courses are very good, with experienced subject-specialist staff working well as a team. Extra lessons after school are provided to help students catch up with coursework. Improvement since A-level business courses were introduced has been good, and the department has good capacity for further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (AVCE) course in ICT was recently introduced into the sixth form. Results for the full AVCE course are not available, as no students have yet completed the course, and students are awaiting results of modules already taken. AVCE is open to all students. Some but not all students in Year 12 have previously taken ICT in Year 11. Retention on sixth-form courses has been very good so far.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- Students make good progress in lessons as a result of good teaching.
- Students grasp basic theory and generally apply it well.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very good relationships with students.
- Students develop excellent attitudes to learning.
- The department is well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Some students do not make sufficient use of links with local organisations in their work.
- Computers are not always readily available for students to use in some other sixth-form subjects.

118. The subject has made a very encouraging start in the sixth form. The first students to take the AS-level equivalent of AVCE in Year 12 obtained significantly more top grades of A and B than the nationally published average in the same examination syllabus. As several students had not taken GCSE in ICT in Year 11, their progress and achievement over time were good, and, for about a half, very good.
119. In lessons and work seen, students were achieving well. Standards of work are generally average and better in Year 13 than Year 12. Year 12 students made good progress when writing specifications for a spreadsheet to analyse income and expenses for a garden centre, but some students found the new topic hard. Those students who did not take GCSE in ICT have not yet gained strong enough basic skills in manipulating formulae but are being supported well to catch up. Year 13 students worked very well on their individual web design projects, although they were still at an early stage on their storyboards and structure designs. A variety of interesting projects were being undertaken, including one about sports cars and a website with information about the famous architect, Gaudy. One higher attaining Year 13 student had produced a plan for her own series of relational databases for bookings and employee details in a luxury hotel, and clearly stated how this improved her work; several macros were successfully employed. Examples of the students' previous outstanding Year 12 work on designing interactive children's stories showed high levels of animation and graphics skills. Some, but not all, Year 13 database projects were geared to the needs of real users in local organisations; where such good local or other links exist, the quality of work is enhanced. Occasionally, the quality of a student's work is diminished because it contains several uncorrected spelling, grammar and paragraphing errors.
120. Students make good progress overall as a result of good teaching and learning. They make very good progress in understanding principles of spreadsheet design because teachers' excellent subject knowledge and lesson planning enable them to demonstrate routines briskly and then maximise students' time for practising their skills. Teachers make homework deadlines very clear, and support individual students well as they assess progress and set students helpful targets. This helps students to stay well motivated because, although they find some topics difficult, they know exactly what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve their work. Students show excellent attitudes to their work and this is supported by teachers' very good relationships with them.
121. The department is well led and managed. Staff are experienced in various software specialisms and have a clear vision for further improvement, which includes greater use by students of local visits and more links with real-life users in business, for example for ICT projects. A computerised record of students' progress is used well by teachers to monitor achievement. The subject was not offered at the time of the last inspection. It has good potential for further improvement. Provision of ICT for students not taking a formal ICT course is variable, primarily because, in too many sixth-form subjects, access to computers is limited and this impedes some aspects of learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus subject for inspection in this area of the curriculum was theatre studies. Music was sampled in Year 11 as part of the short inspection of the main school but not in the sixth form. Music is a strength in the school as a whole and contributes greatly to pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The teaching of music observed in the main school was excellent. The music department provides many of the school's extra-curricular

activities; choirs, ensembles and concerts, for example, and sixth-form students participate in these as well as younger pupils. Two students took music A-level in 2000 but there were no music A-level entries in 2001 nor in 2002. Numbers of students currently studying music in Year 12 and Year 13 are small and, for this reason, collaborative arrangements exist with the Barnet Music Service for A-level teaching.

Theatre studies

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching is good and often very good; lessons are well matched to the needs of the students.
- Learning is good and very well supported by the wider opportunities offered.
- Students show mature attitudes and relationships are very good.
- Assessment is very effective in helping students improve their work.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to encourage the greatest possible effort from those few students who show some reticence so as to raise the standards of their written work.

122. Examination results in 2000 and 2001 were above average when compared with all schools, with a good proportion of students obtaining the higher A or B grades at A-level. Results in 2002 dropped with no A grades and a higher proportion of lower grades. Retention rates are high.

123. Healthy and increasing numbers (15 in Year 12 and 10 in Year 13) currently take theatre studies in the sixth form. The current standard of work in Year 12 is above average and, in Year 13, it is well above average. Standards are therefore well above average overall. Students achieve very well overall and particularly in practical work. Written work varies from excellent in quantity and quality to satisfactory, relative to the effort made by students. There is a wide range of attainment in both groups but, overall, students show strong dramatic skills. Performances are inventive with ideas developed in expressive and perceptive ways. Roles created are detailed, imaginative and well considered. Performers show close rapport with each other and ideas are communicated clearly to the audience. Students are articulate and most are well organised. Several are planning to follow careers in the theatre or media.

124. Teaching is good overall and students appreciate this. Planning is very well matched to the needs of the students, including those who are gifted and talented; objectives and explanations are clear because the teachers' subject knowledge is very secure and communication skills are strong. Teachers make effective use of their professional expertise and experience. Lessons are lively and often entertaining as well as thought-provoking. They are prepared well, have a brisk pace and use a good range of resources so that students know what they have to do and how to do it. Expectations are high and students enjoy the challenges offered. Assessment and marking, in particular, are very effective in identifying students' individual needs and setting clear targets for them to improve. Written and verbal comments are supportive and encouraging. Students very

much enjoy their drama. They are highly motivated and hardworking, support each other and have great confidence in their teachers.

125. Students learn well. Their involvement in a range of activities, including workshops, theatre visits and local drama clubs, supports their learning well and raises standards in lessons. They use this broad range of experiences when making good evaluations of their own or each other's work. Group and self-evaluation constitute an integral part of the high quality work that contributes to a thorough understanding of examination technique. Students make clear judgements about the social, cultural and historical influences related to their pieces, for example when discussing the issue of domestic violence. Students speak confidently, for example, in discussing their interpretation of scenes from 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle' by Brecht. In presenting scenes from this play, students show the capacity to create strong imagery and characterisation through the use of facial gestures, humour, posture and excellent projection to produce blood-curdling, spine-tingling action. They use contrast well, for example between still images and strong movements. In presenting a scene from 'The Threepenny Opera' by Brecht, students show a willingness to experiment with different techniques to create atmosphere, tension and effective body language.
126. Students' good learning is also supported by the mature attitudes and very good relationships shown by students who are keen to learn and spend much of their time being involved with drama, including giving support to younger pupils through the drama club. The positive relationships are a key to the subject's success. Students enjoy the opportunity to work in groups and at their own pace, supported by the expertise of the teachers who intervene sensitively. Their work is further supported by activities such as the regular productions, which are showcased to parents, expressive arts evenings and international afternoons, a celebration of cultural diversity that includes drama. Regular visits to plays such as those to 'Abigail's Party' in the West End and local theatres are organised by the department. The 'Theatre Centre' uses the school to give performances, and regular workshops, such as the recent Greek one, broaden the students' experience.
127. Leadership and management of theatre studies are very good. Courses are well managed and students' progress is carefully monitored. Staff share responsibility for the teaching of the groups and this shared commitment is a strength. Documentation is very well organised and fully up to date. Accommodation and resources for sixth-form work are good and support students' learning well but, where three groups occur simultaneously, the teaching of younger pupils takes place in the canteen. The department has maintained the very high standards that were reported upon at the time of the previous inspection.

HUMANITIES

The main focus was on geography and sociology. History was sampled. History results in 2001 were well below the national average, having dipped from 2000 but they improved in 2002. Performance in history A-level is not as strong as that in most other subjects in the sixth form.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good and students are well motivated.
- Effective teamwork exists amongst the three teachers who teach the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Provide more opportunities to develop students' spiritual and cultural awareness.
- Increase the use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Improve the management of the subject by introducing and implementing more robust systems for monitoring teaching and learning so that the quality of provision and outcome are consistently high.

128. In 2001, examination results at A-level were above the national average. A-level results in 2002 were very similar to those in 2001. Evidence provided by the school indicates that most AS-level students at least achieved their target grade in both 2001 and 2002. Overall, students make good progress and achieve well.

129. Standards of work seen in both Year 12 and Year 13 are above average overall. In Year 12, students have good investigative skills and their analytical skills are a particular strength as evident in their coursework folders. Analysis of students' files in Year 13 indicates that they are able to form hypotheses at a level above average for students of their age. Students in Year 13 demonstrate high order mathematical skills which are likely to support them in attaining the highest A-level grades. Year 12 students have a good understanding of how the word rural has different meanings in different areas. Year 13 students can present robust hypotheses concerning what is the likely trigger of a natural hazard. Their knowledge and understanding of weather and climate are above average. They have a very good understanding of why the United Kingdom experiences such changeable weather and seasonal variations in climate. Their depth of understanding of the different health challenges facing both the more and the less economically developed countries in the future is exceptionally good. Analysis of students' files indicates that on the rare occasion where underachievement occurs, it is due to the students in question having careless attitudes towards their work and also absenting themselves from certain key geography lessons. Geography teachers have been rigorous in dealing with this problem by chasing the students' attendance at lessons.

130. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching ranges from good to poor. Over time, standards achieved in both Years 12 and 13 are above average because of the good teaching. For example, good subject knowledge on the part of the teacher in a Year 13 lesson, coupled with teaching delivered at a cracking pace, resulted in all the students present making good gains in the skills required to answer an examination question on the push and pull factors which contribute to forced and voluntary migration. Good relationships between students and teachers result in students having the confidence to ask their teachers questions and so deepen their knowledge and understanding, as observed in the lesson where students were presented with the challenge to differentiate precisely between what is meant by the term 'refugee' and what is meant by the term 'asylum seeker'. However, even where teaching is good, opportunities are missed to raise

students' spiritual and cultural awareness through the topic under discussion. Students' ability to engage in confident discussion contributes to their personal development and also to a deepening of knowledge and understanding of the issue being explored in the lesson. On the rare occasion where teaching is poor, the lesson is conducted at a pedestrian pace and the intended planned learning outcomes for the lesson are not clear, as evidenced in a Year 12 lesson on rural environments. Lack of challenge and confusion about expected outcomes held back learning in this lesson. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.

131. Leadership of the department is satisfactory. The head of department has successfully inspired a group of very competent and committed teachers to work effectively as a team in planning work. In particular, the team benefits from the expertise of a teacher who has a very thorough understanding of what examiners expect to see in high quality examination scripts. She is able to share this knowledge with students who learn well how to answer test questions clearly, fully and concisely, presenting their arguments with conviction. This was seen in a Year 12 lesson on Glasgow inner-city development. Management systems are unsatisfactory. There is not a robust and formal procedure for monitoring teaching and learning and so to model and share good practice in lesson delivery. Although the marking of students work is good overall, there are inconsistencies as some teaching points out in a much sharper and crisper manner what students need to do to improve their work than other teaching. Because of the lack of formal monitoring, these inconsistencies are not picked up. Development planning within the department has weaknesses, particularly in relation to costing priorities for development.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning lead to students' high and rising standards and their very good achievement.
- The teachers' excellent relationships with students contribute to students' outstanding attitudes.
- Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not easily available for students to use in lessons.
- Students do not make enough use of examples from, or links with, industry and the community to enrich their learning.
- Some students do not read or research widely enough, and tend to rely too much on the teacher to provide very good worksheets.

132. Sociology is currently the most popular sixth-form option, with increasing numbers. Retention on courses is very high.
133. A-level sociology results for the 26 students entered in 2001 were in line with the national average for both the proportion of students achieving a pass and the top grades of A and B. Results in 2001 were less impressive than in the previous two years, when they were above average, although students achieved well considering their starting points. In 2002, the outstanding results were a significant improvement from 2001. All 33 students entered

passed, and more than two-thirds gained top grades of A and B. Students' achievement in this subject, which they had not previously taken at GCSE, was excellent, better than for most other sixth-form subjects in the school. Most students achieved higher grades than indicated by their GCSE results.

134. In 2002, virtually all of the 41 students entered for AS-level passed, and nearly a half gained top grades. Their achievement was very good because many exceeded expectations based on GCSE point scores. Results were not quite as good as those in 2001; in 2001, all students passed, the number of students gaining top grades was well above the national average and the majority achieved better than predicted.
135. In lessons and work seen, standards are above average overall and sometimes well above average, reflecting very good teaching. Students are achieving very well. They develop, with skilful guidance, very good skills in critical evaluation. The teacher's very well structured lesson planning helps students to maintain their interest and involvement because they are encouraged to voice their own viewpoints, based well on theory, and draft their own definitions. Their excellent attitudes are the result of excellent relationships with the teacher, whose caring and very supportive approach, allied to his expectations of very high standards, helps each student fulfil her potential. Year 13 students show a good understanding of the key features of functionalist theory and Marxist ideology, for example, and are beginning to relate concepts of subculture and family to crime and deviance in urban areas.
136. Other features of the very good teaching and learning seen include excellent assessment methods, with frequent short tests and incisively-marked essays. Constructive comments help students develop critical views and develop good examination technique. Frequent timed essays in class, after revision of key points using comical acronyms, enable students to recall the main theoretical concepts and how to improve their answers. Students are well aware of the high level at which they are required to work, but some tend to rely too much on the teacher to provide very good worksheets and other resources rather than read more widely to develop their understanding. They tend not to use ICT enough to explore and model statistical data, for example on family types and sizes. This is because computers are not readily available in lessons, although teachers recognise their potential in learning. Students debate moral, social and cultural issues well, and, in a very good Year 13 lesson, students learnt the difference between community (gemeinschaft) and society (gesellschaft) through summarising key points from teacher's excellent handouts. Though the coursework option is not currently being taken, projects that students have chosen in the past covered topics related to students' own personal interests and experience and were very well founded in appropriate theory and methodology.
137. The subject is very well led and managed, the teacher being an enthusiastic, well-qualified and well-organised specialist. All students, including the gifted and talented, are fully stretched by lesson activities. Each student's progress is very well monitored. It is not possible to gauge improvement from the last inspection because the subject was not then inspected, but it has a good capacity for further improvement.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English literature. English language and literature and French were sampled. Provision for English language and literature is good. Students study an exciting range of media

and non-literature texts as well as literature. Their achievement is good. At the moment, this subject is only available at AS-level.

Very few students take French or German at A-level so national comparisons for examination results are not viable. Provision for German is in collaboration with Barnet College. In the French lesson sampled, teaching and learning were sound. Students' understanding of French was good but students were rather reticent in speaking French other than in short phrases.

An A-level course in media studies is offered and this is attracting increasing numbers; 14 in 2002. A-level results in media studies show a 100 per cent pass rate for the last three years and good achievement for the students taking the course.

English literature

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

Strengths

- The standard of students' work seen during the inspection is above average.
- Very good teaching is ensuring that students' learning and hence their achievement are very good.
- Students' positive and enthusiastic attitudes contribute very well to their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Planned opportunities for the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

138. In 2000 and 2001, students' results in AS- and A-level examinations were in line with national averages. National benchmark figures are not yet available for 2002, but the school's 2002 English literature results are similar to those in the previous year. These results show that students achieve very well.

139. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average and students' achievement is very good. Students' speaking and listening skills are particularly impressive. Students use talk very effectively as an essential learning tool in every lesson. They readily investigate, share and challenge ideas, concepts and interpretations, and refine their own opinions as a result of discussions. Their ability to explore and hypothesise was well illustrated in a Year 12 class studying 'A Streetcar named Desire' when their teacher gave them a number of contentious statements about the characters to consider. Opinions were clearly stated, well justified and formed independently after careful evaluation of what others had said. Standards of writing are also above average. The most able students write fluently and succinctly, supporting their argument well with textual evidence and references. Their interpretations are often perceptive and they show a good awareness of the historical and social contexts of texts, and the cultural and intellectual influences on writers. The less able do not always match their writing style to suit the intended audience or context.

140. Students' learning is enhanced by their use of ICT to do independent research about the texts and authors which they study, to prepare presentations and to plan, draft and write essays. Students are encouraged to use the library, which has a good range of critical works, though more copies of frequently-used books are now required because of the

growing numbers choosing to study the subject in the sixth form. There are also regular extra-curricular opportunities, such as visits to London and Stratford-upon-Avon theatres, and workshops provided by BBC Education and the London University Institute of Education. However, the development of students' spiritual, moral, ethical, social and cultural awareness is not part of everyday lesson planning. Although good work is done on all of these areas, it tends to be incidental and not part of the learning objectives for lessons, consequently, some valuable opportunities are missed.

141. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and most lessons are well planned, using the examination board's assessment objectives to ensure that all students know what they have to do to attain the highest grades. In the most successful lessons, teachers use open questions very effectively to challenge students, to encourage them to develop and justify opinions and to check their understanding. They also give them many opportunities to work in pairs and groups, as well as encouraging them to make independent decisions by allowing them to choose their preferred ways of working. A good example of this was seen in a Year 13 lesson in which students were working on synoptic texts, a passage from Friel's 'Translations' and one from Orwell's '1984'. The following discussion, on 'language is power', was of high quality and students were able to consolidate their learning by preparing either a mini-essay or a piece of creative writing to illustrate their theses. In one less successful lesson, insufficient emphasis on the appropriate assessment objectives meant that the symbolic and allegorical nature of the characters, and the importance of the social settings, in Williams' 'Streetcar Named Desire' were not brought out clearly. A feature of all teaching which helps students' learning considerably is the high quality of marking. Teachers frequently give good, helpful advice on how students can improve their work as well as suggesting areas for further investigation.
142. The leadership and management of English are very good. Communication is excellent. Teachers regularly meet, formally and informally, to plan lessons and to review and share best classroom practice. Teaching and marking are well monitored; planning for improvement and target setting using performance data are good; students' standards and achievement are carefully tracked. The head of department sets a fine example of dedication and hard work and has built an effective and high performing team.
143. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards are no longer below average, achievement is very good and all teaching is effective. Additionally, teachers use a wide range of teaching methods and they ensure that their students are set challenging targets and are able to work independently. The department's successes account for the very high number of students now choosing to study English literature in the sixth form. It is the second most popular subject in the sixth form. Retention rates are high.