

INSPECTION REPORT

VALENTINES HIGH SCHOOL

Iford

LEA area: London Borough of Redbridge

Unique reference number: 102857

Headteacher: Dr D Moynihan

Reporting inspector: Mrs G Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th March 2003

Inspection number: 249565

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 19 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Cranbrook Road
Gants Hill
Ilford
Essex

Postcode: IG2 6HX

Telephone number: 0208 5543608

Fax number: 0208 5182621

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Graham

Date of previous inspection: March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2901	G Kayembe	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and students' achievements</p> <p>How well are students taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9708	S Daintrey	Lay inspector		<p>Students' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its students?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
32288	I Khan	Team inspector	Mathematics	
27411	H Butensky	Team inspector	English	
19043	D Lewis	Team inspector	Science	
18032	I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
10288	J Richards	Team inspector	Art and design	
12331	V Grigg	Team inspector	Design and technology Educational inclusion, including race equality	
30743	N Cowell	Team inspector	Geography	
22849	R Catlow	Team inspector	History Citizenship	
32208	D Aitken	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
8360	F Peacock	Team inspector	Music Special educational needs	
18888	J Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
12179	L Moscrop	Team inspector	Religious education English as an additional language	
30648	B Skelton	Team inspector	English (sixth form) Drama	

20527	B King	Team inspector	Mathematics (sixth form)	
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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23402	B Singh	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry	
10666	P Wheeler	Team inspector	Sociology	
15277	C Vidler	Team inspector	Business education	
2652	R Lomas	Team inspector	Classical studies Psychology	
7636	A Sinha	Team inspector	Urdu Ivrit (Modern Hebrew)	
31138	T Westrip	Team inspector	Physics	
17314	E Marchant	Team inspector	Physical education (sixth form)	

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

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London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is of above average size with a roll of 1229 boys and girls aged 11 to 19. The majority come from the local authority area of Redbridge but a minority live further afield in neighbouring local London boroughs.

The school is oversubscribed. Overall, the school has a rich multi-ethnic mix, though the predominant ethnic groups are Indian, white-British and Pakistani. The proportion of students with English as an additional language is very high and, though most of these students are fluent English speakers, there are still a relatively high proportion who are at earlier stages of learning English. The intake is challenging in a number of respects; the overall socio-economic circumstances of students are below average, and this is reflected in the above average proportion eligible for a free school meal. The attainment on entry is also below average, though the numbers of students with special educational needs and those with statements of special educational needs are broadly average. There is a high, and growing, proportion of refugees, mainly from Somalia. The school has Beacon and Technology College status.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school which provides a very effective education for its students. The ethos of the school promotes a strong learning culture and one in which students are valued for who they are and what they contribute to the school's collective identity. Harmonious relationships are a most marked feature of the school. Very good teaching promotes very good learning and results in students achieving very well. The overall leadership and management of the school are very good and the headteacher provides outstanding leadership. The school uses its financial resources very well and provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching in the main school is very good overall and promotes students' learning very well.
- Standards of attainment are well above average by the end of Year 11 and reflect the very good progress made by students between Years 7 and 11.
- There is a very positive ethos which embraces inclusion of all regardless of race, religion or social background. As a result, the school is a very harmonious community where all extend respect for others.
- Links with parents are very effective and parents hold the school in high regard.
- The school makes excellent use of its Beacon and Technology College status to extend out into the local community and other schools. Much of this work directly benefits students and staff at the school.
- There is excellent provision of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
- Leadership and management of the school are very good overall. Significant emphasis is placed on students' education. The headteacher's outstanding leadership promotes a single-minded and unerring drive to achieve the highest standards.
- The provision for students' personal development is very good and, as a result, behaviour and attitudes are also very good. Students at the school feel that they are part of this community.

What could be improved

- There is insufficient provision for religious education in Years 10 to 11.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.
- In a number of subjects in Years 7 to 9, assessment is underdeveloped or marking is not always as rigorous as it needs to be.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection in March 1997. Most of the key issues have been very well tackled, though compliance with national and local requirements for religious education in Years 10 to 11 and for the requirement of a daily act of collective worship have yet to be fully addressed. Standards of work have improved well, very well in the last three years, and the quality of teaching is now much better than it was. Aspects of the school which were strong at the time of the last inspection have been maintained and many aspects have improved further. This is reflected in the very positive responses of parents to the questionnaire. Given the high quality of leadership and management and the support provided by governors, there is very good capacity for the school to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	B	B	A	A*
A-levels/AS-levels	C	E	n/a	

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Standards of work are well above average by the end of Year 11 and achievement is very good. Students' performance in GCSE examinations is very high when compared to similar schools and well above the average of schools nationally. Girls outperformed boys by a wider margin than is the case nationally, though the school is taking action to narrow the gap between them. The school exceeded the targets set for performance in GCSE examinations in 2002. Results of national tests for 14-year-olds in 2002 were above average overall; well above in English, above in mathematics and in line with national averages in science. The gap between boys and girls was much narrower than the gap nationally indicating that the school's strategies to raise boys' attainment are working. The trend in improvement in national tests and GCSE examinations has been better than the trend nationally.

Inspection evidence indicates that standards are above average by Year 9 and well above by Year 11. Students make very good progress and achieve very well against their prior attainment. By Year 11, standards of work in most subjects are either above or well above the national average, with the exception of art and design and music, where standards are broadly in line with national averages, and ICT and non-GCSE religious education, where standards are below. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make very good progress. Students with refugee status are well supported and achieve equally well. There is little significant difference in the performance of students from different ethnic groups in public tests and examinations.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Students enjoy coming to school and actively participate in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Both in lessons and around the school, students behave very well. There is very little incidence of bullying but, on the rare occasions it occurs, it is swiftly and sensitively nipped in the bud.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The quality of relationships amongst students and between students and teachers is excellent. Students trust their teachers. Race relations are also excellent. Students demonstrate a mature understanding

	of the needs of others and listen with respect to others' views and ideas.
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Aspect	Comment
Attendance	Very good. Students are punctual to school and good attendance has a positive impact on standards.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It is good in English and mathematics. Use of literacy in lessons is very good but use of numeracy is less well developed. Teaching is at least good in all other subjects, with the exception of Urdu where it is satisfactory overall. The overall quality of teaching is very good in science, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education, and it is excellent in drama. Planning and preparation of lessons are very good and learning objectives are clearly identified and shared with students. They, hence, know what they are expected to learn. The overall match of work to students' individual needs is good, though sometimes work could be more challenging for able students or made easier for lower attainers. Questioning by teachers is often of very good quality and helps to develop students' thinking. A wide variety of teaching methods are used and there is frequent use of pair or group work so that students are actively involved in their learning, which they enjoy. A small number of lessons were unsatisfactory. These were not concentrated in any particular subject and were for various reasons such as trying to achieve too much, insufficient subject knowledge or weak student management skills. In the main, teachers' subject knowledge is strong and they manage students with great skill.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The curriculum provides a wide range of courses in Years 10 to 11 to suit the needs and aspirations of a wide range of students.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good. Students are well supported by the learning needs department and by class teachers. Individual education plans identify clear and useful targets. Students make very good progress and achieve very creditable results in public tests and examinations as a result of the support they receive.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Very good overall. The English as an additional language department is very well organised and supports projects in other institutions as part of the Beacon status of the school. Overall, teaching is very good both in terms of the specialist staff input and the support provided by class teachers. As a result, students make very good progress.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. The school is exceptionally good at promoting a strong sense of community so that students feel that they belong here. Provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development is very good and for social development it is excellent.
How well the school cares for its students	The pastoral care provided for students is of a very high standard. Monitoring and support of academic and personal development are also very good. There are good assessment procedures in English, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education but in a number of subjects, assessment in Years 7 to 9 is

	underdeveloped.
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Teaching time for music and modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 11 is too short and there is insufficient curricular time for religious education in Years 10 to 11. The school has made a very good start to implementing the new requirements for citizenship education. Almost all subjects make at least some use of ICT, but this needs further development in some. The partnership with parents is very effective.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. There is a very strong commitment to securing further improvement. Delegation of responsibilities is very well organised and managed. Deputy headteachers provide very good support to the headteacher, and other senior staff carry out their responsibilities very well. The vast majority of middle managers manage their areas well and provide good or better leadership to their teams.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are well organised and actively support the work of the school. They are very well informed and have a very clear idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ask pertinent and searching questions of the school about its work and performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There is very good monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school. Performance data, including results of national examinations and tests, are analysed in detail. The information garnered from evaluation of performance is used very well to secure improvements.
The strategic use of resources	Financial and other resources are very well managed and used to secure best value for students. The availability of staffing and resources are good. However, accommodation is unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That their children like school. • That the school has high expectations of students. • That their children make good progress. • That the quality of teaching is good. • That the leadership and management of the school are good. • They feel able to approach the school if they have a query or a problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework. • Information about their children's progress. • The closeness of the school's working relationships with parents.

Inspection evidence supports parents' positive views about the school. However, there is little evidence to back-up the concerns expressed by some. Homework is provided regularly and is of good quality and appropriate quantity. The school goes out of its way to establish good working relationships with parents. There is regular and good quality information to parents on the progress of students. Parents receive information either in writing or at a meeting once a term. The quality of reports is generally good, although music reports are general and give little personal information about students.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

VALENTINES HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The number on roll in the sixth form is higher than the national average with 282 students. There are more female students than male ones. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average. The sixth form, like the main school, is oversubscribed. The ethnic mix in the sixth form broadly reflects the rich cultural diversity of the main school. There are many students with English as an additional language, but most are either fully fluent or at the later stages of learning English. There are currently no students with special educational needs. About 58 per cent of Year 11 students in 2002 stayed on into the sixth form, though some of the ablest left to join other sixth forms in the local area. About 40 per cent of the current Year 12 are from other schools, including from other surrounding local education authorities. Entry to the sixth form to study A-levels requires five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C and, for some subjects such as mathematics and science, at least a B grade in that subject is required. This requirement has been a recent introduction. For double award AVCE, the requirements are four GCSEs at grade C or above or a merit in GNVQ or vocational GCSEs. Those wishing to study GNVQ at intermediate level, a minimum requirement is for four GCSEs at grade D or above.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students make good progress in academic study and in their personal development so that they emerge at the end of their courses as well-educated, mature and responsible young adults. Current standards are broadly average. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with much of it being very good and excellent which inspires students, engages their interest and promotes high standards of work. The sixth form is very well led and managed. It successfully meets the needs of students and is cost effective. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Strengths

- Students achieve well against their prior attainment and the value-added in academic development is good.
- The quality of teaching is good and much is very good or excellent and makes a significant contribution to students' learning.
- The sixth form is very well led and managed.
- Students receive very good support and guidance and this enables them to make good progress.
- Students have very positive attitudes to school. They get on well together and respect one another's differences.

What could be improved

- Accommodation, which is insufficient to meet the needs of students.
- In a number of subjects, students' skills of independent learning have not been sufficiently well developed and they do not take a sufficiently active role in their own learning.

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	Good. Results at AS- and A-level have been low but improved well in 2002 because of good teaching. All students gained a pass grade, though there were few higher grades. However, attainment on entry is low so 2002 results signify good progress. Inspection evidence reflects these results. Staying-on rates also improved well between 2001 and 2002.
Mathematics	Good. The good quality of teaching and learning at A-level yielded high standards in 2002. These were much better than 2001 results. At AS-level, the lower attainers need closer monitoring to minimise the number underachieving and discontinuing the A-level course. Leadership and management are good. Students achieve very well.
Biology	Good. Standards are in line with national averages and improving. Teaching is good and students work hard. Hence, they achieve well. However, students do not participate actively enough in lessons. More emphasis is needed on interpretation of data. A-level results for 2002 were low, but a marked improvement on the well below average results of 2001.
Chemistry	Very good. Standards are above average. Teaching is very good and students are very committed to the course. Achievement against prior attainment is very good. However, students need to be more actively involved in lessons and make more oral contributions. 2002 A-level results showed good achievement.
Physics	Satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Marking of work is not rigorous enough though and there is insufficient participation of students in their own learning. Nonetheless, teachers use their good subject knowledge to help students learn. 2002 results were low but achievement was good.
Art	Satisfactory. Standards of work are appropriate and most students are working towards meeting course expectations. Achievement is satisfactory as is the overall quality of teaching. Assessment and students' skills of independent learning are underdeveloped.
Drama	Excellent. Current standards are very high and reflect the results of AS- and A-level over the past few years. Students make excellent progress when compared to their prior attainment as a result of excellent and dynamic teaching. Accommodation is limited, however, as is the use of ICT.
Geography	Satisfactory. Examination standards have been well below those found nationally. AS-level results have improved this year, however. Present standards are above average and reflect the higher prior attainment of current students. Achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is good and students enjoy their studies.
Psychology	Very good. Examination results are increasingly good. Current standards are above average and students achieve very well against their prior attainment. This is due to the very good teaching which promotes students' learning well.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Sociology	Good. Teaching is good and students are very well supported in their learning. As a result, standards are now in line with national averages after having been below in A-level examinations over the past four years. Students achieve well, though they are not given enough opportunities to be independent learners. Use of ICT could be improved. The subject is well led.
Business education	Good. A-level results tend to compare favourably with results nationally, though 2001 results were well below average. Current standards are above average and broadly reflect the 2002 results. Students make good progress. Teaching is well organised and students are enthusiastic and work hard.
Classical studies	Very good. Examination results have tended to be below average reflecting low prior attainment of students taking the course. Current standards are broadly average and students achieve very well against prior attainment. Teaching and learning are very good and students enjoy the subject.
Physical education	Very good. Students make very good progress over the course of Years 12 and 13 and attainment in AS- and A-level is above average. This signals very good achievement relative to the low attainment on entry and is due to very good teaching. Students work hard and are well motivated. Not enough use is made of ICT.

Lessons were sampled in a number of other subjects, including product design, ICT, law, media studies and travel and tourism. Lessons in personal, social and health education were also sampled. In all these lessons, the quality of teaching was good or very good. As a result, students made good progress in their learning. Analysis of examination results for academic and vocational courses shows that this learning is well consolidated over the duration of the courses being studied so that examination results show high value-added. AS- and A-level results in media studies and law, both of which are very popular subjects, are high and indicate that students have achieved well, especially in media studies.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	There is very good guidance and support for students, especially by the director of the sixth form and form tutors. Students are given useful and clear targets and their progress is tracked very carefully. Swift action is taken if any show signs of under-performance. Careers education is good. In most subjects, teachers monitor students' progress well and provide regular and detailed feedback on how they can improve their work. However, in some, marking could be more rigorous and feedback more detailed, especially for lower attainers.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. There is a very clear direction for future development and a very good focus on high standards of achievement. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted. Monitoring and evaluation of the work of the sixth form are regular and thorough.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are happy in the sixth form.• They have good relationships with teachers.• There is a positive atmosphere.• They feel well supported with their studies.• They feel the quality of teaching is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Careers education.• The school does not treat them as young adults.

The inspection evidence agrees with the positive views of students. With respect to advice on careers, discussions with students indicated that they wanted to know more about career opportunities after higher education. This is an area that could be improved. Discussions with students and other inspection evidence indicate that they are treated as young adults and given much responsibility around the school. However, the key aspect of students' discontent seems to be with the code of dress. Many would prefer not to wear jackets to school. However, the school feels this is important preparation for the world of work, and this seems to be a reasonable stance to take.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Attainment on entry to the school is below average based on National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science taken by the students in their primary schools shortly before starting at the school. Results of other nationally available tests taken shortly after starting at the school also indicate that the overall standards of attainment are below average, especially in verbal reasoning tests. Results in quantitative and non-verbal reasoning are better, though still lower than the national average.
2. Through very good teaching and hard work, students make very good progress so that by the end of Year 9, their standards of work are above average. The 2002 results of National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above average overall. They were well above average in English, above average in mathematics and in line with national averages in science, signalling very good achievement. Comparisons with similar schools, where similarity is defined by the proportion of students eligible for a free school meal, were well above average in all three subjects. In relation to their prior attainment, students' results were very high. The new national value-added measure placed the school amongst the top 25 per cent of schools nationally and the top five per cent of similar schools.
3. There has been good improvement overall in English and mathematics results over the last four years. For example, English results have risen from being above average in 1998 to well above in 2002; mathematics results have gone from being in line with national averages to being above average over the same time period. Improvement in science results has not been as good due to difficulties in staffing. Results were broadly in line with the national average in 1998 and remain broadly in line, hence, improvement has been similar to the national trend in improvement. The overall trend of improvement, taking all three subjects together, is above the trend nationally over the last four years. Improvement from 1997 on the whole is very good in all three subjects as the 1997 test results were noticeably below average.
4. High attainers do very well in English and mathematics. In 2002, the proportions of students gaining the higher levels in National Curriculum tests for Year 9 students were well above average in English and above in mathematics. In science, this proportion was in line with the national average. Lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, perform well in the tests.
5. Analysis by gender indicates that boys' results are improving at a faster rate than those of girls, and in both mathematics and science, boys are outperforming girls. In English, though girls' results remain better than those of boys, the gap is narrowing. The school has identified the start of this new trend of boys achieving better than girls and is re-focusing its attention on the girls to raise their standards further.
6. Pakistani and Indian students performed as well as white students in the tests in 2002, and this is a significant achievement for the Pakistani group, which nationally underachieves. The results of black students were good, especially in English and science where their results were better than those of other ethnic groups. The results of Bangladeshi students were not as high as the rest, especially in English and science, though they were similar to the school average in mathematics. However, their results were good when compared to their prior attainment. The numbers of black and Bangladeshi students were very small, hence the statistical differences with other

groups of students need to be treated with great care. In addition, a minority of students of Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani and Somali origin were still at various stages of learning English when they took the tests. Their achievement is very good when this is factored into the equation. Students who have refugee or asylum seeker status also achieved very well. There is a good trend of improvement in the results of minority ethnic students.

7. The school has performed consistently well at GCSE over a number of years but improved even more in 2002 when the overall performance was very good. The proportions of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C or five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G were well above national averages and very high when compared to similar schools. The proportion of students gaining one or more GCSE at grades A* to G was also well above the national average and the averages of similar schools.
8. The trend in GCSE results has been a marked upward one between 1999 and 2002 and better than the trend nationally in that period. The school exceeded its 2002 targets by a significant margin. Girls, however, have been outperforming boys and the gap between them is now bigger than the gap nationally.
9. There is little significant difference in the results of different ethnic groups, though black students did not do as well as others in 2002 in terms of the percentage of five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. However, they did perform better than the national average and significantly better than the average for their ethnic group nationally. In addition, the numbers were small thus rendering reliable statistical comparisons difficult. Various groups of Asian students performed well. Those of Indian origin and those placed in the 'other ethnic background' category had the best results in the school. There has been a good trend in the improvement of results of different ethnic groups, particularly for Pakistani, Bangladeshi, African and Caribbean groups, which are the most likely ones to underachieve at national level.
10. In 2002, GCSE results in the majority of subjects were in line with, or better than, the national averages with respect to percentages of students gaining grades A* to C. Subject results reflect the upward trend. However, ICT results were below average, and a drop from the previous year's results, and this is largely due to significant difficulties in staffing of the department at the present time. Art and design results fell from above average in 2001 to well below average in 2002, and music results were below average. Though results in classical studies have been below average in both 2001 and 2002, the students taking the subject have achieved well against their prior attainment.
11. GCSE results in English and mathematics in terms of the percentage of students gaining A* to C grades were above the national average and well above the average of similar schools. Mathematics results were also above average in 2001 and, in both years, results were very high when compared with similar schools based on prior attainment. The 2002 English results improved much on 2001 results when they were broadly average. Science results were well above average for 2002 and 2001 and very high when compared to similar schools.
12. Drama, English literature, media studies and science are amongst the school's best performing subjects at GCSE. Results in design and technology and modern foreign languages at GCSE have improved significantly over the last few years. They were above average in modern foreign languages and well above average in design and technology in 2002. Results in vocational subjects were largely positive, and were very

good in the GNVQ Part 1 courses in leisure and tourism, and manufacturing. However, in the ICT GNVQ examination, a high proportion of students did not pass. Overall, there is less difference between the performances of different subjects than at the time of the last inspection.

13. Inspection evidence largely reflects the results of national tests and public examinations such as GCSEs. The overall attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average. This signals very good achievement given that the students begin with below average attainment. By Year 11, the overall attainment is well above average as in the vast majority of subjects; students' standards of work are either above or well above age-related expectations. The achievement of students is very good. Given the high numbers who are still learning English (although by Year 11 many are at the later stages of learning English), the school has done very well to not only sustain the high standards reached by the end of Year 9, but to further improve upon these. Students with English as an additional language are further nurtured in Years 10 to 11 to ensure that they continue to develop higher order English language skills in order to meet the greater demands of GCSE syllabuses which require in-depth understanding of the uses of the English language. There is no discernible difference in the achievements or attainment of students from different ethnic groups. For example, members of all ethnic groups are represented in top sets, where subjects are set by ability, as well as in lower sets. Girls and boys make equally good progress and there is little difference between the two. Only in modern foreign languages is this noticeable in Years 10 to 11, though boys' attainment is improving.
14. Standards of work in English and mathematics are above average by Years 9 and 11. In English, students read and write fluently and, by the time they are in Year 11, they have a very good grasp of hidden meaning in text. They interpret a range of texts, fiction and non-fiction, with skill to unpick implied meaning and gain deeper understanding of characters, their motivations and their needs and desires. Able students produce writing of very high quality by the time they are in Year 11. The very good progress made by students in English is supported by the good attention given to the use of literacy across the curriculum. In most subjects, students have good opportunities for extended and varied writing and, in all subjects, key words and subject-specific vocabulary are very well taught. Students' numeracy skills are good, though not always used well or developed further in subjects across the curriculum. By the time they are in Year 11, students have well-developed problem-solving skills and can break down problems to make them easier to solve. Students achieve very well in Years 7 to 9 in mathematics and make at least satisfactory progress in Years 10 to 11, though progress in earlier years is better than in Years 10 to 11. Standards of work in science are above average by Year 9 and well above by Year 11. Students across the school make very good progress so that their achievement against prior attainment is very good. Students' skills in practical and investigative work are appropriate for age by Year 9 and are very good by Year 11. They make very good gains in developing knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas as they move through the school so that, by Year 11, the majority provide confident and clear explanations for various scientific phenomena.
15. Standards of work are average in art and design by Year 9, and above average in citizenship, design and technology, history, Urdu, physical education and religious education. In drama and geography, standards are well above average. Students make good progress in French and Spanish, though their attainment remains slightly below average by Year 9. Continued good progress in French and Spanish means that by the end of Year 11, standards of work are above average in the GCSE course, though they are lower for students taking the Entry Level Certificate. In music, standards are average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. They are average by Year 11 in art and

design also. In ICT, standards are average by Year 9, but below by Year 11. By Year 11, students' work reaches above average standards in citizenship, history, non-GCSE physical education and the GCSE course in religious education, whilst attainment is well above average in design and technology, drama, geography, Urdu and in the GCSE course in physical education. Within design and technology, standards are very high in the GCSE electronics and textiles courses and in the GNVQ course in manufacturing. Only in non-GCSE religious education are standards of work below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus and progress is unsatisfactory. This is because there is very limited provision for teaching religious education to students who do not opt for it as an examination course.

16. Though examination courses in Years 10 to 11 in subjects such as business education, classical studies, leisure and tourism, and media studies were not inspected in depth, lessons sampled in these areas indicate that standards of work are high and students' progress good. These observations reflect the results of public examinations in these subjects.
17. The students who have English as an additional language make very good progress in the school. In 2002, 66.7 per cent of the students who had English as an additional language gained five or more GCSEs in the higher ranges of A* to C and 99.3 gained five or more GCSE grades in the range of grades A* to G. This is in comparison to 67.1 and 98.8 per cent for the students who have English as a first language. Students also make good progress from one language stage to the next. In 2002, 65 per cent of the students moved from Stage 1 to 2, 50 per cent moved from Stage 2 to 3, and 60 per cent moved from Stage 3 to 4. Inspection evidence confirms the progress evident in the statistical analysis provided above.
18. Students with special educational needs make very good progress over time because effective strategies are used in many subject areas to support them. Learning support teachers and support assistants make a valuable contribution in helping students achieve success. Almost all students with special educational needs gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to G. Some students also successfully take Entry Level Certificates in English, mathematics and science.

Sixth form

19. Currently, there is very limited national data for A-level results in 2002. The most recent results where detailed national comparisons are available are for 2001, when the school's A-level results were lower than they have been since the last inspection and the overall value-added score was lower than in previous or subsequent years. A-level results in 2000 and 1999 were close to national averages. The 2002 results are significantly better and broadly in line with the overall national average point score for 2002. The value-added score in the past has been good, with the exception of 2001 where it was satisfactory. Value-added analysis indicates that students' examination performance in 2002 exceeded quite significantly their expected performance based on attainment on entry to the sixth form. The value-added was also high in 2000, though in 2001, students performed significantly less well than expected based on their prior attainment.
20. A-level performance in the majority of subjects was in line with, or better than, the national averages of 2001. The best performing subjects in terms of value-added included: physics; drama; business studies; mathematics; media studies and physical education. In these subjects, students' achievements, compared to their prior attainment, were very good. In most other subjects, students' achievements were good.

Only in English literature and geography was achievement just satisfactory. Results in vocational A-levels and GNVQ examinations were good, and were particularly high in the intermediate GNVQ in business and finance, where over half the students gained a merit, and in the vocational A-level in ICT, where the majority of students gained a grade A or B.

21. AS-level results for 2002 were largely in line with, or better than, national averages. In history and sociology, boys' performance was significantly lower than that of girls. The reverse was the case in chemistry and classics. In English and mathematics, both boys' and girls' results were below the national averages.
22. 2002 results indicate that there is little significant difference between different minority groups. Though Bangladeshi and black students performed less well than other groups in absolute terms, the value-added in their scores was just as good as for other groups. The very small numbers of Bangladeshi and black students also make comparisons with national results somewhat unreliable.
23. The current standards match the national average overall and largely reflect the results of 2002. Where standards are different, it is usually due to further improvements in provision and hence in the standards currently being reached. Given the below average attainment on entry to the sixth form, students make good progress and achieve well. In the subjects inspected in depth, standards are broadly in line with national averages in English, biology, art, sociology and classical studies. They are above average in chemistry, physical education, geography, business education and psychology and well above in mathematics. Standards are very high in drama. Where subjects were sampled, lesson observations indicate that students are working well and achieving well in relation to their prior attainment.
24. Retention rates are good overall. Inevitably, a number of students choose to drop one of their subjects after taking the AS-level examination; however, most continue. Mathematics has a higher drop-out rate than most after AS-level examinations, though this is in line with the high drop-out rate nationally.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

25. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the students are very good and major strengths of the school. The high standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained and, in some respects, have improved still further. Most parents are pleased with the attitudes, values and behaviour which their children develop at the school.
26. The students' attitudes to school and to learning are very good with some excellent features. The vast majority of students are keen to come to school and take pride in their own achievements and in the improvements which have taken place in the school over the past few years. Students in all years, of all abilities and from all ethnic groups respond very well to the school's ethos of working hard, taking lessons seriously and making the most of the extra opportunities provided. They are highly committed to learning. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson for a group including a significant number of students at a relatively early stage of speaking English as an additional language, most students concentrated hard on locating and recording information from the text of 'A Christmas Carol' to help them with their GCSE coursework essay. Many students take part very enthusiastically in the numerous activities available at lunchtime and after school, which are designed to stretch both their academic and personal development. The breakfast club is very popular and well attended by students who are

keen and eager to improve their literacy skills. In the occasional lesson when the teaching is not as good as it might be, the students still settle down reasonably conscientiously to complete the tasks required of them. These very positive attitudes have a major impact on the progress which all students are able to make.

27. The students' behaviour is very good. On occasions, it is excellent, as was seen, for example, in a Year 8 assembly when the students waited very patiently for everyone to gather in the dining hall after lunch and then listened with very great respect to the deputy headteacher talking about the thought for the week. The students are very polite and friendly and move around the cramped site in an orderly and good-humoured fashion. They behave well in the vast majority of lessons. Students with emotional and behavioural difficulties are usually managed very effectively. The number of permanent exclusions was untypically high last year, but there have been no permanent exclusions so far this school year and the rate of fixed-period exclusions is low. No ethnic group is disproportionately represented amongst the students excluded.
28. Racial harmony in the school is excellent, as it was at the last inspection. Students from all backgrounds mix extremely well together and they value highly this strength of the school. The outstanding quality of the relationships between students is exploited very well in lessons with the result that very effective learning takes place when students work in pairs and small groups. Most parents and students are confident that bullying is not an issue at the school and that the few incidents are swiftly and effectively dealt with. The students' personal development is very good. Students in all year groups are mature, articulate and sensible young people who are a credit to the school. They take their responsibilities seriously and respond well to the increasing opportunities provided to contribute to the life of the school. For example, Year 7 and Year 10 students have made presentations to assemblies about activities which promote citizenship. The students are keen to raise money for charities, for example they raised over £2,000 for Children in Need.
29. Attendance is very good. It declined since the last inspection, when it was good, and fell below the national average in 1999. Since then, it has improved dramatically and has been well above the national average for the last two years. Unauthorised absence is below average. Attendance so far this school year is not quite as good because many students were absent for religious holidays in December and February. However, the school's figures still compare favourably with national rates, and all year groups have attendance rates that are above the 90 per cent benchmark. The school's very careful analysis of attendance data by ethnicity and special educational needs has revealed only one area of concern which is that the very small number of Bangladeshi students are not attending as well as other groups. An action programme, in close liaison with the education welfare officer, is having a positive effect on improving the attendance of this group. Punctuality is good. Arrangements at the start of the school day ensure that the vast majority of students have arrived in time for their first lesson and are well prepared for learning.

Sixth form

30. Students' attitudes to school and learning are very good. They are enthusiastic about their work and keen to do well. Most are confident and articulate and are fully involved in the life of the school. Sixth-form students make a positive contribution to the school community and present very good role models to younger ones. Students are very effectively involved in the leadership of the sixth form through the senior team, comprising a head boy and girl, deputies and senior prefects, which is supported by a team of prefects. Prefects carry out a range of duties diligently, such as taking the late

register and organising events. Many students are actively involved in fundraising for charity and participate in a range of sporting, musical and drama activities as well as acting as representatives on the school council. They act as very good ambassadors for the school in community activities and on public occasions. Sixth-form students interact with and support younger students well. For example, they effectively lead the school council, support the work of the year councils and listen to younger students reading during registration sessions. Trained Year 12 student counsellors also support younger students on issues of bullying and racism.

31. Students form excellent relationships amongst themselves, with staff and other adults. The different minority ethnic groups all work and socialise together very well so that there is considerable racial harmony within the sixth form. Students' personal development is good. They develop very mature and responsible attitudes and are thoughtful about issues that touch their own and others' lives. Sixth-form students are supportive of younger students. A good proportion participate in extra-curricular activities, including sporting activities, though there is no formal provision of recreational physical education for them. Though many students develop good independent learning skills in and out of lessons, a significant minority take too passive a stance in lessons, demonstrating little curiosity. Nonetheless, the vast majority show a very positive approach to learning and appreciate the opportunities available to them.
32. Attendance is very good and a major strength of the sixth form. It has improved dramatically over the last few years, especially in Year 13, because high expectations have been set and procedures tightened up. Attendance in the term before the inspection was 95 per cent in both year groups, which is very high. This has a significant impact on the progress which students are able to make in their courses. Punctuality is good.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

33. The overall quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is very good. A high proportion of lessons are good or better and nearly half are very good or excellent. Very few lessons were less than satisfactory and those that were, were not concentrated in any particular subject. There has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
34. Teaching and learning are equally good in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11, though there was slightly more unsatisfactory teaching in the former. A key to the success the school achieves in terms of raising the standards of students' attainment from below average to well above average by the end of Year 11 is the care and attention given to developing students' learning skills and providing them with a good grounding in subject skills and knowledge in Years 7 to 9. In other words, provision of quality teaching lower down in the school is given as much importance as for examination groups higher up the school.
35. The quality of teaching and learning are good in English and mathematics. Literacy skills are very well taught across the curriculum and all teachers are aware of the need to provide good models of speaking and listening, writing and reading. This is especially important given the high number of students with English as an additional language. In all subjects, good attention is paid to providing opportunities for extended writing and to oral work. Subject-specific vocabulary is very well taught across the curriculum. Good use is made of numeracy skills in some subjects such as science and design and technology, where these skills are enhanced and practised to consolidate them further. However, a number of subjects, such as art and design and history, miss opportunities

to add to the development of these skills. In mathematics lessons, the numeracy strategy is being used but not as extensively or actively as it could be. For example, teaching styles are narrower than they should be with a standard pattern of whole-class demonstration followed by students working on set problems rather than a more innovative approach of, for example, students showing one another how to solve problems. Whilst many teachers make good use of ICT, this is not universally the case, and there is room to improve use of computers in teaching and learning, particularly in mathematics, art and design, geography and history.

36. In almost all subjects, the quality of teaching and learning is good overall and in science, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education, the overall quality is very good. Teaching in drama is excellent. Very good teaching was seen in all subjects, with the exception of Urdu, where the majority of teaching was satisfactory. Where teaching is good or very good, brisk pace, a wide variety of teaching methods and challenging work for students are strong features which make a significant contribution to students' learning. In the very few instances of unsatisfactory teaching, there was no distinct pattern in terms of the factors involved. In one mathematics lesson, the teacher tried to achieve too much in the lesson and, as a result, confused rather than clarified key concepts for students. In another lesson, design and technology, the teacher was not a subject specialist and a lack of knowledge about the specific processes being used meant that students' learning was slowed down. In a couple of lessons, management of students was not effective enough and pace of learning became too slow. Where teaching is only satisfactory, students make sufficient gains in their learning but lessons tend to be unexciting and the pace rather pedestrian.
37. Overall, teachers' planning is of very good quality and the vast majority of lessons are prepared with care and with a very good level of awareness of individual students' needs. As a result, students work at a level that is right for them and have access to support from the class teacher or others to help meet their needs. In most lessons, the match of work to students' needs is good and, in the best lessons, there is good availability of different materials, tasks and resources to meet differing needs. Occasionally, in some subjects, there is scope for providing easier work for lower attainers or additional or harder work for able students. This is the case in some lessons in citizenship, history, modern foreign languages, religious education and science. However, in many lessons, able students are very well extended and lower attainers supported to ensure they achieve the best that they can. A wide variety of methods ensure that lessons are stimulating and engaging. Students are actively involved in their own learning and are helped to make very good gains through activities such as group or pair discussions. In the best lessons, teaching techniques are innovative and exciting. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson, students considerably developed the depth of their knowledge and understanding of Shakespeare by planning and enacting scenes from 'Twelfth Night', whereby the main characters each had someone (another student) acting as their inner voice. This inner voice expressed what the character was thinking whilst saying their lines and this enabled students to understand the private feelings and views of characters such as Duke Orsino and Viola.
38. Teachers ensure that they introduce lessons clearly and that students are aware of what they are expected to learn. At the end, there is usually an effective review of what has been learned and what students need to consider next in the topics or areas they are currently studying. Question and answer sessions are used well to develop students' thinking further and to test the level of their understanding. In the best lessons, this is very well managed and at a cracking pace. Good assessment in most subjects further involves students in developing an understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, in some subjects, there are inconsistencies

in the quality of marking and feedback to students. Though some parents were concerned about the homework provided to students, overall, this is regular and of good quality, often building on what students have been doing in lessons or preparation for the next step in learning.

39. Overall, the quality of teaching for students with English as an additional language is very good. Specialist teachers work in co-operation with the class teacher to prepare materials before the lesson takes place. This planning and preparation are thorough and, as a result, the progress of the students is very good. Some of the support in the lessons is in the form of very effective team teaching. Planning includes the preparation of simplified materials as and when necessary. This makes the work more accessible to many of the students. Use is sometimes made of the whiteboard by the specialist teachers to indicate significant words and phrases. A more consistent use of this technique should be of additional benefit to the students. The teachers are always active in the lessons and support other students in addition to the ones who need language help. There is not always consolidation at the end of each lesson of new words and concepts learnt during the lesson in order to enable students' long-term learning to be stronger. Students are kept on task at all times and are well behaved. They concentrate on their work and maintain this concentration very well. Again, learning and progress are strong as a result. Students in the Year 10 learning support option group also make very good progress. Here, students receive not only general language support but also specific support for their future careers in the form of exercises such as filling out application forms for entry to the surrounding colleges. The department often incorporates the use of ICT in its lessons.
40. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good overall and they make very good progress in their learning. Individual education plans give a workable profile and include effective strategies to enable students to reach their targets. Students' progress is particularly good in lessons where subject teachers plan to take account of differing needs and abilities, for example in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and physical education. Students use ICT very effectively and the 'Successmaker' program allows them to develop their skills independently. Teachers in the learning support team have very good knowledge of methods and approaches that work for students. They plan well and use data to assess and monitor progress carefully. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to the progress of students with statements of special educational needs, including those students with medical and specific learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties. They liaise well with teachers and provide very good support that enables students to gain access to the curriculum in all subject lessons.

Sixth form

41. The overall quality of teaching is good in the sixth form. Lessons seen were consistently good or better and none was less than satisfactory. About a third of lessons were very good or excellent and about four-fifths were good or better. Sixth-form students are very clear that they are receiving good quality teaching and they very much appreciate the support they receive from their subject teachers.
42. The quality of teaching and learning is at least good in most subjects and is very good in chemistry, physical education, psychology and classical studies. In drama, the standards of teaching and learning are outstanding with many excellent lessons. Only in art and physics is teaching satisfactory overall, though there are good features in both.

43. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to impart important information and ideas to students. Content of lessons is very well structured to support students' learning and, again, the depth of subject knowledge of teachers ensures that there is logical progression built into consecutive lessons. Learning objectives are shared with students and they are clear about what they need to learn. Students are challenged well and whole-class teaching is effectively used to promote better knowledge and understanding of the subject. However, in many subjects, students take too passive a role in lessons. Sometimes, this is because of the style of delivery, where students are not actively involved by the teacher. At other times, teachers try hard to engage all students and get them to contribute to, for example, whole-class discussions, but some remain reticent. Overall, many students in the sixth form need to develop better skills of independent learning and to be more actively involved in lessons. This is particularly the case in subjects such as mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, art, English and business studies. In some cases, it is the lowest attainers who need the greatest help in developing their skills of independent learning.
44. There is good, ongoing assessment of students' work in most subjects and they receive good advice on how to improve through the marking of their written work. In a few subjects, however, marking is an issue. Either marking lacks sufficient rigour, as in physics, or there is insufficiently detailed written feedback to students.
45. Homework is used effectively to support learning and students are given good pointers by teachers on additional study, including resources such as books and websites, in order to broaden their knowledge base. Very good relationships are another positive feature of teaching and learning and encourage students to seek help from their teachers if they are confused or unclear about any aspect of the subject. Certainly, students feel very comfortable and confident about asking for help and clarification from their subject teachers.

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

46. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good throughout the school. The school offers a wide range of subject and examination options and an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in Years 7 to 9 but does not meet statutory requirements in Years 10 and 11 as there is insufficient time allocated to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 is broad but the time allocated to subjects is not as well balanced as it could be. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, but the time allocation for modern foreign languages and music is low in relation to other subjects. The teaching of drama and personal, social and health education extends the range of learning opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9. In addition, all students in Year 8 study Latin.
47. Students in Years 10 and 11 have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Compulsory provision, that includes English, mathematics, science, personal, social and health education and physical education, is supplemented by courses from option blocks. These choices give students a wide range of subjects that include Urdu, media studies, leisure and tourism, business, manufacturing and drama. Different types of accreditation are also offered in the form of vocational qualifications and GCSE examinations. The time allocated to compulsory physical education lessons in Years 10 and 11 is too little and insufficient to keep students fit and healthy. The time allocated to modern foreign languages is also low. There is a successful extra-curricular GCSE

Latin class. Results are high and the offer of such a course provides added breadth to the school's enrichment provision.

48. A minority of students for whom statutory requirements have been lifted follow a learning support course that includes vocational subjects in ICT and leisure and tourism. Two students attend the local college on a full-time basis because the courses provided and the environment meet their needs more appropriately.
49. At present, the proportion of students in the school who speak English as an additional language is high. It is about 72 per cent of the school population. About 120 students are at the earlier stages of learning English. The overall provision for students with English as an additional language is very good. The support team for these students is comprised of two full-time staff and three part-time staff. These members of staff also support other minority ethnic students in the school who are not on the language register. The demands on the team, therefore, are very significant. Support for the students who need language assistance is by the specialist teachers who are linked to a particular year and subject area. Individual subject departments can bid for time if they feel they have a significant number of students who need help. These strategies work very effectively to ensure that students receive the support they need. In Year 10, the students are offered a learning support option and this very effectively meets needs of earlier stage English language learners. In the autumn term, support is rightly concentrated on the Year 7 students and enables them to make very good progress and acquire further fluency in English to support learning across the curriculum. In addition to support in classes and in the option group, there is also a wide range of other activities outside of lesson time, which also make a significant contribution to the students' progress. These include mentors from the community, homework clubs, literacy classes after school, and reading practice during registration supported by students from the sixth form. The department is also very active in the community in a general sense, with parents particularly.
50. There is very good provision for students with special educational needs to have access to a broad and balanced curriculum in mainstream classes. A few students are withdrawn from a different lesson each week for booster sessions to improve their basic skills. The early morning breakfast club is an excellent facility run by two enthusiastic learning support assistants. Their first-rate knowledge of the literacy catch-up programme has enabled them to capture students' interest in such a way that makes them eager to learn and make progress. Students with a statement of special educational needs get good support and there is a very close working relationship with local education authority agencies. Those students with disabilities benefit from the school's inclusive policy and this enables them to access the curriculum. Students who display challenging behaviour have counselling that includes talking through strategies to help them cope better in the classroom. To prevent older students on the special educational needs register from becoming disaffected, there are vocational courses being developed with the local college. A co-ordinator for the gifted and talented students has been appointed and plans for development are at an early stage.
51. Provision for personal, social and health education, including sex and drugs education, is very good. The programme also includes citizenship, careers and religious education lessons (in Years 10 and 11). One weekly lesson is allocated and taught by form tutors. The responsibility for a specialist area of the programme is allocated to each teacher and they teach each form in the year group for a group of lessons in their specialist area. Teaching is good overall. Objectives are shared with the students at the start of lessons and summarised at the end. This ensures learning is focused. Many outside professionals share their expertise with students during these lessons and teachers

have had some in-service training in their specialist field. The programme is well balanced and very well organised. Students have files to record their work and these are built up appropriately as they progress through the school.

52. There is an excellent, rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities, with a wide range of clubs, practices, support and revision courses before school, at lunchtime and after school, and take up is high. Time given by staff to organise and run the extra-curricular activities is very generous and provides valuable help to all students in a wide variety of activities. The provision for drama and sport is excellent and extensive. Art and design provides well-attended clubs where students are encouraged to work with a variety of media. Music activities include orchestral concerts that are very well supported by parents and friends, and regular student revues. Subject-based enrichment, revision and homework clubs are regular activities. Years 7 to 9 have a series of challenges. These include swimming, writing, ICT and pottery. There are visits and overseas trips, a culture club and a very successful learning support breakfast club. The school enters national competitions, for example Rotary Club and magistrates awards. The school works hard to ensure opportunities are available to all students.
53. The community provides excellent support for students' learning through involvement with local businesses. A local businessman provided the initial funding for the successful Technology College bid. A very successful partnership with a national communications company provides mock-interviews, work experiences and advice. Many local and national companies have been involved in the technology days and the science fair organised by the school. The school has forged very strong links with the local Somali community and ICT courses and family learning events have been very successful.
54. Links with partner establishments, including mainstream schools and special and further education providers, are excellent. Links with primary schools are extremely strong. They have been initially developed through the Beacon status, built on with the technology links and most recently activated by the sports co-ordinator programme. There are summer holiday courses for Year 6 students. Several primary school groups visited the school during the inspection week to take part in a variety of sporting activities. Links with a local special school have also been developed. The school enjoys profitable relationships with several local secondary schools and adult and further education providers. All these partnerships help students to reach appropriate levels in their learning before attending Valentines and when they move on to further study.
55. The school's provision for work-related education, including careers education and guidance, is good. It has been considerably enhanced by some very good initiatives arising out of the school's status as a Beacon and Specialist Technology College. These include events for students from Years 6 to 9 which involve, for example, representatives of small and large firms organising challenges that require the practical application of science, design and technology, mathematics and ICT. The process of choosing what to study after Year 9 is well organised, with all students having an interview with a senior member of staff. The options available now include a growing range of vocational courses. Students in Year 11 have a valuable opportunity to undertake a two-week work experience placement and to complete a diary which demonstrates the key skills they have developed. Helpful and impartial advice is available from the experienced Connexions adviser who is in school for one day a week and runs group sessions as well as a drop-in service. A very good feature is the school's provision of careers advice to students who speak English as an additional language. Careers lessons are taught in Years 9 to 11 by designated form tutors within

the personal, social and health education programme. The one careers lesson observed during the inspection was satisfactory, with Year 9 students making sound progress in preparing for situations in adult working life where negotiation and assertiveness may be required. There is a good development plan for careers education and guidance which appropriately identifies the need for staff training.

56. Provision for students' personal development is very good. The school has a high quality policy document for the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. In accordance with this document, an audit of provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the curriculum has been carried out. The results of this audit are not consistently reflected in lesson delivery. However, there are some outstanding examples provided within subjects to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural values. Year 7 drama students have excellent opportunities to compare material and spiritual values and to reach an awareness of the greater importance of the latter. In a drama lesson observed during the inspection, the excellent teaching brought about impressive gains in students' understanding on this count. Music students have good opportunities to learn about music from other cultures through their study of Gamelan in Year 7, Indian music in Year 8 and African music in Year 9. Students in English are able to understand the experiences of refugees through their work on this issue.
57. Each year group has one assembly per week and there are 20-minute form periods at the start of the afternoon. Year assemblies form the basis of collective worship. The content of assemblies is directed by a series of 'thoughts for the week' which provide a clear framework for reflection for teachers. Students are made aware of these 'thoughts' as they are on prominent display throughout the school. Many of these 'thoughts' centre round abstract moral principles but teachers relate them successfully to experiences closer to the lives of the students. Teachers are free to alter the content as they see fit and circumstances dictate. Speakers representing the diverse ethnic community deliver assemblies during religious festivals. During assemblies, students listen carefully and applaud the speaker at the end. The assembly programme indicates that there are regular and very appropriate opportunities for groups of students to lead assemblies. The 'thoughts for the week' sometimes make reference to biblical sources and provide moments for contemplative reflection. Sometimes, a short prayer is read. Students' success in a variety of school activities is celebrated on these occasions. Form time is used for administrative and pastoral matters. In the afternoon, there is a 'thought for the day' led by the teacher and designated student speakers. The quality of the latter varies, depending on teacher and student planning and preparation. The school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. In the wider sense, provision for spiritual development is very good. Respect for feelings, values and beliefs is highly ingrained and this promotes a strong sense of self-worth. As one student said, 'All races and students of all levels of ability feel equally valued here'.
58. The provision for moral development is very good. In this area, the year assemblies make a strong contribution. The strenuous effort the school makes to promote an inclusive ethos creates an environment where students' personal development flourishes. Students are very willing to listen to others, are sensitive to each other's needs and are highly courteous in their dealings with adults and other visitors. The school is a very orderly community as students are given a very clear understanding of the differences between right and wrong which goes far beyond paying mere lip service to the Valentines' code of conduct. Students show good self-discipline, and behaviour is underpinned by the strong relationships they have with teachers and the very effective pastoral system. This creates a unity of purpose which promotes success in all areas of school life.

59. Social development is excellent. Full use is made in lessons to group students flexibly to promote both academic and social development. In Years 7 to 9, boys and girls and higher and lower attaining students are seated next to each other. Seating methods in the early years also enable students to make new friends. As a result, there are very good classroom relationships. Students quickly settle to work with each other in collaborative activities. The school provides numerous opportunities to develop social skills within the curriculum. Recently, the curriculum was suspended for Years 7 and 8 students for one day for each year group to enable them to work together on a mobile phone packaging project. At the end of the project, students were required to evaluate their teamwork skills. It is intended to repeat this successful experiment. The school actively reaches out to the local community to enrich the experiences of students. Imams come in to support and mentor students individually. Students are encouraged to become involved in decision making through year group and whole-school councils. The latter is run by sixth-formers and is now becoming more effective in enabling students to have a say in the running of their school.
60. The provision for cultural development is very good. Cross-curricular co-operation ensures students are aware of their cultural heritage, for example in the recent 'black history month'. Black scientists featured strongly in a science fair. The school is proactive in its approach and quick to take appropriate action. For example, Imams were invited into school to run an assembly about Ramadan and help deal with difficult issues as a result of the September 11th bombings in New York. Students have high regard for the support which is provided in instances of this type. The school works hard to engage more vulnerable or hard-to-reach groups and provides many opportunities where ethnic cultures can be celebrated. A Somali culture club caters for the interests of the growing numbers of Somali students, while a Punjabi group develops cultural awareness as well as providing an opportunity for students to study the subject to GCSE. There are several other after-school activities, including African drumming, which celebrate the ethnic diversity of the students.

Sixth form

61. The curriculum provides well for the needs of students and effectively complements other local provision. It is tailored to the school's aims and students are advised well about the courses on offer at the school and other local provision so that they can make informed choices. A wide range of courses is available to meet the needs and aspirations of potential students. In addition to the traditional AS- and A-level courses, other AS- and A-level subjects available include sociology, psychology, media studies, classics, law and drama. The choice is wider than at the time of the last inspection in 1997. Since then, vocational courses at intermediate and advanced level in business and finance, art and design, ICT and travel and tourism have been introduced. In addition, an intermediate GNVQ course in science is also available.
62. The school does not provide key skills courses in communication, numeracy and ICT because these areas are expected to be covered by all subjects. Use of literacy, numeracy and ICT are well integrated into vocational courses but less well embedded in A-level courses, especially with respect to the use of ICT. In a significant number of subjects, there is insufficient use of ICT. Nonetheless, students feel that they have very good access to ICT resources to complete assignments and research work.
63. A good programme of enrichment studies and the personal, social and health education programme enhance the sixth-form curriculum. The programme is comprehensive and well organised. Speakers are invited to make contributions on a wide range of issues.

Such events provide students with the opportunity to listen to, and discuss, issues which raise their awareness and contribute very effectively towards their personal development and understanding of citizenship. Students speak well of this aspect of the enrichment programme. Good quality careers education is also provided through the programme for personal and social education. There are regular visits and trips which enhance students' learning and enrich their curricular experiences. However, in some subjects, such as business education, links with the world of business and industry are not as well developed as they could be.

64. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are satisfactorily covered through units of work delivered through the personal, social and health education programme. This is supplemented by an annual conference focused on religious education topics. The personal, social and health education programme also includes sex education and relationships education and this is very sensitively delivered. The school has good links with local colleges and universities, in particular there are close links with Queen Mary College.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

65. The school's provision of care for its students has improved since the last inspection and is now very good. It is rooted in a very effective pastoral system of form tutors, heads of year and senior staff who know individual students very well and who work closely together. This is underpinned by a very good range of detailed policies, procedures and records which are consistently maintained and monitored. Parents are very pleased with the care and support provided for their children at the school.
66. The arrangements for ensuring students' welfare, protection, health and safety are very good. Procedures are closely based on guidance from the local education authority. Risk assessments are carried out twice a year and accidents are monitored weekly, with the result that any defects or issues are swiftly followed up and remedied. Strong action has been taken to improve the security of the school. The health and safety co-ordinator has very good expertise and there are a good number of trained first aiders. The designated teacher for child protection is experienced and knowledgeable about local procedures and ensures that all staff are reminded annually of their responsibilities. Documentation provides clear guidance on child protection issues and all staff know who the designated teacher is. The students are taught very effectively about the importance of healthy and safe living through the personal, social and health education programme.
67. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are excellent. The school's measures to raise attendance have been so successful that they have received national praise and attention. They are based on a concerted drive which makes high expectations of regular attendance and punctuality very clear to parents and students. Rewards and sanctions are used very effectively. Form tutors, office staff and heads of year all have well-defined roles in recording and monitoring attendance and following up absences, including, for example, by contacting parents on the first day of absence. The school makes very good use of its resources by buying extra time from the education welfare service and working extremely effectively with the designated officer to tackle, for example, the below average attendance of the small group of Bangladeshi students. The officer is aware that more needs to be done to reduce the number of days which some students take off school for religious holidays. The school also employs a part-time home/school liaison worker who talks to the families of the Somali refugee students about, amongst other matters, the importance of attending school regularly.

68. Procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour are very good. As with attendance, they are founded on clearly-defined expectations, policies and procedures which are backed up by well-staged and fairly-applied rewards and sanctions. The rare incidents of racism and bullying are dealt with very effectively, a notable feature being the use of trained Year 12 students to link with Years 7 and 8 form groups. Very good use is made of the local behaviour support service and of strategies, such as pastoral support plans and alternative options in Years 10 to 11, to help those students whose behaviour can be difficult.
69. All teachers receive information about the students who are at the early stages of learning English. This enables them to be aware of their needs so they can plan the lessons accordingly. The information also indicates if a particular class has need of support due to a particularly high proportion of students who are at an early stage of learning English. The progress of the lower stage students is reviewed on a termly basis. All support for students is within the classroom context and they are only withdrawn from lessons if their progress is giving cause for concern. The parents of the students who are at an early stage receive reports on the progress of their children in addition to the standard subject reports.
70. Teachers and teaching assistants know individual students with special educational needs very well and are fully aware of their physical, emotional and academic needs. Before Year 6 students arrive at the school, the special educational needs co-ordinator and the learning support assistants visit feeder schools to collect information and get to know those students who have a statement of special educational needs. There are good systems in place for monitoring progress and effective methods to support new students in the lessons. Good records are kept and students' individual education plans are reviewed regularly with new targets set with planned procedures for improvement. Those students with a statement have an annual review to see how their needs have changed over time and what new strategies need to be put in place to support them. Students with disabilities are catered for and there is close liaison with the local agencies. The audit for access to buildings as required by new government regulations has been completed.
71. Procedures for assessing students' academic progress are mainly good, as they were at the last inspection. Departments continue to develop their own systems within the broad framework of the school's overall policy. This does result in some inconsistent practice. In the best examples, such as in English, science, ICT and physical education, students are given very good feedback on their work and know what they have to do to improve. In most other subjects, assessment is satisfactory with a weakness in Years 7 to 9 where the levels at which students are achieving are not shared with them until a late stage in Year 9. Assessment is unsatisfactory in music and religious education and has a negative impact on standards and provision in those subjects. A strength in assessment in most departments is the very good use made of data, which is collected centrally, to identify any underachievement of groups and individuals, to set targets and to adjust planning. For example, an action plan has been devised to tackle the underachievement of boys in modern foreign languages at GCSE.
72. The educational and personal support and guidance provided for students are very effective in raising standards. This begins before the students join the school through the excellent liaison with primary schools and transition events such as the summer school. Year 7 students are well inducted and supported when they begin at the school. Those who have not yet achieved the national standard in literacy are given highly successful provision before school, in the breakfast club, to help them catch up. A key feature in the school's arrangements for supporting students is the mentoring system

which is available to all students in all year groups and enables them to discuss with their tutors twice a year how they can achieve the academic and personal targets of which they are capable. Year 11 students also have a mentoring session with a senior member of staff. Those students who, from the thorough analysis of assessment data which the school makes easily available, are not achieving as well as they should, are given additional support involving their parents and senior staff. The school provides a very wide range of booster, revision and homework clubs before and after school, at lunchtimes and during holidays, which are much appreciated by the students. Years 7 and 8 students are encouraged to widen their academic and personal experiences by taking part in 'challenges' which can involve, for example, taking part in multicultural activities or creating a leaflet about the school for Year 6 readers. A growing range of provision is being devised to meet the needs of gifted and talented students. The school makes very good use of local community resources, external agencies and national strategies to enhance its support for students. For example, it has invited local Imams to mentor particular ethnic groups. It has worked on a national project to raise the achievement of black boys and adapted it to meet the needs of a wider range of students. A Somali learning support assistant provides very good liaison between the school and community with respect to supporting the progress of Somali students. Students have access to a counsellor and the Connexions adviser for confidential advice. Achievement is very effectively celebrated and rewarded at special assemblies and high-profile presentation evenings which are held in the local town hall.

Sixth form

Assessment

73. The school's assessment of students' academic progress is very good and contributes to their good achievement. Results of examinations are carefully analysed and evaluated and the information used to improve curricular provision and support and guidance for students.
74. Students' prior attainment is well analysed to help set useful and challenging targets for them and these are very effectively monitored by tutors and subject teachers. Teachers have information on the ability of the groups they teach and they use it well to plan lessons and match work to students' needs. The levels to which students are working are reviewed termly and are shared with students and reported to parents. The system is used well to set targets in subjects and by the school overall. Most teachers and tutors use this information effectively to guide students in their progress and to quickly spot students who have problems with their work. Greater attention is needed, however, in some subjects to the provision of feedback to students. For example, in business studies, though work is mostly well marked, written comments to students could be more extensive so that they have a clearer idea of what they need to do to improve their work. Lower attainers in mathematics and in sociology could also do with more feedback and support in order to help them improve their grades.

Advice, support and guidance

75. There is very good support and guidance provided to students by the director and deputy of the sixth form and sixth-form tutors. Students themselves feel that they are very well looked after and that there is always someone they can go to when they have concerns about their work.
76. Induction procedures when students join the sixth form are very good and ensure, particularly, that students who have come from other schools are well integrated into the sixth form at Valentines. Year 11 students and their parents are able to attend an annual evening meeting and a sixth-form conference to find out about the opportunities available post-16. They are able to talk to teachers and older students about courses and their own suitability for individual subjects. Full and useful documentation is provided about courses. Year 11 students planning to return to the sixth form the following academic year are usefully given tasks to undertake during the summer holidays. These enable them to prepare well for their sixth-form studies.
77. Up-to-date careers information is available, though some students feel that they do not receive enough information about post-university careers, and inspection evidence indicates that this is an area where the school could improve its provision. A considerable number of students spoken to by inspectors were appreciative of the quality of information and guidance provided for university applications. Students receive very good help when completing applications for a university place and are guided very well on how to prepare for interviews. The school has very good links with local institutions offering higher education.
78. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance in the sixth form are excellent. Expectations are very high and stated explicitly for students and parents at the start of Year 12. Students are required to provide explanations for any absences, as in the main school, and attendance is monitored frequently so that any causes for concern are identified and tackled quickly. Students appreciate the school's tough stance on attendance. The arrangement of allowing students to have study leave in the afternoon if they have no timetabled lesson works very well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

79. The school's links with parents have improved since the last inspection and are now very good. Most parents express very positive views about the school. Parents at the meeting with the registered inspector were very satisfied with all the main areas discussed. There was a much larger response to the parents' questionnaire than at the last inspection. The responses showed good levels of support for most areas of school life, with parents being particularly pleased with the school's high expectations for their children. Some parents made specific comments about particular concerns arising from their own experiences with the school. The inspection team was not able to investigate individual cases but found that, overall, the school works very hard to keep all groups of parents informed and to involve them in their children's learning.
80. The school has a very good partnership with parents and is prepared to go out of its way to establish working relationships where they will benefit students' development. Significant numbers of parents come to parents' evenings held throughout the year to discuss matters such as their children's underachievement, the process of choosing options to study in Years 10 and 11 and an update on drugs issues led by local education authority staff and a representative of the local police force. The school goes out of its way to ensure that parents from all ethnic groups are made to feel welcome

and are able to find out about the requirements of the English educational system. The education welfare officer has used some of her extra hours bought by the school to run a monthly coffee session for Bangladeshi mothers whose children were not attending as frequently as other groups. A part-time home/school liaison worker links very effectively with parents from the Somali refugee community. Social events and evening classes are successfully held to break down the barriers between home and school. The school carries out periodic consultations with parents to seek their views of the school, for example when the length of the week was raised to 25 hours and the school uniform introduced. It has also sought the views of Punjabi-speaking parents about the teaching of community languages in the school.

81. Much of the information provided about the school is very good and extremely well presented. This includes learning guides which explain what will be studied in Years 7 to 9 and how parents can help. Termly newsletters are available which celebrate students' achievements and school events. The prospectus and governors' annual report provide very detailed and clearly-expressed information about what the school offers and has achieved, and both fully meet statutory requirements. The sixth-form prospectus is also written and produced to a very high standard. Parents receive good information about their children's progress three times a year. This includes a useful review sheet and a full annual report which gives clear information on National Curriculum levels and predicted examination grades. Reports explain very well what the student needs to do to achieve his or her potential in every subject except music. The school uses interpreters at parents' meetings and makes information available in community languages. Heads of year maintain good contact with parents, which has improved recently through use of voice-mail and e-mail. Parents of sixth-formers are also given regular feedback and contacted if there are any issues.
82. Parents have a positive impact on the work of the school and make a strong contribution to their children's learning. They support the school very well over matters such as the students' appearance, behaviour and attendance and by signing the homework diaries. There is a small but active parent-teacher association and a full complement of parent governors on the governing body. Two Somali parents contribute to a newsletter for the main refugee community served by the school and play a very active role in school life, for example by talking to Year 7 students about Somali culture. Overall, the school's very good partnership with parents has an important effect on the progress made by all groups of students.

Sixth form

83. Parents of students in the sixth form who responded to the questionnaire or attended the meeting with inspectors are very happy with the sixth-form provision. Students' own views of the sixth form are also very positive, and were much more so in discussion with them during the inspection than in their responses to the questionnaire. Students are very appreciative of the very good support they receive from their teachers who they feel are very approachable and always willing to help. Students rate the quality of teaching highly and feel that it meets their needs well. In response to the questionnaire, a minority of students were not happy with the provision for careers education or felt they were not being treated as adults. Inspection evidence, including discussions with groups of sixth-form students, indicates that careers education is good, though more could be done to inform students about career options and choices after higher education. In discussions with inspectors, students generally agreed that they were treated much more as 'grown-ups' in the sixth form than when lower down in the school and that relationships with teachers were very good. A dislike of wearing a jacket, which forms part of the sixth-form dress-code, seems to have prompted many to feel that they

are not listened to or treated fully as adults because their views on this have not led to a change in the code of dress. Overall, though, inspection evidence indicates that there is a good degree of consultation with sixth-form students on matters which are of interest to them or directly concern their academic and personal development. Good account is taken of their views to inform planning and decision making.

84. On the whole, students are very happy in the sixth form and those who join the school for the first time at the start of Year 12 settle in very quickly due to the very positive atmosphere and the helpfulness of fellow students and staff.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

85. The overall leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. There is a very sharp and unyielding focus on students and their needs. Everything the school does is based on the need to promote and support students to do their best. The headteacher not only provides a very clear and coherent vision for the future development of the school, but also sets out a very focused and clear strategy to achieve the goals set. Staff and governors have a very good understanding of common aims and each person's role in achieving these. The school improvement plan captures the school's key priorities for development well and identifies how these will be achieved. The excellent leadership by the headteacher has contributed to the strong sense of purpose amongst staff, governors and students and established very good teamwork. This is a school where members of the school community are working in harmony with one another and with a very clear idea of what they need to do to achieve identified goals. The leadership team provides very good support to the headteacher, and members of the team are not only clear about their responsibilities and roles, but demonstrate a high degree of professionalism in acquitting them. As a result, students flourish here and achieve very well academically. There is a vibrant and energetic approach to taking on new initiatives so that they become quickly embedded in the work of the school. The Technology and Beacon College status of the school have been used most effectively to drive improvement and raise attainment.
86. There is very good delegation of responsibilities to staff across the school and delegation is very well managed through rigorous and well-structured systems of line-management. Responsibilities are clearly defined and accountability effectively built into management processes. Overall, the headteacher and senior staff ensure that those with managerial responsibilities are well supported and their leadership and management skills continuously enhanced. Hence, the overall contribution of staff with management responsibilities to the leadership and management of the school is good, and often very good. The leadership team successfully supports new initiatives and developments, and members of the team provide informed and effective support to those they line-manage. Almost all heads of department provide at least good leadership and management of their subjects and successfully promote high standards of work. Many provide very good or excellent leadership and management of their subject teams. Year heads have clearly defined roles which they carry out very effectively. They, in turn, are very well directed and supported by the deputy headteacher responsible for pastoral matters. This results in a very positive school ethos where students know what is expected of them, academically and in terms of their behaviour and attitudes.
87. The school's management of its performance is very good. Senior staff are involved very effectively in ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school. There are regular lesson observations which lead to useful points for action to support continued

improvement and development. Most heads of department are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of their departments. Examination performance is very carefully analysed and appropriate action taken as and when required. Overall, there is a coherent and carefully-structured approach to self-evaluation and monitoring the work of the school so that weaknesses are quickly identified and the appropriate action taken.

88. Overall, the arrangements for professional development are very good and very well managed. There are strong links between professional development, school improvement planning and teacher appraisal and this ensures that there is a very well co-ordinated approach to managing, and continuously improving, the performance of staff and students. New teachers, both those who are new to the school and those who are newly qualified, are given very good support so that they settle into the job quickly and are effective in the classroom. The programme for professional development for all staff is very well focused on key areas of need, such as a programme of management development for middle managers or meeting the needs of students with English as an additional language. Teachers share the expertise gained on courses they attend so that they have very good impact on learning. The school makes very good arrangements for teachers to share expertise by observing each other. Teachers are encouraged to participate in local and national initiatives, though the Technology or Beacon College status, and these allow them to develop their skills and knowledge further as well as enabling them to share their expertise with staff in other schools.
89. Governors fulfil their roles and responsibilities very well. They are very actively involved in the work of the school and are fully involved in the development of the school improvement plan. There is a good committee structure and the committees are active in monitoring and supporting the work of the school. They are focusing on the right areas of work. Governors have a very good awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, there is a very well-organised structure where governors are linked to different departments or areas of the school's work. This provides a good opportunity for them to ask searching questions and to become more familiar with the school. The governing body has given the school very good support in seeking to improve the provision for accommodation by, for example, supporting bids to the local education authority.
90. There is very good leadership and management of the learning support department. Very good systems ensure that all teachers play a part in the identification, assessment and provision for students with special educational needs. This means planning an inclusive curriculum and acting as a primary source of support as set out in the Code of Practice. The work of the learning support staff is characterised by teamwork, sharing of good practice and effective monitoring and evaluation. All school policies are in place and the improvement plan has targets that can be achieved. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly with the school's inclusive policy of mainstream education for all. The accommodation is barely adequate. Resources to support learning are good.
91. The department for students with English as an additional language is very well led and there is a wide range of documentation including development plans. The staffing is good, though the large numbers of students with language needs means that these resources are very stretched. The accommodation is satisfactory and resources are good.
92. The governing body provides careful oversight of the school's finances. The school's systems for financial management are very good, with scrupulous monitoring by senior

management and governors. Planned expenditure is closely linked to the objectives identified in the school development plan. The budget for resources is delegated to departments by formula funding but there are good arrangements to deal with innovation. These are very well linked to the school development plan and other special circumstances. As a result, departments have good quality resources with good access to new technology. The school's use of assigned resources is good, with identifiable income supplemented to provide good support for special educational needs. Principles of best value are scrupulously applied.

93. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Almost all teachers are suitably qualified in their main teaching areas, or have substantial experience in the subject. Staffing problems in the recent past have had an impact on the continuity of learning, but the school is fully staffed at present as a result of the headteacher's and governors' very effective action in recruitment and retention. The school has a very good team of support teachers to help students who speak English as an additional language. All teachers in the school have received in-service training on how to support students with English language needs. Newly qualified teachers, as well as heads of department and heads of year, have extra training in this area. Technical and administrative staff are suitably qualified.
94. The school is well resourced, in particular there is very good provision of computers, though there are, as yet, no electronic whiteboards. Books and equipment are in reasonably good supply across departments. However, the library is too small for the size of the school. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. Though much has been done by the school over recent years to keep it well maintained and improve the availability, there is insufficient accommodation for the numbers of students. The quality of the accommodation is generally good. Many departments are spread out across the school site and are not grouped together. There are insufficient laboratories and the demountables, used mainly for English, are unsatisfactory. Drama lessons have to be taught in the hall and this is unsatisfactory. Many rooms are small for group sizes and, though it is difficult to do group work or engage students in active learning, many staff, amazingly, are not deterred by this. It is the flexibility and determination of staff which ensure that the availability of accommodation does not have a major adverse impact on standards of teaching and students' work. However, this is at the cost of considerable upheaval to, and inefficiency in the use of, staff. Displays around the school are of good quality with some that are excellent, for example those within the physics area.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

95. The overall quality of leadership is very good. There is a very clear direction for future development and a very good focus on high standards of achievement. There is good monitoring and evaluation of the work of the sixth form and this contributes to the good standards achieved. Management of the sixth form is generally very good. The academic and pastoral care of students is effectively delegated to an experienced director of the sixth form who actively works with the sixth-form tutors. They work well as a team and ensure that students are working well towards the targets set. Tutors and subject staff monitor effort and achievement very well. The leadership and management provided by heads of departments for sixth-form subjects are generally

good or better. Governors have a clear oversight of the work of the sixth form and are involved well in providing a strategic overview of its future direction for development.

96. There are very good systems and procedures in place to manage the sixth form, and these are geared well towards the needs of older students. For example, there are good systems for alerting the director of the sixth form where students are falling behind with work or their attendance to lessons is declining. There is good co-ordination of areas of work such as careers education, the programme of personal and social education and assemblies so that they cater well for the needs of older students.
97. The sixth form provides good value for money and is cost-effective. Very good attention is given to the principles of best value, such as consultation and challenge. Students are surveyed regularly about their views on various aspects of the school's work. For example, they were recently surveyed on their views about the teaching and learning they receive. Results of such surveys are used very well to inform and adjust practice. Sixth-form courses and lessons provide good challenge to students, as do the targets set for sixth-formers. As a result, they themselves have high expectations of performance.

Resources

98. The sixth-form accommodation is unsatisfactory, due mainly to its amount and availability rather than quality. Though there is a sixth-form block, it is small for the numbers of students in the sixth form and many of the tutor rooms in the block are small for the sizes of teaching groups and tutor groups. For example, in a personal, social and health education lesson, where students were in their tutor group, pair and group work was difficult to manage as there was very little room for the tutor to move round groups. There is no sixth-form learning resources centre and the main school library has limited space to cater for the needs of these older students.
99. The availability of resources is largely good. Most subjects have sufficient books and equipment to deliver the subject and, in many cases, the departmental resources are good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

100. In order to improve the current provision and further improve on the very good standards of achievement, the headteacher, senior management team and governors should:
- (1) Ensure that statutory requirements for religious education for students in Years 10 to 11 are fully met by:
 - (a) providing sufficient teaching time for the delivery of the programmes of study identified in the locally agreed syllabus being followed;
 - (b) making sure there are sufficient qualified teachers to deliver this programme.

(Paragraph numbers: 15, 46, 197, 199. 203)
 - (2) Improve the availability of accommodation by:
 - (a) continuing to seek to secure support from the local education authority to extend existing accommodation;
 - (b) continuing to seek external funds where these might be available;

- (c) working towards grouping departments together;
- (d) replacing the demountable accommodation for English;
- (e) increasing the numbers of laboratories for science and specialist rooms for drama and design and technology;
- (e) improving the outdoor facilities for physical education;
- (f) improving library facilities.

(Paragraph numbers: 90, 94, 108, 125, 149, 152, 195)

(3) Improve the procedures for assessment and marking by:

- (a) making sure that all subjects use National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 to assess students' progress and inform them on a regular basis of how well they are doing against the National Curriculum criteria;
- (b) making sure that the levels accorded to students in music are accurate;
- (c) improving the quality of marking and feedback to students in subjects where this is not rigorous enough.

(Paragraph numbers: 38, 71, 81, 116, 131, 139, 148, 163, 175, 188, 202)

Minor Issues

(1) Improve the use of ICT particularly in mathematics, art and design, geography and history.

(Paragraph numbers: 35, 108, 117, 132, 155, 163, 180)

(2) Improve the teaching time in modern foreign languages, music and non-GCSE physical education.

(Paragraph numbers: 46, 172, 173, 183, 195)

Sixth form

(1) Improve the amount of available accommodation by:
(see also Key Issue 2 above)

- (a) improving the availability of specialist accommodation for drama and textiles;
- (b) developing a learning resource facility for the sixth form;
- (c) improving the availability of rooms that are big enough for large group sizes.

(Paragraph numbers: 98, 233, 245, 249, 259)

(2) Develop students' skills of independent learning and reduce the level of passivity in lessons by:

- (a) developing the use of a wider range of teaching and learning methods, particularly methods which promote active involvement of students;
- (b) encouraging students to ask questions and show curiosity;
- (c) improving the use of ICT in teaching and learning.

(Paragraph numbers: 31, 43, 62, 205, 212, 213, 220, 226, 236, 244, 255, 259, 265, 268, 269, 273)

Minor Issues

(1) Improve the quality of marking and feedback to students.

(Paragraph numbers: 44, 74, 207, 225, 243)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	160
	Sixth form	67
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		67

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	16	58	59	22	5	0	0
Percentage	10	36	37	14	3	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	5	18	32	12	0	0	0
Percentage	7	27	48	18	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	947	282
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	211	17

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	22	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	176	0

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	888

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	32

Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving
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26

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	114	70	184

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	85	80	73
	Girls	60	51	49
	Total	145	131	122
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (77)	72 (74)	66 (63)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	43 (42)	52 (50)	33 (32)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	81	83	71
	Girls	60	51	43
	Total	141	134	114
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (68)	73 (76)	62 (65)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	28 (30)	47 (42)	30 (30)
	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 students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	74	100	174

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	42	73	73
	Girls	75	99	100
	Total	117	172	173
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	67 (56)	99 (96)	99 (98)
	National	50 (58)	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 student	School	46.6
	National	39.8

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

Vocational qualifications	Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	28
	National	73.2

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	43	52	95
	Average point score per candidate	8.4	10.7	9.6
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	18.0	17.5

		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	38	46	84	7	6	13
	Average point score per candidate	7.8	11.7	9.9	9.4	3.0	6.5
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	9.8	11.4	10.6

Figures for 2002 were not available at the time of publication of the report.

Ethnic background of students

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
220	8	1
4	0	0
55	0	0
23	0	0
6	1	0
19	0	0
25	0	0
372	8	2
261	6	2
43	3	0
66	0	0
44	0	0
58	1	0
19	0	0
7	0	0
7	0	0
1	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	77.53
Number of students per qualified teacher	15.89

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	539

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

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

Key Stage 3	23.5
Key Stage 4	19.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	4,469,449
Total expenditure	4,225,556
Expenditure per student	3,458
Balance brought forward from previous year	270,266
Balance carried forward to next year	243,893

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	34
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	35

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	1229
Number of questionnaires returned	363

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	48	7	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	39	55	5	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	48	7	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	48	15	2	2
The teaching is good.	30	58	7	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	48	12	4	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	44	41	8	2	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	35	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	26	51	15	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	37	50	6	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	51	8	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	44	11	2	12

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment were well above average in national tests by the end of Year 9 in 2002 and in GCSE examinations.
- Management and leadership are very good and provide a clear framework for the development of the department.
- Teaching is consistently good, and at times very good, resulting in students making tangible gains in their learning.

Areas for improvement

- The quality of accommodation is poor.

101. In the national tests for 14-year-olds in 2002, the proportion of students gaining the expected level, Level 5, or above was well above the national average and above average for similar schools. The proportion reaching the higher levels was above the national average. Overall, the performance was very good as it was well above national and similar schools' averages. The school's results have improved from average in 1998 to well above in 2002. Students make very good progress through Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11. By the end of Year 11 in 2002, the proportions of students gaining grades A* to C was above average in English language and English literature. The proportion of students gaining an A* for both subjects was above the national average. Results for girls and boys in both subjects were above national averages.

102. Overall, standards of work are above average and reflect the results of national tests and examinations by Years 9 and 11. There is no discernible difference between the attainment of boys or girls or between different ethnic groups. All make very good progress and achieve very well. By Year 9, standards in speaking and listening are good overall. Most students listen well and participate confidently in oral work. Students demonstrated good discursive skills in a Year 9 lesson on 'Macbeth', and this promoted a good discussion of the characters and the theme of the play. By Year 11, standards of speaking and listening continue to be good and very good for higher attaining students. This was apparent in a Year 10 lesson on the role of men and women in the poem, 'Valentine', where students were able to articulate their views well and respond thoughtfully to the views of others. Higher attainers in this lesson developed their arguments and challenged views about the respective roles of men and women well during high quality interactions with one another when working in groups.

103. Standards observed in the classrooms and in students' work indicate that writing skills develop well between Years 7 and 9 so that they exceed national expectations by Year 9. Students in Years 7 to 9 write expressively, adapting their style to one that is appropriate to the audience or purpose they are writing for, such as letter writing, reporting or recording. They are fluent at writing stories and in personal writing, expressing feelings or emotions. Standards are also good in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Lower attaining students benefit from either support and/or use of literacy strategies to help them structure their writing effectively. All students redraft their work frequently and have exercise books for this purpose. Students continue to develop their writing skills well through Years 10 to 11 so that by the time they are well into Year 11,

high standards of written work have been maintained. Able students produce very good written work which shows considerable confidence, fluency, use of imagination and varied vocabulary. This is illustrated in the following example of a Year 10 student's high quality creative writing: 'I leaned against the door post sweating heavily. A feeling of nausea swept over me as I heard the boss's words resounding in my head'.

104. Some lower attaining students produce imaginative work of sound quality and effectively adapt their writing so that it is appropriate for the task.
105. Standards in reading are above national standards by the end of Years 9 and 11. By Year 9, most students read fluently and refer to textual evidence to justify their comprehension and interpretations of various texts. Most students are excited and enthusiastic about reading Shakespeare and many demonstrate a perceptive understanding of the text. By Year 11, students read well and widely in a variety of formats.
106. Progress over time is very good for all students, including the higher attainers, students with special educational needs and English as an additional language, throughout the school. They make significant progress in the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. This is partly because teachers have good structure to the lessons with clear learning objectives. The tasks are appropriate for the students' levels of ability and are well focused and usually challenging. There is a good mix of fiction and non-fiction texts. Students with special educational needs are supported effectively in their classes. The planning of work assists students to attain the learning objectives. The tasks for the lesson are explained and ideas discussed with the class, followed by a series of activities, some individual, some in small groups and some whole class. In most lessons, teachers insist on attention and keep students on task and this helps them to improve and make good progress. The good use of literacy across the subjects of the curriculum also supports students' progress in English. Subject teachers pay very good attention to subject-specific or technical vocabulary. In most subjects, there are good opportunities to develop extended writing and a very conscious effort is made to develop writing for a variety of purposes. The good level of awareness of subject staff of the English language learning needs of students with English as an additional language means that they actively promote and develop students' English usage through subject teaching. These factors, combined with the very good provision in the English department, make a significant contribution to the overall very good achievement of students.
107. The overall quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school and, at times, it is very good. Only rarely is teaching less than good. In Years 7 to 9, all lessons observed were good or better, with the exception of one which was satisfactory. In Years 10 to 11, the teaching was always at least good and often very good. Teachers demonstrate very good subject knowledge, expectations of students are high, planning is of good quality and homework is set regularly. Work is generally well marked and assessed. The ability to manage and control students is very good overall. Hence, students always respond to learning opportunities in a mature and responsible manner, whether providing feedback from a discussion or answering questions. Students are co-operative with each other and relationships between students and teachers are generally good-humoured. Most students displayed a good capacity to work well, independently or in small or large groups.
108. The department is very well led and managed by the head of department who gives clear guidance and good support to the teachers in the department. The planning is good and future plans mean that the department will work further together as a team.

There is limited use of ICT in lessons but this is a good department that is working collegially towards the aims of the school. Resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is poor. The mobile classrooms are too small and accommodation arrangements mean that the department is located in two parts of the school, which is unsatisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Students make very good progress between Year 7 and Year 9.
- Use of data and target setting successfully promotes high standards.
- Students' behaviour and attitude to their work make a significant contribution to their learning.
- Leadership and management of the department are good.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough use of computers in lessons and overuse of calculators.
- The variety of teaching styles is not as wide as it could be.
- Though students' use of numeracy in many subjects is good, this is not consistently the case across all subjects.
- The systems for the regular assessment of students' work are not sufficiently developed.

109. Attainment on entry to the school is just below the national average. By the end of Year 9, standards are above the national average. These standards represent very good achievement over time. In 2002, results in the national tests for students at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and much higher than those of similar schools. This indicates very good achievement when compared with students' prior attainment at the end of Year 6. There was little difference between the results of boys and girls. Overall, results were below those in English and above those in science. The rate of improvement in results over the period 1998 to 2002 exceeds the national trend of improvement.

110. In 2002, GCSE results at grades A* to C were above the national average. Girls attained better results than boys. The overall results matched expectations based on students' previous attainment at the end of Year 9. Girls attained lower results than in English and science whilst boys attained higher than English but lower than science.

111. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in written work in Year 9 broadly reflects the pattern of results in the national tests and confirms the very good achievement in Years 7 to 9. Overall, standards are above average and students have good numeracy skills. Higher ability students in Year 9 understand and use proportional changes well. They successfully solve complex problems by breaking them down into smaller, more manageable tasks and effectively interpret and synthesise information presented in a variety of mathematical forms such as pie charts, line graphs, scatter graphs, frequency diagrams and cumulative frequency tables and diagrams.

112. The standard of work seen in Year 11 similarly reflects the pattern of results in national examinations and is above average but, overall, achievement in Years 7 to 9 is better than that in Years 10 to 11. By Year 11, students have developed good skills in solving problems and make skilful use of their numeracy skills to tackle mathematical problems

in a methodical way. For example, higher attainers in Year 11 apply transformations to linear, quadratic, sine and cosine functions with a good degree of confidence and accuracy.

113. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and teaching in over two-thirds of lessons was good or better. There are many examples of good quality displays that enhance the learning environment. The very best teaching was characterised by enthusiastic and inspiring delivery which resulted in rapid progress and generated keen interest amongst students. In one such lesson, Year 11 students were able to accurately construct triangles according to length and angle size and were learning how to do this at a faster rate than might be expected of more able students. The single instance of unsatisfactory teaching was mainly due to the teacher trying to achieve too much in a single lesson. This resulted in many students in the class making inadequate progress and not gaining sufficient depth of understanding of the key ideas being taught during the lesson.
114. Most teachers exhibit secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and teach mathematics effectively. Teachers are generous with their time and provide additional lunchtime and after-school support. This strengthens the very good teacher/student relationships that exist and supports the very good attitudes students have towards mathematics. Data is used effectively to promote students' progress and clear targets are identified for all, regardless of ability. This helps to motivate students towards greater achievement.
115. Learning by most students with special educational needs is good overall, with some examples of good practice and support by learning support assistants. Effective support was given over a period of time to one such student that enabled the student to achieve on a par with other students in the class. Very good support is also provided for students with English as an additional language through effective planning and they make very good progress as a result. Teachers emphasise key words in lessons to support reading and comprehension skills as well as encouraging students to read out questions aloud. Learning objectives written on the board also aid reading skills.
116. Teachers routinely incorporate methods from the National Numeracy Strategy to enhance students' learning. Whilst these methods in themselves are sound, not enough emphasis is placed on increasing the range of teaching styles throughout the department. There is too much reliance on textbooks and worksheets and not enough active involvement of students with their work. Hence, opportunities are missed to inspire students and get them excited about mathematics. There is excessive use of calculators, which hampers the development of students' arithmetic skills. Further improvements also need to be made to the monitoring system for the regular assessment of students' work. Many books across all year groups and sets were sparsely marked.
117. Whilst students are able to meet the mathematical demands of other subjects, the department needs to further develop the school numeracy policy and ensure its implementation across all other departments. There are good opportunities across all year groups for students to develop their number skills as an integral part of learning science. Students also have opportunities to practise and apply their mathematical skills in ICT, geography and design and technology. Other subjects contribute to numeracy but to a lesser extent. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good, with significant improvements in teaching, enhancement of the learning environment and a major improvement in the behaviour and attitude of students. Whilst there has

been some improvement in the use of ICT in the teaching of mathematics, this requires further development.

118. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The department has undergone recent staffing difficulties and is currently operating without a deputy head of department resulting in additional responsibilities for the head of department. However, difficulties are being resolved and, in the main, the impact on students has been minimised by the effective teamwork amongst mathematics staff and the good leadership and management of the head of department.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Attainment overall is above average by Year 9 and well above by Year 11, and achievement is very good.
- The consistency and unity of purpose within the department, together with very good relationships between staff and students, mean that learning science is a very positive experience for nearly all students.
- The teaching is very good overall, and sometimes excellent, so that students gain a sharp insight into the subject which helps them to think productively and solve problems.

Areas for improvement

- The number of laboratories is inadequate for the number of classes learning science and restricts the range of practical work being undertaken.
- Although the individual support given to gifted and talented students is very good, the curriculum is not always well adapted to the needs of top sets.

119. When they come into the school, students' levels of attainment overall are below average, with fewer higher attaining students than is normal. Many have special educational needs, and a significant number are at various stages of learning English. The vast majority of students make very good progress in Years 7 to 9 and, by the end of Year 9, they gain results in the National Curriculum tests which are in line with national expectations. In comparison with similar schools, based on prior attainment, their results are in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. Since the last inspection, the results have closely followed the national trend. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to make very good progress, so that their GCSE results are well above the national average at age 16. Achievement is therefore very good throughout the main school.

120. The quality of work seen in the school is well above average and so reflects the standards of public tests and examinations. Students take a pride in their work. Classwork, homework and coursework submissions show a good level of understanding of scientific principles and ideas. Classroom discussions, led by the teacher, are usually good or very good, and are sometimes of outstanding quality. In such lessons, the scholarly atmosphere and the high level of intellectual effort lead to standards which are well above average, reflecting students' performance in national tests. High standards in literacy and numeracy and good use of ICT help to support these standards. Students who have special educational needs, or who have English as an additional language, are supported well so that they progress as well as other students.

121. The quality of teaching provided is very good, leading to very good learning. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen, and just over half the lessons were very good or excellent. In the best teaching, the teacher had planned a good variety of activities which were well adapted to students' needs, and which produced real progress within the lesson. For example, in an outstanding lesson on electric circuits, the teacher introduced a role-play activity which gave students an excellent insight into the concept of voltage. In turn, students demonstrated their gains in understanding by considering in a logical way the solutions to everyday problems, such as how electric light bulbs are designed. In other lessons, the use of ICT played a significant part in raising students' understanding, not only of science, but also of how modern techniques make possible the measurement and recording of data which would be difficult to collect by any other means.
122. Throughout the school, lessons are well planned and teachers are very good at adapting the curriculum so that all students' needs are met. Teachers know their students very well and are aware of their special needs. They are careful to include all in discussions, and work sensitively with those who are at the early stages of learning English so that their progress is as good as that of other students. Teachers use a variety of techniques to support students who are especially able, by asking them more challenging questions and by presenting them with more open-ended activities. However, the school should look carefully at the suitability of the curriculum for these able students because some activities, which are entirely appropriate for most students, do not provide them with sufficient challenge and they do not always progress as quickly as they could in lessons.
123. Where teaching was satisfactory or good, rather than very good or excellent, this was often because students' attention wandered at times during the lesson. An academic approach, sometimes taken in these lessons, is less appropriate for students with a short attention span. Thus, in a few lessons, scientific examples or situations students were asked to think about were not sufficiently relevant to their lives to maintain their interest. These students were easily distracted, the lesson tended to lose pace and learning slowed. Nevertheless, all science teachers are sufficiently skilled to adapt their teaching to changing circumstances and were able to make sure that the lesson achieved its purpose.
124. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a good vision for his subject and communicates it very well to a large number of teachers. He makes excellent use of the wide variety of skills and experience which they bring to their teaching. Under his leadership, teachers present a consistent view of science, which contributes substantially to the overall quality of learning and which supports the overall aims of the school very well. Administration of this complex department is very good. All appropriate policies are in place. Excellent records help teachers to identify problems if they should arise and take appropriate action. Staff are very well supported in their day-to-day teaching and in their longer-term professional development.
125. The department is seriously short of accommodation. There is insufficient laboratory space, and too many lessons have to take place in ordinary classrooms. Laboratories are spread over several areas in the school. This places a strain on availability of resources. It is a tribute to the management skills of the head of science and his colleagues that the system works as well as it does, but there is no doubt that the difficulties of transporting apparatus and materials away from the preparation rooms significantly inhibit the range of practical work which students experience, and learning suffers as a result.

126. Since the last inspection, the department has developed significantly and improvement has been very good overall. Results have been maintained or improved, the curriculum has been reviewed in line with modern developments and the quality of teaching has been maintained at a high level despite the difficulties associated with recruitment of teachers in London.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **good**, but better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11.

Strengths

- Students achieve well and make good progress through Years 7 to 11.
- Projects and examination courses are well planned.
- Displays and good organisation of resources provide a stimulating learning environment and promote high standards.
- Students' attitudes are extremely positive and they work well in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Results in the GCSE course have dropped and need to be improved.
- Procedures for assessment and the tracking of progress through Years 7 to 11 are not sufficiently well developed.
- National Curriculum levels are insufficiently used or shared with students in Years 7 to 9.
- Not enough use is made of ICT in Years 7 to 9.

127. Students of all ages make good progress and achieve well in art and design. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 show attainment overall in 2001 to be just above national expectations, and slightly higher in 2002. However, in both years, fewer students than the national average gained the highest levels and no students came into the exceptional performance category. Inspection evidence suggests that, overall, standards are in line with national expectations. In 2001, the proportion of students gaining a grade A* to C in GCSE examinations was above the national average, but dropped to well below the national average in 2002. More girls than boys took the subject and their results were better than those of boys, as is the case nationally. Inspection evidence and predictions based on teachers' knowledge of students' work indicate that results in 2003 are likely to improve towards national average standards. Students' attainment in art and design is not as good as in other subjects. However, since the time of the last inspection, good standards have been maintained.

128. The well-planned programme of projects in Years 7 to 9 enables students to develop a good understanding of a variety of tools and techniques and their use. Practical work is integrated with the study and work of major artists and the aims and objectives of art and design movements past and present. Based on these, and direct observational drawing, students develop their own ideas for work in a range of media. For example, Year 7 students, influenced by the study of Roman and Byzantine mosaics, created effective self-portraits using a mosaic technique. Their work showed good understanding of the proportions of the face. Most students understood the concept of using light and dark tones of a similar colour to show facial characteristics, and their work was well presented with carefully cut and shaped pieces. In Year 9, students made four colour lino prints. They cut and printed designs that incorporated their initials, using the 'elimination' lino cutting method. They showed good understanding of how to adapt font designs to link their initial letters and how to build up attractive colours with

overprinting. They worked carefully and safely and their work was in line with expectation overall. Achievement and progress overall, and in lessons, are good for students across the attainment range, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language.

129. This good progress is continued in the GCSE course. Students follow a process of experimentation with a variety of art media. Most ideas are developed from direct observational drawing, for example from still life and drawings of natural forms. Year 11 students' drawings of shells and chrome metal objects show good understanding of proportion, but few use tonal values sufficiently to show three dimensions. Coursework sketchbooks are colourful and rich in pattern quality and most students annotate their work. Documentation generally is below the standard normally seen at this stage, with insufficient in-depth evaluation and analysis related to the aims and objectives of the project, and the techniques of other artists. Only the ablest few document sufficiently their investigations of media, ideas and developments towards finished work. Self-evaluation of work-in-progress and students' awareness and interpretation of examination requirements are also areas for improvement.
130. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is never less than good and there is some very good teaching in Years 7 to 9. Lesson aims and objectives are well planned, clearly presented and communicated well, often with the use of lively demonstrations. Teachers have appropriate expectations of their students and set challenging tasks that are open-ended and suitable for the full range of students including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. There is good use of questioning, with all students given the opportunity to give answers, and evaluative plenary sessions, where students are asked what they have learnt. Resources are carefully prepared, distributed and cleared away. Very good working relationships with teachers and peers are formed through mutual interest in the subject. Students are eager to be artistically creative, including those with special educational needs, who learn well through practical work, problem solving and exploring visual media. In Years 7 to 9, students show enjoyment in their homework assignments but, in the examination years, lower attaining students do not have the same commitment and productivity is relatively weaker.
131. Assessment of work is generally satisfactory through individual, verbal comment and written comments at the end of projects. However, National Curriculum levels are insufficiently used or shared with students in Years 7 to 9. Literacy is effectively promoted through contextual work in all years but links with numeracy are infrequently made and good opportunities are missed for developing mathematical and aesthetical concepts, for example work involving ideal proportions or shapes in pattern work.
132. The art and design curriculum is good overall. A range of art aspects are covered in both two and three dimensions. However, ICT is infrequently used, except for the use of digital cameras to record work in Years 10 and 11. The computer-aided design element of the Key Stage 3 art and design National Curriculum is insufficiently developed.
133. Leadership is satisfactory. Day-to-day management, teamwork in lesson organisation and the management of resources are good. Development plans show some understanding of what is needed to improve standards but lack an analytical approach. More importance needs to be devoted to keeping pace with educational developments, such as changing examination requirements, and priority must be given to improving attainment in Years 10 and 11. Procedures for the tracking of attainment, achievement and progress through the school need considerable development. Informative, good quality displays provide a stimulating learning environment and promote high standards.

Improvements since the last report are barely satisfactory. Attainment overall in Years 7 to 9 has improved, but not in Years 10 and 11.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The strong support given by senior managers to the introduction of this new subject has meant it has started well.
- The head of department provides very good leadership and management of the area.
- In the lessons seen where citizenship was the clear focus, the teaching of the lessons went a long way to helping students to become responsible citizens.
- The citizenship curriculum contains a wide range of learning activities and effectively promotes a good range of teaching methods.

Areas for improvement

- Marking and review of students' work are not yet sufficiently developed to give them a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work.

134. Citizenship is a new subject and the school has made a very good start in laying a good foundation for its future development. A successfully managed audit and mapping exercise to ascertain what elements of citizenship were in place, followed by the introduction of a well thought out policy, have made significant inroads into embedding the subject into the school's curricular provision. The school has built very successfully on its excellent links with the local and wider community to formally recognise the citizenship learning outcomes that were always implicitly present in community-related activities undertaken by students. The delivery of the subject through personal, social and health education lessons, relevant subjects across the curriculum and extra-curricular activities within school means that, currently, there is good coverage of citizenship.

135. The standards of attainment for students at the end of Years 9 and 11 are slightly above national expectations. This was seen in the evidence made available which comprised a scrutiny of work together with a reasonable number of lessons that were identified as having citizenship as a focus and the work done by students in the school councils. Students had a favourable view of their councils as they felt that their views were listened to and their suggestions often acted upon. There were slight differences between the various groups involved in school council work, with the girls taking part and progressing at a slightly faster rate. Students in all year groups make considerable progress when compared with standards on entry.

136. In a Year 8 Spanish lesson, students understood well the damage done to the environment by a recent oil spillage on the Spanish coast, prior to writing a news item for Spanish television. In a Year 8 history lesson, a good discussion amongst students showed the differences between democracy in the 1820s and the present day. In a Year 7 drama lesson, students clearly understood what was important in life and became aware of a material and spiritual dimension. They also learned the skills needed for successful teamwork. In a Year 10 religious education lesson, students had a good understanding of the views of different religions on punishment. In a Year 7 personal, social and health education lesson, students engaged in a lively discussion about human rights and ended by drawing up their own charter of children's rights. All the work that was undertaken gave the students involved a good opportunity to think about

relevant issues, and to write about and discuss these, giving them a framework for becoming responsible citizens in future life.

137. Students made good progress because of the activities they were encouraged to be involved in and the opportunities to reflect upon, and respond to, the issues brought out in the lessons. This was reinforced well by the follow-up work that students willingly completed. Teachers assisted students with different learning needs well; however, there is a need to provide additional or different work that is sufficiently challenging for more able students.
138. The teaching observed was good, and there were examples of very good teaching, including one lesson that was excellent. Teachers had high expectations, not only for their subject, but also for citizenship where it was the focus, and all lessons had clear learning objectives which were shared with students. In lessons, students were encouraged to develop informed opinions and challenge the opinions of other members of the various groups they were in. This they did well and confidently.
139. The assessment and recording of students' work, which are recommended, are good. However, current procedures need to be reviewed to ensure that students can clearly see how they are progressing and what is required to make improvements in the future. For example, marking of work is not sufficiently developed to help students and teachers know what needs to be improved.
140. The senior managers and the head of department have led the introduction of citizenship very well. This is reflected in the detailed planning, which included an audit and mapping of what was in place prior to the introduction of this new subject, and the high quality of delivery. There is considerable enthusiasm for implementation of the citizenship requirements amongst senior staff and the departments that take part.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standards are high.
- Teaching is very good and leads to a very high level of achievement.
- Leadership and management are excellent and teamwork is strong.
- Relationships are very good, which results in a very high level of motivation by students.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not provide students with clear targets that show how to improve and which relate to National Curriculum levels.
- There are too few rooms to provide adequate spaces to teach all subjects and some rooms are small.
- Single lessons are impracticable in design and technology as time has to be spent on preparation and packing away.

141. Design and technology caters for all students in Years 7 to 10 and 195 students in Year 11. GCSE examinations are taken in electronics, food technology, graphics, resistant materials and textiles in Years 10 and 11, also GNVQ manufacturing in Year 11 and GCSE manufacturing in Year 10.

142. Standards are well above average. In the 2002 examinations, the proportions of students gaining grades that were in the A* to C range and in the A* to G range were well above average. Results have improved well over the last three years and were better than the results of other subjects. Results in textiles were very high and those in

food technology were also high. Results in resistant materials were not so good and were below average. This was the result of staffing problems. The results in the GNVQ manufacturing course were very high. Teacher assessments in 2002 showed that more students at the end of Year 9 gained the expected level, Level 5, or above than the national average, which signals very good achievement as students begin at the school with low-level skills in the subject. They have had very little experience of the design process in particular. By Year 9, inspection evidence indicates that standards are above average.

143. Standards by Year 11, as seen from observations of lessons and scrutiny of work, match examination results, with the exception of resistant materials, where the quality of work has improved and is now in line with national expectations. Standards in electronics, which was not taken as a GCSE subject in 2002, are very high. All students achieve very well, including those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. They succeed with the support of the teachers and other students. All the different minority ethnic groups achieve equally well.
144. At the end of Year 11, students research well to gain information. This was seen when a student visited the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood to gain information about toys. Gaps in the market are shown by effectively mapping price against quality. Ideas are very well developed. This was seen when a student developed samples of colour and ornamentation which reflected her study of design in Ancient Egypt. Students' making skills are good. For example, a dolphin seesaw, which functioned as a mechanical toy, had a very high standard of finish. Evaluations are good when students test their product against their original design specification. Students make effective use of ICT to produce work that has a high standard of presentation. Students who do not attain well, present work that is poorly presented and their research is not so well developed.
145. At the end of Year 9, students have made great strides in their understanding of the design process. This was seen in their research into cakes, when they found out useful information about unusual 'King Cakes', made in New Orleans for the Mardi Gras, and described their findings. Students use their research well to create their final design specification. For example, a student designed a sports bag that would be strong and waterproof, and which would hold a towel, spare trainers, outfit and a drink. Students' making skills are good. This was seen when Year 7 students took great care to get a good finish on the wood that they were using for a spinning top. Also, Year 8 students took care with the appearance of their layered dessert, and those in Year 9 with their designs for the cultural wall hangings. Students' homework shows the importance that the department places on their development as independent learners.
146. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Two lessons seen were excellent and in only one lesson was teaching unsatisfactory. The very good and excellent lessons are conducted at a rapid pace so that much is covered and no time is wasted. With very high expectations of behaviour and outcome, students respond and want to do well. Teachers create an excellent learning environment where all are valued. As a result, students enjoy learning and apply themselves conscientiously to the task set. This was seen when a group of Year 11 students demonstrated the equipment that they had used to make timers, and pointed out the areas where they had improved the product, for example by changing the switch. They work well, both individually and in groups, and are ready to help each other. For example, a student with special educational needs had made tremendous progress in making her paper pattern and was delighted to show another the process. Students listen well and this shows in their comments.

147. Teachers' questioning is very good. For example, students were asked why colour is important in designs, which made them think. Demonstrations are very good. This was seen when a teacher used files to smooth wood and first asked the students to describe the files shown and then how they might work on wood. This ensured that students would use a correct file. There is much imaginative teaching, such as was seen when students were organised into a production team to make a cultural wall hanging. Each member of the team was given responsibility for a particular aspect of the production, such as designing. This motivated all to attain high standards and contributed to the overall ownership of the project. Projects are challenging and have improved since the time of the last report. Teachers set great importance on homework which encourages students to become independent learners. For example, they are encouraged to go out and take photographs, rather than just to gather information from the Internet. Students apply themselves to their homework and this shows in essays about types of production. Excellent use is made of ICT within the department, not only to improve the presentation of students' work, but also through the application of computer-aided design and manufacture to improve the quality of their project work. Marking is rigorous and has improved since the time of the last inspection. The unsatisfactory lesson was taught by a non-specialist, who was not clear regarding the use of equipment; therefore, the students did not progress well. The excellent lessons resulted in an exceedingly high degree of motivation and attainment by students due to the passion of the teacher for the subject which inspired students to achieve much.
148. Leadership and management are excellent. This is shown by the clear development plan, with highlighted issues. This has improved since the time of the last inspection. The head of department sets great store by good teamwork, and the teachers meet regularly, both formally and informally. One session a week is devoted to learning new skills, which is important with the rapid growth of new technology. Regular monitoring of teaching, both formal and informal, ensures that good practice is shared. Assessment is very good in Years 10 and 11 as it is matched against examination criteria. However, in Years 7 to 9, National Curriculum levels are not regularly given and explained, with comments on the specific areas that would enable students to improve. The use of folders which contain all information relevant to teaching groups is an excellent method of collating information and ensures that teachers are kept up to date with information about students.
149. There are insufficient rooms for design and technology, which can result in students experiencing textiles either in Year 7 or Year 8 only. This results in standards in Year 8 that are lower than expected, as basic skills are then taught. Also, the Year 12 textiles group is taught on one occasion at one end of a textiles room, while another class is taught at the other end. This does not allow students to progress at the rate that they should. Single lessons make the teaching of a practical subject very difficult, as the nature of the subject results in time spent setting out and clearing away. This cuts down on taught time and makes the completion of food that has to be cooked extremely difficult. Visits, such as to a soft drinks factory, add considerably to students' understanding of manufacturing and industrial design. The department supports students' literacy by careful marking and the use of extended writing. The department is very well supported by excellent technicians.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is excellent, enabling students to make exceptional progress in their learning.
- Standards of work are well above average and achievement is outstanding.
- The subject makes a very strong contribution to the students' personal development.
- The drama curriculum is very exciting and the topics of work both motivate students and are relevant to their everyday lives.
- Both drama teachers work with considerable energy, drive and commitment and this makes drama one of the school's most successful subjects.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation for drama is limited with only one purpose-built studio.

150. GCSE results in 2002 were very high with all students attaining a grade A* to C and just over half gaining a grade A* or A. The standards of work seen in lessons are well above average by the time students are in Year 11. Students' skills of performance are very well developed. Older and younger students demonstrate a very secure intellectual understanding of the topics of study and how drama is used to express inner feelings and qualities such as dominance, superiority and fear. Older students exhibit a marked intensity within their performance which is well beyond their years. Group work is very well done and results in the development of coherent short pieces of drama that are expressive and well put together. In a Year 11 lesson on physical theatre, students choreographed their movements masterfully, using mirror work and symmetry to add to the aesthetic quality of their performances.
151. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent. Lessons are very well planned and the teachers' own skills are expertly used to demonstrate techniques and concepts to students. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher demonstrated how to respond to a roll-call with defiance and disrespect and how to use gestures and tone of voice which depicted insubordination and were intimidating. Students then used these examples to develop their own gestures and facial expressions when enacting a scene depicting characters with low status and high status. Lessons are very carefully structured so that a range of short, very well co-ordinated activities build into a more significant piece of theatre. At each stage of the lesson, and as the activities are rolled out, new skills are brought in and students pushed and challenged to achieve even better results. Students respond with excellent enthusiasm and willingly work hard and at a very brisk pace. Teaching uses a reflective approach very effectively by asking students to evaluate their own and others' performances and to be constructively critical. As a result, students visibly improve their performance as they work.
152. The drama curriculum is imaginative and exciting. The topics and themes, such as considering issues of social class or exploring spirituality, provide considerable interest for students. Themes and topics also make a significant contribution to the students' personal development. There is a very strong focus on enabling students to achieve their best and this is rooted in the dynamic and energetic approach to drama by teachers in the department. There is only one purpose-built drama studio and many lessons have to take place in the hall, which is not suitable.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Very good achievement by students in all years leading to well above average standards.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning. They work hard and are keen to do well.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and teaching is usually very good.
- Sound lesson planning, high expectations and challenging work raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough use of ICT.
- Mapping, graphical and diagrammatic work needs further development.

153. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were well above those found nationally. There is a trend of good improvement since the previous inspection. All students entered gained graded results and a very high proportion gained the higher grades of A* to C. Girls do better than boys, particularly at A and A* level. Students do better in geography than in their other subjects. Very high standards are attained by the end of Year 9. These are well above national averages and better than at the time of the previous inspection.
154. In Year 7, on entry, students' skill and knowledge base is average. Students are quickly introduced to geographical concepts and terminology. In a case study of the earthquake at Kobe, they begin to understand human consequences of tectonic activity. They develop numeracy skills well whilst investigating relationships between earthquake magnitude, fatalities and levels of economic development. Very good progress by boys and girls in their first terms in school results in above average attainment by the end of the year. Levels of verbal responses are very high. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language also make very good progress.
155. By Year 9, standards are well above those found nationally. This represents very good progress over Years 7 to 9. Students have a very high level of knowledge and understanding of terms and processes in river systems and the water cycle. They are able to define and explain terms like 'permeable' and 'infiltration'. In very effective paired work, the majority show their understanding of attrition, corrosion and corrasion by teaching the meaning of the terms to their partners. Higher attaining students explain complex ideas well, such as ground-water flow. Experience of graphical techniques is limited mostly to bar and line graphs. Lower attaining students are well supported by displays of key vocabulary and by provision of writing frames to structure written tasks. Gifted and talented students are extended effectively by very high expectations and by additional challenging tasks. ICT experience, however, is insufficient.
156. In Year 10, students preparing for GCSE work hard and make good progress in response to challenging teaching and varied and well-resourced lessons. When they have the opportunity, they use the Internet very effectively as an inquiry tool, finding out how hurricane Andrew affected life and property differently in Texas and the Caribbean. They develop study skills well, analysing news articles about hurricane Gilbert and selectively noting main points from video reports of tropical storm damage.
157. Year 11 students learn very well about the physical geography of sand dune formation and the ecosystem they sustain. They successfully describe and explain the interdependence of flora and fauna and understand well the fragility and hostility of the system. There is very good development of thinking skills through preparation for examination questions which require description, explanation and hypothesis. Students

interpret photographic data very well. Students have very good recall of previous learning and operate and extend their subject language to a very high standard.

158. Teaching is very good overall and almost all is very good or good. In the rare instances where teaching is only satisfactory, it lacks the pace and rigour that generally characterise better lessons. Students are keen to work hard and expectations are very high. Students' work shows much care and effort. Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject. They use questions skilfully to check and extend understanding, and give very clear explanations of new ideas. Relationships and behaviour are very good. Work is soundly resourced and activities within lessons are varied. Students with special educational needs are well supported by peers and teachers, particularly in paired and oral work. The needs of bilingual students, including those needing support with learning English, are very successfully addressed. Care is routinely taken to ensure all students learn, understand and practise high levels of subject language in their spoken and written work and this leads to good and inclusive learning. Students have very good moral, social and cultural experience and good spiritual moments. Homework is relevant and used effectively to extend learning. To raise standards further, teachers need to increase the range of graphical experiences and expose students to a wider range of mapping techniques.
159. Assessment and monitoring of teaching and of students' work and progress are sound. Analysis of examination achievement is very good and this is used well to plan future action. Better resources, including more textbooks and up-to-date levels of provision of audio-visual and computer equipment, are needed to sustain and improve the quality of teaching and learning. Management is good. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The new department head has an excellent plan for development that supports whole-school aims and is raising the quality of provision.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching is reflected in students' high academic standards.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject.
- The relationships between staff and students are very positive and students are positive and enthusiastic about their learning.
- The good use of a variety of learning activities enhances the progress made by students.
- Management of the department is good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers is underdeveloped and does not as yet support learning and research adequately.
- Marking of work is not sufficiently detailed or analytical to give students enough information on how to improve it.
- Work, including texts, is not always matched to students' needs, particularly for able students.

160. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were above the national average and show little difference between the performance of boys and girls. GCSE results are above national averages at the higher grades, A* to C, but slightly lower over the full grade range. In 2002, the girls performed better than the boys. The results showed a considerable improvement when compared with standards on entry.

161. In the work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 9 are slightly above national averages. Standards on entry show that students experience difficulties with written work due to weaknesses in literacy skills and historical knowledge. Over the ensuing years, students of all abilities demonstrate, in both written and oral work, a good understanding of the cause and effects of major events in the period of history they are studying. They confidently read aloud from sources, recording events and discussing them well in their groups or pairs. Students in a Year 9 class reached a high level of understanding for their age of the impact of war when discussing ideas the government could consider for the protection of its people in a world war. While extended use of key words is clearly apparent, a critical approach to source material was not much in evidence during the inspection. As students progress through Years 7 to 9, they gain confidence in writing and, occasionally, drawing and mapwork. Their written work is greatly helped by reading from the text, and pairs or groups of students develop and clarify ideas effectively before sitting down to write. While the least able students are fully challenged by the texts used, the more able do not always have texts appropriate to their ability level. The girls for the most part are operating at a slightly higher level than the boys. There is little difference in the levels of performance between different ethnic groups. Students with special educational needs make good overall progress towards their targets. However, the strategies employed to support those who have emotional and behavioural difficulties are more successful than those for students with moderate learning difficulties. Students at the early stages of learning English make steady progress in improving their literacy skills in English.
162. In the work seen during the inspection, students are working at above national averages at the end of Year 11. Students' achievement, relative to the standards reached at the end of Year 9, is good. Most students show a confidence and increasing ability in the use of source material to extract information and draw conclusions about events in the past. However, students tended to be uncritical of the sources they used and, for example, did not consider that these may have been biased. Most students worked well in their groups or pairs to discuss ideas and, in the past, have worked well on the tasks they were set. There are slight differences in the work of girls when set against that of boys, and girls' attainment is, on the whole, higher than that of boys. Students at the early stages of learning English as an additional language make good progress. Progress is particularly good when these students are supported in lessons. When no specialist support is available, they tend to work more slowly, though class teachers are sensitive to their needs and try to provide as much support as they can.
163. The quality of teaching is good with some that is very good. This is because lessons are well prepared with suitable aims that are shared with students. Teachers draw on an appropriate range of activities and resources and use a wide variety of teaching styles. Regular use of group and pair work means that students are developing good skills in independent learning. However, opportunities to make more regular and active use of computers were missed. In many lessons, teachers began with a review of previous work to assist students to recall and build on their learning so that they could progress in their knowledge and understanding. This was mainly through question and answer sessions and was used well to check previous work and to ensure that new learning was clearly understood. Good teaching was greatly helped by a good command of the subject and the setting of high expectations with tasks that matched the needs of students. Most students rose to the levels expected of them. However, more able students could have been more fully challenged in some lessons. When oral assessment was used, it greatly enhanced students' involvement and learning and students confidently participated. Marking, on the whole, is regular but needs more analytical comments and the use of grades which students understand so that they can

improve their future work. Homework is given and is completed by most, however, it is not often used in lessons, for example to extend class work. While the subject, by its very nature, makes a contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural welfare of its students, this is not overtly identified. Nonetheless, relationships between teachers and students are strong and contribute to the good behaviour and positive attitudes of students.

164. The management of the department is good. The new head of department is setting a clear direction for the future. Accommodation is good and all rooms have good wall displays both of students' work as well as published material. Resources are good but texts need to match the ability levels for more able students. Historical visits are under consideration as they have the potential to add greatly to the knowledge students gain in lessons. All issues mentioned at the last inspection have been addressed with the exception of the use of computers.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Very good quality of teaching promotes very good learning in lessons.
- Curriculum planning develops students' reasoning and independence well.
- There is very good commitment of governors, senior management and teachers in the department to the development of the use of ICT across the school.
- Levels of resources, especially of computers and specialist equipment for design and technology, science and music, are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Some difficulty in staffing, though now becoming resolved, has had an adverse impact on standards.
- Use of ICT in art and design, geography, history and mathematics is underdeveloped.

165. The 2002 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards of attainment were average. These standards are confirmed through work seen during the inspection. There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls as compared to their relative performance nationally. GCSE results in 2001 were above average, with girls performing better than boys. The results at GCSE declined sharply in 2002, and were below average overall. However, the majority of students were entered for GNVQ Part 1 in which their performance matched that of the 2001 GCSE. Students achieve well by Year 9 in relation to their standard on entry to the school, which is below average. Though students in Years 10 and 11 are currently making good progress, there are some gaps in their learning and some unevenness of progress over the last year due to the difficult staffing situation in the subject.

166. The work seen during the inspection reflects the results of teacher assessments and GCSE and GNVQ examinations. Attainment is, overall, broadly average by Year 9 and below by Year 11, but is variable in standard throughout the school because of the high proportion of students taught by temporary teachers for parts of their courses. Year 9 students show good understanding of basic principles, such as when they construct a spreadsheet to show profit or loss in a company but, as a result of recent non-specialist teaching, they have difficulty in remembering the basic procedures, such as writing formulae for different purposes. In general, the most able students in the lower school justify their independent decisions by reasoned argument, while the majority describe accurately what they have done. Although some lower attainers are confused by

specialist terms, they carry out procedures accurately and often identify for themselves where they have made initial mistakes. GNVQ students in Year 11 are all producing work that should attain at least pass level by the end of the course. The highest attainers show very good understanding of database designs and use clear annotations in their written work to demonstrate the development of their ideas. They have carried out extensive, independent research to include advanced features of databases to their own designs and which improve the efficiency of their designs. Lower attainers replicate accurately the simpler features of the examples of databases they have studied and apply these to their own design work.

167. Throughout the school, students who speak English as an additional language make very good progress, making very good contributions to discussions, as do those with special educational needs. This is the result of teachers' insistence that they participate in discussions and contribute to group or class decisions, and the care that teachers take to make sure that all students understand subject-specific terms and texts. Students of all ages have enough capability to use computers to help their learning in all other subjects.
168. Teaching is very good in lessons seen during the inspection, with a very good impact on the learning of all students, both in class and also through the many extra sessions after school. The recent need to employ temporary teachers caused some variations in teaching, and this was evident in the quality of written work examined, that had a negative effect on the learning of many students. However, good leadership before, during and after that period has sustained the overall quality of learning in the longer term. Strong teaching is evident in careful assessment of students' needs and planning at all levels from individual help to writing schemes of work in order to meet those needs. All teachers make students think about solutions to problems rather than providing them with ready-made answers. Students are given carefully judged prompting, so that they learn very well by applying their own reasoning to solve technological problems. Teachers also encourage them to work co-operatively to find viable solutions. For example, a student struggling to create a web page with imported digitised images was encouraged to examine the HTML and to work out for himself why he could not find his images. With teacher and peer support, he succeeded, but also understood fully where he had made a mistake. Teachers expect students to work hard, including regular homework that is a valuable contribution to preparation for the next lesson. They, in return, provide valuable detailed feedback on areas of strength and weakness so that students know what to improve and how to set about it. Both teachers and students celebrate progress, building strong relationships that provide a positive environment for working. Teachers do not regularly give specific information on levels attained, preferring to wait until results have been agreed in school or by external moderation, but students know in detail how well they are performing. Lessons give very good support for literacy and this is particularly supportive for students who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. These very good practices are carried out throughout the school and into the sixth form, where students learn to take personal responsibility for working out solutions to problems.
169. There is a strong team spirit in the department that has made it possible for staff to work together through recent difficulties. In addition, the headteacher and governors have given wholehearted support to the development of ICT within the department and across the school. The department now teaches all of the ICT National Curriculum, but computers are also used in all subjects. There is good use in many areas and by many teachers but, in some subjects, there is not sufficient or consistent use by all teachers in the department. There is excellent use in design and technology, and good use in science. While some use in mathematics is very good, there is still inconsistency, with

some teachers making little use of ICT for learning. Opportunities are missed in art and design, history, geography and mathematics. The level of equipment is sufficient for all subjects to make good use of ICT, with very good specialist equipment in design and technology, science and music. As a result, ICT in the school has made very good progress since the last inspection, so that almost all students use ICT independently in all subjects as a matter of course.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment are rising rapidly in all years.
- The leadership and management are very good and have transformed the quality of provision.
- Students' attitudes towards the subject are improving.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of sufficient curricular time impacts on standards and, in particular, results in too few opportunities for students to develop their oral skills.
- Though the overall quality of teaching is good, this is not uniformly so.
- Not enough use is made of National Curriculum levels for ongoing assessment of, and feedback to, students on their progress.

170. Results in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have been below average since 1999. Girls outperform boys in line with the national average. In 2002, however, there was a rise in girls' results which took them close to the national average.

171. Standards in GCSE examinations in French rose between 1999 and 2001. This was largely due to the improvement in girls' results. Overall, results were still well below average by 2001. However, in 2002, there was a very substantial rise in girls' performance. This, together with a decline in the numbers of entries for boys, lifted overall standards to above average. Spanish results have followed a similar pattern, though from a higher baseline in 1999. Consequently, parity with national averages was achieved in 2001. The number of entries for boys has fallen but, in 2002, they played a full part along with the girls in achieving a combined success rate that was above average.

172. In work seen in the inspection, standards in Year 9 are rising, but still remain below the national average. In all years, there is a strong focus on developing literacy skills and this has a cumulative effect on students' progress. By Year 9, students have a sound appreciation of the tenses and nouns, adjectives, prepositions and time phrases. The higher attaining students benefit from the drive to develop extended writing skills. Middle and lower attaining students also have suitable opportunities to access the same variety of language. Standards are depressed, however, by the lack of curricular time which leads to a narrowing of topics covered and contributes to a lack of activities to develop oral skills. Within this restricted range, some of the written work of higher attaining students is of very high quality. They cope better than lower attaining students who are more reliant on teacher support to consolidate their learning. The work of the latter is often very thin in content. Although boys are over-represented in the lower sets, their standards in relation to the girls are improving. Numeracy is developing more slowly. There are good, isolated examples in Year 7 Spanish where students compare sterling equivalencies to the Euro and, in Year 9 French, where they construct bar charts to

display results of surveys. The department is working on building up students' ICT skills. This is well mapped in schemes of work. Overall, achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory.

173. Standards of work in Year 11 are average. In the GCSE classes, they are above average. This is due to high quality teaching. Lack of curricular time remains a factor in Years 10 and 11, again with a disproportionate impact on the progress of lower attaining students. In Year 11, those students in danger of failing are now being entered for the Entry Level Certificate which provides them with useful accreditation. Work is heavily orientated towards fulfilling examination requirements and concentrates on the development of coursework and the practice of role-plays. Teachers' knowledge and understanding in developing competence in these areas ensure success for all students. Again, however, the narrow topic coverage restricts learning opportunities and the development of speaking skills. This shortfall is ameliorated in Year 11 by the use of foreign language assistants. Standards of achievement for GCSE students are good. Achievement in Years 10 to 11 is good overall.
174. In both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11, students with special educational needs make good progress over time. Those students with English as an additional language make good gains as they move through the school in developing skills to speak yet another language. There is no discernible difference in the standards attained by different ethnic groups.
175. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Though most lessons were good or better, this is not consistently the case across the department. The best teaching is characterised by high expectations and is well focused on activities that develop key foreign language skills. For example, in a Year 10 French lesson, students successfully adapted information taken from a website on Bordeaux to enhance their own writing. Thorough preparation and expert guidance helped them to make the best use of the time spent on computers and resulted in high quality work. In a Year 11 Spanish lesson, students incorporated the ideas from other students' homework to improve their own standard. In less good teaching, there are some inadequacies in the direction given to students and unimaginative use of the course text which leads to passivity in lessons. At times, teachers need to do more to bring out the more reticent speakers. Gifted and talented students are generally well provided for with extension work and questions designed to stretch them. Students with English as an additional language make similar progress to others in the class. The progress of students with special educational needs is generally good. The department uses seating arrangements flexibly to pair boys and girls and higher and lower attaining students to promote the learning of all. Occasionally, however, staff do not pay sufficient attention to individual education plans in their lesson planning. When this occurs, there is a resulting lack of match of work for individual needs. Students are developing more positive attitudes towards modern foreign languages than was reported to be the case a few years ago. They are very responsive to good questioning and show great willingness to work together productively in pair-work exercises when they get the chance. Homework is suitable and regular. Marking is more variable. The department has a good marking policy but some marking does not provide sufficient guidance to help students improve. Their day-to-day work in Years 7 to 9 is not assessed in relation to National Curriculum levels. This deprives them of an opportunity to measure their progress and set targets.
176. Leadership and management are very good and have been central to restoring the department to health in the last two years. The head of department has shown great drive and determination to build a new identity for modern foreign languages in the school. This is reflected in the fact that provision at sixth-form level is shortly to be

included for the first time for some years. Every aspect of the work of the department has been comprehensively revamped and is thoroughly monitored. Students' performance is reviewed and assessment information used well to guide curricular planning, as exemplified by the new strategy to raise boys' achievement in Year 10. This pro-active approach has restored morale in the department and is laying secure foundations for future success.

177. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory as there was a major dip during this time in the fortunes of the department which has now been reversed. The department has made very good progress over the last two years.

Urdu

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

Strengths

- Standards are high and students achieve well throughout the school.
- The provision of Urdu extends the choice of modern foreign languages for students and enhances equality of opportunity.
- Experienced teachers, who are competent native Urdu speakers, provide good models for students.

Areas for improvement

- Though satisfactory overall, teaching does not have the pace and variety to secure the interest of all students, especially in Years 9, 10 and 11.
- ICT is not yet used to support teaching and learning, though this is planned and, hence, opportunities to provide a wider range of activities to students are currently missed.

178. GCSE results are consistently well above national averages. The results are even better given that some students are entered early in Year 9 and they attain grades A* to C. Urdu A-level results have also been consistently very good in the past few years, although the numbers of entries are usually small.

179. Standards seen in lessons are above average by Years 9 and 11 and achievement is good. Students speak Urdu well, building on their prior knowledge of this community language. Year 9 students demonstrate a good grasp of the grammar and their vocabulary is suitably wide. Their pronunciation of Urdu normally demonstrates authenticity. Students' written work is developing well to meet the GCSE requirements. Most students copy words and phrases accurately and many write unaided sentences and paragraphs to a good standard. Students' handwriting is developing well. They undertake a variety of written tasks, involving relevant topics, and in keeping with their course requirements. There are no significant variations in the achievement of students with special educational needs or those at early stages of learning English.

180. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The Urdu teachers delivering Year 9 (after school), Year 10 and Year 11 lessons are competent, native speakers, with many years of teaching experience. They maintain good discipline. Lessons are planned well and follow an appropriate scheme of work. Teachers employ a suitable range of topics to deliver their lessons. They normally succeed in motivating most students through a variety of language materials, tasks and activities to meet the learning needs of targeted ability groups. The teacher preparing two students for A-level Urdu shows good planning, resourcefulness and enthusiasm, which keep his students well motivated. On the whole, however, lessons in Year 9 (after school) and Years 10 and 11 tend to lack enthusiasm and enjoyment. Also, the pace of lessons in Years 10

and 11 sometimes fails to address the learning needs of some students. The absence of ICT in the Urdu curriculum, moreover, denies students an interesting range of activities and challenges.

181. As this is a two year course for GCSE for most students, though a few complete it in one year, as against the normal five year course for a modern foreign language, most students make very good progress in written work to reach GCSE standards in the time. Students also achieve sufficient consolidation of their spoken Urdu to meet the course requirements. In the case of some students, who speak a related language rather than Urdu at home, they acquire sufficiently authentic Urdu pronunciation and vocabulary to meet GCSE requirements. Students preparing for A-level Urdu demonstrate creditable progress both in lessons and over time. Relationships between students and between them and their teachers in all Urdu lessons are very good, which facilitates sustained progress and attainment at well above national levels.
182. The planned introduction of ICT into the Urdu curriculum should significantly enrich the range of activities, choices for independent work and the enjoyment of the subject, as well as the visual quality and presentation of students' written work. Greater involvement by parents and the local Urdu speaking community is also likely to further improve the provision of this community language in the school.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The teacher's good subject knowledge and his good relationships with students encourage them to learn.
- School concerts are well supported by students and parents.

Areas for improvement

- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 needs expanding to give equal coverage to the programmes of study.
- Assessment is rarely done and levels and targets are not used to develop learning.
- There are weaknesses in the accommodation.

183. Levels of attainment are average at the end of Years 9 and 11. The quality of teaching is good overall and is a key factor in maintaining the standard of learning. The 2002 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above national expectations but inspection evidence indicates that this was too high and that standards are average at the end of Year 9. All GCSE students passed the examination, but numbers attaining grades A* to C were below the national average and have remained so over the past three years. This is partly due to the restriction of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 which does not lay a firm foundation for later work. Gifted and talented students make good progress. They play instruments, sing to a high standard and take part in activities such as the choir, orchestra and African drumming. School concerts are well supported. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls or between different ethnic groups. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language do well in music. The department makes a good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
184. Work seen during the inspection shows that by the end of Year 9, students of all abilities make progress and achieve well compared with their prior learning. Higher attaining students understand musical terminology and use keyboards well. Lower attaining

students are less secure and rely more on teacher support. Singing, composing and appraisal are underdeveloped however. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is average and students achieve satisfactorily. Students find difficulty developing their compositions and coping with the listening tests because of the lack of preparation in Years 7 to 9.

185. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 9 because of the teacher's good subject knowledge and high expectations. Year 7 students improve their knowledge of 'Carmen' by discussing the music and how it reflects the attitudes of the main characters. Careful planning allows Year 8 students to sing along to rock and roll songs whilst playing keyboard accompaniments. When planning is less effective, students become restless, as happened in a Year 9 lesson where additional activities could have helped to keep students interested and on task. In all years, students rely on keyboards. They successfully follow the New Music Matters course recently introduced. Students of all abilities are well motivated and try hard to improve their keyboard skills. Unfortunately, students have not been taught how to use the sequencing and recording system on the keyboards effectively.
186. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 10 and 11 so that practical skills are developed to enable students to do well. This was obvious from a Year 11 song performance in three parts, which was skilfully accompanied by a student on the piano. A number of higher attaining students go weekly to Redbridge music centre and this supports their schoolwork and gives them another incentive to succeed. However, from looking through folders in both years, talking to students and listening to recorded examples, composing and listening need more work. To help address this, the department is putting on Saturday morning lessons. Even though there is only one computer in the department, all students know how to use the 16-track sequencers that are built into the keyboards.
187. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and occasional bouts of negative behaviour are soon checked so that learning is not disrupted.
188. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory because of the additional support given by a music consultant who is making a contribution to lesson planning and improving the schemes of work. Whilst keyboard playing in the new course is proving very successful, the curriculum still lacks breadth of study because there is very little composing and appraising being attempted in Years 7 to 9. Without this knowledge, students choosing GCSE are virtually starting these modules from scratch. Things are not helped by the lack of time for music in Years 8 and 9 nor by having the music department adjacent to the school hall where external examinations take place. Progress of students is not charted and assessment is rarely done. National Curriculum levels and target setting are not used and the yearly reports to parents are generic rather than personal to each student. Accommodation is cramped and the two practice rooms appear to be walk-in cupboards with no windows. Resources are good. Because of the recent support given to music, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- GCSE results are improving and, in 2002, were well above the national average.
- Leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- Teaching is very good and students make very good progress.

- Students' attitudes are very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- The indoor facilities provide a very good learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- The lack of time allocated to core physical education in Years 10 and 11.
- The absence of a dedicated theory room.
- The outdoor facilities that are cramped and of poor quality.

189. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, a high proportion of students attained A* to C grades. These results were well above the national average. Girls' and boys' results were similar. All students achieved very well in relation to their attainment at the end of Year 9. More boys than girls entered the examination. Students' results in 2002 were significantly better than those attained in their other subjects. Over time, results show a very good rising trend.
190. On entry to the school, students attain below average levels in most activities and, by the time they reach the end of Year 9, their attainment is in line with the national average. Their achievement is good and illustrates well the department's commitment to helping and extending all students. Most groups are taught in one of two sets in practical activities and this allows students to progress alongside others of similar ability. Boys in Year 7 have mastered the basic skills in badminton and have good movement around the court. Year 7 girls have good spatial awareness and a few girls are very consistent in their footwork and passing skills. Boys have above average skills in football and distribute the ball accurately in the game. Girls have good body tension and control but lack agility in gymnastics. Boys and girls in Year 9 are able to work co-operatively in small groups to warm up and stretch independently and effectively.
191. The present GCSE students are working to a standard well above the national average and their achievement is very good. Students' seating in theory lessons is well planned so that more able students can help the less able and those students for whom English is an additional language can be helped by more fluent speakers. The presentation of students' written work in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Students draw detailed diagrams and use photographs to illustrate their work. Year 11 students use subject-specific vocabulary very accurately when describing the components of fitness. When playing netball, boys and girls have excellent ball skills, although a few boys do not have secure footwork.
192. The majority of students in Years 10 and 11 in the non-examination classes attain standards above those expected nationally. The use of a local sports centre is a very good initiative that gives Year 11 students the opportunity to experience different activities in first-rate facilities. A feature of the above average attainment of students in all years is their very good knowledge and understanding of health and fitness. This is a result of consistently focused teaching of this component of the National Curriculum and the use of the well-equipped gymnasium at the sports centre.
193. A few individual students achieve very high standards in district and county competitions in athletics, cricket, netball and football. The attainment of these talented students is well above the national average and they benefit considerably from the excellent opportunities offered by the hard work and dedication of their teachers. The numbers of students who attend extra-curricular activities demonstrate the very positive attitudes and involvement of students in the subject.

194. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was very good with some excellent features, and this promoted very good learning. In the best lessons, students benefited in their learning because a wide variety of challenging tasks were set and matched to the needs of all students. Teachers addressed all four strands of the National Curriculum and the planning and pace of lessons were very good. In GCSE lessons, questioning was rigorous. Students were given many opportunities to carry out research and feedback their findings independently. Examination and test questions are frequently used and marked very constructively. This helps students to fully understand the examination requirements. Teachers recap previous work and share the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson with the students. This improves students' learning by giving them a specific focus. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and their demonstrations give students a clear visual image of the activity and show them how to improve their skills. One unsatisfactory lesson was observed during the inspection. Teaching in this lesson lacked pace and energy and students' progress was hindered by the lack of progressive activities planned. There is a clear focus on developing literacy skills. Key words and objectives are displayed around the department but strategies for the development of numeracy and ICT are not as regularly used.
195. The head of department provides clear educational direction and excellent leadership for the subject. He leads by excellent example with his teaching and manages the department very well. For example, he has several very good strategies to monitor teaching and to provide regular support for department members. The issues raised in the previous report have been fully addressed, and improvement since then has been very good. Assessments for Years 7 to 9 are secure and linked to students' self-assessment. Sports-specific criteria have not yet been developed for all activities. GCSE students are well informed about their performance and future targets. The department makes a very good contribution to students' social, moral and cultural development. Very good links with local primary schools have been developed through the sports co-ordinator programme. The examinations and the junior sports leaders award (JSLA) are very good extensions to the curriculum. However, the allocation of students to the JSLA course is not sufficiently well managed. The indoor accommodation allows higher standards of performance to be attained. However, the open-plan sloping courts and the small, muddy playing fields considerably limit the performance of students. There is no dedicated room for the teaching of the theoretical aspects of the subject and not enough use is made of ICT. The time allocation for students in Years 10 and 11 who are not taking a GCSE in physical education is insufficient to improve their standards or to keep them fit and healthy.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory** because there is inadequate provision for students in Years 10 to 11.

Strengths

- Very good teaching overall.
- The lessons in Years 7 to 9 have strong content drawn from world religions.
- The students have a positive attitude to their study.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient time to meet the statutory requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 10 and 11. It was the same at the last inspection.
- There is some inconsistency in the marking of students' books and so they are not always clear on how they can make further progress in their work.

196. A small number of students took the GCSE course in Year 2002. Although it is not statistically significant, their results are at least above national averages as all seven of them gained the higher grades of A* to C. There are no results from previous years as there has not been an option group for some time.

197. The standard of work seen during the inspection for those doing the GCSE course is similarly above average. From the lessons and from their books, it is clear that the students have a good knowledge of Islam and Hinduism, the two religions that they are studying. The students have a good grasp of the central beliefs of Hindus and Muslims and they understand how these beliefs work themselves out, both on a personal level in the lives of the believers and in the community. Students talk meaningfully about many of the important rites of passage in the two religions and they have a developed understanding of the function and purpose of religious buildings. Students have a good understanding of the viewpoints the two religions put forward on a wide variety of moral and social issues such as abortion, justice and equality. Most demonstrate a good range of skills. Their developed and extended writing is strong and they are also good at expressing themselves verbally. Students think through many of the issues brought up by their course and express opinions with confidence. The number of students in the option group is small, about 20 in total in Years 10 and 11. The standard of attainment for the rest of the students in Years 10 and 11, that is the vast majority of students, is below the standards indicated in the locally agreed syllabus. This is due to the very limited amount of time they have for their study. The amount of written work produced by this large group is very small and, overall, they have not added anything substantial to the knowledge and understanding developed when they were in Years 7 to 9.

198. The standard of attainment at the end of Year 9 is above the standards indicated in the locally agreed syllabus. Students have a strong knowledge of the central beliefs of a significant number of world religions including Christianity, Sikhism, Islam and Hinduism. They understand many concepts which are common to many religions, such as significant symbols, festivals, deities and pilgrimage. Students use religious language in a meaningful way and they can relate religious belief to many issues which are common to human existence, such as creation and the beginning of things, and issues surrounding survival and life after death. Students appreciate the importance of religious belief to many societies and communities and they see how their own understanding might differ from someone else's. Students have a good range of skills. Their written skills are strong and they can plan and write essays readily. Students are good at thinking through many issues brought up by their study and express their own viewpoints and opinions in a confident and clear way.

199. The achievement of the students in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE option group is very good. Teachers work hard to raise their levels of attainment and so the students progress very well in their work. The achievement of the students in Years 10 and 11 who do religious education as part of the personal, social and health education programme is unsatisfactory due to insufficient time. The achievement of students who have special educational needs is good as is the achievement of the more able and the gifted and talented students, though the former sometimes need help with tasks and the latter are not always stretched enough. The progress of students who have English as an additional language is very good. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
200. Overall, the teaching in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE group is very good overall, sometimes good and sometimes excellent. All lessons are very well prepared and teaching includes a wide and varied range of methods and activities to put across the learning content. As a result, the students take an interest in their work and are always well behaved. They concentrate well and maintain this concentration effectively. The pace of the lessons is fast and so the students learn a lot in the time available. The expectations in the lessons are generally appropriate for the ability range of the students, though additional structured tasks and extension work could enhance the learning of the less able and the more able.
201. Where teaching is excellent, it clearly brings out the relevance the learning might have to the students' own lives and experiences. In the good teaching, this aspect is not so significant. A particular characteristic of all the teaching is the strong, explicit content drawn from world religions. The atmosphere in the lessons is always purposeful and the relationships are positive, both between the teacher and students and amongst students themselves. Students respect one another's viewpoints and opinions.
202. Some ICT work is used for research and wordprocessing. Homework is set regularly. At times, the marking of students' work is inconsistent and so they do not always know how they can make improvements in their work. Teaching makes a significant contribution to the standards of literacy through very good use of texts and provision of extended written tasks and discussion opportunities. Teaching also makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision, for example in the study of moral codes in world religions. There is insufficient evidence to make a comment about the standard of teaching of religious education within the personal, social and health education programme as a very limited number of lessons were timetabled during the time of the inspection. The few that were observed were very good overall.
203. Leadership and management are good. The staffing is good for the present needs of the department. Statutory requirements are being met in Years 7 to 9 but not in Years 10 and 11 in that there is insufficient time to teach the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. The same situation pertained at the last inspection and there has been no progress on this since then. Progress on other issues since the last inspection has been good. Statutory requirements are now being met in the sixth form and the standards of attainment in Years 7 to 9 and in the GCSE group are above what they were then. Evaluative and investigative skills have also improved. Resources are good and accommodation is very good.

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

In the inspection, 13 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.

GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Chemistry	3	-	43	-	5	-	0.77
Communication studies	1	100	-	-	-	2.00	-
Mathematics	14	29	62	-	15	0.36	1.51

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 and design	6	83	96	33	46	4.33	6.57
Biology	19	74	88	11	34	3.05	5.25
Business studies	28	68	92	7	32	2.64	5.50
Chemistry	10	100	90	20	43	3.80	5.90
Classical studies	5	80	95	-	49	2.40	6.51
Communication studies	23	87	93	4	31	3.39	5.53
Computer studies	21	90	86	24	23	4.38	4.62
Drama	8	100	99	75	38	9.00	6.59
English literature	22	77	95	5	37	3.09	5.91
Geography	4	50	92	-	38	1.00	5.74
History	3	67	88	-	35	1.33	5.45
Mathematics	19	84	87	26	43	4.63	5.80
Other languages	4	-	93	-	56	-	6.84
Other social studies	19	79	87	11	34	3.26	5.30
Physics	13	69	88	8	40	3.54	5.67
Sociology	17	88	86	24	35	4.35	5.32

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9.00	12.24
Business	14	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.71	10.45

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The school offers mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics at AS- and A-level. All these subjects received a full inspection.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Standards at A-level are well above average.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching and learning are good.
- Students have very good attitudes to work and apply themselves conscientiously to study.
- Very detailed student tracking data assists monitoring of progress.

Areas for improvement

- Targets in reports are too general and need to be more specific to assist progress.
- Support for lower attaining students, including in the marking of work, could be better.
- There are not enough opportunities for discussion in lessons in order to enhance understanding.

204. Current attainment is well above average and achievement is very good. At A-level in 2001, there were fewer higher grades than in previous years, and results were below national averages. The 2002 unvalidated A-level data indicate substantial improvement, with over 80 per cent of candidates gaining grades A or B, and with only one not attaining at least a grade E. Overall, this represents very good achievement when compared to students' prior performance at GCSE. There was no significant difference between the performances of boys and girls or of different ethnic groups. Mathematics is a popular subject amongst Asian students. Though the overall AS-level performance in 2001 had been good when compared to students' prior attainment, a significant number did not continue with mathematics to A-level as many attained only U-grades. However, most of these students did not achieve higher grades at GCSE either. The 2002 AS-level results show some improvement but a substantial minority of students still did not attain at least a grade E. Of sixth-form students who retook GCSE in 2002, one third gained C and one third D grades. This performance was sound.

205. The teaching and learning of mathematics are good. The modular courses are taught by specialist teachers whose subject knowledge is very good. Lessons are thoroughly planned and there is clear exposition of topics, as in a Year 13 lesson on vectors, and a Year 12 lesson on regression lines. Good use of the overhead projector is made for three-dimensional geometry. Students receive comprehensive notes, supplemented on

occasion by commercially produced information. Lessons tend to be dominated by the teacher explaining material, giving limited time for discussion or investigation, partly attributable to the pressures experienced in completing three modules in Year 12. A very good Year 13 lesson on use of the product rule in calculus did promote interchange of ideas, enhancing understanding more effectively.

206. Classes have a positive working atmosphere, promoting good learning. Students listen attentively and, because of their carefully taken notes and through their very good application to assignments, both in and beyond lesson time, they learn well. Most display written work very clearly, analysis is logical and there is good progression through exercises. Individually or co-operatively, students work well. Within the rich ethnic mix, there is a high proportion of Asian students. Both genders and all ethnic groups are well integrated and there are no significant differences in attitude, interest or application to study.
207. Marking of homework exercises and tests is efficient. Much additional work undertaken by students is self-assessed, encouraging independent learning. This work, however, does need more careful checking by teachers, particularly for students who have difficulties in the subject since their mistakes or misunderstandings can persist, inevitably lowering performance. This could be contributory to the large number of students who get poor results at AS-level. With no key skills provision in the sixth form either, the provision and support in mathematics for lower attaining students merit review. GCSE resit classes are timetabled and have successfully enabled students to achieve higher GCSE grades.
208. The department is well led and resourced, with a dedicated computer room, but this is currently underused for sixth-form studies. As yet, there are no interactive whiteboards. Record keeping is extensive. The vast quantity of student data, including by gender and ethnicity, facilitates regular tracking of performance and is increasingly being used for monitoring and target setting. Targets, however, are still too generic and need to be more specific. Performance management is fully implemented, though lesson observations tend to be by senior staff only. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There are very many good features in the department on which to build and to sustain and further develop current performance.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Results last summer (2002) show considerable improvement on those in 2001.
- The standard of work seen in Year 13 is average and most students show a clear sense of responsibility for their own progress.
- Teaching overall is good and students are very productive. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Lessons have clear objectives and are well structured, enabling students to learn well.
- The subject is very well led.

Areas for improvement

- The learning opportunities for students are limited by insufficient practical work and work that emphasises interpretation of graphical data and use of ICT.
- Too few students make oral or clearly audible contributions in lessons to explain their thinking.

209. The GCE A-level examination results in the summer 2002, whilst still below the national averages of 2001, showed a significant improvement over those of 2001 and those in most of the years since the last inspection. Most students who took the examination gained a pass grade but the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was well below the 2001 national average. In relation to their GCSE results, most students performed a little better than expected. There are no significant differences between the results of male and female students over time.
210. The standards of work seen in Year 13 are sound, at around the national average, but students are achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. They have sound understanding of processes such as photosynthesis and bioaccumulation. In one Year 13 lesson, students correctly described the effect of photosynthesis on the primary productivity of plants. In another lesson on pollution and toxicity, some students discussed how toxic materials accumulate at each stage of the food chain, a process known as bioaccumulation, with confidence. Students in another lesson calculated the approximate area of a leaf and used the leaf area index formula correctly. They were less confident in explaining why the index has no units and whether calculating area in cm^2 or m^2 made a difference to the value of the index.
211. The standard of work seen in Year 12 is high. Students are achieving well and are successfully building on their GCSE knowledge and understanding. In one Year 12 lesson, most students effectively described the cardiac cycle. They knew well the structure of the heart and could explain how the blood circulates. Higher attaining students understood the concept of double circulation and the functions of the valves in this process. Most were less sure about explaining the increase or decrease of pressure during the process.
212. Teaching overall is good with some very good features. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They plan lessons well. Lessons have clear objectives and good structure. As a consequence, students are very well motivated and engage fully with the activities and tasks in hand. Activities are appropriate and generally match the requirements of the syllabus and students' prior achievement. Expectations are high and lessons are well paced. Students respond well to these challenges. They work hard in lessons and are very productive. Questioning is generally good but, too often, teachers accept inaudible and one-word answers, often having to repeat students' responses so that others can note what was said. Teachers accept answers from the same two or three students too often and do not attempt or expect to involve all. As a result, many remain passive in lessons. Marking of test questions and homework is good and teachers provide good written and oral feedback to students. In some lessons, however, the teaching style is limited and is dominated by the 'chalk and talk' model. In such lessons, learning is limited and progress is unsatisfactory. In some lessons, the plenary at the end does not fully connect with learning objectives for the lesson.
213. The biology curriculum is good and students get very good guidance and support in preparing for their external examinations. More opportunities to participate actively in lessons and more use of ICT skills in lessons are needed to enhance learning. The subject is very well led and effectively managed. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- The results in the summer of 2002 were a significant improvement on those of 2001.
- Current standards are high and signify very good improvement since the last inspection.
- Students have a good grasp of ideas in chemistry and many are able to apply this knowledge in answering questions. They achieve very well.
- Teaching overall is very good and this helps students to learn effectively.
- Students are motivated and apply themselves well to tasks.
- The subject is very well led.

Areas for improvement

- Some students tend to be passive in lessons and lack confidence in contributing to class discussion, and they are not always brought into the discussion by teachers.
- There is not enough emphasis on interpretation of graphical data, and this could enhance learning opportunities for students.

214. The GCE A-level examination results last summer showed a significant improvement on those for summer 2001. About a quarter of students gained the higher grades A and B and all obtained a pass grade. These results are just below the national average for 2001 because the proportion of higher grades was lower. Students achieved well above predicted grades based on their GCSE results. The AS-level results for 2002 also indicate an upward trend, though still below the national average of 2001. Many students have improved on these grades by retaking their AS-level module examinations this year. As a result of this, the percentage of students gaining A to C grades has improved to 100 per cent.

215. The number of male and female students taking chemistry at A-level has been roughly equal over the last four years, except in 2001 when two boys and eight girls took the A-level examination. There are no significant differences in the results of males and females over time.

216. The standard of work seen in Year 13 is high and is above average. Students show very good attitudes to work and achieve very well. Most have good experimental skills and good knowledge of key concepts in chemistry. In one Year 13 class, students made accurate observations of chemical changes and carried out experiments with methyl 4-hydroxybenzoate successfully and safely. They measured liquid chemicals accurately and knew the importance of handling Bromine carefully. All were able to write the structural formula for methyl 4-hydroxybenzoate, but only two out of five were able to explain the structure with confidence.

217. The standard of work seen in Year 12 is also above average. Most students have acquired good knowledge of some key areas in chemistry. In one Year 12 lesson, most students knew the difference between endothermic and exothermic reactions and understood well the effects of temperature on the kinetic energy of molecules. In another Year 12 lesson, most students demonstrated effectively their knowledge of hydrocarbons and ISOMERS. They were able to write down successfully both the chemical and the structural formulae for simple alkanes and alkenes such as methane, ethane, methene and ethene. Only some, however, knew the significance of the double bond in ethene.

218. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and show enthusiasm for chemistry. They explain concepts well. This motivates students and engages them fully with lessons. Work is pitched well, connects with prior learning and is linked to what should be achieved during the lesson. This offers a good structure for students to consolidate previous learning and to acquire new knowledge and understanding. Teachers give clear instructions and organise class experiments very well. In one Year 13 lesson, for example, clear instructions and good guidance on safety enabled students to complete a series of short experiments efficiently and safely. Lessons have good pace and classes are managed very well. Teachers provide good revision notes and ask good, probing questions. Marking of homework and other assignments is good. Sometimes the plenary at the end of the lesson does not fully revisit the learning objectives and review how well they have been met.
219. Students respond positively to the good quality of teaching they receive. Most work hard, concentrate well and are very productive. The higher attaining students make good oral contributions during class discussion. The weaker students contribute much less.
220. Teachers use a variety of teaching styles to make their lessons interesting. More active participation by students in class discussion could raise their achievement further. More opportunities and encouragement for students to communicate, explain and develop their thinking orally are needed to deepen learning and help all students to improve further.
221. The chemistry curriculum is very good. Students are prepared very well for external examinations. More use of ICT in lessons should enhance opportunities for learning. Chemistry is very well managed and led. Resources are good but accommodation is inadequate. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Physics

Overall the quality of provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Results for A-levels in terms of valued-added showed a marked improvement last summer.
- Lessons are conducted at a pace which allows all the students opportunities to develop their learning and to reinforce skills.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to increase both the breadth and the depth of the learning during lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Marking needs to be more thorough and constructive.
- The majority of students are too passive and are insufficiently actively involved. They do not display sufficient enquiry and exploration of the subject material unless directly questioned by the teacher.

222. Although the A-level results last summer were mainly in the middle to lower grades, when viewed against prior attainment at GCSE, these showed good valued-added, with the majority of the students doing better than indicated at the beginning of the course. This pattern of positive value-added has been the norm even though results have ranged between being well above to below average. The results for 2001, which were well below average and showed barely satisfactory value-added, are the exception to this pattern over time. In 2002, the vast majority of students passed, mostly gaining

grades C or D.

223. Although the teaching overall is satisfactory, individual lessons show a mixture of strengths and weaknesses and this is reflected in the learning. Whilst teachers' questioning skills are usually good, students are often insufficiently actively involved in their learning. For example, in one lesson there was some skilful use of directed questioning which ensured that every student was involved and this greatly increased the breadth and depth of the students' thinking and learning. In another lesson on reflection and refraction, the lesson started with an overlong period where there was insufficient opportunity for the students to be actively involved and the teacher did not check their understanding. The same lesson did contain a very good analogy about the change in velocity during refraction which involved all the students in fruitfully exploring the model so that it helped their understanding. Sometimes, exposition is unclear. For example, one lesson seemed to lose its direction and to be very hard to follow at one point.
224. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 approached experimental work with enthusiasm. The students were well focused on this work and were quickly able to draw the appropriate inferences and to explain their conclusions, for example in working out the relationship between the angles of the incident and reflected rays in a Year 12 lesson. The teacher's good time management during this practical work aided the positive sense of purpose.
225. A significant proportion of the written exercises undertaken had no indication of having been marked by the teacher nor of being checked by the students. There was also very little in the way of constructive comments which would indicate to an individual student what he/she needed to do to improve the quality of the work. This is an area of teaching where there is a need for improvement.
226. Students are attentive during lessons but tend to be too passive. They are not sufficiently questioning of the subject material nor are they seeking real depth in their learning and understanding unless prompted. The skilful use of questioning by the teachers did bring about the required student involvement and depth of thought at the time but it usually had to be led by the teacher. The ability to work and learn independently needs to be developed further for the majority of students.
227. The relatively newly appointed head of physics has already identified some areas which need to be developed, for example some points arising from the most recent AS- and A-level results. She is very positive about the working relationship with the other teacher involved, a deputy headteacher, and values his advice. The head of department is energetic, enthusiastic and eagerly seeks advice which will aid development. However, some of the monitoring procedures, such as checking on the quality of marking, need to be more formalised.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The school offers a design and technology course in product design. Within this course, there are two options: resistant materials and textiles. Neither option was inspected in depth, though one lesson in each of the two product design options was sampled, and both were very good. In both, teachers had very high expectations, and very good demonstrations were used to show new processes. Students are highly motivated and are eager to investigate and experiment. For example, one student in the resistant materials option was making a lounge chair, which required extensive modelling and trials to test out the design. In the textiles group, students strive to attain very high standards, even at the first attempt at a new process.

However, students rely too heavily on the Internet to gain information, although they are encouraged, and expected, to go out and undertake their own research. Nonetheless, students achieve well in both product design options.

BUSINESS

Three business courses are offered in the sixth form: Intermediate GNVQ; vocational A-level; and AS- and A-level, and they are all increasing in popularity. The main focus of the inspection was on the AS- and A-level business studies courses, though other courses were sampled and are also reported on below.

Business education

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

Strengths

- Teachers are enthusiastic, well managed and work effectively as a team to support their students.
- Examination results for 2002 showed a significant improvement compared to those from the previous four years.
- Students are very responsive and keen to learn, showing great persistence even when faced with difficult challenges.
- Planning is thorough and the department has great potential for further improvements.

Areas for improvement

- Though development planning reflects the school's priorities on improving teaching and learning, these have not yet been implemented to further develop teaching and learning.
- Insufficient use is made of visits to, and visitors from, business and industry or modern technologies to improve learning.

228. A-level examination results in 2001 were well below average, though in the two years prior to this, they were above national averages. Last year's A-level results were a great improvement on the 2001 results with a 100 per cent pass rate, including 33 per cent A and B grades. These results compare well with the national averages of 2001 and are similar to results in 2000 and 1999. Smaller number of students took the vocational A-level in business and finance in 2002 and all passed. The 2002 results for intermediate GNVQ business and finance were good, though there were no distinctions, but most students gained a merit and the remainder passed. The GNVQ course caters very well for students who do less well in their GCSEs and a significant number have gone on to advanced courses and ultimately to university. The overwhelming majority of students on all courses came from minority ethnic backgrounds.

229. Standards of work, particularly from those students in Year 13, are average. A minority of students show high levels of attainment. Achievement is good. Students successfully apply business concepts, such as stakeholder analysis and tests of business viability, to a range of contexts. Their files are comprehensive and well ordered, containing sound notes and many examination practice papers. More able Year 12 students make rapid progress in building up fluent written answers, and all students are prepared to contribute to discussions and answer questions. Oral work of weaker students is better reasoned and more thoroughly explained than their written work.

230. Students on all business courses were positive about the subject in terms of what they learn and how they are taught. They also said that they find the subject is very useful as

a direct preparation for further study and employment and as an aid to understanding contemporary events.

231. Teaching is good and business courses are well planned. In the vocational A-level course, there is good sequencing of activities to build up student competence to complete assignments, and teachers work hard to boost the confidence of students on the intermediate course. Teachers are well qualified and work very hard to continue to improve their planning and organisation of learning. Particular efforts are made to develop the numerical skills essential to a good understanding of business decision making. The meanings and applications of business are clearly communicated but the pace of some lessons is too slow. Coursework opportunities are used well to develop skills of independent learning but there are insufficient opportunities for students to benefit from industrial visits, and inputs from the local business community. Opportunities are missed to engage students in deeper and more extended discussion in such important moral and ethical topics as globalisation. Teachers are always very approachable and support is readily offered to students. Marking of work is largely thorough, although some of the written feedback could be expanded. Teachers have worked hard to ensure that students are well prepared for their examinations but do not always clearly identify appropriate learning outcomes from individual lessons.
232. Business courses are making an ever more significant contribution to the sixth-form curriculum. The leadership and management of the department are good. The senior management team offers good support and has worked very effectively with the department to eradicate the cause of some underperformance in the past. Current efforts have focused on improving the quality of examination preparation. Though the departmental development plan now reflects the objectives of the school improvement plan, insufficient attention has been paid to developing and refining a range of teaching strategies which take into account preferred learning styles and background cultures.
233. Classrooms used for business studies are scattered throughout the school, with only two dedicated to the subject. The effectiveness of teaching business uses of ICT could be enhanced by the availability of modern equipment such as interactive whiteboards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The school offers a vocational A-level course in ICT as well as a GNVQ course at intermediate level. Neither course was inspected in depth, though two lessons, one in the GNVQ course and one in the AVCE course, were sampled. Students choosing ICT in the sixth form have below average attainment on entry to the course. Their achievement is good, however. The A-level results in 2001 were slightly below average. AVCE results in 2002 were good, with all students passing and a high proportion gaining grades A or B. These results also show that students' performance was above expectation from their standard on entry. The quality of teaching in the lessons sampled was good in one and very good in the other. In both, good subject knowledge and well-structured activities helped students to make tangible gains in their learning.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The school offers an advanced GNVQ course in leisure and tourism and AS- and A-level courses in physical education. The latter were inspected in depth and the leisure and tourism course was sampled. Results in leisure and tourism are good and reflect the good quality of teaching and learning seen in the lesson observed.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Attainment at both AS-level and A-level is above average and students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment.
- The excellent relationships between students and staff benefit students' learning.
- Students also benefit from very effective monitoring and guidance from teachers.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The leadership within the physical education department is very good.

Areas for improvement

- To develop the use of ICT to enhance learning, and to further improve standards.
- To have a specialist classroom to deliver the theory aspects of the subject.
- To recruit more students onto the AS- and A-level courses.
- To include physical education in the enrichment programme for all students.

234. The most recent AS-level examination results in 2002 were above the national average for 2001 with a high proportion of students attaining A to C grades. No student attained an A grade but 100 per cent attained within the range of A to E grades. The cohort was small with only six students taking the examination. In the A-level examination, results were also above the national average for 2001 with 100 per cent of students attaining within the range of A to C grades, but again, the cohort was small, with only three students taking the examination. There was no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in either examination or between students from different ethnic groups. There are no students with special educational needs taking AS- or A-level physical education/sports studies courses in the sixth form.
235. In 2001, there were no entries for the A-level examination but AS-level results were above the national average with the four students all attaining within the A to E range of grades. Again, there were no A grades, but three students attained B or C grades. Prior attainment of students undertaking the AS- and A-level examinations is below the national norm, hence, their achievement is very good. The subject also performs very well when compared to other subjects in the school. There are five students in each year entered for examinations in 2003.
236. From evidence obtained during the inspection, standards of work are above average. Students are producing written work which is mostly above, or in line with, their predicted grades. Their work is well organised and appropriate to the syllabus and they make good progress during the two years. Their use of technical terms, punctuation and grammar is good. Topics have been well researched and students demonstrate a sound understanding of the subject. This is particularly evident in their study of contemporary issues and in the work done on their chosen sport for their personal performance plan. In Year 12, students do not make good use of ICT and, although there is some improvement in Year 13, it is still not used extensively.
237. No practical sessions were observed during the inspection. In theory lessons, all students are keen to answer questions using correct vocabulary and technical terms. They develop a good understanding of effects of the media on sporting behaviour and are able to compare competitors and spectators in America with those in Great Britain.

They talk confidently about the characteristics of the three phases of learning and use practical demonstrations to illustrate these. Students understand and use key words such as visual, cognitive and autonomous.

238. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The enthusiastic teacher shares objectives for the lesson and makes sure that students are clear about what is expected of them. He makes very good use of targeted questions, including questions pitched at different ability levels, to ensure that all students are involved in the lesson and are able to develop their knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned, the teacher has very good subject knowledge and marking is constructive so that students know what they have to do to improve. Activities are contextualised by the use of role models or real examples so that students can relate to them. For example, the use of the video recording to illustrate the effects of the media on sporting behaviour and the practical application of the three phases of learning in a sport using rugby and golf to illustrate these. Students make good use of the 'physical education file check' which helps them to focus on areas of strength as well as to target areas for improvement. Assessment procedures involve a variety of methods that build progressively on students' knowledge and give them confidence to undertake more demanding tasks.
239. Students have a responsible attitude to their work, relationships are excellent and they are very enthusiastic and obviously enjoy the subject.
240. The department is well led and managed. The syllabus is carefully structured and planned, and AS- and A-level results are analysed in great detail in order to inform points for action and targets for the following year. Staff are deployed according to their expertise, and continuing professional development ensures they keep up to date with examination work.
241. Progress since the last inspection, when standards in A-level examinations were below the norm, has been good. Engagement of students is good, although only small numbers opt for the subject. There is no opportunity for sixth-form students to take part in recreational physical education.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No courses relating to this area are offered by the school.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Courses currently offered by the school include art, drama and media studies. Art and drama were inspected in depth but some media studies lessons were sampled. Teaching in these lessons was good, hence, students made good progress. A-level results in media studies tend to be good and mostly above average.

Art

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

Strengths

- Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject and determination to raise standards.
- Lessons are well planned and presented.
- The positive attitudes of students make a good contribution to their learning.
- The use of ICT and computer-aided design is developing well.

Areas for improvement

- Strategies to raise attainment and to improve recruitment.
- Teaching styles do not sufficiently promote independent learning.
- Assessment is insufficiently related to examination criteria and absolute standards.
- Provision for visits, work experience and links to other school subjects and outside agencies.
- Accommodation is inadequate and there is no provision exclusively for sixth-form use.

242. The department currently offers art at AS- and A-level, AVCE level and GNVQ intermediate and advanced courses. A-level results were below average in 2001 and, in 2002, student numbers were too low to make meaningful comparisons with national standards. However, most students taking the AVCE and the GNVQ intermediate courses gained good results in 2002. Standards of work seen in the vocational courses, and in the A-level courses are average, and most students are working towards course expectations. Levels of attainment cover a wide range from well below to above average across the courses. All students in Years 12 and 13 are making at least satisfactory progress, and some are making good progress. Most students are achieving appropriately in relation to their prior attainment and predicted grades.
243. Students have a good understanding of the use of a wide range of visual media and use their studies of well-known artists to develop their own styles and techniques. They also work from drawings that they have made from direct observation. For example, students make paintings of their favourite place based on drawings and photographs of the locality. The resulting work is variable in quality, with some work showing good understanding of composition, while other work shows weak understanding of the use of tonal values to convey depth. Work in the vocational courses is characterised by rich pattern quality, for example colourful lino prints on a variety of background media are especially striking. Lively pattern work is also a strength in sketchbooks, which show the use of a good range of media and art processes, with average understanding of the art elements of line, tone, form, colour and composition. Some work is linked meaningfully to cubism but, generally, influences from artists and the major art movements are insufficiently documented; the exception was a very good personal study on the work of Lucien Freud by a student on the advanced vocational course. Students on the vocational courses produce a good body of work, showing very good investigation and experimentation skills; for example, good use of harmonious colours through lino printing onto fabric and powerful use of ethnic designs in mosaic work. The use of digital photography and electronically manipulated images is developing well in all courses, but the use of ICT, generally for annotation, graphics and personal evaluations, is underused. Although examination assessment grids are regularly referred to, students generally have lower understanding of curriculum specifications and assessment criteria than would normally be the case at sixth-form level.
244. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is never less than satisfactory and there is some good teaching. Teachers are very enthusiastic and make every effort to help students at all attainment levels to achieve their full potential. Resources are carefully prepared and aims and lesson objectives clearly stated. Teachers have appropriate expectations of their students and set challenging tasks but, in some lessons, the lack of experience and knowledge of some areas of the subject constrain progress, and inevitably attainment potential. This reduces the rigour and depth of study normally present in sixth-form work. Students need more help with study skills, and guidance on self-evaluation and self-assessment procedures. However, the quality of individual tuition is very good, as groups are small and teachers give their time generously. The enthusiasm and positive attitudes of students are a strength. There is some evidence from talking to students that they would benefit from more external visits

and course assignments that involve links with outside agencies, and other subject areas in the school.

245. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Individually, the courses and lessons are well managed. The environment is stimulating, and good quality resources promote high standards, but there is no separate art accommodation exclusively for sixth-form use. Teamwork in lessons is good, and students benefit from the interest that teachers show in their welfare. Improvements since the last inspection are just satisfactory; a good range of courses are now offered, but standards and numbers taking the subject have not significantly improved. As with the main school, it is important that staff keep up to date with subject and course requirements and assessment procedures. The profile of the subject needs promoting, in line with the school's Technology College status, to attract greater numbers of students, and the reason for the low retention rate at A-level explored. Development plans need to be more sharply focused on raising standards.

Drama

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

Strengths

- Teachers' excellent knowledge of their subject and the outstanding quality of teaching promote work of the very highest quality in lessons.
- Excellent relationships with students and the outstanding quality of individual guidance, build on high achievement at GCSE.
- The range of challenging learning activities in lessons demands the highest levels of intellectual and creative response from students who respond very well.
- The value of the subject to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and its contribution to the ethos of an ethnically diverse school are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Limited accommodation restricts the activities of classes on examination courses.
- There is scope for the department to make greater use of ICT, such as the use of digital cameras.
- The assessment of written assignments should contain more explicit reference to assessment objectives and levels of achievement so that students have precise understanding of their own learning.

246. Attainment in drama continues to be very high. The proportion continuing from AS-level to the full A-level is very high. In 2002, of the nine students entered for A-level, five obtained grade A and three obtained grade B. No students failed. The trend over the last three years has been well above national levels. The standards achieved by students are very high and are the result of teaching of exceptionally high quality. Expectations are very high so students respond positively and achieve their full potential. Current standards are very high and achievement is excellent.

247. In all of the lessons observed, the quality of the teaching and learning was excellent. All students are totally engaged in a variety of exercises which challenge fully their intellectual, physical and creative abilities. Students were observed making excellent progress in a range of areas including, for example, voice projection, skills of movement, interpretation of scenes and characters and critical evaluations of texts. The very high quality of the teaching led them through a planned sequence of exercises so that by the end of a lesson, they had together achieved exceptionally well. Teachers modelled and demonstrated skills and techniques very effectively and gave students

confidence 'to be brave in their own performances'. The quality of the teaching ensured that lessons maintained their focus and momentum and all aims were met. Pace and creativity were exceptionally good in all lessons, for example in work on 'Blood Wedding', it was evident that students enjoyed the challenge of the lessons and they responded with great maturity. The creativity in work on 'Woyzech' was exceptional and the commitment of students was so intense that they had to be stopped 30 minutes after the lesson was supposed to have ended.

248. Relationships and collaboration were always exceptionally good so students were able to build on one another's ideas. Students take the responsibility of evaluating one another's work with honesty and maturity. A student was heard giving a presentation of the highest quality on 'The Trojan Women' with an excellent understanding of genre, theatre skills, set and lighting, costume, moral themes and characterisation. Her sharply perceptive and imaginative personal response was followed by searching questions from the rest of the group and led to a discussion of the highest quality. Folders and written assignments scrutinised indicate that the high level of practical skill observed in lessons is supported by study of history, theory and criticism of performances. Standards of written work are good, although the poor presentation in students' files and notebooks is disappointing when compared to the very high standards they set themselves in all other elements of the course. Students for whom English is an additional language receive very good help in comments on their work which enable them to investigate with more depth sophisticated issues and to express subtle and complex ideas with greater clarity. The historical and social significance of texts, 'today and in their own period', is well understood by most students and the teaching is very effective in challenging students by stressing the moral and cultural issues. The quality and range of learning experiences are extended by excellent clubs and workshops, including the A-level rehearsal club and rehearsals for school productions, for example 'Macbeth', 'Our Day Out' and Somali and Bravanese drama evenings. Groups visit the drama centre, and theatre visits have been arranged to see 'Woyzeck' and 'The Dance of Death'. Theatre companies and dance troupes have visited the school. During the week of the inspection, the culture club activities observed included Yoruba songs, a Bhangra dance class and African drum sessions. Drama makes a very valuable contribution to the culturally rich curriculum of an ethnically diverse school.
249. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. Schemes of work are very well planned and the scrutiny of students' work confirmed that examination specifications are well met. Students are very well managed. The subject is genuinely inclusive in its philosophy and there is an excellent atmosphere in all lessons. There is a very clear sense of educational direction which is shared by the two drama teachers. There is a strong sense of shared ethos and good collaboration. The leadership of the subject is both thoughtful and enthusiastic. However, the accommodation is insufficient to meet needs. There is scope for the department to make more use of ICT, such as digital cameras, so that students can see their performances and edit and revise what they are doing.
250. The high standards reported in the last inspection have improved further and, overall, progress has been good because of the excellence of the teaching which promotes attainment of the highest quality. The skill and commitment of the teachers indicate that the progress will be maintained.

HUMANITIES

Geography, psychology and sociology are all offered at AS- and A-level and all these courses were inspected in depth. The school also offers AS- and A-level courses in history and law. These were only sampled. The quality of teaching and learning in the sampled lessons was good. A-level results in law were relatively good in 2002 as all students passed, the vast majority gaining a grade B or C. In history, all students gained a pass grade in 2002, though there were few who gained the higher grades of A and B.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Lessons have a very clear structure and are well planned and resourced.
- Students work hard and enjoy their studies; relationships and conduct are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at AS- and A-level examinations are low.
- ICT does not have sufficient prominence in both teaching and learning.

251. Geography caters for ten students following AS-level courses. A further five are now preparing for A-level examinations in 2003. Similar numbers of females and males choose to study geography. Total numbers vary from year to year but, in recent years, groups completing the A-level course have been around four or five. In the last two years, AS-level cohort numbers have increased and include more students than in previous years with higher attainment on entry to the course, most having attained higher grades at GCSE in geography.

252. From 1998 to 2001, when comparisons can be made with schools nationally, students did significantly less well in geography than in their other subjects and less well than students of geography did nationally. Results were well below those of schools nationally. Standards attained in 2002 do not show any substantial change from this pattern. There is not a trend of improving attainment year on year, as there is nationally. There is evidence of higher standards being attained this year; students currently in their second A-level year have raised their AS-level grades by choosing to re-sit AS-level examinations while studying the A-level course. Almost all have now attained the highest AS-level grades. Entry numbers are too small to allow comparisons of achievement by gender.

253. The observation of students in lessons and analysis of their work show above average standards, reflecting the higher prior attainment levels of recent recruits to the subject. Since the students started on the courses with above average levels of GCSE attainment, these standards represent satisfactory progress.

254. Students show good knowledge, both in physical and human geography. They select and extract data from source materials satisfactorily and organise this well in a format which supports structured, extended writing for examination answers. Students have a good understanding of ways of analysing examination questions and using these in planning their responses. They use complex subject vocabulary with facility and accuracy and draw well on their earlier learning in studying new topics. Even so, levels

of understanding, for example of key concepts of location and development factors for

shanty towns, are not high enough for sixth-form study. Students' literacy needs are well supported by strong focus on advanced subject vocabulary and terms such as 'deprivation', 'gentrification' and 'infrastructure' are employed appropriately with ease and understanding. However, greater emphasis is needed to develop breadth of experience in graphical skills.

255. Independent study standards are sound and use is made of ICT in private and home study. There is only limited use of ICT equipment during lessons and this limits learning. Students work with confidence individually and co-operate very well in group activities.
256. All teaching is good. Lessons have a clear structure. Resources, whether in the form of text, maps or the students' existing knowledge, are used very effectively. Internet sources are employed very well to provide relevant, topical and interesting information, statistics, photographs and articles to challenge higher attaining students and extend others. There are good opportunities for independent study. All teachers show very good subject knowledge, not only through what they say, but also in how they check students' learning and give effective support to students experiencing difficulties with their learning. Assessment tasks are carefully marked and students are given good verbal guidance, which they value, on how to improve. Monitoring of students' progress is good, both in lessons day-to-day and through assessment of individual research and study tasks, including work done at home. Students feel that more consistent use of examination grades in assessment of routine work would give them a clearer understanding of their progress towards examination targets. Students do not have a clear enough focus on their individual targets.
257. Geography makes a very important contribution to development of moral, social and cultural learning. Economic, political and social awareness is developed very well. Study of rural change enhances knowledge of life in other parts of Britain and an appreciation that rural issues differ from those of a metropolitan area.
258. Students learn well. Male and female students, of all ethnic backgrounds, display very positive attitudes and conduct, work equally hard and relate very well to peers and teachers. Relationships, conduct and mutual support of students and teachers ensure learning can proceed at a good pace without loss of time and this raises standards. Students are highly motivated to succeed. They enjoy the subject and speak highly of the quality of teaching, support and encouragement they receive. Fieldwork opportunities, particularly the study of rural change in Cambridgeshire villages, is a valued part of the Year 12 course that makes a good contribution to improving understanding of geographical theory. Students can talk authoritatively on the aspects of the course they have studied. They make equally good progress with physical and human elements of the courses. There is sound growth in geographical maturity, both in oral work and in writing, particularly during the second A-level year. Students find the AS-level course largely similar in content and requirements to their GCSE studies but find the substantially different requirements of the A-level course very demanding. AS-level students are not currently working at a level high enough to achieve their anticipated grades.
259. Work in the subject is soundly led and managed. Under a new head, the department has good capacity for further improvement. Teachers are well motivated and strongly focused on achieving good results for their students. Resources are sound, but not enough use is made of new technologies to enhance teaching and learning. Hardware for video, computer and interactive teaching is unsatisfactory and needlessly limits teaching and learning styles. Library provision does not adequately support sixth-form study. There has not yet been sufficient improvement since the previous inspection.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Results at A-level are increasingly good.
- The attitudes and behaviour of students are almost always excellent.
- The department makes very good use of target setting to enhance achievement.
- Marking of students' work is consistently good, so that students know how to improve.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The small size of the teaching rooms in which psychology is taught limits the effectiveness of the increasingly wide and effective range of learning opportunities being provided by the department.

260. Increasing numbers of students are studying psychology. All 26 entrants to A-level psychology in 2002 passed. This was the first year group which followed a new psychology syllabus. Lesson observation and the analysis of students' work indicate that attainment is above average and that the proportion of students attaining higher grades is likely to increase. Departmental data show that a majority of students are exceeding the grades predicted by their GCSE results, and achievement is very good. There is no apparent difference between boys and girls, or of minority ethnic students. The very good use of spoken English in lessons by students identified as having English as their second language is evidence of the very good progress they have made.

261. Teaching is very good overall and all seen was good or very good. Very good subject knowledge leads to confident and enthusiastic exposition. There is very good use of questioning, which promotes reflective learning among the students. The relationships teachers have with students are excellent. Teachers are thus able to create a climate for learning in which students take a large measure of responsibility for their learning, and work independently. As a result, students also become a learning resource to each other. A wide range of learning opportunities is provided. As well as an effective use of direct teaching, students work confidently in pairs and groups. Opportunities for reflection and discussion form a significant part of lessons. There is vigorous and passionate debate, for example about the ethics of research on humans and animals, such as Little Albert and Pavlov's dog. The subject thus contributes significantly to students' personal development, including their moral and social development.

262. Students carry out their own learning research. For instance, students use the Internet as a valuable resource to visit websites covering topics which are being studied, such as compliance in human behaviour. The department is committed to finding ways of further enhancing the use of ICT. Students' learning is consolidated very well through groups of students taking turns to prepare and compete in successfully arguing the case for and against views, for example in the nature versus nurture debate. Their progress is evident in the way in which they make use of arguments from research about which they have already learned.

263. The department has a very good handbook, which provides an effective structure to the provision of the subject. It includes a good departmental development plan, which demonstrates the department's commitment to continuous improvement. Long- and short-term planning is very good, enabling a rigorous approach to be taken to teaching. The use of target setting is excellent. It includes analysis by prior attainment, ethnicity and stage of English language development. As a result, teachers are able to focus

effectively on the progress of individuals. Awareness of their personal targets, combined with the very good marking of their work, enables students to adopt a self-critical approach to their learning, and to know exactly what they must do to improve.

264. The curriculum offers wide exposure to the various models of psychological theory. It is well suited to the needs of the students. Project work, for example on sex stereotyping in television advertising, gives students some exposure to the use of statistics. Their interest, and competence as psychologists, could be further enhanced through being given more opportunities for practical psychology experiments than are required in the syllabus.

265. The subject leader has an excellent understanding of the value of the subject to students, and its place in the curriculum. She provides a clear vision of its development at the school, and provides very good leadership and management. Accommodation, however, has an adverse impact on teaching and learning as rooms are often too small for group sizes.

266. Although psychology was not specifically mentioned in the last report, the department has successfully taken the opportunity to provide a wider range of learning opportunities for post-16 students, in order to promote independent learning. Students taking psychology now demonstrate a high level of personal responsibility in their learning. In this respect, the department has made very good progress.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Students' achievement is good in relation to their prior attainment.
- Teaching and learning are good and students are very well supported in their learning.
- The subject is well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Students do not use ICT as a tool for research.
- Students are given insufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.

267. Results at A-level over the past four years have been below national averages, both in terms of the higher grades and in terms of average point scores. During these years, there have been considerably more female students studying sociology than males and girls outperformed boys by a wider margin than nationally.

268. Observation of lessons and a scrutiny of samples of students' work show that, currently, standards are now in line with national averages and achievement is good. Year 12 students have acquired a basic understanding of key sociological concepts and definitions. They have a good knowledge of sociological theories of the family and education. They are developing a sociological vocabulary. They are learning how to design research, to form clear aims and to anticipate problems. Research projects are topical, for instance they address such questions as 'why do boys underperform in education?' and 'has secularism led to an increase in divorce and cohabitation?' Year 13 students have a good knowledge and understanding of contemporary social processes and structures, specifically in their area of study, namely religion and crime and deviance. They know and understand about concepts and theories drawn from different sociological traditions, for example Marxism. They use a range of evidence to generate and support discussions about social life. They are developing a critical

attitude towards sources of evidence and towards social and political issues. Essay writing, though, is not well developed for all students. Much of what they write is descriptive rather than evaluative, particularly in Year 12. Overall, there was a lack of evidence of wider reading. They do not use ICT as a tool for research. Students do not read widely enough, either from sociology journals or from the wide range of sociology books and research available on the Internet. They rely on support material put together for them by their teachers. There were very few examples of case study material in their folders, for example, or of students taking notes from their own researched material. Students have good oral skills and there is clear progression in thinking and in learning.

269. Teaching and learning are good. Good subject knowledge and expertise are used to motivate and inform students. Lessons are well planned with appropriate learning outcomes. Lesson time is used productively, as was seen in a Year 13 class where the focus was on the evaluation of evidence, which the teacher had identified as a weakness. Teachers' marking is thorough, and detailed comments are made, designed to improve progress. Assessment is regular and students feel very well supported. Relationships are extremely positive and underpin the work of the department. Teachers structure students' learning very tightly with writing frames and carefully designed worksheets. However, whilst these are appropriate for some lower attaining students or those for whom English is not sufficiently fluent to cope with sociological debate, higher attaining students need more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.

270. The department is well led by a recently appointed subject co-ordinator who shares the sixth-form sociology teaching with another teacher. There is regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and of the sociology curriculum with effective action taken to improve standards. Schemes of work are clear and detailed and assessment procedures are very good. Take-up rates for the study of sociology in the sixth form have increased and students have an excellent view of their sociology experience.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The school currently offers A- and AS-level courses in English literature and classical studies. Both of these subjects were inspected in depth. Sixth-form courses in modern foreign languages will be available from next September.

English

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

Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge of their subjects and their relationships with their students are very good.
- The quality of the marking and assessment, which is the basis of good guidance received by students at AS-level and GCE A-level.
- Good teaching of students taking GCSE English in the sixth form.
- English makes a very valuable contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to their personal, social and citizenship education, preparing them for life in a culturally and ethnically diverse society.

Areas for improvement

- Students with low previous attainment are not as independent and responsible for their own learning as they could be.
- The challenge and the pace of learning in some lessons are not as good as in the majority.

271. Results at AS-level and at A-level, which have been below the national level, have improved because of good teaching. The staying-on rate for A2-level improved from 70 per cent in 2001 to 90 per cent in 2002. In the last year, all students taking A-level English literature passed and five per cent of students achieved a grade B.

272. In 2002, GCE A-level results were below average. However, the trend over the last two years has been one of improvement. Of 25 students entered in 2002, five per cent gained the higher grades A or B and none failed to pass. The staying-on rate from AS-level to A2-level (the full A-level GCE) is now better than the national average. The attainment of most students on entry to the AS-level course is low and, although their attainment remains lower than national norms, good teaching helps these students to make good, individual progress.

273. The standard of teaching is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teachers have a good conceptual grasp of their subject and good technical teaching skills. Basic skills are well taught and lessons include elements to improve the literacy of students, particularly those for whom English is an additional language. Lessons are prepared thoroughly and contain a variety of related activities for the whole class, for small groups and for individuals, with a mixture of note-making, discussion and textual analysis. Written work seen during the inspection included good examples of opportunities for personal response and for creative writing, for example in imitating a gothic style. Lessons are well organised and students receive clear and helpful guidance about ways to approach texts, for example in a lesson on 'The Raven', which included opportunities for creative writing and made good use of DVD recording. The most able students respond well and explore ideas or defend their judgements with some confidence, but this was not true of all students in the lessons observed. Some lower attaining students offered limited answers and were less clear and confident in their ability to express their views, for example in a Year 12 lesson on 'Jane Eyre'. Observation of students in lessons and an analysis of samples of their work indicate that achievement seen in lessons is good for these students, but the pace of the lessons is slower than would be expected at this level. Academic written work analysed was of satisfactory quality and reflected good progress for them over the two years. The most able students show good perception when faced with challenging texts and difficult tasks. In discussion, they are able to challenge or build on one another's ideas, for example in an enjoyable Year 12 lesson debating issues raised by 'The Time Machine'. Students were learning to support their lively views with textual reference and sound critical judgements.

274. In all classes, written work is very well prepared and marked very thoroughly so that students receive precise judgements on the quality of their work and how it might be improved. Students also benefit from personal advice and tuition when needed, including help outside of lessons in the development of their coursework and in their preparation for examinations. Less able students do not use, with adequate discrimination, the material provided for their wider reading to help them understand the genre or the historical and social context of texts being studied. When interviewed, students are positive about their teaching and about their progress. Their response to the subject is very positive. The inclusive philosophy of the department requires students to work together effectively and to respect one another's views. English makes

a very valuable contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and their development as citizens in an ethnically diverse society.

275. English is well managed in the sixth form. Teachers, including the head of department and the director of the sixth form, work in teams of two. Collaboration between teachers is good, with regular discussions for curriculum planning and the sharing of good practice. Schemes of work are well planned to meet the specifications and the assessment criteria of the syllabus. The good variety of learning experiences is complemented by extra-curricular activities in which students can extend their own skills or develop their sense of responsibility by helping younger students, for example in the reading club. The quality of teaching and learning, including lesson observation and 'book looks', is monitored by the senior management team and by the head of English. Academic leadership of the subject is good. Assessment of students' progress is very thorough and accurate. The accuracy of assessment at AS- and A-level has been confirmed by the reports of external examination moderators. Assessment of students' work is used very effectively to revise their personal targets.
276. Standards of teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and the good teaching across the department indicates that there is good potential for further improvement.

Classical studies

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good or better and students make very good progress in relation to their prior learning.
- The subject makes a significant contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development, and to citizenship.
- Students greatly enjoy the subject and, particularly in Year 13, have developed commendable habits of independent learning.
- The department is enthusiastically and effectively led.
- It provides a good example of inclusivity, for example it is effective in enabling lower attaining students and those for whom English is an additional language to achieve success.

Areas for improvement

- There is not enough use made of ICT.

277. Over the past four years, examination grades have been marginally below the national average. Observation and analysis of students' work suggest that attainment now at least matches this. There is no apparent difference between boys and girls, or of minority ethnic students. Some students exceeded the grades predicted from their GCSE results (over 37 per cent in 2002). This suggests that the department very successfully enables students of differing (including lower) prior attainment to gain success from studying Greek and Roman civilisation. It is also a measure of the value which the department adds. Those students who had the benefit of learning classics in Years 10 to 11 appear to attain better in the sixth form because of the very good grounding they received in the subject.
278. The quality of teaching is very good and is the main factor in the success which students gain. Teachers, through the very good relationships which they have with the

students, create a very positive learning environment in lessons. This is a major factor in the very good progress which students make. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge, and enthuse the students with their commitment to the subject. Their good use of questioning adds pace and challenge to lessons. They have developed good strategies for enabling students for whom English is an additional language to understand the sometimes complex linguistic structures often found in translations of Greek and Latin texts. This has the positive effect of supporting the development of students' own competence in English. In particular, the focus on literary criticism in lessons helps them learn how to use English to understand and express mood and emotion. Their increasingly confident use of spoken English in lessons is evidence of the progress they are making. Marking of students' work is a strong feature. Helpful comments are consistently included which make clear to students how they can improve.

279. Students all say they like the subject and feel it is meaningful to them personally. Students in Year 13, particularly, have developed commendable habits of independent learning. They are very keen to take responsibility for their own progress, suggesting ways in which they believe they can progress. Two students prepared a talk on the topicality of Juvenal, prepared a wordprocessed summary and delivered a high quality seminar to the class. Students frequently refer to texts they have read when making the case for their own point of view. For example, a Year 12 student reminded the class about the 'shades' in Homer's 'Odyssey' in order to make a point about the common Roman belief in ghosts, being discussed in a class reading of one of Pliny's letters.
280. Students make very good use of the regular opportunities, which arise from reading classical texts, to reflect on moral and social issues. For example, a reading of Aristophanes' play, 'Ekklesiazousai', led to a vigorous discussion about the place of women in society, while a reading of Euripides' play, 'Alcestis', led students to share views on the duty to sacrifice one's own needs for the good of children or the elderly. In ways such as this, the subject makes a significant contribution to students' moral and social development, and to their ideas about citizenship.
281. The curriculum provided is effective in promoting standards. It is supported by extra-curricular activities such as visits to the theatre to see Greek plays, for example Aristophanes' 'Wasps', or to a university to hear a lecture on Juvenal. The use of ICT, evident from displays in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, requires further development in the sixth form. The department is well led and managed, and enthusiastically promotes the value of the subject. It has maintained its high standards since the last inspection.