

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FOREST HILL SCHOOL**

Forest Hill, London

LEA area: Lewisham

Unique reference number: 100745

Headteacher: Mr P Walsh

Reporting inspector: Mr R Passant  
2728

Dates of inspection: 11 - 15 November 2002

Inspection number: 249587

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 11 to 19 years  
Gender of pupils: Male (sixth form: mixed)

School address: Dacres Road  
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London

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Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Ms L Thauoos

Date of previous inspection: 7 February 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2728	Roderick Passant	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion Citizenship Drama	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11041	Marvyn Moore	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31218	Thomas Allen	Team inspector	Geography	
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
10984	Pamela Bishop	Team inspector	Biology (sixth form) Science	
12825	Niall Carr	Team inspector	Physical education	
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	English as an additional language Religious education Religious education (sixth form)	
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Business education (sixth form)	
18261	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Special educational needs Art Art (sixth form)	
24026	Celia Holland	Team inspector	Music	
7958	Georgina Lewis	Team inspector	Media studies (sixth form)	

28097	Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)	
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Design and technology	
1990	Graham Preston	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Information and communication technology (sixth form)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
15971	Michael Pye	Team inspector	History Politics (sixth form)	
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English English (sixth form)	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Forest Hill is a larger than average comprehensive school for boys aged 11 to 19. A small number of girls join the sixth form, which is run as a consortium with two other schools. There are about 1149 pupils on roll including 220 pupils in the sixth form. The school is a popular school and demand for places exceeds the number available. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is fully comprehensive as measured by the local education authority. The attainment on entry to the school, using the scores of the National Curriculum tests taken in Year 6 of primary school, is well below average. Just under a third of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. The school has a diverse ethnic population. The largest groups are white UK British (37 per cent), Black or Black British from a variety of backgrounds (11 per cent), Black or Black British Caribbean 6.7 per cent. There are in addition Asian or Asian British –Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi pupils as well as some Chinese and pupils from other ethnic groups. There are 18 refugees from Kosovo in school. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is high. The main languages spoken, other than English, are Turkish, Albanian, Yoruba and Bengali. Eight of these pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition. The percentage of pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs (31 per cent) is well above average as is the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs. The school draws its pupils from some 67 primary schools from a wide geographic range. The school received a School Achievement Award recently to recognise its increased examination success. It has also received recognition as an Investor in People and its work in the arts and sport. The percentage of pupils going onto further education is above the national average.

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

Forest Hill is a good school with many very good and some excellent features. Pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and standards are improving year by year. Overall standards in GCSE examinations are above those achieved in similar schools but below the national average. Behaviour and the attitudes of pupils are good. The relationships throughout the school are very good. High quality care and support ensure that pupils are known, valued and supported to achieve. Excellent leadership by the headteacher, supported by the teamwork of a highly effective senior management team ensures that there is a sustained focus on raising standards and the school functions very well as a community. The quality of teaching is good. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils are known, valued, cared for and supported very effectively in order that they can achieve well.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, supported by highly effective senior management creates a strong ethos within the school, which is focused on achievement and respect for others. The school values and develops effectively the partnership with parents and has established excellent links with the local community.
- Overall, pupils have good attitudes to work, they behave well -often very well; the relationships between pupils and staff and pupils are very good.
- Teachers work hard to teach interesting material well. Teaching is good.
- The quality of the curriculum, supported by very good opportunities outside the formal lessons, provides pupils with a good range of learning experiences.

#### **What could be improved**

- Standards in some subjects in GCSE examinations, particularly mathematics, science and English so that they match national averages.
- Making better use of assessment information within the classroom so that pupils are even clearer about what they have to do in order to improve their work and grades.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to raise achievement, particularly in literacy skills and to support learning in most subjects and meet National Curriculum requirements.
- Aspects of the accommodation, particularly in science, physical education and music but also in some classrooms, the general circulation areas and boys' toilet accommodation.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall there has been very good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the key areas of leadership and management and the quality of teaching and learning. Behaviour and attitudes of younger pupils have improved. Standards in GCSE and National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are rising at a rate above the national rate.

### STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
GCSE examinations	D	D	D	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
A levels/AS-levels	E	E	C*		

\* The 2002 school data for A2/AS levels is compared to 2001 national data. At the time of publication 2002 national comparative information is not available

The school has a balanced intake using local education authority criteria but the overall attainment is well below average. Standards in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are rising at a rate above the national average. Standards in English are broadly in line with the national average and well above average compared to similar schools. Given their starting point pupils' achievement is very good in English. Standards in mathematics by the end of Year 9 are below average but represent satisfactory achievement given their starting point. Standards in mathematics are above average compared to similar schools. In science, pupils achieve well. Results are well above average compared to similar schools but below national averages. Over the last three years there has been steady improvement in all three subjects.

GCSE results show year by year improvement over the past three years. In 2002 the percentage of pupils gaining 5 A\* to C grades was 42 per cent, very close to but just below average, as was the average point score. Since 2000 there has been a yearly five per cent improvement in the percentage of pupils gaining 5 A\* to C grades. Standards are below average in English, mathematics science, ICT, modern languages, geography, and music. They are average in drama, and design and technology. In art, citizenship, history, physical education and religious education standards are above average.

Overall pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs so that they achieve well. Black Caribbean pupils attain less well than Black African British pupils and pupils from dual or mixed heritage but this is linked mainly to prior low attainment. In lessons pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds made progress similar to that of their classmates. The school is working very well with these pupils to raise their self-esteem. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. Pupils who work steadily but might be overlooked, the school's quiet achieving pupils, are recognised and encouraged, as are gifted and talented pupils through extension and enrichment activities. As yet the work with these pupils has not yet had time to substantially affect examination results although 25 per cent of pupils in 2002 achieved 8 A\* to C grades. The yearly improvement has been achieved by rigorous target setting for departments and for pupils.

Pupils have good oral skills and reading is positively encouraged in the school. Writing skills are below average and this hinders some pupils and restricts their attainment.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall, behaviour is good. The majority of pupils behave well for most of the time. Procedures for monitoring behaviour are very good.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships across the school, between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. The provision for pupils' development is very good.
Attendance	Satisfactory, achieved by very good procedures and close monitoring.

There is a high number of fixed term exclusions. Pupils from ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented. The school uses this procedure to involve parents and prevent reoccurrence of poor behaviour.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	good	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.*

Good teaching is seen across the school and in all subjects. In no subject was teaching unsatisfactory overall. Teaching is underpinned by good relationships. There has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. Very few unsatisfactory lessons were seen and a significant amount of very good teaching. Literacy skills are taught well in most subjects. Numeracy skills are satisfactory. Teachers know the pupils and plan well for those pupils with additional needs. The school has a deep commitment to equal opportunities and works hard to engage all pupils in learning. ICT is not used enough to support learning. Better use could be made of assessment information so that pupils have a clear idea of what they have to do in order to improve their work. Learning is hampered by the quality of the school environment; particularly in some subject areas such as science and physical education and in the dismal quality of circulation areas.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good opportunities for learning are provided for pupils. The one weakness is the lack of opportunities to develop ICT skills.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school is transition. Diagnosis of need is good. Currently, because of changes to funding arrangements, the school is without a specialist to advise and provide strategic support. Overall, the provision is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural	This is very good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' very good attitudes and the respect they have for others' points of view. The school is a strong community in which pupils are encouraged to take

development	responsibility.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a particular strength of the school. There is high quality support and care for pupils that is focused on helping them achieve.

The partnership with parents is very good and parents hold the school in high regard. The school is not meeting statutory requirements with regard to ICT or collective worship. Assemblies are held twice a week and they have a strong moral and social context.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school has a clear sense of direction with its focus on raising standards of attainment. Overall, leadership and management across the school are very good. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. The senior management team are very effective.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is effective. They are committed and very supportive and know the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has very effective systems to monitor all aspects of its work, particularly teaching and the behaviour of pupils.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of the resources it has and overall use of funding is effective and creative.

There is a good match of staff to the curriculum. Staff are very good role models and in their diversity reflect the school's community. Parents spoke positively of the number of female teachers at the school and felt that their presence contributed to the fact that there was an absence of 'laddish' behaviour in the school. Resources, apart from those for ICT, are adequate. The library has developed as a focal point in the school and requires additional investment. Accommodation is poor for some subjects. Circulation areas are dismal. Overall, the quality of the environment does not support teachers' efforts in stimulating interest in learning.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The fact that their sons liked school and was making good progress.</li> <li>The school expected their children to do their best and that the school works closely with them.</li> <li>They were confident to approach the school if there was a problem.</li> <li>They were also pleased with teaching, and the fact that the school was led and managed well.</li> </ul>	<p>A minority of parents had concerns about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homework.</li> <li>The range of extra-curricular activities.</li> <li>Behaviour.</li> <li>Information about their sons' progress.</li> </ul>

The inspection supports parents' very positive views of the school. Homework is satisfactory. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Overall, behaviour is good and incidents are managed well. There are very good opportunities to discuss pupils progress in parents' meeting and academic review days. School reports are very good.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form of this larger than average size school has 220 students and is expanding helped by its membership of the long established Hillside Sixth Form Consortium. Substantial numbers of students take up different courses across the three participating schools and at any time, over a third of students studying at Forest Hill is drawn from the other schools. The sixth form is a culturally and ethnically diverse community with around a quarter of its students having Asian, African, Caribbean and Turkish-Cypriot backgrounds and the remainder almost equally having Black British and white British origins. A comparatively high proportion of students are drawn from less economically advantaged backgrounds and about a half receive local authority educational support grants.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The Consortium has a clear identity and within that the Forest Hill sixth form sustains a very positive and strongly inclusive ethos reflective of the whole school. The range of courses is very good and the consortium arrangements allow students to take advantage of that range across the three schools. Efforts continue to achieve a better balance between general and vocational courses. In the Forest Hill sixth form most teaching is good and in half of lessons is very good and excellent, with students achieving well in most subjects. Media studies, religious education and the arts are areas of particular success. In recent years, pupils taking Intermediate and Foundation level vocational courses attain standards close to national average. Past A level results have clearly been below national average but have significantly improved recently to be closer to those nationally. The sixth form, as part of the Consortium, has made greater efforts to monitor students' progress more carefully and ensure that students are following appropriate courses. This work continues. The effective school monitoring and good student attitudes help ensure satisfactory attendance and retention rates.

**Strengths**

- Standards have improved recently and most students achieve well.
- The membership of the local sixth form consortium provides a much wider than average range of courses.
- Teaching is good in most subjects and courses. There are particular strengths in teaching in media studies, religious education and art and design.
- The sixth form tutor system is well led and it provides very good educational and personal support to students.
- Key skills are well provided for one-year students and communication key skill accreditation is facilitated for those who need it at Advanced level.

**What could be improved**

- The monitoring and assessment of student progress are much improved, though good practice is not yet fully embedded in all subjects and courses.
- The use of ICT is less developed in non-vocational courses and higher level ICT key skill accreditation has yet to be implemented.
- Responsibility for course and subject management is unclear at times making accountability more difficult.
- The school does not meet the religious education (RE) requirement.
- The quality of the accommodation.

*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 judgements about provision, and comment
<b>English</b>	<b>Good.</b> Standards have steadily improved and are broadly in line with national average. Teaching is good and makes a significant contribution to students achieving well from a modest start.
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Satisfactory.</b> There has been a significant increase in numbers taking the subject. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and students are achieving appropriately.
<b>Biology</b>	<b>Good.</b> Biology is now taught within the sixth form and the very good teaching is ensuring that students make good progress.
<b>ICT</b>	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards are below national average though the mostly good teaching helps students achieve well.
<b>Media studies</b>	<b>Very good.</b> Teaching is a particular strength in this very popular subject and results in students working with considerable independence and achieving very well in both the vocational and general courses. Standards are at least in line with those nationally.
<b>Business studies</b>	<b>Good.</b> Teaching and learning in lessons and work seen results in good progress overall on AS and GNVQ business courses, although standards are well below the national average because of students' low GCSE starting points.
<b>Art and design</b>	<b>Good.</b> The very good leadership has brought about an improvement in standards and these are now in line with those nationally. The very positive student attitudes and very good teaching lead to students achieving very well.
<b>Government and politics</b>	<b>Good.</b> Students are attaining standards close to national average as a result of good teaching and learning.
<b>Religious education</b>	<b>Good.</b> The excellent subject leadership and very good teaching ensure students to make good progress and attain standards in line with those nationally.

*Inspectors make overall judgements of the provision in subjects and courses in the range: Outstanding, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, very weak*

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Students are well supported through the tutorial system which is well organised by the head of sixth form. A particular strength is the advice and guidance they receive about higher education and has contributed to the significant increase in those successfully applying to university. The consortium has responded well to the need for more rigorous monitoring of students' progress with regular assessment and review points, though this has still to be fully embedded in the subjects and courses.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The long established Hillside Consortium has good management systems that fully involve the school in the curricular, pastoral and financial arrangements. These ensure that most courses are viable and delivered at the most appropriate sixth form centre. Arrangements for course and leadership vary considerably between subject areas and make accountability unclear at times.

## 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"> <li>• Students enjoy being in the sixth form and believe they are taught very well.</li> <li>• Although there is no sixth form council, students believe that staff are very approachable and listen and respond to student views.</li> <li>• They value the wide range of courses available and think they received clear and appropriate guidance about those courses.</li> <li>• They feel they are well supported by the tutor system and can rely on strong help and support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They greatly value the advice and guidance concerning higher education but feel that wider careers advice is less strong.</li> <li>• While they often have very good activities and visits as part of their courses the range of outside activities and enrichment courses is more limited.</li> </ul>

Inspection confirmed students' positive views about the quality of teaching and the effective support systems. The school does arrange prompt access to careers interviews and helps students prepare well for applications to university, college or employment, though recognises the need for more general careers information. The school feels that the questionnaires would have indicated a different response regarding careers advice next term when the careers focus is on Year 12 and 13. The Consortium is in the process of further improving the number of extra-curricular activities.

## 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 pupils' achievements**

**Overall pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Standards at GCSE are below average compared to national results but are above average compared to similar schools. They have improved each year for the past three years and are improving at a rate above the national rate of improvement.**

1. There are several reasons why the school is successfully raising pupils' attainment. The school has at its long-term aim attaining standards in GCSE examinations that match national averages, and it sets realistic targets as steps in achieving this standard. In addition it also expects departments to set targets which they aspire to gain. These aspirational targets mean that departments are continually raising their expectations. Through departmental reviews, departments are held accountable for the results that they achieve. This process of target setting is a significant factor in the school's making yearly improvements in its examinations.
2. Raising standards, however, can only happen if individual pupils do better. The school has very good systems to track pupils' progress and which pick up early those pupils who are having difficulties or not achieving as they should. Particular groups of pupils are identified, including those quiet achievers who cause little problems but are coasting quietly. Senior staff meet these pupils and provide mentoring support, setting targets. Much happens informally in the corridor, with a quiet word acknowledging particular achievement in a lesson.
3. The school provides a rich range of opportunities for achieving success other than academic. The gains in self-esteem that emanate from the sports hall or drama studio spills over into the pupil's academic achievement. The school provides high quality care and support for all pupils. The support is focused sharply on enabling them to achieve within school. The school is a community in which expectations are clear. There are high expectations of behaviour and respect for others. Part of that respect is the recognition that others have the right to learn undisturbed. Most pupils meet these expectations.
4. Pupils' standards of attainment in numeracy are average overall. Years 7, 8 and 9 have benefited from their experience of the National Numeracy Strategy in primary schools, and overall they show good facility in their calculations. Two groups observed showed confidence in dealing with number operations and in investigating statistical calculations. Younger pupils have better numeracy skills than those preparing for GCSE examinations. Generally, however, pupils' numeracy skills support their work well in many subjects. Most pupils use calculators efficiently and sensibly.
5. In science, higher-attaining pupils' graphical skills enhance their interpretation of distance-time graphs. They use their manipulative algebra skills well in working with equations involving moments and forces. Lower-attaining pupils preparing for GCSE courses in science, however, are sometimes hampered by their lack of confidence in calculations. In geography, the pupils' application of their statistical skills supports their GCSE work. Younger pupils enhance their understanding of scale and location through working with maps and co-ordinates. Accuracy in measurement, estimation skills and scale drawing are well supported in design and technology and in physical education pupils of all age groups are at ease in using numbers to interpret and evaluate progress.
6. Pupils reach good standards in speaking and listening, explaining, describing or answering questions. They give extended answers and speak confidently. The librarian plays a very significant role in developing literacy across the curriculum and works very closely with departments, such as English, science and special needs, to promote reading and research skills. Overall, writing skills are below average. Whilst the good promotion of literacy is

supporting improved standards, the progress of individual pupils remains handicapped by their below average written language.

7. Overall, pupils who are identified as having special educational needs are generally well supported by the school's provision for them and they generally make progress similar to that of others in their classes. This is particularly evident when they are supported by teacher assistants and where class teachers are working hard to include these pupils fully in their lessons. Where they are withdrawn for additional literacy support they benefit from very good, well-targeted teaching and make at least good progress in those lessons. In some subject departments, such as history, geography and modern foreign languages, the withdrawal of pupils for literacy support slows down their progress in those subjects and requires review in order that the literacy support is in a form that enables, rather than restricts, access to the aspect of the curriculum they are missing.
8. The school has identified pupils who are particularly gifted or talented. The programme is particularly well managed and has successfully helped create an ethos not only success is recognised but where trying to succeed is accepted. Departments are aware of which pupils can manage additional challenge and there are good enrichment opportunities outside the formal curriculum. In English, and in mathematics until recently, pupils have been encouraged to take GCSE early. Although not achieving the higher grades, members of the English staff consider that pupils make enormous gains in personal confidence as a result.
9. Overall, the provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory. Pupils who receive individual support make progress that matches their abilities. Some of these pupils are underachieving in terms of GCSE results because their command of English does not allow them to sufficiently access the higher grades. This is often due to their lack of vocabulary or familiarity with idiomatic English.
10. The numbers in specific minority ethnic groups are often too small to make valid comparisons in performance at GCSE. Generally Black African British pupils do well, as do pupils from mixed heritage. Generally UK pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds do as well in lessons as other pupils. Statistically Black Caribbean British pupils perform least well as a group. This fact has been picked up on by the school and some excellent work was observed of a teacher working with a specific group of black Caribbean boys to raise their aspirations and set their own goals. The boys were articulate, well-balanced and clearly recognised the importance of gaining qualifications. They also recognised how difficult it was to change attitudes resulting from stereotyping. The teacher worked particularly well to raise these pupils' sense of self-esteem in an excellent atmosphere of trust.
11. Overall, pupils achieve well in the school. Parents are clear about this. The returns to the questionnaire indicate that 94 per cent of parents strongly agreed or tended to agree with the statement that their children were making good progress. Ninety-seven per cent of parents felt the school expected their child to work hard and achieve his best.

## **Sixth form**

**Results in 2002 show significant improvement over 2001 where results were well below average. The majority of students achieve well in relation to their often modest success at GCSE.**

12. In 2002, the sixth form results significantly improved when compared with those in the previous year. In that year, students taking the equivalent of two or more A level courses attained an average points score of just over 10, which was well below the national average of around 17 points for all post-16 providers. In summer 2002 the provisional results indicate that students' average points score rose to 14.8, which represented a 50 per cent improvement. On average, students taking the Advanced vocational courses (AVCE) performed slightly better in terms of point score. One-year sixth students taking one of the Foundation or Intermediate courses had a success rate similar to that nationally.

13. A considerable number of students start their sixth form courses with modest GCSE results and the most recent results show that the great majority of students performed considerably better than expected. The school, as part of the Hillside Consortium, uses an externally provided A Level Information System (ALIS) as a means of predicting Advanced level performance based on GCSE results. In 2002 nearly three quarters of students performed better than those predictions.
14. During the inspection, nine subjects and courses were observed in detail and standards were judged to be broadly similar to the most recent results. In the general and vocational advanced level courses in media studies, English literature, government and politics, art and design and religious education, standards are in line with national averages. In almost all the courses, students are making good progress, with those taking media studies and art and design achieving very well. Much of this is a result of the good and very good teaching in the sixth form.
15. There is an increasing emphasis on ensuring that all students have the key skills accreditation in communication, application of number and information and communication technology. This is successfully achieved in one-year courses, where all students complete the key skills accreditation as part of their courses. Only one key skill, in communication, is taken by those students not otherwise gaining qualifications in English but all those who completed the key skill at level 3 were successful.
16. In the current year the size of the sixth form has increased to 220 students, reflecting the increased popularity of school. Retention rates, expressed as the proportion of enrolled students who complete their studies are good, with over 90 percent of students doing so.

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

**Pupils' behaviour at school is generally good and they have good attitudes to school. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. Attendance is satisfactory.**

17. The school promotes pupils' personal development very well. This has a very positive impact on pupils' progress, and relationships between pupils and staff are very good. Pupils find the school to be a happy place, and they feel secure and safe within its environment. In almost all lessons observed during the inspection week pupils behaved well, often very well, displayed interest and enthusiasm in their activities and enjoyed what they were doing. Pupils have a noticeable respect for the feelings of others, and display tolerance and patience. Relationships between pupils' groups are very good. Pupils in the upper school often give advice and guidance to younger pupils, are trained as mentors and counsellors and act as good role models. The school has a strong sense of being a unified community which works hard to include all pupils. There is a noticeable lack of 'laddish', 'macho' behaviour by the boys.
18. Pupils realise that the school expects a high standard of behaviour from them and, in the main, respond positively as a result. Pupils' behaviour outside lessons is generally good. Most pupils behave well for most of the time. Pupils move about the school in an orderly fashion and although some jostling is inevitable as a result of cramped corridors, pupils' behaviour at recreation and lunchtime is good. Pupils socialise well together in the dining hall, and in the main display sensible behaviour in the recreation areas. Some silly behaviour was noticed during the inspection week and there are occasional more serious incidents where individual pupils overstep the school's rules that are clearly established and consistently reinforced. Members of staff manage these incidents effectively when they occur. Generally teachers, pupils and non-teaching staff co-operate together to a high level. Pupils have a good respect for their own, other people's and the school's property. Computers, library books and ancillary equipment are treated with respect, and the school is graffiti and litter free, and no vandalism is in evidence. Incidents of bullying are very rare. Pupils and parents said that if it occurred the school dealt with it swiftly and effectively.



19. The school has had only a small number of permanent exclusions (four in the previous year). These are only given for good reason, and procedures are always followed. The rate of fixed term exclusions in the last academic year has been high. To some extent this can be explained by the fact that the school uses the procedure of fixed term exclusions to involve parents and to develop a partnership approach to address the particular problem. Generally this 'shock treatment' is effective in that most offenders do not re-offend and overall behaviour is evidently good. Because the school is a well-ordered community it is easy to forget that there are vulnerable pupils who can be disruptive and who do not accept the rules of the school community. However, given the school's evident deep commitment to equal opportunities, the school does need to question why pupils from specific ethnic minorities are subject a greater number of fixed term exclusions than you would expect given their actual numbers in school and whether there are other strategies that could be adopted to reduce the fixed term exclusion rate.
20. Attendance at 92.9 per cent is above average and is improving as a result of the school investment in time and energy setting up priority measures to improve attendance. The school uses an electronic system of registration, but does not have the OMR (Optical Marking Recording System) for marking registers, and therefore time is spent transferring information to the computer system. Registers are marked accurately and comply with legislation, and the school monitors attendance on the first day of absence basis by dedicated office staff. Most lessons start on time.
21. Pupils with special educational needs demonstrate good attitude and behaviour throughout the school. Although a minority of pupils demonstrate challenging behaviour because of the nature of their special needs, they are supported well in the school because teachers and support staff are very effective in dealing with their behaviour problems. The attendance rates for pupils with special education needs are similar to those of other pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language are generally highly motivated and this contributes very well to their overall progress.
22. The school's aim that pupils should take up successfully 'the roles of citizens of the future' is well understood by staff and pupils, and is exemplified by their behaviour in daily life at the school.

## **Sixth form**

### **Most students are, highly motivated and have very good attitudes.**

23. Sixth form students display very good attitudes to the school and are generally highly motivated to achieve good examination results and work hard. They pay close attention, come to lessons on time and complete course work promptly and well. Behaviour in sixth form lessons is very good. There have been no exclusions in the sixth form, and many students demonstrate dedication and maturity to their work. The development of personal and study skills in the sixth form is very good. Sixth formers are proud of their school, the work they produce, and they aim to succeed. Students give the school a good level of support, act as mentors and are good role models.

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

**The quality of teaching is good. It is good across the school and good teaching was seen in all subjects. There is a significant proportion of very good and sometimes excellent teaching and very little was unsatisfactory. There has been very good improvement in the overall quality of teaching since the last inspection, when there was a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.**

24. The good teaching is underpinned by the good relationships between pupils and their teachers. Teachers know the pupils well and use this knowledge in the classroom effectively to ensure that they are appropriately challenged and supported. Classroom management is good. Teachers are confident, very secure in their subject knowledge and manage pupils well. Pupils' behaviour in

lessons is good because teachers effectively establish what is expected and are consistent in reinforcing it. Classroom routines are established well.

25. Planning of lessons is good. The objectives of the lesson are usually clear and are shared with pupils so that they know what the lesson is about. Teachers use a variety of techniques, often careful questioning, to remind pupils of what they did before and as a consequence pupils see how this particular lesson fits into a pattern of lessons. Some teachers are particularly skilled in the way the lesson is started so that the initial activity catches pupils' interest. In lessons which are good or better, teachers also ensure that the lessons is structured carefully to include a range of activities which keep the momentum and pace of the lesson going- so that the learning time is broken down into specific 'chunks'. This ensures that pupils maintain their interest and enthusiasm throughout the lesson and that they work at a good pace and concentration. A further element that pupils said helped their learning was when it was associated with practical activities. In many lessons this happens well. Generally teachers are skilled at making ideas concrete or reinforcing the learning through a range of practical activities or exercises. They are also skilled at locating experiences within the pupils' experience so that the pupils can make the connection and see the relevance of the work. Pupils found particularly helpful the concrete nature of these activities, the fact that learning was reinforced by 'doing'. In some lessons, dealing with ideas and concepts, perhaps associated with a particular text they were studying, pupils used 'mind-mapping'<sup>1</sup> to fashion and shape their ideas. What pupils found most difficult was where teacher talk dominated the classroom, where there were long explanations and little opportunity for them to engage practically with the ideas.
26. Pupils stressed that they found discussion and working in groups and learning from classmates particularly helpful in their learning and this often happens. In a religious education Year 9 lesson, for example, a very well-structured discussion allowed pupils to develop the confidence to share their thoughts and feelings and the fundamental choices to be made in the face of religious persecution, within a safe context of exploring the theme of religious persecution in mediaeval England. In English too, group discussion is often used particularly effectively to allow pupils the opportunities to share and rehearse ideas.
27. The approach of clearly identifying the objectives of the lesson and then breaking it down into 'bite-sized chunks' after hooking pupils' interest is an approach shared by departments across the school. Lessons too are usually 'finished' effectively, often by some form of class discussion of the progress that has been made against the specific objectives. Achievement is reinforced effectively. Praise is used well to bolster pupils' self-esteem.
28. Teachers create a working environment where it is safe to make a mistake. Pupils are confident to attempt an answer without fear of ridicule by their class-mates. The teacher uses pupils' mistakes positively and pupils' contributions are valued. Most classrooms have this 'safe' work ethic and teachers work hard to support pupils growing confidence and self-esteem. The work the school has done with pupils capable of high attainment, the gifted and talented pupils, has meant that that the school has successfully created an ethos where it is not only accepted by the pupils that some pupils **achieve** but that it is also accepted that many pupils want to **try to** achieve. The ethos of competition, which is managed carefully within the physical education department has as its emphasis achieving one's 'personal best'. This concept spills over into the main school. Pupils do not sneer or ridicule others who find the work easy or difficult. The consequence is that pupils who have additional needs are integrated well into the lessons.
29. At the parents' meeting homework was a particular issue that parent wanted to discuss. The main points were the variability in the amount and quality of the work and the fact that the homework timetable was not always followed which meant that their sons were faced with a large amount of homework on a given night. One parent whose child had special needs and found it difficult to note the homework down in the time so that when parents looked at the homework book they were not able to provide the support they wanted because they could not make sense of it.

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<sup>1</sup> A particular technique in which the pupil draws a map of the ideas which are being discussed, stressing their inter-relationship.

30. Overall, the provision for homework is satisfactory. Often the setting of homework was integrated well into the overall lesson plan so that it was not a rushed process. Pupils in discussion said that homework was set regularly at the appropriate time. They also said that it was sometimes set to be handed in later in the week and if you did not do it you could get a backlog of work to catch up on. The school places appropriate emphasis on the contribution homework makes to pupils' achievement and there is regular monitoring of homework.

31. In lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9, where pupils with special educational needs are withdrawn in small groups to support their literacy development, the quality of teaching is mostly very good. The learning support teachers know the pupils well, have very good relationships with them and use their knowledge and understanding of the Key Stage 3<sup>2</sup> literacy progress units to ensure that the literacy needs of their pupils are effectively met. Teacher assistants, who give support to pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes, work very effectively with class teachers to ensure that those pupils make at least similar progress as others in their lessons. Their support is focussed on Years 7 to 9 and they act as co-tutors to all of the tutor groups in Year 7, to ease the transition of pupils with special educational needs from primary schools. All class teachers are now regarded as teachers of special educational needs and most understand their role. They are able to adapt their teaching and provide appropriate curriculum materials for the very diverse range of pupils in their classes. All staff are given the individual education plans made up for those pupils on the special needs register by the learning support team. The majority are using them well and ensuring that their lessons are fully inclusive. The learning support department is able to offer advice and guidance to subject teachers as they develop their roles within the guidelines set out in the revised Code of Practice.
32. The provision for developing literacy across the curriculum is good. There is focused intervention through the detailed literacy policy, the investment in the library services and the clarity of departmental responsibilities for embedding literacy in teaching and learning. Teachers engage pupils well in all developing pupils literacy and oral skills. Pupils reach good standards in speaking and listening, explaining, describing or answering questions. They give extended answers and speak confidently. Departments emphasise word level work through the insistence on pupils using correct terminology and spelling. For example, in physical education, key words are linked to the GCSE examination. Science makes very good use of a range of reading activities but not enough attention is not given to pupils using key words in music and geography. The librarian plays a very significant role in developing literacy across the curriculum and works very closely with departments such as English, science and special needs to promote reading and research skills. Pupils use mind-mapping well in some subjects to plan and they make good use of writing frames to organise their writing. However, writing skills are below average, as the quality of expression and use of technical errors at word and sentence level are weak. The promotion of literacy is supporting improved standards although the progress of individual pupils remains handicapped by their below average written language.
33. The identification and diagnosis of pupils' needs who have English as an additional language are well established. In the main, pupils are supported effectively in class. Pupils in the very early stages of language development receive additional lessons in literacy, and they are supported well by teaching assistants for several periods in the week. Currently the school's arrangements for English as an additional language are in transition. Because there has been a significant reduction in financial budget for this aspect of work the school currently lacks a specialist teacher who can act as consultant, support the work in classrooms and meet the specific language needs of individual pupils. However, pupils are motivated to do well and they make, overall, satisfactory progress in their learning.
34. Overall provision for numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. There is good provision within mathematics to develop the pupils' numeracy skills. The department is making effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy to develop existing number skills in Years 7,8 and 9. There are planned developments to co-ordinate numeracy provision across the curriculum. However, these are not yet in place, as a result of earlier staffing problems in mathematics. Some subjects use pupils' numerical skills well to support their work, but there is little positive enhancement of numeracy in others.

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<sup>2</sup> The term Key Stage is used to describe particular stages in children's education. Key Stage 2 describes the junior phase of education that ends at the end of Year 6. Key Stage 3 covers the first three years in secondary school that is Years 7,8,9- the lower school. Key Stage 4 covers Years 10 and 11- the upper school.

To develop the work of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies in primary schools various initiatives have been introduced in Key Stage 3 to further literacy work and to suggest particular teaching approaches for pupils aged 11 to 14- within the report these are sometimes also referred to as the Key Stage 3 strategy.

35. There are two main aspects of teaching that require further development. The first is the under-use of ICT to support learning in subjects and to provide a means of promoting achievement by helping pupils with below average writing skills present their work well. The second aspect is making even better use of marking and grade criteria and National Curriculum levels so that pupils know precisely what it is they have to do in order to improve their work.
36. There are also two additional features that are causing difficulties in pupils' learning. The first is the discontinuity caused by some withdrawal groups. For the best of motives the school operate some withdrawal groups, taking pupils out of a specific class to give additional literacy work or support work. Generally this is done on a simple rotation so that the same lessons are not missed each week. However, this is not always the case and some pupils are missing significant lessons in a specific subject such as history or geography, both of which only happen once a week. The result is that although the original aim was to develop pupils' skills so that they can have access to the full range of the curriculum, the net result is that they are missing parts of it and catching up in the specific subject that they have missed, perhaps over an extended period of time, becomes particularly difficult.
37. The other subject from which pupils seem to be withdrawn significantly is modern languages. Rather than recognising what this subject has to offer in terms of gaining literacy skills, there seems to be an assumption that modern languages is less important for these pupils requiring additional support outside the classroom. Modern languages occurs three times a week in Years 7 to 9. If a pupil misses one lesson for support work it makes it particularly difficult to catch up what was missed in the next two lessons. This means that these pupils find achieving in modern languages more difficult and they are less likely to continue the subject in the upper school.
38. The second feature, that is a handicap to learning, is the quality of teaching accommodation in some areas, particularly in physical education and science. A particularly heavy rainfall during the inspection made the indoor physical education accommodation unusable because it was wet and dangerous. In general the physical education facilities are poor. Laboratory accommodation is unsatisfactory. One class had two out of its three science lessons outside a laboratory. Other classrooms are cramped and some are in a poor state of repair and decoration, with, for example, ceiling tiles missing. Too many spaces, including major circulating areas, are dismal. The work that members of staff are doing in trying to develop pupils' interest and enthusiasm in learning is not supported by the overall quality of the school's physical environment.
39. Finally, there is an aspect related to teaching which is making a very positive contribution to pupils' achievement and learning and which parents raised and stressed. Teachers are very good role models. A particular strength of the school lies in the diversity of the staff in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. Boys gain considerably from the fact that staff include a high proportion of women, some of whom are in senior management positions, plus the fact that there is an ethnic diversity amongst the staff so that it represents the community of the school.

## **Sixth form**

**The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good. It was very good in five out of ten lessons and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen.**

40. High quality teaching ensures that pupils make good or better progress in their learning in the majority of lessons and progress is never less than satisfactory. Good teaching was seen in all subjects sampled. Teaching is good in English, biology, ICT, business education, art and design and government and politics. Teaching is very good in media studies and religious education and is satisfactory in mathematics.
41. Many of the characteristics of good teaching seen in the main school are present in the sixth form. Teachers have very positive relationships with the students and establish a good working atmosphere in class. It also means that they get to know them well and are therefore able to

provide very effective support. Teachers have high expectations, very good subject knowledge and are confident to pick up on students' queries. They present the work well, often with enthusiasm and they work hard to ensure that students are interested, involved and engaged. Questioning is good and discussions organised well. Teachers usually remind students effectively what was covered in previous lessons and in several lessons seen it was clear from the students' approach that very good teaching had led them to the point where they were able to tackle the specific task in hand with confidence. The objectives of the lesson are usually shared with students so that they have a clear map of the lesson and know how it fits into the particular unit of study. Students' independent learning skills are encouraged effectively along with the consistent fostering of their confidence. Course work assignments and homework are used satisfactorily to extend the classroom opportunities. There is a rigour about much of the work. Although lessons are timetabled for long stretches of time, lessons are planned well and structured carefully to ensure a variety of activities and approaches to engage students in the lesson, hold their attention and focus, enabling them to learn effectively. A weakness seen in mathematics teaching was that it was sometimes over-directed by the teacher so that students were not being challenged sufficiently to think.

42. As with the main school, the ethos in the sixth form is inclusive. Overall, pupils are making good progress, often achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. No particular groups of pupils are making progress different from that of the majority. There is good support for students with special educational needs within lessons and in the nature of specialist support ensures good overall progress. Pupils capable of high attainment are challenged. Most pupils with English as an additional language are fluent and they make similar progress to their peers. Pupils from ethnic minority heritage backgrounds make at least good progress.
43. The two aspects for the development of teaching in the main school are replicated in the sixth form. Greater use needs to be made of ICT to support learning across the sixth form. While the consortium has done a lot to improve the monitoring and assessment of students' progress, good practice is not yet fully embedded in all subjects and courses. Allied to this, as with the main school, is ensuring that students have a very clear idea what it is they have to do in order to improve their work, in other words, what it is they have to do, for example, to raise their essay from a C grade to a B.
44. Finally, as with the main school, aspects of the accommodation make learning more difficult. Although the overall provision in media studies is very good, teachers and students, perhaps united in adversity, have to overcome the fact that most media studies lessons take place in unsatisfactory accommodation. In science too, teachers work creatively to overcome the science accommodation limitations. In Business education, accommodation is barely satisfactory.

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

### **Main School Curriculum**

**There are clear and significant strengths in the curriculum that reflect the school's commitment to being inclusive in the way it supports the needs of all its pupils. The one major weakness is the lack of ICT use to support pupils' learning. Overall this provides good opportunities for learning to pupils.**

45. The focus of the school on good and respectful relationships, and the creation of a safe environment that respects differences of culture, race and gender, influences every aspect of the life of the school. It has a powerful impact on the growth and development of all members of the school community. It is planned, carefully structured and reinforced consistently. The school also has a strong focus on the individual pupil. The curricular opportunities for pupils are provided in three main ways. First, the formal taught lessons; second, the informal opportunities that the school provides, for example in the range of extra-curricular opportunities and in the opportunities within the daily life of the school. Finally, the curriculum support given to individual pupils. In

addition the school sees itself as a very important focus within the community and it has set out with other agencies to develop co-operative approaches to enhance the opportunities for young people within the immediate locality.

46. The quality and range of learning opportunities within the formal curriculum are good. The school makes good provision for a broad and varied curriculum in which it specifically avoids what it considers to be the more divisive banding and setting arrangements that might lead to disaffection among those pupils that would more conspicuously be identified as low attaining. Mathematics does set pupils but the preferred model in modern foreign languages and science is to have accelerated groups drawn from otherwise mixed ability groupings. Given the generally good achievement and positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils, the school appears to be successful in its strategy.
47. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in extending the taught week. The range of provision in Years 7 to 9 is good, with almost all subjects having appropriate amounts of time to deliver the National Curriculum. In order to improve pupils' basic skills, often from a low than average baseline on entry to the school, the core subjects are given proportionately greater amounts of time. Modern foreign languages provision is also given more time to better improve language skills. The arts subjects are a prominent feature of school and pupils benefit from very good experiences in drama, music and art and design. Another strong feature of provision is in sports and physical education. While design and technology is otherwise a good and developing area, food technology is not one of the strands provided by the school, though there is sufficient breadth to meet National Curriculum requirements.
48. The specific and significant curricular weakness is in information and communication technology. The school has experienced problems in establishing a team of specialists and expanding its ICT resources. While there have been improvements in both staffing and facilities, these are still too recent and limited to have brought about a major improvement in the ICT curriculum. The taught programme in Years 8 and 9 has too little time and the continuous development of knowledge and skills is disrupted by the carousel arrangement. This results in inadequate breadth and challenge in the National Curriculum programme of study. Cross-curricular use of ICT is also unsatisfactory, with the majority of subjects not using it sufficiently to enhance learning and support the development of basic skills. More recent exceptions to this are in design and technology, music and modern foreign languages particularly, where good use is made of the nearby City Learning Centre, a well equipped ICT facility.
49. Curricular provision in Years 10 to 11 is also good in terms of its range and breadth. Many of the strengths in earlier years such as a focus on core subjects and a very good arts and physical education provision all continue. In the last inspection the school did not meet requirements because religious education was not taught to all pupils in the upper school. This is now not the case. All pupils have religious education for one period per week. Furthermore, because of the very effective teaching and learning in the subject, very good use is made of the limited time to enable most pupils to gain a full GCSE in the subject.
50. The school is beginning to make better use of the greater flexibility now allowed in the curriculum for 14 to 16 year-olds. A number of higher attaining pupils are able to take two modern foreign languages while an increasing number of the whole cohort are now able to replace their foreign language study with courses that strengthen their basic skills and follow more practical and vocational options. A good example of this is the recent introduction of the full GNVQ Intermediate course in ICT, which is proving popular and successful. The development of other vocational courses has otherwise been relatively slow though it does form part of the school development planning. The lack of cross-curricular ICT also applies to Years 10 and 11, although around a third of pupils take GCSE ICT and generally make good progress. The remaining two thirds have no planned ICT opportunities that sufficiently cover the National Curriculum programme of study.
51. Careers education and the work related curriculum is good overall. Although the careers staff are not directly involved in teaching the careers programme, there is a team of specialist personal,

social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) staff who include it as part of their very strong provision. The careers service advisers visit every week and the school endeavours to arrange careers interviews for every Year 11 pupil. Work experience provision is arranged for all Year 10 pupils through the local education business partnership with effective preparation and debriefing within PSHCE lessons. Responses from employers are mostly very positive. As part of the Excellence in Cities initiative, pupils considered to be gifted and talented are involved in careers and higher education activities that encourage higher levels of aspiration, particularly with regard to higher education. Careers resources are located in the well managed library though are comparatively modest in quantity and range.

52. The provision for pupils' personal development including PSHCE is very good. The programme is structured extremely well and is taught by a trained team of dedicated teachers. The programme is very effective; it includes modules of drug awareness, relationships, civic affairs, citizenship, and sex education as well as providing very effective opportunities to explore spiritual, moral and social issues. The subject has high status in the school and makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
53. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. In the last few years, much highly successful work has been done to provide an environment where cultural differences are recognised, developed and enhanced. This can be seen in the way the curriculum of the whole school has been developed to ensure that it includes aspects of all cultural traditions represented in the school. In addition, each department has a profound awareness of the need to affirm and celebrate cultural identity. Pupils are able to understand the influences upon their own cultural traditions and have a deep respect for the cultures of others. They are open to new ideas and participate fully in the activities celebrating other cultures. There are many opportunities for pupils to be involved in activities that extend their cultural development.
54. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good overall. The influence of the school's ethos enables pupils to demonstrate their values and beliefs in a safe and supportive environment. In religious education, pupils were encouraged to share their beliefs and values with others. They did this freely and with confidence, and other pupils did show a profound respect for their views. A well-directed discussion on views about God in different religions demonstrated that pupils were prepared to explore their own beliefs and those of others, thus developing knowledge, insight and appreciation of the variety of religious principles. Assemblies take place once each week, for each house. Assemblies are not used as a vehicle for spiritual development and do not constitute collective worship. The school concentrates heavily upon moral and social issues in assemblies. Developing pupils' sense of self-worth, an important aspect of spiritual development, is an important feature of the school which is developed consistently.
55. The school has a very moral ethos which stems from the stress on respect for others. There are high expectations of behaviour and how others should be treated. The provision for moral development is very good. Within subjects, pupils explore moral dilemmas. For example, in English the exploration of units of work on homelessness (Year 9), War (Year 9) and immigration (Year 10) provide pupils with the opportunity to discuss themes as they occur in texts or, for example, geography in examining the destruction of the rainforest or world energy consumption opportunities.
56. The provision for social development is also very good. Citizenship is taught well. Pupils have very good experience of working in groups, teams and with partners. Pupils are given a good level of responsibility, and are keen to accept it. Two students from each tutor group represent the views of the pupils as a whole, on the school council, and the council looks at a wide variety of issues. Pupils in Year 9 volunteer as school mediators and are given mediation training. Half of the boys in Year 11 are given House responsibilities as prefects. They support the staff on lunch and break duty, and spend one duty period a week with a tutor group lower down the school supporting boys with homework, organisation and foster a sense of House community. Those who excel and participate in sport are lead by team captains, a House newspaper has just been commenced with one of the Houses, and Year 10 boys are asked to act as 'buddies' to younger boys, and about a third of Year 10 have taken on this responsibility.



57. The curriculum support provided for pupils with additional needs is very good. The school has established a systematic approach to identifying and targeting curriculum support to vulnerable pupils. For example, the school has established a project to work with disaffected pupils referred to it, in a carefully planned, staged approach. Individual pupils who have a specific learning need are effectively supported within the classroom and also withdrawn for specialist support. Some review of the balance of in-class support and withdrawal is required, particularly when pupils are withdrawn from lessons which only occur once in a week or from modern languages.

58. There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The learning support department (LSD) is managed well and staffed by a very good team of learning support teachers and teacher assistants who work well together to provide a very good service to pupils with special educational needs. The provision has made a good improvement from the previous inspection and is now central to the school's inclusion programme. The head of the LSD has developed a very effective programme of transition from primary Year 6 to Year 7 at Forest Hill School. A very large number of primary schools are involved in this and there is an exchange of information at meetings between primary staff and both teachers and support assistants from Forest Hill. Once pupils have been identified, teacher assistants go into Year 6 classes to learn more about future pupils. The upshot is that by the time these pupils enter Forest Hill School their special needs are known well and a relationship with staff has been formed because the teaching support assistants act as co-tutees to the new Year 7 classes. Programmes are set up and individual education plans put in place to ensure that every pupil gets off to a good start.
59. Individual education plans are set up by the head of the LSD and relayed to all staff, with copies for parents to comment on. Most of the individual education plan targets are in appropriately small steps that are attainable by the pupils and they are reviewed at least twice a year, with the pupil. Most subject departments liaise effectively with the LSD and both class teachers and teacher assistants make good use of the individual education plans in their planning. As yet, there is no requirement for departments to add their own subject-specific targets, or to interpret the given targets in the light of their own subject expertise and available resources. The department has a well-established effective literacy project. It also manages the 'supported curriculum' for pupils who are not entered for the full range of GCSEs and who take a Certificate of Educational Achievement examination in English at the end of Year 11.
60. There is very good provision for pupils who benefit from the legal protection of a statement of special educational needs. Recommendations made in their statements and annual reviews, are carried through by the learning support department from funds allocated by the local education authority. Annual reviews are carried out to guidelines set out in the revised Code of Practice. Transition reviews at age 14 include an input from specialist careers advisers, although this has sometimes required the review to be re-scheduled when the Connexions adviser has been unable to attend. Most parents attend the review with their son, and subject departments supply progress reports for the reviews. The special educational needs co-ordinator sets up and co-ordinates the reviews whilst the class tutor and teacher assistant responsible for the pupil manage them.
61. The head of the LSD has recently introduced a new initiative, the 'school action behaviour support programme', which is an early intervention programme targeting pupils whose behaviour is a cause for concern in subject departments. The pastoral staff play an important role in supporting pupils whose behaviour is affecting their progress and who come to the attention of tutors and heads of house. Heads of house set up individual behaviour programmes for staff to implement in their lessons and tutorial classes.
62. The provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory overall. Currently the school is in transition in its staffing arrangements. Currently the school lacks a specialist who can act as a consultant and provide support to teachers. There are good diagnoses of individual pupil's needs and members of staff know pupils well and plan for their support. Pupils are supported well by teacher assistants.
63. The formal taught curriculum is enhanced by the very high-quality provision for extra-curricular activities. Many are recreational but the programme includes visits, speakers, residential trips and community links. The current provision encompasses pastoral teambuilding in Wales, sports teams, outdoor and adventure activities, skiing, European exchanges and University summer school. Extended out-of-hours opportunities open to all pupils in dance, arts, music and drama which shares and celebrates pupils' creative achievement in the wider community.
64. There are very good links with neighbouring schools and very good use is made of local community resources to extend learning. For example, a couple of parents were particularly

enthusiastic about the opportunity for their son to study astronomy at the Greenwich observatory

as part of the gifted and talented programme. The school plays a very significant role within the local community and established excellent links. This was a particular required feature of the inspection and is reported in detail separately.

### ***Sixth form curriculum***

**The school as part of the consortium arrangements provides a very good range of courses. There is a growing number of vocational courses. Students with special educational needs have good and developing support by a co-ordinator and teaching assistants. Key skills are integrated well into GNVQ courses. Too little use is made of ICT. Careers guidance is mostly good. The enrichment programme is mostly through general studies and that provided by specific courses. Statutory requirements are not met with regard to teaching of religious education.**

65. The school benefits from being part of a three-school consortium and provides a very good range of courses that include 25 different courses at GCE Advanced Subsidiary (AS) and Advanced (A2) level as well as six vocational courses, some at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced level. The GCE Advanced level courses (AS, A2) include all main sciences, English language and literature, mathematics, modern foreign languages such as French, German, Spanish, media studies, psychology, sociology, law, sports studies, geography, politics, religious education, business studies, art and design, ICT, drama, performing arts, history, design and technology and general studies. There are major strengths in some areas of provision, notably media studies, art and design and religious education, where the teaching and students' achievement are often very good. Mathematics and sciences have until recently been less strong though the school's gifted and talented programme is beginning to have a positive impact, with an increasing proportion of the highest attaining students continuing their education in the sixth form.
66. The consortium also has a good and growing number of vocational courses that include business, media and communication, performing arts, science, health and social care and information and communication technology. A course in leisure and tourism has also been offered though does not currently provide a viable group. The further development of the advanced vocational (AVCE) courses has been an effective response to the need to provide more applied courses that while challenging, enable students to succeed through more practical coursework activities. The school recognises the need for this to continue, particularly through the introduction of single award AVCE courses.
67. The recent local area-wide 16-19 inspection report by Her Majesty's Inspectors noted the need to provide a wider range of provision for the lower attaining students, particularly those with special educational needs. The school, with the consortium, makes a satisfactory if narrower provision for those students through its GNVQ Foundation course in business and GNVQ Intermediate courses in business and media studies.
68. The provision for students with special educational needs is supplemented by good and developing support by a co-ordinator of students who have additional needs, either relating to specific learning difficulties or associated with students who have English as an additional language. She works with two teacher assistants, one of who is assigned to a particular student. She sets out the individual education plans, conducts regular reviews and co-ordinates the annual review of those students who have a statement in liaison with other school in the consortium. The students who are on the register of special educational needs value the provision.
69. All one year students continue to develop and be accredited for their key skills in communication, application of number and ICT. These are integrated well into all of the GNVQ courses. In common with many schools, the development of the higher level key skills for those following advanced level courses has been more problematic. Even so, the school does ensure that students not taking specific English courses continue to develop their literacy and oracy skills

through taking the key skill in communication as part of the general studies AS course. Provision for the increasingly important key skill in ICT is more mixed. Students do have access to a modest number of computers in their study area and some of the advanced courses, particularly the vocational, make some effective use of ICT. However, it is little used in many courses, in part because of limited resources and there is currently no accreditation for the key skill.

70. Currently, the consortium curriculum does not provide for religious education though there are plans for a mix of conferences and other planned activities that would meet the statutory requirement.
71. The provision for students' personal development including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. All students have a tutorial period and it is used both to provide guidance and support and cover some aspects of personal and social education. The consortium has a clear PSHCE statement that identifies student entitlement relevant aspects that include study and revision skills, health education, political and social issues and career, educational and life choices. Tutorial groups are structured by course in the belief that guidance and the PSHCE programme can be tailored to meet the varied needs of students. For example, the sixth form special educational needs co-ordinator is able to give specific support to students special educational needs by being the GNVQ Foundation tutor. Correspondingly, the advanced level students receive considerably more information and preparation for university application. This flexibility is mostly used well though it does mean that the PSHCE entitlement as outlined, can be patchy in delivery.
72. Careers education and guidance is mostly good. The tutor groups focus on helping students prepare personal statements and other information for application for further education and employment. There is very good coverage of university and other higher education with a range of visits to different universities and colleges as well as informed help in making course choices. Students taking the vocational courses also benefit from visits and visitors related to their course area and this helps provide a realistic context to their assessment activities. The head of sixth form and the tutors are very responsive to student concerns and make prompt use of the careers service advisers to help students clarify their careers and educational choices. Detailed careers information is less strong within the tutorial period and in library.
73. Although the sixth form provides very strong student support, as part of a wider consortium accommodating students from different schools, it has some features of a further education college, in that students come for specific taught courses. Students feel that there is a limited range of extra-curricular activities and there is no sixth form council. The consortium does provide occasional activities such as debates and the sixth form runs a successful football team but there is a recognition by staff that extra-curricular provision needs to be further developed. However, students are very positive about the sixth form and this is largely the result of their involvement in their courses. A number of these courses such as English, media studies, performing arts and vocational courses do in fact provide provide considerable enrichment through a range of visits and activities that include drama and music, photographic and video presentations and a range of visits and activities.

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

**Pupils are cared for and supported very well. Overall procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good.**

74. The school has a very caring and supporting ethos. The staff know their pupils well and relate very easily to them. As a result pupils learn well and with confidence, and the school provides a very effective support system for its pupils. The pastoral system works extremely well, and the two learning mentors and counsellor appointed by the school to support its pastoral programme offer a very high level of confidential advice and help to pupils, and as a result the progress they

make is enhanced. Form tutors move up the school with their own tutor group, and as a result pupils are known well by form tutors and their confidence is gained. The school takes great pains to discuss progress, achievements or difficulties with pupils, and pupils are confident in their learning that the school will help them if they have personal difficulties. The previous report identified a lack of clarity in the role of pastoral staff in supporting and extending pupils' achievement. This is now not the case. The school has undertaken a considerable amount of

work in developing the pastoral structures so that pupils are not simply supported but supported very effectively to achieve. Pastoral support and academic achievement are indivisible and mutually supportive mechanisms to ensure that pupils do not slip through the school's 'net'.

75. Parents identified the effectiveness of the management systems as the main reason why they felt that problems, if they existed, were picked up early and acted upon. Management systems, which track pupils' personal and academic achievement, are very good. There is a good interchange of information between form tutors, subject teachers and head of house and the pupils' progress is promoted very well. The result is that the school's 'net' has a particularly fine mesh. Pupils with problems, some pupils come from homes where life is difficult and challenging, vulnerable pupils, those capable of high achievement and those whose contribution is more quiet are identified, supported, chivvied or valued as appropriate. Pupils are taught to be responsible for their actions and to see this monitoring as support. All pupils receive high quality mentoring, care and support.
76. There is however, a second reason why the school is effective in picking up problems. Members of the senior management time spend a lot of time around the school, particularly at key moments, such as at the end of lessons. This has considerable benefits. Individual pupils and their particular achievements are recognised with a quick word or smile, school rules can be reinforced in a relaxed rather than confrontational manner and perhaps most importantly, senior managers are alert to influences that lie outside the school, particularly, the signifiers of gang influences and peer pressure. This investment of time means that the school anticipates problems rather than reacts to them. It forestalls issues, often creatively, for example having to change into school-provided black plimsolls if you wear trainers to school, rather than letting them grow into problems. It also means that there is constant and consistent reinforcement of what the school expects and what is not acceptable.
77. The school has very good procedures for the monitoring and promoting of good behaviour and the elimination of oppressive behaviour. The behaviour policy is fully understood by pupils, staff and parents, who support fully the school in the operation of sanctions. Sanctions are applied consistently, and the overwhelming majority of students respect the school rules, which are prominently displayed throughout the school and in each classroom, and adhere to them. The PHSCE programme, example of adults and the ethos of the school combine to ensure that good relationships and behaviour at the school are the rule rather than the exception. Pupils interviewed during the inspection week were firmly of the view that any incidents of poor behaviour and bullying were dealt with by the staff effectively and that such incidents were extremely rare.
78. The school has good procedures for promoting pupils' health, well-being and safety. The designated child protection officer is well aware of her role and duties, and has received appropriate training. She has arranged for cascade training for all other members of teaching and non-teaching staff. The school child protection policy is brief, but comprehensive, and is modelled on the procedures of the local area child protection committee. Good records are kept of pupils on the 'at risk register' and looked-after pupils. The school liaises well with the social services department.
79. The school has good arrangements for providing first-aid. Good records of accidents are kept and the school has a dedicated first-aid room. Regular health and safety audits take place, and all departments such as science, design and technology and physical education regularly carry out risk assessments. The fire alarm is tested regularly and regular fire drills are carried out and recorded. Some items of health and safety concern were reported to the senior management team, and most rectified during the inspection week.

80. The school has very good procedures for the improvement and managing of attendance. The electronic system of recording attendance with the dedicated phone line for parents to ring in to report absences, and the automated system of telephoning parents of pupils with unexplained absences on the first day of absence, fully ensure that attendance is very well monitored and is improving. In addition the appointment of the two attendance officers has had a very positive effect on the improvement of attendance figures.
81. The school has good arrangements for monitoring the personal development of pupils with special needs. Where individual education plans are in place, they are used effectively and the learning mentors and the school counsellor offers high level support to the majority of pupils whose behaviour is likely to have a serious effect on their learning. Pupils have open access to this service and their appointment has contributed to considerable success with some pupils who would otherwise have failed to benefit from their education.
82. Whole-school arrangements to assess the pupils' attainment and progress are very good, and there has been a clear improvement in practice since the last inspection. As pupils progress through the school their achievements are tracked and monitored by coherent school-wide systems. The school has a clear picture of each pupil's progress at key points and identifies underachievement swiftly. The school's inclusive ethos provides very strong support for the pupils' academic progress. Line-management structures ensure that pastoral and academic staff successfully fulfils their roles in supporting the whole-school drive to raise the pupils' attainment.
83. The school's assessment policy provides clear guidance to departments in formulating their own assessment policy and practice. Data from examinations are carefully scrutinised and analysed within and across departments. Generally departments have good centralised working records of the pupils' assessments. There are particularly good structures within religious education. However, not all departments are yet proficient in using grades and levels to inform the pupils of their progress, nor in relating their assessments to the pupils' target grades. At classroom level, assessment information is not always used well to inform teachers' planning. Although marking is frequent and regular, and often includes encouraging comments, it is not always diagnostic, nor does it always show pupils how to improve.

## **Sixth form**

**Students receive high quality advice and support and assessment systems are good.**

### ***Assessment***

84. Overall, the procedures for assessing the students' attainment and progress are good. The consortium has recently introduced key point assessments in each term. There are regular reviews of the students' progress involving both parents and students. Information on the students' achievements at the end of Year 11 is well used to set minimum and aspirational target grades for AS and A2-level examinations.
85. Most students receive regular advice and guidance from their subject teachers. The head of sixth form monitors the students' overall progress. However, in several subjects the monitoring of the students' day-to-day progress is not rigorous enough. Marking is not always related to their target grades and as a result not all students are clearly aware of how well they are doing. There are models of very good practice in some areas, for example media studies, where the wide range of activities such as self and peer evaluation, one-to-one interviews and careful moderation contribute to very accurate profiles of the students.
86. Progress in developing post-16 assessment procedures since the last inspection has been good.

### ***Advice, support and guidance***

87. The students in the sixth form receive a high quality of advice and support from the school. The school has arranged for pupils in Year 12 to receive good induction by a well-structured programme, which enables them to have a very clear indication of sixth form life, and the expectation that the school has of them for their work and behaviour. The tutor programme includes citizenship, career guidance given by the careers department and study skills. Because of staff shortages among the specialist external careers staff during the previous year, students have not been very well served in support of careers advice but the school has compensated for this by extra advice given by sixth form staff. The school does not have a good range of career resources, and only a very small section of the library is allocated to a stock of pamphlets. The students feel that their views are very well taken into account by the school. The overwhelming majority of sixth form students who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that the school helped them to settle down well, they were treated as responsible young adults, and the school gives them helpful and constructive advice.
88. The inspection findings agree with these positive views, and students interviewed confirm that they feel that sixth form staff are extremely caring and supportive, and they can readily turn to them for guidance and help when they need it. Students value sixth form life, enjoy being part of the consortium and have confidence that the advice given to them by the school for their future academic needs is of high quality.

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

### **Parents have very positive views of the school, its aims and achievements**

89. The school is very over-subscribed. Parents want their sons to attend the school. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and wrote to the team were pleased with the fact that their sons liked school and were making good progress. They felt that the school expected their children to do their best and that the school works closely with them. They were confident to approach the school if there was a problem.
90. The school makes a very good effort to give parents a high level of support, and the quality of information given to them about their children's progress is extremely high. Parents are contacted promptly if the school has any cause for concern, and immediately contacts them to report on action taken. Regular communication between parents and the school is the rule rather than the exception, and the head teacher and all staff at the school are available to see parents at any time if necessary. Parents are encouraged to visit the school at any time. In all years, the school arranges two parents' evenings every year, and extra evenings are arranged with parents of Year 9 and 10 pupils to discuss National Curriculum tests, GCSE options and to discuss progress. The annual report issued by the school is of very high quality, contains good information on a subject by subject basis on target setting and an explanation of grades awarded.
91. The school diary/planner is used as a means of communication between the school and parents, and staff monitor the planner well and respond extremely well to parental comments. Homework policy is applied consistently in most cases and in the main pupils are given even amounts of homework. Overall, the setting of homework is satisfactory. The quality of information provided to parents is excellent. The prospectus is very attractively presented, professionally produced and contains all the information that parents need including all statutorily required information. Regular newsletters are produced, which are well written and provide a good deal of interesting information about school activities to pupils and staff. The school has provided a home-school agreement, and also an anti-bullying agreement, which sets out the duties of parents, pupils and the school.
92. The governors' annual report to pupils is extremely detailed, gives parents high quality information as meets all statutory needs. The parent-teachers association (PTA) to which all parents belong, has only a small number of active parents who form a hard working committee and is very successful in arranging fund-raising events, which benefit the school. During the past year the PTA has raised over £4,000, which has been well used by the school to support the running of the

school mini-bus. In addition, the PTA arranges successful social events, such as raffles, jumble sales, disco evenings, barbecues, and so on, and this work is much appreciated by the school. Very few parents come into school to help, but those who do offer much appreciated assistance. They help with accompanying pupils on school visits and school production. Open nights are reasonably well supported, with approximately 60 per cent of parents attending.

93. Parents of sixth form students are very complimentary about the school. They have positive views about the sixth form. They know that staff at the sixth form give their children a high level of support and guidance, and that they are treated as adults. The good level of communication between the school and parents, mentioned in the previous report, has been greatly improved upon and is now regarded as excellent.
94. The school involves parents of pupils with special education needs well and ensures that they are fully involved in their children's education. They are regularly invited to annual reviews of pupils' progress, take full part in discussion and are invited to review updates and involved in target setting. The school has a welcoming and open attitude to parental involvements, and this has a significant impact on progress that this group of pupils make.
95. Transfer procedures for children coming from primary school are very good. The school has gone to great pains to ensure that parents of pupils in Year 6 of primary school are well informed about the range of options available for their children when they join school. Although the school takes pupils from a large number of primary schools (67) substantial effort is made by school staff to communicate with parents of children in Year 6 to give them good information about the school so that they are able to make an informed choice. The school has a number of open days for prospective parents, and in addition primary school staff are invited to come to the school with their pupils for demonstration lessons.

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

**Leadership by the headteacher is excellent. Overall leadership and management across the school by key staff are very good. The school has a clear sense of direction and very effective systems to monitor its work. The school provides good value for money. Aspects of the accommodation are poor.**

96. Members of staff share a deep commitment to pupils, promoting their success and raising the level of their achievement. The school has a clarity of purpose which has as a sustained focus raising pupils' attainment and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils and their success are the focus of the school. The school has a very clear sense of direction as a result and its commitment to the pupils is reflected in the way it provides support and challenge and works to engage all pupils in the learning process. Members of staff are supported well but challenged to reflect critically on their practice. There is a clarity about their roles and responsibilities, open communication and consequent involvement in taking the school forward which results from effective delegation of responsibilities. There has been good and in some aspects, such as the quality of teaching, very good progress since the last inspection. The work of the school, particularly teaching and learning and the outcomes of the work of the school, in terms of attainment, behaviour and attendance, are monitored very effectively and issues identified for further improvement. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and through careful referral appropriate strategies introduced to improve their achievement and support them in their difficulties. The school recognises and values pupil's individuality but has created successfully a strong community out of those differences. Standards are improving yearly.
97. This has been achieved because of the excellent leadership by the headteacher, supported very effectively by a close-knit senior leadership team. The headteacher is around the school, knows staff, pupils and parents. He invites the trust of parents, staff, and the local community. Pupils have confidence in him and the senior leadership team. Between them they provide the initial drive and the energy to take the school forward. There has been very good improvement in developing the mutual inter dependence and, in terms of raising pupils' achievement, the indivisibility of the academic and pastoral structures in the school.



98. Overall, management across the school is very good. Very effective systems are used to monitor performance, behaviour and attendance and to underpin the high quality of care and support to pupils. The school operates very smoothly on a day-to-day basis because the school invests time in ensuring that it is an ordered community. There are very effective systems for managing any difficulties. In the main, time is not often wasted in reacting to events but invested in pre-empting difficulties.
99. The school's performance management system is very good. Those systems have been built on previously well-established appraisal procedures that enabled teachers to observe and share practice as part of their professional development. While some staff were initially apprehensive about the introduction of more formal performance management procedures, they have now been broadly accepted as part of the schools' improvement procedures. Those procedures have been used effectively to support and develop staff as well as successfully guide a few less effective members away from teaching. The headteacher takes direct responsibility for performance management arrangements and there is clear line management structure to operate those arrangements, reflected in the school gaining the Investors in People Award.
100. The governing body is effective. It has a wide range of personal and professional experience. Governors are supportive of the school but prepared to challenge and act as critical friend. They are kept well informed through presentations, regular reports and effective information and some are linked to specific departments. They are aware of the school's particular strengths and aspects, such as accommodation that require improvement. They brief themselves well about specific initiatives so that they are able to question effectively. They are clear about the school's priorities in raising achievement. They fulfil most of their statutory duties and, along with the senior management team with whom they have a close working relationship, are engaged in setting the strategic direction of the school. They are clear about their non-executive director function.
101. Principles of best value are very well applied. There is a strong ethos in the school of sharing information. This open management style encourages teachers at all levels to challenge and compare their own performance. Consultation with teachers, pupils and parents is undertaken regularly. The school effectively evaluates the performance of all service providers.
102. The resources available to the school are well deployed overall. Financial planning is effective. The school has been very successful in obtaining a wide variety of funding which it has used creatively to recruit and retain high quality staff. At the same time it has been able to maintain small classes and to increase the amount of non-teaching time for teachers, recognising that high quality care requires time to work with pupils. The school provides good value for money. However, expenditure on resources for learning is relatively low and some subject areas, for example, science and physical education have poor accommodation. Some aspects of the school, such as the indoor circulation areas are institutionally dismal. Boys' toilet accommodation is poor. Outside circulation areas are also poor, with the consequence that corridors become muddy and cleaning a thankless task. The work of developing pupils' interest and enthusiasm for learning is not supported by the overall quality of the school's physical environment.
103. Resources for ICT are inadequate. The library, which has become a very important focus in the school under the very effective management of the librarian, requires additional investment. Overall, other resources are adequate.
104. The head of the learning support department and his special educational needs co-ordinator lead a very good team of well qualified and experienced teachers and teacher assistants. The department works in very good accommodation and with very good resources. There are regular meetings between the different staff groups, as well as whole department meetings. These have yet to be formalised to ensure that the progress of the department can be effectively monitored through the decisions made at such meetings. Very good records of the progress of pupils are kept, although the certificate of educational achievement exam results are not yet effectively

analysed to determine how well different groups of pupils are achieving. The literacy support project benefits from the very good leadership of the special educational needs co-ordinator and the deputy head teacher in her role as the inclusion co-ordinator oversees the disaffection project. It is clear that the learning support and these other supportive structures are very effective in their efforts to raise standards at the school.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Leadership and management***

***Leadership and management of the sixth form within the school are good.***

105. The three-school consortium has effective management systems that address all aspects including curriculum, pastoral and academic support and guidance and financial management. The consortium co-ordinator works closely with the school's senior staff in developing and

revising the curriculum across the three schools. He also supports the head of sixth form in developing and maintaining monitoring and review systems including regular attendance checking procedures.

106. Within the school, the head of sixth form, supported by his deputy, lead a team of tutors who provide the effective academic monitoring, personal and social education and pastoral care. The leadership and management are good. Members of staff meet regularly to plan the effective use of tutors' time and evaluate students' progress. The tutorial support system works well and students value the support.
107. The school as part of the consortium has responded to the recent area 16-19 HMI inspection report by more closely monitoring the students' performance and improving assessment systems. The half-termly assessments, and twice-yearly student academic reviews involving parents, are a response to that report with a focus on raising standards. Good in design and intention, it has still to be fully established at subject and course level where implementation is still patchy. In part this may be related to the sometimes unclear responsibility for the management of particular sixth form courses including monitoring and improving practice.
108. Financial planning is soundly based. For example, the three schools share clear policy guidelines regarding where courses are sited in the different schools to ensure the most effective and efficient use of staffing expertise and resources. Being part of the consortium and having established management procedures enables the school to provide a cost effective sixth form of nearly 220 that benefits from a very good curriculum offer and in which most students achieve well. The staffing cost is a little below revenue received so provides modest gains for main school provision.
109. Responsibility for special educational needs in the sixth form has recently passed to a co-ordinator who works to ensure that no student is disadvantaged in their advanced level and vocational studies. This is a good, developing provision that is valued by the significant number of students who are on the special educational needs register. A strong link with the learning support department in the main school. She also oversees the provision for students for whom English is an additional language.

### ***Resources***

110. Overall resources are adequate although access to ICT is limited. Accommodation in some areas is unsatisfactory.

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

111. In order to raise standards to at least national averages in GCSE examinations the headteacher, senior management team, governing body and members of staff should continue with the successful strategies employed so far; in particular the rigorous target setting and monitoring of pupils' progress and the high quality of support to help pupils achieve. In addition they should ensure that members of staff make better use of:

- (1) assessment information within the classroom so that pupils are even clearer about what they have to do in order to improve their work and grades;
- (2) ICT to raise achievement, particularly in literacy skills and to support learning in most subjects and in order to meet National Curriculum requirements.

In addition the headteacher, senior management team and the governing body should seek ways in the short and longer term to:

- (3) improve the quality of accommodation and decor, particularly in science, physical education and music but also the indoor and outside circulation areas and boys' toilets; so that the quality of the environment supports the school's efforts in engaging pupils and making learning more interesting.

### **Sixth form**

The headteacher, governing body and, where appropriate in consultation with the senior management of the consortium, should:

- (1) ensure that students' progress is tracked carefully in all subjects and courses and that students know what it is they have to do in order to improve their work;
- (2) develop the use of ICT in all courses and implement higher level ICT key skill accreditation;
- (3) clarify course and subject management so that there is effective liaison, sharing of good practice and clear accountability;
- (4) meet the statutory requirement to teach religious education in the sixth form;
- (5) seek to improve the quality of the accommodation.

*The school development plan identifies ICT as an aspect for improvement and is active in seeking improvements to the overall accommodation.*

### **LINKS WITH THE COMMUNITY**

112. The quality of Forest Hill School's links with the community is excellent. As a response to the issue of youth crime and anti-social behaviour by young people in the locality, not necessarily attending the school, Forest Hill School became the focal point for all agencies involved with the welfare of young people in the local area – the school, the police, youth services, the council, churches, housing agency and sports organisation. On the initiative of the headteacher they came together to form the Sydenham and Forest Hill Inter-agency Group, which has had regular meetings at the school over the past four years. Its success has been recognised and it is now regarded as a model for dealing with youth issues nationally. It is the headteacher's clear vision that the school becomes a focal point of the whole community and an agent for social development and citizenship. A major advantage of the interagency group is the integration of different services working together for the common good of the community, sharing ideas and taking effective action.

113. The present chairman of the group is a local councillor who has the opportunity to support the work of the agency through the council of the local authority. He regards providing a link between the interagency at the school and the council as the most rewarding aspect of his work. In order to address the issue of loitering of young people on the streets and graffiti in the area, youth clubs were opened to provide purposeful activities for young people. Near the railway station where young people congregated a youth club was established and appropriately named by them Platform One. A local resident runs this who has a vested interest in the improving the environment and encouraging young people to acquire a sense of pride in their community. The organisers made a special effort to involve disaffected pupils by offering residential weekend courses as well. Other youth clubs such as the Crypt at St Bartholomew's, Rockbourne Youth Centre, St Saviour's and Elm Lane Youth club followed. The formation of the Hillside Schools Consortium consisting of Forest Hill Boys, Sydenham Girls and Sedgehill creates a wider educational community link. Youth leaders work across the Sydenham and Forest Hill sites and meetings between groups have resulted in the establishing of an annual Lewisham Youth Conference. Invited guests include councillors, teachers, police and youth workers. Further developments include some youngsters becoming peer monitors in wider areas of London and have been invited to explain to other boroughs, how the interagency community links function in Forest Hill and Sydenham. All involved share ideas and work together in the interest of the community.
114. Before the recent government initiative for police liaison with schools, the headteacher, in consultation with the local commander, succeeded in acquiring a school police community officer who is now regarded as an integral part of the school. The pupils know the officer well, communication is good and a positive attitude prevails. A regular presence in the school and patrolling round the area help to encourage disaffected pupils into school and occasional truancy is reduced. Pupils take an active part in the prevention of crime. Additionally, one officer volunteers his off duty time to ensure the safety of pupils on the way home at the end of the day. Since this initiative was taken there has been a significant reduction in youth crime and criminal damage in the area. During the holidays the police arrange summer schools for pupils over a period of three weeks taking three groups of about 40 pupils, for a week at a time, engaged in adventure courses involving activities which they would otherwise not experience. Attention is paid to character building and care for the community. Pupils on the course include some at risk of disaffection and even pupils referred by the criminal justice system mainly as a preventative measure to encourage movement away from petty crime. There is evidence to claim significant success in the scheme. Significant changes have occurred within recent years in the Forest Hill and Sydenham area. There are no longer such descriptive newspaper headlines as 'Hell on the Hill', which in the past appeared in the South London Press.
115. The local authority Sports Development Department is actively engaged in projects at the school. Developments include a new sports hall to become the basketball centre for the borough, the setting up of a women and girls' football centre of excellence, upgrade of outdoor facilities and the provision of a local football training facility. In association with the headteacher who is chairman of the Schools Playing Fields Association, there are further developments for community project groups such as a rugby and a football pitch, and a cricket net. The conversion of the pavilion at Elm Lane from January 2003 will house a pre-school playgroup, youth and boxing club. The school, in conjunction with Lewisham Sports Development, Pinnacle Housing Management and the Millwall Community Scheme, provides a range of holiday activities, which help to keep young people off the streets and engaged in purposeful activity. Kent County Cricket Club also run a successful coaching programme.
116. Millwall Football Club is involved in the Millwall Community Scheme - a limited charity, working in and for the community. They organise Easter break, half term and summer activities on the school premises involving between 60 and 100 pupils. Three evenings a week they offer free after-school sports clubs. A full-time appointment has been made from 1<sup>st</sup> Dec to co-ordinate the work, financed by a grant from the Football Association. Arising from this will be local teams to take part in league competitions. The aim is to get the maximum number of young people involved in some form of sporting activity. Millwall Football club also provides special course for disaffected pupils referred by the school or other agencies concerned with the welfare of young people. The

courses focus on aspects of citizenship including working as part of a team, developing team spirit, accepting decisions, working to rules, taking care of equipment and showing respect for property. Most pupils make good progress and show positive attitudes by the end of the course.

117. The school has had long standing links with the Lewisham Pupil Referral Unit, largely concerned with managing challenging behaviour and pre-exclusion intervention. Co-operation between staff and the sharing of good practice have resulted in the reduction of exclusions from school. Forest Hill School accepts transfers from elsewhere and thereby makes a significant contribution to the wider educational community.
118. JSS Pinnacle, the Housing Management Agency for the local authority, works in cooperation with other organisations to organise activities in the school for all residents in the community.
119. On Saturdays a Turkish Saturday Supplementary School is available to cater for a significant number of Turkish pupils at the school. At present there are 125 pupils on roll in five classes. A high degree of success has been achieved at GCSE level Turkish examinations. The classes recruit pupils from beyond the local community. The headteacher has been highly praised for the support he gives to the whole community. Parents are actively engaged in the running of the supplementary school. Recognising that Turkish pupils have levels of attainment that are below average in the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 in primary school, one class has been established to learn English for children aged seven to eleven. A Lewisham and south Kent Islamic supplementary school operates on Sundays and an application for a Tamil community school is pending. The headteacher of Forest Hill sees these as a celebration of the diversity of cultures in the community. For a number of years the school has been the centre for a large Christian Church on Sundays. The hall and a number of rooms are used for a range of activities.
120. In conjunction with the City Learning Centre, community information and communication technology classes are offered to the community in the evenings and at weekends.
121. A wide range of benefits has arisen from the links with the community established by the school. A Youth forum has been set up at the Greater London Council, invitation to discuss the project with the Metropolitan Police Training college, art work of Forest Hill pupils on display at the Barbican underground station, boys from the school twice a year clean up litter from Mayow Park and there is fund raising for the Nature Conservation area.
122. Young people are developing as stakeholders in the community. The pupils are proud of their school and ensure that the environment is not spoilt by unacceptable graffiti. Any occurrences can readily be traced. There has been an increase in the number of pupils who participate in community issues. Lewisham now has a Youth Forum through which the views of young people can be voiced. Academic attainment has been raised through supplementary schools. Pupils develop social skills that enable them to access education. Attendance at school has improved. A unique aspect of the Forest Hill School is the commitment and involvement of the staff to the vision of the school as a focal point of the community.
123. There are also wider international links such as the annual visit to Belgium by pupils studying history. Concerns over the underachievement of some pupils from an Afro / Caribbean background prompted the visit of two teachers from the school, to Jamaica through the British Central Bureau Teachers International Professional Development Scheme, to gain an insight into the culture and system of education on the island. Visits were made to educational establishments ranging from prep schools to the University of the West Indies. A number of benefits resulted, including support for the employment of a school counsellor, the introduction of practical vocational courses, a better understanding of cultural differences, the visit of a Jamaican performing arts group, the Ashe Ensemble, to Forest Hill School and establishing a link with St George's College on the island.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	162
	Sixth form	43
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		40

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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#### Years 7 – 11

Number	6	30	75	46	5	0	0
Percentage	4	19	46	28	3	0	0

#### Sixth form

Number	1	19	10	13	0	0	0
Percentage	2	44	23	30	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1,149	200
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	355	355

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	48	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	359	17

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	200

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	37
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	46

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.2
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.9
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	210	0	210

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	180	126	131
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	180	126	131
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	86 (51)	60 (52)	62 (59)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	31 (12)	30 (25)	24 (25)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	109	135	118
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	109	135	118
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	51 (36)	64 (63)	56 (46)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	17 (8)	29 (25)	19 (14)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	207	N/a	207

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	86	175	197
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	86	175	197
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	42 (37)	85 (88)	95 (95)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	34.1
	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 pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0
	National	N/a

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	48	0	48

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	48	1	44
	Average point score per candidate	14.8 (8.3)	0 (12.0)	(8.4)
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9*	17.7*	17.4*

\*Forest Hill 2002 results are compared to national data for 2001

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	48	0	48	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Average point score per candidate	14.8	0	14.8	N/a	N/a	N/a



National	Average point score per candidate	16.9*	0	17.48*	9.8*	11.4*	10.6*
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Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

A particular difficulty is extracting Forest Hill's students' data from consortium data. Only examination results as published by the school are shown.

\*Forest Hill 2002 results are compared to national data for 2001

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

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

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

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
504	67	2
2	0	0
70	13	0
43	0	0
9	0	0
5	0	0
79	34	0
11	2	0
11	1	0
12	0	0
10	2	0
91	11	1
73	11	0
153	54	1
11	0	0
9	0	0
56	0	0

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	92.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.5

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	26
Total aggregate hours worked per week	690.5

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	22.8
Key Stage 4	21.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	5,117,649
Total expenditure	5,210,177
Expenditure per pupil	4,191.61
Balance brought forward from previous year	141,834
Balance carried forward to next year	49,306

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	34.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	35.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.6
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.6
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	1348
Number of questionnaires returned	210

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	42	3	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	49	45	3	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	53	8	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	48	15	4	1
The teaching is good.	45	46	2	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	40	9	0	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	24	1	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	25	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	49	42	3	1	6
The school is well led and managed.	64	32	1	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	50	41	3	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	44	8	4	9

*Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding*

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Pupils' results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9.
- The strong tradition of promoting reading and discussing literary texts contributes well to pupils' academic and personal development.
- The National Strategy is having a positive impact on teaching and learning.
- Teaching is a strength and teachers are committed to improving standards.
- Teachers enthuse pupils and enjoy a positive relationship with their pupils.

#### Areas for improvement

- Writing skills to drive up standards in the GCSE examinations.
- Use of ICT in the English curriculum.
- Use of assessment as part of the marking process.

124. On entry to the school standards in literacy are below average. By the end of Year 9, standards improve and are broadly in line with national averages as a result of the explicit attention given to teaching basic literacy skills. Standards in the 2002 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are in line with the national average and well above average for similar schools. This was a significant improvement on previous years test results. However, teacher assessment is more accurate than the actual test results. Boys' results have been below average for boys' nationally for several years but the recent results confirm the rising trend in performance. Given their starting point on entry, achievement is very good by the end of Year 9. The 2002 English results are better than those in maths and science.
125. Standards in the 2002 GCSE English and English results were significantly below average. Boys' results in English and maths were below those of science and other subjects. Based on their Year 9 results in the National Curriculum tests, their achievement is average overall. The 2002 English results were broadly similar to the previous years; however, there was a marked improvement in English literature. A particular strength of the department's work is that virtually all pupils achieve a grade in both subjects. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as their peers.
126. These standards are confirmed by work seen during the inspection. Standards in writing are below average overall but attainment is rather better in Years 7 to 9 because of the impact of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy on teaching and learning. Overall, achievement is consistently good in lessons and often very good because of the demands teachers make on pupils and the interest and enthusiasm they display.
127. Standards in speaking and listening are above average and are a particular strength. Pupils, including those with special educational needs speak confidently and are precise in their pronunciation. Responses are sustained and most use formal language effectively when discussing, explaining, describing or posing questions. Boys are very responsive to questions and listen well to each other, as demonstrated in a Year 8 lesson where they used a range of oral skills, including hot seating<sup>3</sup> to evaluate their Almond's *Skellig*. By the end of Year 11, they use discussion skills well to explore their learning.
128. Reading skills have improved since the last inspection because of the emphasis teachers and the librarian place on promoting reading. Reading analytically and for pleasure are central activities in the department. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 take part in the PACT reading strategy, which involves

<sup>3</sup> Hot seating is a particular technique where a pupil assumes the character from the book and answers questions put to him by the rest of the class as that character.

their parents. There are regular timetabled library lessons, and a reading club organised by the librarian. These activities foster a love for reading and pupils treat these events seriously by maintaining their reading cards and awards and acting responsible as mentors and assistants in the library. Pupils in all year groups have graded reading lists but there are no clear procedures for monitoring the reading in Years 10 and 11. Teachers give a high priority to pupils' use of discussion skills to analyse texts. By the end of Year 9, pupils talk confidently about the style, structure and use of language as well as the writer's intention, as illustrated in their work on Sasson's poems and Swindell's *Stone Cold*. Book reviews and emphatic response to texts such as Hinton's *Buddy* and Guy's *The Friends* are usually thorough and there is good engagement with a range of genres. By the end of Year 11, pupils draw on their critical skills gained from the intense study of texts in Year 10 to offer well-founded interpretation and personal response to texts. Higher attaining pupils give these in detail whilst lower attaining pupils tend to make general comments.

129. While pupils use mind mapping effectively to plan and structure their work, standards in writing are below average overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Higher attaining pupils write well and produce creative and original stories and poems. However, across the curriculum, the achievement of many pupils is hampered by weaknesses in writing. Although they read with understanding and articulate their ideas clearly, they do not convey their ideas fluently in written language. Their work shows frequent errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. This is reflected in the percentage of pupils not achieving the higher grades A\* to C in the subject. Nevertheless, many redraft and edit their work well to improve their writing, as seen in the work of an Eastern European pupil who redrafted a media assignment several times to produce a much improved structure and content. There are indications that writing skills are improving in Years 7 to 9 where there is increased emphasis on teaching writing skills. A very good example was seen in a Year 8 lesson where pupils discussed the tone and atmosphere of *Skellig* before composing a diary entry using a similar style.
130. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and are determined to rise to the set challenges. Pupils with special needs and those taking part in the disaffection project display a similar level of commitment to their work. Overall, they are keen to do well and thrive on their very good relationships with their teachers.
131. The quality of teaching is good, with much that is very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers use their very good subject expertise to reinforce basic literacy skills and set clear, challenging targets that ensure that pupils make progress. They consistently use aspects of the National Literacy Strategy to structure lessons. The focused introduction leads to pupils achieving well because previous work is reviewed and linked to the set objectives before they move onto the development of the lesson. They use the plenary part of the lesson well to assess the taught skills and reinforce pupils' understanding of the work. The step-by-step approach in the literacy support classes enables pupils to make good progress as teachers use various strategies to build their confidence. They engage pupils in active learning through paired work, discussion, and a range of short timed activities. In one superb lesson in Year 8, the teacher captivated pupils as they deliberated the use of language to create tone and atmosphere in Almond's *Skellig*. The teacher skilfully guided pupils by explicitly drawing their attention to the power of words and sentences. This increased their critical thinking as they successfully grappled with the idea of emulating the style of writing. Teaching assistants provide good back up support by chivvying pupils and developing their confidence. Marking is thorough and pupils are routinely set targets to improve their work.
132. The interim joint subject managers provide good support and guidance for the team. The department has an inclusive approach and there is good attention to the legal framework on equal access and opportunities. The clarity of vision is well expressed in the development plan and the shared commitment to raising standards. The improving standards are in part due to the improving standards on entry but mostly to the revised curriculum for Years 7 to 9 based on the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy. The department has achieved a degree of success in entering pupils early for the GCSE literature examination in Year 10. Whilst this is a motivating factor, pupils are not gaining the highest grades. There are good procedures for monitoring and

evaluating teaching and learning. However, levels and GCSE grades are not routinely shared with pupils to drive up standards. ICT is not embedded in the schemes of work and is not fully exploited. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' overall development and provides

enrichment programmes. The department has made good progress since the last inspection particularly in raising standards. The issue of raising standards at the end of Year 11 remains. The department is well placed to make further improvement.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- The pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are improving. Pupils have good number skills.
- Teaching is good. There is a very good match of teachers to the needs of the mathematics curriculum.
- Pupils generally apply themselves very well to their work in mathematics lessons.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations remains below the national average.
- National Curriculum test results at the end of Year 9 are below average.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to use ICT to support their work.
- Pupils do not always benefit as well as they should from homework.

133. Currently, the attainment of the pupils in mathematics when they enter the school is below average. However, for older year groups, attainment was well below average when they started in Year 7. Results of tests taken at the end of Year 9 show standards gradually rising, from well below average to below average in 2002. Attainment at level 5 and above, in 2001, was in line with that of similar schools, but was above the average for those schools in 2002. The proportion of the pupils gaining level 6 or better also improved to match that of similar schools. For most pupils, given their starting points, this represents at least satisfactory achievement. Although the school's data analysis indicates some variation in the results of pupils from different ethnic groups, within mathematics, this is mainly because of prior attainment. Mathematics results in the national tests compared unfavourably with those of English but are close to those of science at the age-expected Level 5 and above.
134. In the 2001 GCSE mathematics results, the proportion of the school's pupils achieving grades A\* to C was well below the national average. Based on the pupils' achievements at the end of Year 9, the results were below those found in similar schools. Boys were less successful in achieving the higher GCSE grades, A\* to C, in mathematics than in English and science. However, the 2002 provisional GCSE mathematics results were higher than those of the previous year by ten per cent. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieved at least as well as others in the school. The proportion of the pupils achieving the higher A\* and A grades in 2001 and 2002 was low compared with the national figures, partly as a result of mathematically gifted pupils taking the examination early in Year 10, a practice which is now discontinued. Those pupils who have special educational needs in mathematics successfully achieved their expected grades.
135. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Year 9 is broadly average, and higher than that recorded in the national tests. This is clearly the result of the very positive developments in teaching and learning which are now taking place in the mathematics department. Attainment ranges across the mathematics sets from well above to well below average. Higher-attaining pupils have very good numerical skills and are confident in using a range of mental methods in their calculations. Their manipulative algebra skills are strong and they work systematically on a range of tasks, involving the expansion of brackets and the

manipulation of directed numbers as in a Year 9 lesson for able pupils. Oral skills are strong; pupils are confident in explaining their work. Average-attaining pupils are well able to work with solids, identifying cross-sections and using formulae to find volumes. Some, however, have an insecure grasp of units and their conversions. For some lower-attaining pupils in Year 9, achievement is hampered by not having one mathematics teacher for their group. In the lesson seen on finding perimeters, a significant number of pupils lacked a clear understanding of dimensions, and in particular, the difference between length and area in plane compound shapes. Pupils with special educational needs, however, are competent in working with whole-number operations, sometimes in the context of word questions, although they are not always able to give reasons for their answers, particularly when making comparisons.

136. By the end of Year 11, the standards pupils achieve are average overall, and again better than GCSE results indicate. This is again the result of teachers' and pupils' raised expectations as a result of the improvement in teaching. Able pupils show a good understanding of the issues involved in sampling and are increasingly able to use their knowledge of shape and space in questions of proof. Average-attaining pupils give clear oral explanations for their solutions in class but do not always achieve equivalent standards in their written work, as seen in a Year 10 lesson on angle facts. A number of these pupils have a poor recall of earlier work, relying too much on half-remembered rules. Lower attaining pupils, as well as those with special educational needs, are able to work with shapes, using a range of transformations. However, their uncertain understanding of basic concepts such as direction hinders their learning. Their basic number work is sound but they are not always sure of the order in which to perform calculations.
137. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good overall, and positively influenced by the National Numeracy Strategy. Teaching within the regular departmental team ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. In the best lessons, very thorough planning ensures that the work is matched well to the pupils' needs and earlier learning. The pace of lessons is brisk, and sometimes sparkling, so that the pupils make the best use of their time, as in a Year 9 lesson on manipulative algebra. Oral work is well used to further the pupils' understanding and there is a considered balance between consolidating previous work and acquiring new skills. In these lessons, pupils concentrate well and waste little time in idle chatter. They apply themselves well because of the range of activities to engage their interest, as in a Year 11 lessons for pupils with special educational needs on shape and space. In the lessons which are satisfactory, teachers plan the content of their lessons carefully, secure in their knowledge of mathematics; however, in some lessons pupils spend too long on written activities and do not benefit from imaginative and visual resources to support their learning. In a few lessons, teaching objectives are too general, so that learning outcomes are not clearly distinguished and there are missed opportunities to assess and record the pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Individual pupils often receive good and immediate feedback on their work in lessons and the marking of pupils' work is regular and frequent. However, some comments, while positive and encouraging, do not always give sufficient guidance on how to improve. Incomplete work, such as homework, is not always followed up.
138. Since the last inspection, progress within the mathematics department has been good. Not only has the proportion of good teaching increased, but there is more very good teaching. The good management of the department, very ably supported by the leading mathematics teacher, has initiated recent positive changes through a staff development programme on teaching and learning and the National Numeracy Strategy. Schemes of work have been reviewed and are now well developed. The department has a strong and shared commitment to improve its provision for the pupils and has a very good capacity to do so, in spite of turbulent staffing in recent years. The pupils' attainment in examinations has improved at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. In spite of difficult accommodation, the department has worked successfully to create a stimulating mathematical environment, which is well respected by the boys. However, there remain too few opportunities for the pupils to benefit from ICT to support their mathematics. This is partly a lack of resources, such as graphics calculators, which restricts some of the pupils' work in modelling mathematics. Other factors negatively affecting the department's efforts to raise the pupils' attainment include the distribution of mathematics lessons through the week and teachers necessarily sharing a number of classes. This has a particularly detrimental effect on

classes with pupils who find mathematics difficult and on the teachers' management of homework.



## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching across the school is good.
- The department operates as a well-led team of committed and competent teachers.
- The department is aware of its strengths and areas for development, seeking ways to improve and raise standards.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment data with pupils to agree action points for further improvement of their work.
- The provision and development of more opportunities for the use of ICT within the science curriculum.
- The provision of good accommodation.

139. Pupils come to the school with attainment in science that is below average. In 2002, the results of the National Curriculum tests for pupils at the end of Year 9 who achieved level 5 or higher were below those attained in all schools nationally. They were well above those for schools, which have a similar intake of pupils. The average results for the Year 9 cohort were above those which were predicted for them showing evidence of the good progress that pupils had made from the time that they started science at the school in Year 7. Since the last inspection in 1997 results at the end of Year 9 have risen along with national trends but have remained below national figures. The results in 2002 were closer to the national averages than in previous years and show the improvement year on year that the school is making.
140. Most pupils are entered for the double award GCSE science course at the end of Year 11 but some higher achieving pupils take separate biology, chemistry and physics examinations. Over the last three years results at GCSE have been steadily rising and in 2001 the overall performance in science was just below the achievement of all pupils nationally. The results for 2002 were lower than those in 2001. Almost all of the pupils entered, including those with special educational needs, gain an A\* to G grade but these results are also below national figures. Similarly there are fewer pupils achieving the highest A\* and A grades compared with pupils nationally. For pupils capable of high attainment and for those pupils with English as an additional language progress is satisfactory. For all pupils considered together, progress during Years 10 and 11 is good.
141. Comparisons with national data for the sixth form are unreliable because of the small numbers of students taking the AS and A-level examinations in biology, chemistry and physics and because in each year different subjects are taught at different schools in the consortium. The results for physics students gaining an A to E grade were above the national average in 2000 but were well below in 2001. In chemistry and biology the results for students gaining grades A to E were well below national averages in 2000 and 2001. At the time of the last inspection the attainment in all three sciences was reported to be consistent, sound and approaching national averages. For the first time in two years biology is being taught at the school and good progress is being made in the first term by students in the group. A more detailed subjects reports is available in Part E of the report.
142. In Year 7, pupils are introduced to basic laboratory procedures and they learn to work with chemicals and equipment, to record their work in different forms and to develop scientific and study skills. For example, they are asked to research and write about the life of a black scientist. This is a good task to reinforce the cultural perspective of science. Other units in Years 7, 8 and 9 build on biology, chemistry, physics and earth science topics already started in primary schools. For example, pupils extend their understanding of the properties of water in terms of the particle theory and are using new technical terms such as *solvent* and *solute* correctly. They are helped to use scientific terms by the use of displays of key words in laboratories and by ongoing reinforcement and instruction from teachers. Greater awareness of what and how science is

- taught before pupils come to the secondary school would ensure that work is not unnecessarily repeated and that planning for continuity and progression is more informed and secure.
143. Most pupils are able to follow instructions, make observations and complete simple measuring and practical tasks safely. However, they find it more difficult to interpret what they see and some are limited by their poor writing skills and do not keep accurate and complete notes in their books. Pupils are less competent when asked to plan practical work, to predict what might happen or to evaluate what they have done. The teaching and assessment of experimental and investigative work in science are currently under review to help pupils raise their level of attainment in this aspect. Pupils respond enthusiastically to teaching that allows them to be more involved in their learning. This was seen in an engaging lesson on respiration when the teacher used a circus of activities, excellent models and well-briefed support staff to help Year 9 pupils understand how the lungs work. A project to develop pupils' thinking skills in science has been recently introduced in Years 7 and 8.
  144. In the current Years 10 and 11 all pupils now follow a broad and balanced science programme, either taught as three separate lessons of biology, chemistry and physics each week or as a co-ordinated science course leading to a double award at GCSE. This arrangement needs to be evaluated and reviewed so that the most relevant course is provided for both low and high attaining pupils. In addition, there needs to be a more effective strategy to recruit a viable group of students and prepare them for science study in the sixth form. At GCSE, units of work build progressively on topics already covered lower down the school. For example, in one chemistry lesson, pupils could extend their prior knowledge of the periodic table and go on to apply an understanding of atomic structure to predict and explain the reactivity series of metals. In the sixth form, the structure of the modular programmes, the small group sizes and the supportive relationships that students have with their teachers help them to develop further their scientific knowledge and skills. This provision is particularly important for those students who did not achieve the highest grades at GCSE and who struggle with the increased demands made on them.
  145. Well-structured teaching provides pupils who have English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs with a sound framework for learning the facts, and for acquiring skills and understanding. Literacy support strategies are used to help pupils keep records of their work, and to read more accurately and with greater understanding. The individual educational plans are detailed and clear and they are used well by teachers and learning support assistants. The department has addressed fully the concerns about the day-to-day support for pupils with special educational needs in the last inspection report. Members of staff have a sound overall knowledge of their pupils and show obvious concern for their welfare and progress but assessment data and information are not used fully to prepare lessons that are closely matched to the learning needs of all pupils in each class.
  146. Pupils come to lessons with a positive attitude and an expectation that they will co-operate with their teachers and peers and will concentrate on tasks set. Most are eager to learn. These factors contribute greatly to the standards of work achieved. Pupils enjoy their work, especially when it includes activities that allow them to be involved, busy and work independently from teachers. Most pupils are good listeners and benefit from the expertise, experience and fluency of their teachers. Others have a more limited concentration span and although they do not become overly disruptive, they drift away from their tasks and need to be firmly monitored by teachers to maintain their participation in the lesson. Pupils are given many planned opportunities to talk to each other about work. Most of them are able to discuss ideas and problems in groups, and to feedback confidently a consensus view to the whole class. Pupils willingly collaborate with each other, sharing knowledge and skills, and being tolerant and sensitive to the needs of classmates. Group work helps them to develop their personal skills further and also supports them to gain greater knowledge and understanding of more difficult scientific topics.
  147. The quality of teaching is good in the main school. It contributes significantly to the standards of work that the pupils produce. Teachers are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and confident and they plan their lessons in detail to meet the needs of the National Curriculum, the GCSE syllabus and

the specifications for post-16 courses. The aims of each lesson are shared with pupils who record them in their books so that they have a clear understanding of what they have to learn. Lessons begin with an effective starter activity that settles pupils, serves to reinforce and review prior learning and also provides motivation and interest for what is to come. Pupils expect this routine and respond to it well. In the best lessons, time is also spent at the end to summarise what has been achieved. Teachers keep pupils working at a brisk pace moving them on from one task to the next, reminding them of the time and monitoring the progress of individuals appropriately. In most lessons teachers plan and prepare a number of different and short activities so that the different interests and aptitudes of most pupils are addressed.

148. Teachers are skilled at giving instructions, carrying out demonstrations and explaining facts and concepts. In some lessons teachers talk too much, so that pupils, particularly the low attainers, are unsure whether to listen and respond or to take notes. In the best lessons teachers use a range of creative materials and activities to capture the interest of pupils, to help them work out their own ideas and to support them in keeping careful records. Teachers question pupils to check that earlier work has been understood and some teachers also use effectively more probing questions to make pupils think in more depth about the subject. Practical work is set out by the laboratory technicians and it is generally organised well by the teachers. Pupils are managed tightly to ensure the effective use of resources and safe practice in the laboratory space available. This is sometimes limited. Books are checked regularly and marked in line with departmental policy. However, although teachers add detailed comments on the work, they do not give specific advice on what to do next to raise the standard of work. As part of a whole-school programme and as a result of specific developments within the department, science teachers now have very detailed assessment data on individual pupils. The information is not yet fully used with pupils to plan action on how to improve. In addition to topic tests, there is a need to use a wider range of assessment tools, in class and homework, to provide a broader profile of what pupils can and cannot do in science.
149. Laboratory accommodation is unsatisfactory but teachers generally use good display work and keep rooms tidy to make the best of what there is. There are currently good systems in place to ensure that administration runs smoothly, that roles and responsibilities are clear and shared and that financial management is efficient. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in the management of the department. Science staff have responded positively to the recommendations and requirements of the National Science Strategy and following good in-service training, work is in hand to introduce new strategies. The head of department is aware of the strengths and areas for development in science provision and provides good leadership for ongoing innovation, implementation and improvement. The department is adequately resourced except for access to sufficient and appropriate computers and software. The development of more opportunities to use computer software, data logging equipment, data and word processing packages across the curriculum and in all years would help pupils to learn science even more effectively. The teaching and technical staff work together as a committed, capable and enthusiastic team who are dedicated to support the personal development and achievement of all their pupils.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The good and often very good teaching.
- The positive attitudes of pupils.
- Leadership of the department and the commitment of teachers.
- The curriculum, which ensures a rich experience of art and design.

### Areas for improvement

- The provision and use of computers and good quality software.
- Good quality, up-to-date reference books.

150. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C in the GCSE examinations 2001 was above the national average for boys, although in line with the national average for mixed comprehensive schools. Results were amongst the best in the school. Provisional figures for 2002 indicate a significant fall in the numbers gaining higher grades. The department has acknowledged this fall and identified staff changes and the smaller number of more able pupils opting for GCSE art in 2000 as the significant factors behind the fall. From inspection evidence and teacher assessments, which have tended to be lower than National Curriculum level descriptors would suggest, indicate that standards have risen markedly and should reach the same levels as 2001 by the end of Year 11. The good and often very good teaching, along with the positive attitudes of pupils supports this indication.
151. Inspection indicates standards that in Year 9 are in line with national expectations. Lessons are fully inclusive and pupils with special educational needs or those for whom English is an additional language, make the same good or very good progress as others. The level of attainment on entry to the school is very varied. From Year 7 pupils are taught the basic skills of line, tone, texture and colour and by Year 8 the higher attaining pupils can represent the modelling of form through the use of tone and texture. The very good curriculum ensures that pupils have a rich experience of art and design across different cultures and in the work from different artists and art movements. Annotation and note taking is used to accompany artwork from Year 7, although teachers do not pay the same attention to the assessment of written work as they do to sketchbook drawings. A few pupils show exceptional talent in Years 7 and 8. These are identified and encouraged to extend their efforts in classes. Lower attaining pupils lack the fine motor skills and observational drawing experience to use tone and texture effectively in their drawings and often resort to juvenile imagery when drawing faces or landscape features. Year 8 pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of Native American culture and produce good quality work based on totemic culture and mask making. By Year 9 pupils use colour confidently and know how to mix and blend them on a palette or directly in mark making exercises. The poor quality of brushes does not always enable them to produce the effects they want. They use the work of artists such as Hockney and Hokusai to develop their own stormy seascapes, following the bold, flowing lines of the artists. Their work will be used as a moving projected backdrop to the school's Christmas production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.
152. By Year 11 standards overall remain in line with national expectations, with individual pupils working well above these. Pupils extend their research into artists they choose to study and their annotation is much improved, with quite extensive notes being taken by the higher attaining pupils. Pupils work independently and are imaginative in their designs from the work of William Morris, the 'art nouveau' and pre-Raphaelite movement, as well as from those of Ancient Egypt and Africa. Lower attaining pupils do not research their work with sufficient care to demonstrate the links they make with the work of important artists or styles. In Year 10 pupils explore lino printing under the skilled guidance of the teacher, learning to work safely on well-prepared lino and to register their reduction prints carefully. Higher attaining pupils are able to include fine detail in their linocuts.
153. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. Teachers have a very good grasp of their subject and teach confidently and with enthusiasm. Most classes are well behaved and pupils are well mannered and respectful of teachers. The Key Stage 3 strategy is understood and teachers plan their lessons to it although the plenary sessions do not fully exploit the critical awareness of pupils. Most introductory sessions use a fast paced question and answer method to check learning and focus pupils on to the lesson targets. Teachers have very good subject knowledge but do not always demonstrate their own skills sufficiently in modelling techniques and processes of art. The language of art is targeted well, but not always used fluently in lessons. Expectations of research are appropriately high, although on occasion, the higher attaining pupils are not effectively challenged by the demands for research and annotation.
154. The department benefits from strong, well-informed leadership and a teaching team that works well together to raise standards. They have worked through a very difficult period and are now determined to improve standards throughout the department. The department has set a priority

on developing the AVCE in art and this will create opportunities for pupils to gain a relevant qualification for the workplace. The resources available for learning are barely satisfactory, with poor resources for computer digital art. Good, up-to-date reference books are in short supply and teachers use many of their own valuable books for their work. The technician works hard to support teachers in preparing for lessons. Displays of three-dimensional work in the library are very good, although the overall display around the school could be improved. Accommodation is good and well used; although there are spaces that could be developed in imaginative ways to further improve it. The floor of the kiln room is not sealed and this is a potential health and safety hazard when it comes to cleaning it.

155. The department has made a good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards of teaching and learning have improved and students with special educational needs are now supported well. The provision and use of computers have not improved.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good teaching by specialist team of teachers.</li> <li>• Very good whole-school awareness of the subject and the part subjects have to play in developing citizenship.</li> <li>• Very good opportunities within the school structure for pupils to play a part and take responsibility.</li> <li>• Pupils achieve well.</li> </ul> <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and refine the assessment system over time.</li> </ul>
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156. Citizenship as a subject was introduced into secondary schools at the beginning of the autumn term 2002. Citizenship at Forest Hill is part of the very good PSHCE programme.
157. The school has prepared for the introduction of citizenship carefully. Much of what is expected was already being taught and is integral to the nature of the school's particular ethos, particularly in relation to its emphasis on respect for others and commitment to equal opportunities. Although only just introduced as a subject, because the ethos of the school has shown significant improvement since the last inspection it has the opportunity to flourish. In addition, since the last inspection the school's work within the community has developed into establishing excellent links so that further opportunities are opened up.
158. The strength of the subject at Forest Hill lies in its cohesiveness. Citizenship is part of the defined aims of the school. 'Pupils should take up successfully the roles of citizens of the future' is well understood by staff and pupils, and is exemplified by their behaviour in daily life at the school. The focus of the school on good and respectful relationships, and the creation of a community that respects differences of culture, race and gender, influences every aspect of the life of the school. As identified within the curriculum section of the report, it has a powerful impact on the growth and development of all members of the school community. It is planned, carefully structured and reinforced consistently and provides bedrock upon which 'citizenship' as a 'subject' can be built and to which it already contributes.
159. The work is planned to be taught in four main ways but surrounding the taught sessions is the whole network of opportunities within the school to participate and have that participation acknowledged. The first way is within subject areas. The school has undertaken an effective audit of significant themes within the subject and particular subjects are aware fully of their role in developing, for example, an understanding of the democratic process in history or religious education or the world as a global community in geography and science. This has been linked carefully to staff training. Loyalty, co-operation teamwork, the use and abuse of drugs in sport, the importance of role models and their importance in shaping attitudes, analysing performance

and recognising ones own and other's skill, the notion of achieving one's personal best are issues which are actively discussed within physical education and which make a good contribution to the subject and to pupils' attitudes upon which citizenship is built.

160. The second way it is taught is within the PSHCE programme. There is a clear scheme of work that includes, for example, living in a multi-cultural society, in Year 7; crime and consequences, in Year 8, and the legal system, in Year 9. The third way the subject is taught is through tutor time. The fourth is through special events, which includes the main school assembly. During the inspection, for instance, the underlying theme of the week in main and house assemblies was linked to the one-minute silence held within the school as part of Remembrance Day.

161. A sample of PSHCE was seen. Standards are above average. Year 8 pupils were able to discuss in a sensible and mature manner their perception of emotions regarding death, and displayed maturity when discussing stress situations they may be involved in. Year 11 pupils discussed homophobia with particular maturity within an atmosphere of trust generated by the teacher. Pupils listened to other views carefully and were able to consider the subject with remarkable sensitivity. The quality of discussion was high. In another lesson pupils judged their actions in a series of moral dilemmas.
162. Overall the quality of teaching is good. It is sometimes very good. Teachers plan well, have clear objectives and manage the classes well. Ground rules for discussion are clearly laid down and a 'safe' ethos is created where pupils feel confident to contribute.
163. The school has plotted carefully the extensive 'citizenship' opportunities that exist within the school linked to the house system, school council, peer reading schemes, opportunities within the arts and sports, charity events. The list goes on. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to achieve success. It provides just as many opportunities where pupils can achieve their success by participating within teams and groups that work for the wider community of the school.
164. The subject has been introduced and managed very well. Clearly the curriculum will alter and develop. As part of that development, the current profiling assessment systems will also develop and refine. Considerable thought and effort have gone into making the subject more than a subject but seeing it as part of the overall very good provision for pupils' personal development that results in pupils having very good relationships with each other so that the school manages to be a contained community which values and respects difference but works together.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- There is consistently good teaching in the department.
- There are good procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
- There is good progress in all years and a rising trend of GCSE examination results.
- The department promotes literacy well.
- Teachers give up a good deal of their free time to support pupils' progress.

### Areas for improvement

- There are weaknesses in the presentation of work, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- The procedures for individual feedback on coursework in Years 10 and 11 are not systematically shared and recorded.
- Some aspects of the modules of work in Years 7, 8 and 9 need to be reviewed in order to make teaching the National Curriculum Programmes of Study more efficient and assessment of performance more secure.

165. Standards of attainment according to teacher assessments in Year 9 are below national averages. The department is working on ways to improve the modules of work in this stage of pupils' education and part of this process will result in end-of-unit assessments in Years 7, 8 and 9 that promote better performance.
166. Pupils are gaining grades in the GCSE examinations that are around the national averages. This represents an improvement on the situation reported in the last inspection when results were substantially below national averages. Though the 2002 results are slightly lower than those in 2001, the overall trend in recent years has been one of steady improvement.
167. By the end of Year 9 standards of attainment are below national expectations, though the progress pupils make in lessons is generally good, particularly when the below average standards

of achievement on entry to school are taken into consideration. Pupils produce a sound range and variety of ideas for their designs though their research skills and product analysis are limited. They produce useful plans that take them step-by-step through the process of making. Higher ability pupils make good use of sketching to design but some lower ability pupils take little care over the quality of their work, sometimes using ballpoint pen to sketch designs. Their evaluations of their products are often superficial despite the good level of support given by teachers.

168. By the end of Year 11 pupils' standards reach the national expectations. They produce folders that are organised well and that are mostly successful in communicating their intentions. However, there are still some weaknesses in the presentation of folders in particular layout and lettering that detract from the overall communication of the design process. Pupils write clear design briefs that set out what they are going to design and make. They understand that product analysis helps them to improve their products as they become more critically aware of the strengths and weaknesses of designs. They learn to identify and incorporate good features and avoid the bad. Evaluations are sound though some pupils need a lot of support from teachers to cover a wide enough range of considerations.
169. Teaching is consistently good. Teachers have developed productive working relationships with their pupils. They give up a lot of free time at lunch and after school. A good number of pupils of all ages use these times to finish off their work. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and this is effectively transferred through well-considered feedback both in marking and in the day-to-day support and guidance they give pupils.
170. In Years 10 and 11 feedbacks often occur throughout the course in one-to-one sessions. Teachers discuss work in progress; give pupils an idea of their achievement, and set targets. However, these are not written down as a matter of course in a form that makes them easy to refer to or suitable for sharing with parents. Teachers use new technology well in their teaching of computer-aided design, for example, when a data projector is used to demonstrate software to all members of the class at the same time. Teachers are very effective in teaching literacy through the use of writing frames, sharing lists of key words and the effective use of question and answer to extend and challenge understanding. Learning of numeracy is supported through the exhortation to measure with accuracy. Teachers act as very good role models. In one lesson where a pupil needed help to complete an operation that exceeded the teacher's immediate expertise, the teacher demonstrated a persistence leading to success that was appreciated by pupils and gave them confidence. The structure of lessons is generally good though teachers sometimes run over time. This eats away at time for closing sessions designed to recap on the lesson's progress and to make pupils aware of their achievement.
171. The department is led very well. There is effective teamwork that is considerably enhanced by the technical assistance that is available to the department. Technicians work with pupils and have valuable expertise to share, particularly in computer aided manufacturing processes. The support given to others by the head of department and individuals in the team is very good. For example, a recently qualified teacher spoke with gratitude of the quality of support given during her first year in teaching. The monitoring and evaluation of work in the department are very effective and have accurately identified some areas for improvement, particularly the need to modify the schemes of work in Years 7, 8 and 9.
172. There have been several improvements since the last inspection. The GCSE results have improved, as has teaching, and the more able pupils are now being appropriately challenged, as is evident from the number of pupils who now gain A\* grades. Another important area of improvement is the production by the department of very effective procedures for ensuring the health and safety of all who work in the department.



## DRAMA

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

### Strengths

- Skilled teaching.
- Pupils achieve well.
- The foundations for future development are being established very well.

### Areas for improvement

- Developing pupils' awareness of the uses of ICT within the subject.

173. Since the last inspection there has been a difficulty in staffing the subject and there was a long period when the subject was being covered by temporary teachers. The department is currently fully staffed by specialist teachers who have set about rebuilding the department. There has been very good improvement in the provision for drama since the last inspection but it has been relatively recent and many pupils have had a very variable drama experience. As a consequence pupils do not yet have an extensive reservoir of dramatic experience upon which to draw.
174. Overall, standards of work seen, in the way work is performed rather than the range of ideas, are in line with expectations for pupils in Year 9 and for those pupils taking GCSE examinations. Results in 2002 were below average in the percentage of pupils gaining A\* to C grades but all pupils in the group gained a pass. Pupils achieve well in lessons because of the quality of teaching. They make good progress and pupils in Year 7, coming fresh to the subject and Year 10, starting their GCSE course, are beginning to demonstrate a good understanding of the subject and the disciplines associated with it. The department has managed to create the necessary approach for disciplined work to develop, although with some classes teacher have to work hard at this. In Year 10, there was a strong group identity as they undertook their 'song' as part of a vocal warm-up. Year 11 pupils worked on their improvised pieces with concentration and involvement, showing good co-operative skills. Teachers establish an ethos in which pupils are encouraged to put forward ideas without fear of ridicule. They also have a very good understanding of pupils' additional needs and the way they encourage, support and structure the work or the groups ensures that these pupils make the same progress as the rest of the class.
175. The quality of teaching is good and some teaching seen was very good. The teachers within the department are highly skilled practitioners, they have very good subject knowledge, plan effectively and manage pupils very well. They have very high expectations of the pupils and the level of work they expect pupils to achieve. At the moment, because the subject is still developing in the school there is still considerable emphasis in some lessons on creating the right working conditions and exploring an issue relatively superficially so that the pace of the work can be kept up and pupils swept along in the range of tasks and activities. They will soon be able to demonstrate their more advanced skills, of stopping the action and considering in greater depth, for example, the moment the white settlers met the Native American.
176. Overall pupils have good attitudes to the subject and their behaviour is good but it currently often requires very good positive behaviour management to achieve this. Nevertheless, there are indications in some groups that they are gaining a sense of success from the subject and that as a result there is an upward spiral of achievement and pupils wanting to achieve. Pupils make good progress in lessons, showing good concentration and independence and skills in working within the group. Pupils regularly evaluate their work for homework.
177. The curriculum is planned well. There are good opportunities to explore and practice specific skills and basic concepts. The department is very well aware of the need to feed pupils with ideas as well as giving them opportunities to express them. The structure and detail of the curriculum is under continuous review. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development, particularly through the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the work. The department has established very good assessment criteria. Although teachers were

not seen using the criteria they are displayed well and are clearly used by the department to drive up standards.

178. The subject is led very well. There is a clear sense of direction and appreciation of what needs to be tackled within the department based on knowledge of what is happening in other lessons. A firm foundation for future drama work of high quality is being built. There is a very strong sense of teamwork and commitment to further improvement. The subject could make greater use of ICT, for example, video and projection facilities to develop assessment skills and to allow effective presentation of resource material.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Very good relationship between pupils and with staff.
- Very positive attitude of pupils to learning.
- A broad balanced and relevant curriculum.

### Areas for improvement

- The provision of opportunities for fieldwork in all year groups.
- The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.
- The provision of entitlement for pupils withdrawn for additional literacy support.
- The differentiation of work to meet the requirements of higher attaining pupils.

179. Teacher assessment for pupils' attainment by the end of Year 9 in 2001 showed a significant improvement on the previous year. However this was below the national average. The standard of work seen during the inspection was also below national expectations. The focus on improving standards over the past two years has been successful in raising attainment since the last inspection. The A\* to C grade GCSE results for Year 11 pupils in the 2001 examinations fell below the national average, as did the percentage of pupils gaining a pass in the subject. However the results for 2002 show an improvement. The standard of work seen for students at the end of Years 10 and 11 during the inspection is below what is nationally expected. There are no candidates registered for post-16 courses in geography.
180. The curriculum offered is broad and balanced. Pupils in Year 7 are taught some basic skills in geography that include elements of map work. However, not all pupils understand how to use scales to calculate distances accurately, or to interpret relationships between physical and human features on a map. They use bar graphs to present data extracted from land use analysis and know the cardinal points of the compass. Year 8 pupils assess the advantages and disadvantages of using renewable and non-renewable sources of energy and make individual suggestions for the choice of energy sources for the future. By the end of Year 9 pupils have been introduced to a wide range of topics of general interest. Their lessons provide opportunities for moral, social and cultural development, when analysing issues such as population growth and migration, economic development contrasts in more and less economically developed countries and the inter-dependence of nations. They lack fieldwork experience of places discussed in lessons such as nearby docklands. Pupils preparing for GCSE examinations develop their interest in their local environment by making a case study of contrasts in housing and economic development in Lewisham.
181. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with a significant proportion of good teaching throughout. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. This represents good improvement since the last inspection, when one in five lessons was deemed to be unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned so that no time is wasted over uncertainty as to what comes next. Ample resources are always available to meet the requirements of the lesson objectives. Ongoing assessment by way of recapitulation of past lessons helps to consolidate prior learning at the beginning of each session. The very good relationships between pupils and with staff create a good environment where learning takes place and good management of the

class results in very good behaviour and respect for one another. There are areas for improvement in order to raise standards further. Too few opportunities are provided for independent learning and progress is hampered by too much teacher input. The work is

insufficiently differentiated to cater for the capability of higher attaining pupils who can be expected to achieve more than is usually planned. The use of computers is unsatisfactory and requires urgent attention if standards are to rise to national expectations.

182. There has been satisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection. Assessment procedures are now in place and used effectively for tracking the progress of all pupils. Targets are set for each pupil in order to raise the level of attainment. The standard of teaching has improved because of effective monitoring and sharing of good practice. Standards of attainment have risen for pupils by the end of Years 9 and 11 and resources have been updated and increased. The introduction of a literacy policy reflecting whole school policy is beginning to show improvement but there is room for further development.
183. An enthusiastic head of department who has just completed his second year in office competently manages the department. He is supported well by the good management of the head of the humanities faculty. Attention has been focused on improving the standards that pupils attain by the end of Year 9. Assessment procedures have been introduced to monitor the progress of pupils. The monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work have contributed to improvements in teaching. The curriculum has been made more relevant to pupils' lives. For example, it involves discussion on the location of the local hypermarket and the introduction of news geography displayed in the classroom. The department's development plan includes the production of extension work to suit the needs of gifted and talented pupils, the provision of access to and use of computers in lessons and opportunities for fieldwork.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths:

- Good achievement across the school.
- Above average GCSE standards.
- Good teaching, with some very good levels of subject knowledge in lessons.
- Good attitudes of pupils.

### Areas for development:

- The further development of schemes of work.
- The use of ICT.
- The development of work in lessons for pupils of all abilities.
- Arrangements for literacy withdrawal.

184. The 2002 GCSE results continue the pattern of improvement over recent years. At grade A\* to C in GCSE examinations standards are solidly above the national average with half the students gaining the higher grades of A\* to B in years 2001 and 2002. In 2002, 96 per cent of pupils gained an A\* to G grade. This is in line with the national average and similar to the 2001 results. Teacher assessed attainment levels at the end of Year 9 are also showing consistent improvement and are now approaching the national average. Pupils with special educational needs progress as expected, although those with English as an additional language needs do not always have sufficient in-class support. The subject makes a good overall contribution to the support of literacy, but more development of numeracy is required. Although history has been taught within the consortium at sixth form level until this year it has not been taught at Forest Hill since 1997. The number of overall passes at A level and AS level, in recent years within the consortium, is broadly in line with national expectations although the numbers gaining the higher

grades of A\* and B is below the national average. There has been an improving trend at A level since 1998 when compared to all other schools nationally.

185. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is good. In Year 7 pupils begin to understand the causes and consequences of the Norman invasion. Using the Bayeux Tapestry, lower and middle attaining pupils sequence and tell the story of 1066. High attainers describe the events but also evaluate the source and explain how they arrived at their conclusions. Simple grammatical and spelling errors appear in many books. Year 8 pupils satisfactorily add to their knowledge through their work on past Islamic civilisations, the Crusades and the reasons for building the ancient city of Baghdad. They use written and pictorial evidence to come to conclusions about the use of propaganda. High attainers write with empathy, while middle attaining pupils tend still to write brief answers, almost direct from the text book. By Year 9 pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding have increased and are in line with national standards. High attainers are able to compare conditions before and after the Victorian public health reforms, and consider social, economic as well as personal consequences. Most other pupils are not able to discuss consistently such advances in detail, but do produce interesting surveys of conditions in a typical Victorian street. Low attaining pupils describe Victorian pictorial sources and begin to evaluate their worth using appropriate vocabulary. The subject however makes unsatisfactory use of computers.
186. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11, and standards by the end of Year 11 are above average. Most pupils in Year 10 recognise the economic reasons behind the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and high attainers talk in detail about the consequences for the League of Nations. Pupils identify the symbolism in a cartoon about Mussolini and his treatment of the League. In Year 11 most pupils list events correctly and link anti-Weimar protests to the aims of individuals such as Rosa Luxemburg, and Kapp. High attainers discuss the philosophical differences, including National Socialism, that led to such challenges to the new Republic. Pupils show above average understanding of cause and consequence and knowledge of the periods studied, but are, overall, weaker when studying different historical interpretations. There is evidence that low attainers are still held back by literacy problems, and that many find difficulties in retaining information.
187. In Years 12 and 13 students make overall sound progress when they learn about the arguments associated with the Nazi intentions towards the Jews and the Civil Rights movement in the USA. They show good knowledge of the debate as to whether the Nazis intended the Holocaust from the outset, or whether the later structure of the Nazi regime resulted in various organs competing to satisfy the aims of Hitler. Students are able to link their knowledge to such areas as Racial Darwinism, and the nature of German foreign policy. High attainers interpret sources associated with Crystal Night and show a good level of evaluation when linking it and the role of people like Goebbels to the structuralist argument.
188. Teaching across the school is good overall. Teachers have good and often very good subject knowledge and in the best lessons this enables them to challenge pupils, promote higher-order thinking skills, and deliver effective plenary sessions. Good learning environments are established and very good pupil management skills ensure that lessons and debates progress without interruption. Pupils learn best when teachers present small units of work, regularly reinforced by referring to lesson objectives. However there is a need to consistently plan work for pupils of all abilities that also promotes more individual responsibility for learning. Homework set matches the work covered in lessons, and marking, although supportive, needs to identify more short-term future targets for pupils. Non-specialist staff have sound knowledge of the subject but would benefit from the guidance that more specific learning objectives would bring. Special needs support staff are experienced and pro-active in their dealings with pupils, but are not always briefed sufficiently in advance of the lesson.
189. The curriculum is good, and pupils benefit from a thorough analysis of the subjects they cover. Satisfactory schemes of work guide teaching, and are reviewed regularly, although further development is needed. A common format for all schemes, identifying opportunities for computer work, including the sixth form, would be helpful. Additionally, the usefulness of the schemes

would be maximised, and progression made easier to track, if expected levels of work are indicated. The subject has developed good assessment procedures that enable teachers and pupils to identify progress and set targets. The use of such information, together with the data on exam results, could be further developed to inform teaching and future curricular developments, and in-service training should be directed at this aspect. The arrangements for the withdrawal of pupils for literacy support in Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory, resulting in some pupils not having their full history entitlement.

190. Overall, the subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, social, moral and cultural provision for pupils. They learn about Islamic, British, European and American cultures, and teachers emphasise the need for respect and understanding of other societies and beliefs. This

is well demonstrated in the various opportunities for discussion and group work that are provided. Pupils visit the local army museum, and the 1<sup>st</sup> World War Belgian battlefields, but there is scope for more visitors and visits in other years.

191. The joint managerial arrangements between the head of history and head of the liberal arts faculty work well and have produced good direction for the subject. Teachers share a commitment to improvement within the subject. There is regular monitoring of teaching and of pupils' books to check on standards and continuity. New members of staff are supported well through a comprehensive subject induction scheme.

192. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Development planning has been streamlined, assessment and monitoring procedures now developed and both A and AS level is now taught. Moreover greater pupil numbers take history at exam levels, and there are improved results at the end of Year 9 and 11. The success of the subject is reflected in the positive response of the pupils. They willingly participate in class activities and show respect for the opinions of others.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in the GCSE and GNVQ courses.
- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- The newly developing specialist team is beginning to improve curriculum and assessment procedures.

### Areas for improvement

- Limited time for taught ICT in Years 7-9 and too few opportunities to use computers across different subjects result in pupils making insufficient progress in ICT.
- The National Curriculum programmes of study are not covered in Years 7 to 11.
- Despite continuing improvements, ICT resources are still below average.

193. In 2001, just over a quarter of pupils continued ICT in Years 10 and 11 and their attainment was below national average for the percentage gaining grades A\* to C: 42 per cent were successful compared with 55 per cent nationally. Over 90 per cent of pupils gained a graded result, which was about in line with the national average. While the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to G in 2002 were broadly similar to that in the previous year, the proportion attaining higher grades fell back to just over a third of those entered.

194. Current standards in Year 9 are well below the national average. Pupils come to the school with very limited ICT experience, though make a sound start in Year 7, when they focus on using word processing, desk top publishing and presentation software to communicate their ideas. In the following two years they have much less time and there are considerable periods when they have no separately taught lessons at all. Combined with the lack of ICT opportunities in most other subjects, this results in pupils' making unsatisfactory progress in developing their ICT knowledge

and skills. In Year 9, standards are still well below the national average. With support, pupils are able to produce business documentation and use spreadsheets for data handling. The higher attaining pupils can use a wider range of functions such as mail merge and have a developing awareness of systems design. Lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, benefit from the opportunity to draft and redraft work and so improve their literacy skills. However, despite the effective learning in lessons, pupils do not reach the higher levels of attainment and have little experience of using ICT in wider applications, including those for modelling and measuring data or controlling devices.

195. In Years 10 and 11, about a third of pupils pursue ICT either as a GCSE or GNVQ course. Pupils who do so make mostly good progress and are achieving well, given their limited prior experience. Overall, standards seen in lessons were below average, though significantly better than most recent examination results. Where the GCSE teaching is particularly strong, pupils use a wider range of techniques to illustrate their planning process, such as flow diagrams, and the higher attaining can understand and develop relational databases. Lower attaining pupils use ICT extensively to present work accurately and appropriately in terms of style. In the new GNVQ full course the pupils are making good progress in understanding and using spreadsheets in a commercial context. Higher attaining pupils are able to analyse and annotate their project development work.
196. Teaching is good, overall, though there are instances of less effective, and on occasion, unsatisfactory practice. The well-informed specialist teaching enables pupils to develop their ICT knowledge and skills, particularly in Years 7 to 9, when there is limited curriculum time. However, some pupils do not have sufficient basic skills to attempt more open-ended activities such as designing a sixth form newspaper. Good lessons are characterised by strong class management based on a positive rapport with pupils that ensure good behaviour. In the best lessons the high expectations of standards and effort result in considerably better pace with pupils working harder, showing more care and producing higher quality work. This was particularly so in a Year 10 lesson where pupils had covered considerable ground in their first weeks of a GCSE course, evident in their work on business logos and documentation. The unsatisfactory teaching reflected a lack of clear lesson objectives, inappropriate learning materials and less rigorous monitoring of pupils' working, so resulting in too little progress.
197. Members of staff work hard to improve the quantity and quality of both GCSE and GNVQ coursework and there are more regular reviews of pupil progress. Practice is as yet quite variable in the extent to which those reviews provide indications of current attainment and clear ways in which pupils can improve work.
198. The ICT co-ordinator provides good and positive leadership to a newly developing team of specialist teachers. This is resulting in improvements in the curriculum. A new GNVQ course has been introduced and efforts are being made to improve work schemes in Years 7 to 9 to make better use of the limited timetable time. Much greater and more effective efforts have been made to improve teaching and assessment. Supporting these developments has been the appointment of a good specialist network manager who has allowed staff to focus on teaching. However, the demands on the ICT co-ordinator of managing the taught courses in main school and the sixth form have resulted in insufficient progress in the development of ICT across the school.
199. At a whole-school level, resources and accommodation continue to be a constraint on the development of ICT, despite the recent improvement in computer facilities and access to the nearby City Learning Centre, a very good ICT facility. Currently the school has about one computer to every eleven pupils, compared with one to six in similar schools. This limits the valuable use ICT can have in enhancing pupils' learning and helping them improve their basic literacy and numeracy. Currently, the ICT subject requirements are not met in the main school because the programmes of study are not fully covered. The National Curriculum requirement that other subjects use ICT effectively in their areas is also not met by many of those subjects. Balancing this, there is some good, if recent, good practice in design and technology, modern foreign languages and music particularly where use is made of the city learning centre (CLC).

Furthermore, design and technology is in the process of having installed new computer aided design and manufacture facilities with help from external funding.

200. Overall, there have been significant improvements in staffing and some resources and these have started to have a positive impact on standards. Nonetheless, there is still some way to go in ensuring an effective provision for all pupils.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**

### **Strengths**

- Improving exam results at GCSE.
- Good leadership and management.
- Good relationships between teachers and students.

Areas for improvement

- Examination results at GCSE, particularly for pupils achieving A\* to C grades.
- Inconsistencies in teaching.
- Students' understanding of their own learning.

201. By the end of Year 9 standards are below average. Teacher assessments show that the proportion of pupils reaching an average level of attainment in 2002 was well below average for boys nationally. However, these results are an improvement on previous years. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are improving and, overall pupils make satisfactory progress. Standards of speaking are close to the national average. Most pupils speak with confidence, fluency and usually with good pronunciation. However, high attaining pupils, particularly in Years 8 and 9, are not being given the opportunity to extend their oral responses so that they can reach the higher levels. Standards of listening skills are close to national averages. Standards of writing are below average. Pupils begin well in Year 7, when most learn to write accurately. However, pupils in Years 8 and 9 are not given enough opportunities to produce extended writing. High attaining pupils do not demonstrate secure grasp of the main tenses. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory, often good, progress in lessons, particularly when they have support. However, pupils being regularly withdrawn from language lessons for literacy support slows their progress in modern languages. Pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress.
202. By Year 11 standards are below average in French but pupils make satisfactory progress. In German standards are close to the national averages and students make good progress. Results in GCSE examinations in French in 2002 were well below national averages for all students and well below national averages for boys. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades was well below the national averages for boys but, the proportion of pupils gaining grades in A\* to G range was close to the national average. There has been a consistent improvement in results since the last inspection.
203. Results in GCSE examinations in German were well below average by comparison with all pupils nationally but close to the national average for boys. The proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades was below average for boys but the proportion gaining A\* to G grades was close to the national average. There has been a consistent improvement in results since the last inspection though numbers of students entered for the examination have declined by comparison with 2001 because of the increased flexibility introduced into the National Curriculum for pupils in Year 10 and 11 to allow pupils to take vocational courses instead of a modern foreign language.
204. Inspection judgements are that standards in Years 10 and 11 in French are below average. Standards of speaking are below average. High attainers in Year 10 are often able to give extended responses and to express opinions but students of similar ability in Year 11 lack confidence and fluency. Standards of listening are at an average level. Writing skills remain below average. High attaining pupils in Year 11 use a variety of tenses with increasing confidence but do not use enough complex structures nor do they have the variety of expression that will allow them to achieve the higher grades.
205. Standards in German in Year 11 are close to the national averages. Standards of speaking and listening are at an average level. All pupils respond well to the teachers' challenging use of the foreign language in lessons and speak confidently if not always with good pronunciation. Writing skills are in line with expectations for middle and low attainers. High attaining pupils develop a good range of vocabulary and learn to use complex structures but do not have the confidence to manipulate language effectively.
206. Pupils have positive attitudes to their work. They behave well. They usually listen well to the teacher and each other and generally contribute well in oral work. They respect and support each other well and relate well to their teachers. Sometimes, particularly when the lesson lacks variety, they find concentration difficult.



207. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In many lessons, particularly in German in Year 11, teaching and learning are good. Most students develop good listening skills because teachers have good or very good command of the target language and use it effectively in lessons. Pupils are almost always well motivated because relationships in lessons are good. This is particularly important in developing pupils' oral skills. In one Year 7 class, for example, pupils of all abilities were keen to join in oral practice because the teacher had been successful in creating a good working atmosphere in which pupils were able to contribute without fear of failure or ridicule. Teachers mark work thoroughly and conscientiously. They always point out to pupils the strengths and weaknesses of their work so pupils are in a position to learn from their mistakes.
208. In many lessons, across both languages, planning is good. Learning objectives are clear. Teachers usually introduce and practise new vocabulary thoroughly and ensure that pupils are able to develop their skills in the four areas of speaking reading, listening and writing. The best lessons achieve a good variety of activities and a good balance between teacher-and pupil-centred work. These lessons are successful in maintaining pupils' enthusiasm and concentration. In some lessons, however, objectives are not effectively shared with pupils and the review at the end is not thorough so pupils do not leave the lesson with a sense of achievement. Some lessons lack a clear focus. In a small number of lessons there is insufficient oral practice of new vocabulary and ineffective preparation for some tasks.
209. The best lessons are conducted at a good pace and contain a high level of challenge. In one Year 8 lesson with a wide range of ability, for example, the teacher was able to challenge the more able pupils by good use of questioning while ensuring a good contribution from low attainers through carefully targeted support. In a minority of lessons the pace is slow; in others work is not demanding enough for the more able. This affects pupils' contribution to the lesson. In a small number of lessons in which the work is challenging teachers do not give pupils enough support. Teachers have a good understanding of National Curriculum levels and GCSE criteria. They assess pupils' work regularly and record results thoroughly. However they do not share the information effectively with pupils. As a result pupils are unsure about how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve the standard of their work. Teachers ensure that pupils develop good ICT skills and the subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
210. The way some pupils are withdrawn from modern foreign languages at different times for additional literacy support, particularly in Years 8 and 9 is making it hard for teachers to achieve continuity.
211. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear educational direction for the department, as the consistent improvement in results indicates. The department is cohesive. Teachers support each other well. The head of department is supported well by the senior management team and monitors the work of the department effectively, although the monitoring of teaching needs to be more rigorous to address inconsistencies. Departmental documentation is helpful and detailed. The department has had major staffing problems over the last few years, which have still not been fully resolved. This has had a considerable impact on performance, particularly in French.
212. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. There has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have risen considerably. As a result there has been a consistent improvement in results and in the numbers of pupils being entered for GCSE examinations.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Practical musical skills, including the use of music technology, are developing well at all ages.
- Teaching of practical skills is good overall.

- Students enjoy their lessons, work with enthusiasm and develop self-confidence.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at both key stages through a planned development of knowledge and understanding of a much wider range of musical styles.
- The accommodation for small group work.

213. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 follow a National Curriculum course although not all strands of the curriculum are fully covered. Music technology is developed well but pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of a sufficiently wide enough variety of musical styles. GCSE music is offered as an option in Years 10 and 11 and a music based performing arts course was introduced in the sixth form two-years ago. Instrumental lessons are offered free to the pupils in a variety of instruments including violin, 'cello, flute, clarinet, saxophone, brass, guitar and drums. Several bands and music clubs meet regularly and the department is planning to introduce its own record label as a part of their plans to gain arts college status.
214. Standards at the end of Year 9 are below expected levels for most. Pupils' standards on entry to the school are well below national levels and a significant number of pupils have a limited former musical experience. In performing and composing, standards are broadly in line with national levels for approximately half the pupils. They play keyboards and percussion instruments and can maintain simple parts accurately. Pupils below the expected level have more limited keyboard technique and they cannot always sustain their part in time. In composing, pupils make good use of music technology and develop a satisfactory understanding of sequencing techniques. They select appropriate samples and can arrange patterns within simple structures. In listening and understanding, standards are much lower. Pupils' aural skills are average but they lack understanding and knowledge of a full range of music. They do not always use musical terminology correctly to describe music. Achievement and progress are good in practical skills across the key stage but unsatisfactory in listening and applying knowledge. Progress over time is only satisfactory overall.
215. In Years 10 and 11, standards in examination results since the last inspection have varied from being above national average standards to well below. In recent years, they have been well below. This wide variation in results partly reflects the musical abilities of the pupils opting for music. The numbers of pupils opting for music is above the national average.
216. As in Years 7 to 9, standards in performing are broadly match with national average standards for half the pupils who demonstrate a satisfactory technique on a variety of instruments. In group performances pupils listen carefully to each other and maintain the ensemble. They also develop good skills in improvising. In composing, pupils use technology well to realise their ideas. They combine the musical elements successfully within simple structures. A few, working above the standard, develop imaginative ideas while those working below have less good ideas in overly repetitive structures.
217. Standards in the listening exam are much weaker and this depresses the overall results. Pupils need a much wider knowledge of their chosen areas of study, a better understanding of different musical styles and more opportunities to practise written responses to examination questions. The department has identified this weakness in its development plan. Achievement is good in practical skills but unsatisfactory in the development of knowledge and understanding for the course.
218. Since the last inspection the department has introduced a performing arts course in the sixth form. The first set of results are in line with national standards, with pupils making good use of their performing and sequencing skills to complete their tasks. Achievement and progress are very good.
219. Teaching seen in the inspection concentrated on lessons developing practical skills and was good overall in all year groups. Very good teaching was also observed. Teachers plan their lessons well with a variety of tasks that help to maintain pupil interest. They are patient and encouraging,

establishing a good learning environment in which all are equally valued and included. Explanations are clear and teachers use questioning well to check that pupils understand their tasks. In the best lessons teachers use short, timed tasks of increasing levels of difficulty to help pupils consolidate and extend their skills. Classroom management is good and pupils enjoy their lessons and work enthusiastically developing confidence in their performing tasks. They work well together in paired and ensemble work. In a few lessons, where pupils spend too long on the same task, some lose concentration. Teachers have good subject knowledge and particularly good knowledge of music technology which enables the pupils to make good progress in their compositions despite the limited performance skills of some. Knowledge of the musical elements and the use of correct musical terminology to describe them needed more emphasis in lessons to help pupils develop their knowledge and understanding across a wider range of styles. Teaching in the sixth form and in the instrumental lessons is very good.

220. The head of department has a clear sense of direction for the development of practical skills in the curriculum. The same emphasis must now be put on developing knowledge and understanding of a wide variety of musical styles in order to raise standards and fully meet the curriculum. In particular, music from different times needs development Years 7 to 9 and, in Years 10 to 11, pupils need a deeper knowledge of their chosen areas of study, increased understanding of the main styles of music from different places and times and regular practice in answering examination style questions. Schemes of work must be re-written to ensure the planned progression of this knowledge and understanding and the new assessment schemes that have been recently developed will need adjustments to reflect changes in the curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection is mixed, but is satisfactory overall.
221. Staffing is good. Instrumental teachers support the department and work in the extra-curricular area. Accommodation has not changed from the last inspection and there are still not enough practice rooms. When pupils work in groups in the main classrooms their progress is slowed as they cannot hear their own work clearly. There are good displays on the classroom walls but, overall, the rooms are shabby in appearance, which does not create an aesthetic atmosphere for the subject. Resources are mostly good but more computer work stations are needed to support the composition work at both key stages.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Consistently applied standards and expectations, which enable all students to achieve well. There is a clear focus on raising standards.
- The quality of teaching and the relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- The quality of extra-curricular provision.
- Assessments are integrated into teaching: good records are maintained, which are used for future planning.
- Excellent leadership of the department.

### Areas for improvement

- The accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory.

222. Standards in physical education are above average. Pupils by the end of Year 9 and by the end of Year 11 are working at a level above expectations for their age. There are a few exceptions. The majority of pupils make good progress in terms of skill and fitness levels when compared with their assessed capability and previous attainment in physical education. This is due to good teaching and guidance. Pupils enter the school with limited competence in a narrow range of physical work and a barely satisfactory grasp of what they can personally achieve. Quickly, from Year 7, progress is made in the gym, the sports field and in the wide range of other physical work available to them. By Year 9, boys show their ability to apply their skills, and have a good understanding of fitness requirements, rules and tactics of games. These skills are developed

further in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils co-operate effectively with their teachers and with each other to raise standards.

223. GCSE physical education is a popular option with about 25 per cent of the year group choosing the subject. Recent GCSE results at the end of Year 11 show the percentage of boys gaining grades A\* to C, to be just below the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades A\* to B has increased significantly over the last three years. Performance in the subject compared with other subjects in the school is good. The overall average score of physical education has been greater than that achieved in other subjects. The percentage of pupils gaining A\* to G grades has been above the national average. The physical education examination results have improved each year and particularly for the last three years. The average point score has been above average. Few pupils who take the course have shown any diffidence in tackling the combined theory and practical work. This represents a significant achievement for both staff and pupils. The work that is undertaken to overcome any anxiety about examinations produces a real value to the grades secured. While a few pupils do have problems with their written work in Years 10 and 11, the high quality support provided allows them to reach their full potential. Special attention is given to those pupils who have special needs or a weakness in the use of language. This help has a positive influence on their performance. A small number of pupils fail to maintain a consistent attendance record, which hampers their progress. Nonetheless, a good number of pupils are achieving better than might be expected.
224. Teaching is very good in all years. Lessons have a clear focus and are linked to learning objectives. The pace of teaching and learning is varied. Expectations are high. Teachers challenge, motivate and are supportive to all pupils. In a Year 11 lesson on the muscular system the explanation of why muscles work was made clear to all levels of attainment present. Clear objectives and aims are shared with pupils. Most boys are motivated and remain on tasks although there are a few boys who, despite the teacher's best efforts do not listen and grasp fully the nature of the tasks. Higher attaining pupils could be given even more of a challenge on occasions to raise the quality of their work. Using the social and physical skills of the most able performers to support learning for the less able does happen but opportunities for this co-operation and co-operative group work could be extended further. Pupils with learning needs are integrated fully and they make good progress. More effective and appropriate targeting of these pupils' work would raise the quality of work even higher. They advance their skills in most lessons. Physical education is not elitist. All programmes of work are inclusive.
225. The quality of learning is very good. A notable example of this is the health related fitness-training programme. All pupils are encouraged to evaluate each other's work in order to improve their own performance. Pupils accept a good measure of responsibility for their learning. Boys' behaviour is good overall and most participate with enthusiasm. Most pupils by the age of 14, irrespective of ability or ethnic background, can participate in a wide range of activities from competitive team games, indoors and out, through to swimming and gymnastics. In the last two years there has been a significant increase in the numbers reaching their expected attainment level. By Year 11 many pupils are successfully working with specialists and coaches to raise the standard of their performance. The physical education department holds *Sportsmark* status and will soon make a bid for *Sportsmark Gold*. This award is in recognition of the quality of provision in physical education at this school. The school also been awarded the Football Association's Charter Standard for Quality.
226. The physical education enrichment programme is extensive. A programme of inter-form, house and inter-school competitions help raise standards. Many pupils play sport outside the formal curriculum through teams and clubs. Individuals and squads in football, rugby, athletics, cross-country and cricket throughout the years have been successful in a wide range of tournaments and competitions. A number of boys have performed at district and county level in a range of sports and in football, rugby and athletics the school has provided international representatives. The school has many formal and informal sporting links, such as with Blackheath Rugby Club, Millwall FC and Kent County Cricket Club. While some special needs pupils work at their own level, many work at a level above their previous best and they are all encouraged to raise their performance.
227. The management of physical education is excellent. There is strong teamwork within the department. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. The

overall planning of work and the curriculum are good and the lesson plans and schemes of work are developed well with an appropriate focus on what pupils are expected to achieve by the end of a lesson or unit of work. Schemes of work are constantly updated to meet National Curriculum requirements and to meet the changing needs of pupils as they make greater or lesser progress. Records and handbooks are produced to support teaching and learning. They are of a good quality. A management system of assessing and recording pupils' progress against targets has been devised. Assessment is effective and efficient. There are detailed strategies to help pupils who find the science involved in the GCSE theory work difficult. Pupils who are not actively participating, (for example, because of injury), particularly the lower-attaining non-participants, need to be incorporated more fully in lessons. Greater access to ICT is required. Resources are of a good quality, varied and relevant to raising standards. The quality of the physical environment for learning is poor. During the inspection a heavy downpour flooded the floor of the sports hall and made it wet and dangerous.

228. There has been overall significant improvement in the subject since the last inspection in a number of aspects. Key issues from the last report have been tackled. There is now regular lesson observation and improvement of teaching and learning is the central element of physical education. There is now a greater concentration on pupils working in pairs and co-operating with each other. Schemes of work are better developed. The staff produce excellent learning materials and cover the process of planning, performing and evaluating. The monitoring and co-ordination of the work of the department is even tighter and better organised. One example of the good organisation is that the department has made a number of local bids including 'Awards for All' which connect the school with other parts of the local community and help the development of sports. The outstanding deficiency is the quality of accommodation.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attainment in GCSE is very good.</li> <li>• Teaching is very good, with some excellent features.</li> <li>• Management of pupils is excellent.</li> <li>• Departmental management is excellent.</li> <li>• Curriculum for Years 7 to 11 is very good.</li> <li>• Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good.</li> </ul> <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As identified in the subject development plan.</li> </ul>
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229. Standards in Years 7 to 9 match expectations in relation to the Lewisham LEA Agreed syllabus. In Years 10 and 11, standards are well above the national average for all schools.
230. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 7 to 9 is in line with expected levels. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. There are many very good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. In Year 7, through a very good question and answer session developed by the teacher, pupils understood the differences between history, biography and myth in the Hindu holy books. In Year 8, pupils developed a good understanding of images of Jesus from different cultural standpoints. As a result of the teacher's use of video and discussion, pupils made important links between Christian, Buddhist and Hindu images of God. In Year 9, pupils understand the links between religious persecution and racism. Pupils explored their feelings and emotions about persecution as a consequence of the teacher's skill in developing effective discussion. This enabled them to begin to examine their own attitudes and feelings. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work were useful aids to improve speaking and written skills. Overall, learning is very good.

231. In lessons and work seen in Years 10 and 11, attainment is higher than national expectations. In Year 10 GCSE classes, pupils achieve well, and their attainment is well above national expectations. They show a very good understanding of issues such as the Christian teaching on contraception. Through an excellent teacher-directed discussion and exercise pupils produced profound and well-balanced arguments about the different Christian views of sexual relationships. They showed a deep respect for the views of others, and this enabled all pupils to feel confident in expressing their views in an open and honest way. In Year 11, pupils developed a very good understanding of the difficulties faced by Muslims in non-Muslim countries. Very good questioning by the teacher enabled pupils to understand the importance of having a place for prayer. Pupils develop very good attitudes towards other cultures and traditions as a result of the teacher challenging them to embrace a wide range of views. Pupils demonstrate developing skills of critical analysis and the ability to present balanced arguments. Overall, learning is very good.
232. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by pupils of different ethnic background. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented make significant progress.
233. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They behave extremely well, are very well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and pupils is excellent, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupil behaviour makes an excellent contribution to pupil achievement and progress.
234. Teaching is very good, with many excellent features. The teaching is of high quality and has a significant impact on pupil achievement. Lesson planning is very good, and lesson aims were shared with pupils in all lessons observed. Teachers make very good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work they use a suitable range of styles that enable pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion. This assists pupils to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well, contributing to an excellent climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed, and these are very effective in contributing to pupil achievement.
235. Assessment of pupils' work is generally good and very helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures provide a very good basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. Assessment informs the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work.
236. Religious education makes a very valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, so providing opportunities for pupils to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs.
237. Departmental management is excellent. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction. Pupils are provided with a very rich experience of religious education in all year groups. The head of the department approaches the task with great enthusiasm and commitment. Planning is excellent. The departmental development plan identifies and addresses priorities. The quality of display that celebrates pupils' achievement is very high. Curriculum resources are generally good.
238. Since the last inspection, improvements in standards, teaching styles and the provision of a full curriculum for all pupils have had a very good impact on pupils' achievement and progress.



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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002. National comparative information given relates to 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	8	50	87	50	40	2.1	2.8
Business Studies	42	64	89	10	31	1.4	2.6
ICT	19	89	81	21	22	2.3	2.2
Art	21	81	86	19	43	2.1	2.9
Media Studies	36	97	93	28	38	2.9	2.9
German	5	80	89.5	40	39	2.6	2.9
General Studies	36	81	82	8	27	1.6	2.3
Government and Politics	20	65	N/a	25	N/a	1.7	N/a
English Literature	21	100	95	24	39	2.9	3.0

\* compared to 2001 results for all pupils

### **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 *
Mathematics	5	80	87	40	43	4.0	5.8
Biology	0	0	88	0	34	0	5.25
Business Studies	17	100	92	0	32	3.4	5.5
ICT	25	52	74	0	13	2.1	1.75
Art	3	66	96	0	46	2.0	6.57
Media Studies(results are compared to communication studies)	28	96	93	28	31	5.6	5.53
Religious education	13	100	N/a	8	N/a	5.4	N/a
Politics	0	0	N/a	0	N/a	0	N/a
English	7	100	95	7	37	4.2	5.9

\* compared to 2001 data for all pupils

### Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England *	School	England *	School	England *
GNVQ intermediate Business Studies	17	70	85	9	41	0	19
GNVQ intermediate Leisure and tourism	10	40	84	10	40	0	14
GNVQ intermediate Media Studies	13	85	N/a	38	N/a	0	N/a

\* compared to 2001 results for all pupils

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

239. The inspection of mathematics covered the A2-level and the AS-level courses offered by the school. Students cover modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. There is satisfactory provision for those students re-sitting GCSE mathematics and within vocational courses for the key skill of application of number.

240. The science focus was on biology but a sample of lessons was also seen in physics and chemistry. In physics the A level results were well below national averages for 2001 but above in 2000. For chemistry in both 2000 and 2001 results were well below national averages. Teaching was at least satisfactory in the lessons seen. The 4 students in the Year 13 physics class and the 4 students in the chemistry class are expected to gain a grade A to E in the 2003 A level examinations. This will reflect satisfactory progress based on predictions from their GCSE entry data.

### Mathematics

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

#### Strengths

- There is a good match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum.
- The relationships between teachers and students are good. Students have confidence in their teachers.
- Many students re-taking GCSE make good progress.
- Mathematics is rising in popularity. There is a significant increase in the number of students studying AS-level courses in Year 12.

#### Areas for improvement

- Too many students have been unsuccessful in the AS-level modules. Some students beginning their study of mathematics have low starting points.
- The monitoring of the students' day-to-day progress is insufficiently rigorous.
- There are insufficient resources for students to support their independent study.

241. The number of students studying AS-level and A2- level mathematics courses in the sixth form has been small. As a result, it is not possible to make valid national comparisons. However, overall standards achieved are lower than average, partly reflecting the students' starting points. Individual students have had some success when measured against their prior attainment in GCSE examinations. Nevertheless, in AS-level examinations too few students have been successful in achieving a pass grade. Of the six students completing the AS-level modules in 2002, provisional results indicate that only one student achieved a pass grade, D. The students achieved satisfactorily in the statistics module but were unsuccessful in the pure mathematics

- modules. Five students sat A-level mathematics examinations in 2002. The provisional results show four out of the five students were successful, with two gaining B grades.
242. Many students re-sitting GCSE mathematics in 2001/ 2002 improved their grades significantly. Students entered for the winter examination series were more successful than those entered for the summer series. Ten out of 12 of these students raised their grades by one and obtained a grade C. Of the eleven taking the examination later in the year, only one succeeded in obtaining a higher grade C. For students studying vocational courses, the application of number is assessed within their specialist areas.
243. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' notebooks in the current Years 12 and 13 confirms a wide range of attainment, which is overall below average. The quality of the students' written work is sometimes careless and reflects an emphasis on routine skills. Fourteen students in Year 12, from across the consortium, have begun AS- level courses in mathematics. Currently they are concentrating on statistics and pure mathematics modules. Some of these students have limited manipulative algebra skills, and this hampers their work in pure mathematics as in a lesson on sequences. In a statistics lesson on probability, most were able to build successfully on their Year 11 work to develop their knowledge of probability. In Year 13, three pupils were observed in a pure mathematics and a mechanics class. They applied themselves very well to their work and made good progress in developing their understanding of powers and logarithms and in applying their knowledge to solving equations. In a mechanics lesson, the students clearly understood their work on connected particles, helped by concrete examples. The students reported finding greater difficulty with their work in pure mathematics than in mechanics or statistics. Generally, even able students show little inclination to pursue topics beyond the minimum expected by their teachers, but given their starting points, these students are making satisfactory progress.
244. In the GCSE mathematics class observed, the students' close attention to the teacher's explanations and their application to their work, enabled them to approach the next-day's examination with confidence. They improved their algebraic skills and many were able to use routine methods to solve linear equations successfully.
245. Teaching is satisfactory overall. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and understand clearly the requirements of the examination specifications. The best lessons are conceptually carefully structured and give careful thought to the development of the pupils' thinking skills. Some teaching, however, is over-directed, so that students, particularly in Year 12, rely heavily on their teachers and become passive learners. The short-term assessment of the students' learning is not rigorous enough, with students' unfinished work not always being followed up. Some students are uncertain as to how well they are doing.
246. The mathematics department's provision for post-16 mathematics is well managed. However, the development of the mathematics provision is hampered by the lack of an overall subject leader within the consortium schools. Units studied at AS- level, for example, are not co-ordinated across the three schools. Key assessment points have been developed within the consortium, but interim tracking of the students' achievements in mathematics rests within the individual school departments. Within the constraints of the consortium, teachers strive to satisfy individual needs. This occasionally results in students' beginning their courses from a low base. As the school retains more of its mathematically gifted students, the number of its own students' studying AS-level mathematics is growing. The department now needs to review its monitoring procedures for this group so that there is early identification of the students' learning needs. Resources to support the students' independent study are scarce and do not encourage the students to adopt a scholarly approach to their work.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good.

- Teachers have good up-to-date subject knowledge.
- Base line data are used effectively to monitor progress and set targets for students.

Areas for improvement

- To ensure that A level biology provision is more formally co-ordinated across the schools in the consortium.
- Provision of better accommodation and computing facilities to support teaching and learning.
- Further use of assessment information to help students improve their work.

247. The attainment of students in biology has been well below average in 2000 and 2001. One candidate from the school achieved a grade A to E pass grade in 2002.
248. Biology is being taught at the school for the first time in two years. In the group preparing for AS biology in 2003 there are five students from Forest Hill and a further 12 students from other schools in the consortium. Some students are in Year 13 taking AS biology as a one-year course. The entry grades of the cohort at GCSE range from A\* to C. The group of students has a wide range of ability, aptitude and prior experience of science provision. Some students intend to study sciences or medicine at university, while others are taking the course to complement other non-science A-level qualifications.
249. Most students are committed to learning and to making progress. One or two students do not get to lessons on time and they miss important information and teaching. Most are well organised, keeping their notes up to date and using the library independently to research journals and the Internet. Some students have found it difficult to make the transition to A level work and they need ongoing monitoring and support to establish the necessary study habits. Students are given many opportunities to develop both their personal and social skills as well as their study skills. Most work effectively both independently and in groups on current and relevant sources to analyse and synthesise information and to present their findings in different formats and styles. They enjoy this way of working, acknowledging that although it is challenging it is also varied and motivating. The development of key skills is integrated well into the teaching of biology. There is now scope to find ways to assess and accredit the achievements of the students in the skills of communication, application of number and information technology. The relationships of students with teachers are excellent, ensuring that support and advice are available alongside high expectations of work and effort.
250. Teaching is very good. It is enabling students to make good progress at this early stage of the course. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and have researched thoroughly the requirements of the examinations and the course work. The two teachers planning and teaching A level for the first time benefit from working alongside a more experienced biology teacher from another school in the consortium who provides advice and teaches for one lesson each week. Lessons begin with a starter activity to encourage students to self assess their knowledge and understanding, to review previous work and to introduce the new lesson. Although lessons are long, teachers plan and prepare a series of different activities, all well resourced and managed with skill and pace. For example, in one lesson on gene technology students were asked to write the script to a silent piece of video, reorganise the sequence of slides in a power point presentation, and to research and present evidence from a series of articles. Teachers are equally good at summarising and explaining key points in the lesson and questioning students to develop their own understanding. Practical work is well linked to theory and is efficiently organised. Work is regularly checked and assessed. There is a comprehensive and effective school system to record data and to monitor progress of students towards predicted levels of attainment. This provision needs to be developed further so that assessment information can be used to advise students on practical strategies, which will help them meet their personal targets.
251. The course is well managed. A useful in-house course booklet provides students with information about the examination requirements of the course as well as explaining how they will be taught and offering advice on how to study. Although staff from different schools meet, there is a need for more formal course coordination to ensure continuity and progression of provision year on year and across the various schools, which deliver the biology course. The accommodation for teaching and the computing facilities and resources are unsatisfactory. Teachers work creatively to overcome these constraints and to support the students in achieving their potential.

## BUSINESS STUDIES

252. Courses currently run in the sixth form are Year 12 AS and Year 13 A2 level business studies, and foundation and intermediate GNVQ courses. A GCSE course runs in Years 10 and 11.

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching helps students develop very good attitudes.
- Teachers' good experience of business and industry, and their enthusiastic approach.
- Teachers' supportive relationships with students, whose progress is well monitored.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' use of ICT is insufficient because computers are not available in all lessons.
- Visits, speakers and work placements to enrich students' learning of business.

253. A level standards were well below the national average in 2001. Nearly all students passed, but the proportion gaining the top grades of A and B was well below both national and school average. Results in 2002 were better in the first new A2 examination: all students passed with similar top grades to 2001 but results were in line with teachers' expectations based on students' GCSE grades. AS level results were disappointing, with three quarters of students passing but a third of the 40 entered being ungraded, most having previously taken GNVQ. Standards in the small number of AS lessons sampled were satisfactory.
254. In the GNVQ courses, standards were below the national average at both foundation and intermediate levels in 2001, with five of the 17 intermediate students entered failing to complete the course, and three students gaining a merit grade. Five of the 19 foundation level students entered failed to complete the course, although only one gained a merit grade. Whilst the low trend continued in 2002 for Intermediate, with 11 of the 17 entered passing, with one merit, foundation level showed improvement as all 11 students passed, with one gaining a merit grade.
255. Overall, students achieved well over time from GCSE starting points, but the entry standards of some A level students were too low to ensure success. There is an AS level class currently in Year 12 but no Year 13 A2 level course is running. The school is considering introducing AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) instead.
256. A small sample of previous Year 13 A2 portfolio projects seen were satisfactory, and students evaluated specific business problems in local companies clearly, though not always in sufficient depth. Students' research questionnaires were well planned, and higher attaining students analysed them thoroughly with computer-produced graphs. Students' work included relevant research from web sites and part-time jobs.
257. Current AS level students achieve well in lessons and work seen and standards are broadly in line with expectations related to their age and prior attainment at this stage, though most students do not use ICT enough as it is not easily available. Students showed a good grasp of different types of costs, and break even, but were less clear about how the market affects costs. Students' course work notes on financial accounts were neat and well organised. Most students could define break-even accurately. Students who had not taken GCSE in business found it difficult to explain why firms need to launch new products to ease cash flow problems, and weaker students did not use word processing enough to draft their evaluations, which often lacked detail. Students generally make good progress from their GCSE starting points, where most attained a good business GCSE grade. Students who have previously taken GNVQ tend to make satisfactory progress overall.
258. GNVQ students made good progress overall in lessons seen. At intermediate level, higher attaining students used ICT well to embed organisation charts into their reports and all students developed a sound understanding of basic business finance, and why employers provide training,

developing good communications key skills by presenting their business ideas with PowerPoint slides. A large minority do not attend regularly and tend to work at too slow a pace. Foundation students made very good progress in using PowerPoint to design slides of ideas for products, and students with English as an additional language wrote fluid descriptions of their product. Foundation students, including those with special educational needs showed very good attitudes, helped by good additional learning support in class.

259. Teaching and learning are good overall. The AS level lessons seen were planned well with clear aims. Teachers' good subject knowledge and enthusiasm underpinned class discussions. Lessons had good pace to maintain interest. In a very good lesson, the teacher's well-focused questions to consolidate previous learning and used topical case studies to develop students' problem solving skills well. Students developed good critical understanding of the effects of poor motivation in different businesses. In all lessons, teachers' supportive relationships with students helped them gain interest and enthusiasm for business, particularly where additional learning support helped foundation students with special educational needs. Teachers marked constructively to examination requirements, and, in class and homework, gave clear targets to help students improve. Students' progress over time was monitored well against predicted grades. Weaker GNVQ lessons were affected by the lack of availability of computers and insufficient use of local businesses to generate business ideas for presentations. Accommodation was barely satisfactory, with poor room blackout facilities.
260. Leadership and management of business courses are very good: the co-ordinator has re-written schemes of work to fully meet examination requirements, and further development should incorporate closer links with local business. A clear sense of direction is shown by the introduction of new GNVQ and AS courses. Staff are well co-ordinated and overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

261. ICT is provided as a GCE Advanced level course in Forest Hill with some students taking the vocational Advanced level at another school in the consortium. Additionally, all one-year students take the key skill in ICT as part of their GNVQ course and almost all gain accreditation. A small number of AS students also take advantage of the opportunity to gain a key skill level 2 or 3 as a further option. Otherwise, ICT is used in varying degrees in the other courses such as music, business studies and media studies though the opportunities for the further development of ICT knowledge and skills for Advanced level students are patchy.

### ICT

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT in A and AS courses is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Overall, teaching is good.
- There is developing good practice in monitoring and assessing A level pupils.
- Well-produced coursework guidance booklets help students work with more independence.

#### Areas for improvement

- Best practice is not followed by all teachers.
- Current course does not meet all students' needs.

262. Standards in the GCE Advanced level ICT course have varied considerably from year to year and in 2001 were below national average in terms of the number of higher grades although 80 percent were successful. In 2002 the larger and academically weaker group fared less well, with only half attaining a pass. This was in part a result of less effective provision as well as not matching students to an appropriate course and level.

263. Standards in Year 13 are below the national average but significantly better than those in the previous year. In their problem analysis for a database project, most work at a pass standard or better though with fewer demonstrating the highest standards. Students work with some independence, evident in the links established with different outside businesses to carry out their initial research. Higher attaining students could explain with understanding, how they analysed a client's needs such as document handling and stock control. Lower attaining students have weaker literacy skills which they overcome to an extent by using ICT to redraft and present their work. Their work is more descriptive than evaluative and this was illustrated in a review of possible software use that did not link directly to the possible use in designing a system for the chosen business. Overall, students enjoy their studies and make good progress from modest GCSE results largely as a result of the mostly good teaching.
264. Teaching is provided by a specialist team and is good overall. The best teaching made very good use of the time for course work with clear target setting that sustained lesson pace and provided detailed and constructive guidance as to how students can improve their work. Lessons made effective use of technology, using data projectors to present lesson objectives and summarise outcomes and this provided clear focus and engaged students' interest. The satisfactory, though less effective teaching, is less well prepared with more limited intervention and little use of questioning. This limited dialogue provides fewer opportunities for students to reflect on and improve work and results in slower lesson progress.
265. In what is a newly developing team, one teacher has been given sixth form responsibility and has produced a very good A level assessment guidance booklet. The sixth form courses are taught jointly and this provides some variety for the students. There is still a sense of colleagues working together though with their different emphases to teaching and assessment rather than as a team with a team leader and shared practices. Ongoing assessment practice varies and the half term consortium assessments have yet to be embedded. Overall, the best practice is very good but has yet to be shared by all the team.
266. In terms of wider curriculum issues, given the high proportion of Forest Hill students who enter the sixth form with no ICT qualification, there is a lack of progression routes both for one-year sixth form students in the form of GNVQ Intermediate, or advanced vocational (AVCE) as a single or double award.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

267. A range of vocational and As and A2 courses were sampled in Art and Media Studies. Standards of art in Year 13 are in line with A2 expectations. Evidence of very good teaching and learning and very good progress being made in lessons, along with the excellent attitudes that students bring to the lessons, indicate that there is a strong upward trend in standards of achievement. Provision in media studies is very good. Teaching is a particular strength which results in many of the students achieving above expectation in most courses taken. Opportunities for developing independent learning are very good.

### Art

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

#### Strengths

- The very good teaching.
- The leadership of the department.
- The very positive attitudes of students.

#### Areas for improvement

- The provision and use of computers and good quality software.
- Books for research.



268. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades A to B in the A2 examination in 2001 was well below the national average. The numbers taking the examination were very small. Results for 2002 show a significant percentage increase, but the numbers are too small to enable any fair comparison to be made with national figures. There were no higher grade passes at AS level in 2001, but the provisional results for 2002, a year which saw numbers taking the exam rise almost threefold, a quarter of the candidates gained A to B grades, an improved figure, but one still well below expectations. The picture is of a very unsettled period of staff changes and student courses being doubled up to create viable teaching groups. The department has now stabilised and there are significantly larger numbers of students opting for art at both AS and A2 levels. Students are now taught in separate classes for each course. Evidence of very good teaching and learning and very good progress being made in lessons, along with the excellent attitudes that students bring to the lessons, indicate that there is a strong upward trend in standards of achievement. Predicted grades indicate results close to national averages in 2003.
269. In work seen during the inspection, standards of achievement in Year 13 are in line with national expectations and students make very good progress in lessons. This results from the very good teaching and the very positive attitudes that students bring to the lessons. Most of the students are clear about the next stage of their education and have applied to art colleges or universities to pursue their studies. There are some very able students in the year group and these have built up an impressive range of skills across a wide range of media. Their research is very diverse, ranging from Botticelli and Rembrandt, through art nouveau to Giger, Chris Ofili and the *Manga* art of Japan. Students, including those with special educational needs, put a great deal of intellectual and creative effort into their work and produce well-researched and well-presented personal studies. Year 12 students who are preparing for the AS examination, explore the environmental images in the work of Andy Goldsworthy, working in groups to create patterns and structures from natural forms found in a nearby park. Higher attaining students research their work thoroughly and annotate their sketchbooks in a very informative and well-presented way. They work with great enthusiasm, adapting their structures and photographing them in different settings. Some retain the structures to record them at different stages of decay.
270. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have a thorough grasp of their subject that enables them to support the very diverse research undertaken by the students. The lack of good quality reference books has led teachers to use their own very good books for students to work from, thereby ensuring that they are not disadvantaged by the lack of up to date books provided by the school. Teachers' expectations are appropriately high and the majority of students respond well to them, working to a high standard of finish in their well-annotated studies. Lessons are taught confidently and managed effectively so that students are allowed the creative and intellectual space to develop their work independently. Relationships in lessons are excellent and students work together very well, supporting each other in discussion about their work. The positive critical evaluation of their work is directed well by the teachers.
271. The department benefits from strong, clear leadership. The head of department works very hard as both head of art and head of the faculty of creative and performing arts, to raise standards. The gaining of an Artsmark silver award for the school is a testament to the work of the head of department and her faculty team; the school has been encouraged to apply for the gold award. The curriculum is very good and has a particular strength in its multi-cultural inputs. Financial constraints restrict the use that can be made of planned visits to museums and galleries and the skills of artists in residence, but students are encouraged to explore the world of art in their own time. Resources for computer art are wholly inadequate, although a few students have high quality art software on their home computers and make good use of it for digital art. The department has been through a very unsettled period and, with the very good teaching and learning seen during the inspection, is heading for significant improvement in the years ahead.

## Media Studies

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

Strengths
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- Teaching: the quality of planning, preparation and knowledge of all staff is very good.
- Standard of the practical work: there is a consistently high standard of practical work, which is sometimes excellent.
- Opportunities for independent learning: students are given opportunities to develop independent study throughout all the courses taught.
- Vocational courses: provide a very good opportunity for students to develop a variety of practical skills.
- Progress made by lower attaining students in GNVQ is good.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation: most media studies taught in class rooms where facilities are unsatisfactory.

272. Results in media studies over the past three years have been consistently in line with national expectation. There has been improvement in all courses' results. Students often start with low attainment at GCSE in GNVQ classes and achieve grades that are greater than predicted. Many students who study at AS and A level also achieve results which are greater than predictions from their earlier examinations; for the past two years they have exceeded the average points score at A level in the subject by a small margin.
273. These results show good and sometimes very good progress by GNVQ students who enter the course with low attainment. Students who are higher attainers produce very good and sometimes excellent practical work demonstrating sophisticated skills using computer and information technology to produce newspapers, posters and cassette container covers. An example of photographic work seen was of a 'professional' standard demonstrating some high order skills in the use of a digital camera and manipulation of the data.
274. Teaching in media studies is very good overall. Teachers prepare their lessons well, their planning and use of resources is thorough and effective. Teachers' knowledge of key concepts is very good; they use well-chosen examples of media texts to support their teaching. Well-structured lessons give students clear tasks within the time available and clear criteria for the quality of examination work. Teachers have high expectations to which students respond very positively. Teaching of practical skills is very good with students given the opportunity to develop the use of audio, photographic and video equipment as well as editing facilities. The students are encouraged to develop their independence in learning. Students seen during the inspection in both year 12 and 13 classes were responsible in their use of equipment and also demonstrated their appreciation for health and safety issues and censorship of their work.
275. Learning in media studies mirrors the very good teaching. The handbooks provided by the department set clear criteria for students to meet the grade criteria in each of the courses. The recommended reading lists and the good advice on current media practices also ensures the students are able to use effective examples to support their written work. By year 13 the majority of AVCE and A level students have developed a sophisticated understanding of media concepts, which informs their choices in practical tasks. They build successfully on skills acquired in their year 12 courses, a substantial number continue into year 13. They are independent learners who plan and execute tasks with confidence.
276. The attitude of students is very good overall. There is some absence from lessons caused by clashes with other activities; retakes of GCSE and administrative tasks but work is made up. The absence in Year 12 does affect some group practical work but students are flexible and work round situations as they arise. Students are mature and behave responsibly; they show great respect for the facilities available. They support each other and mirror the way in which the staff uses supportive evaluation and constructive criticism. They respect each other and the efforts of all the staff involved in media studies. It was pleasing to see how well they responded to the technical support staff and valued their advice in the practical work projects. There is a mutual respect in relationships, which encourages students to respond to the high expectations of the staff.
277. The curriculum provided for all students is rich in key skills; in communication and the use of technology. They have a varied diet of theoretical lessons and activities, which underpins the practical work undertaken. Each course is designed to meet the needs of the participating students. The department also involves itself in the local community; providing a promotional video designed and made by students for 'Connexions', the local careers service. Year 12 students are involved in a multi-arts production to be performed in December and they participate in various 'media' competitions. The resources available are limited. There is careful management of resources for practical work to ensure that no student is disadvantaged.

278. The leadership of the department is quietly efficient and effective; there is a good team atmosphere. The very good working ethos of the department is apparent in all lessons seen. They have been complimented by all the examination boards for the way in which coursework is presented, marked and annotated. Joint planning and regular review ensures that courses are well taught and relevant. Analysis of results and the evaluation of courses ensure that any deficiencies are reviewed promptly. There is a clear direction set by the head of department to which all staff are committed. There is a good system for monitoring progress and regular assessment is carried out on the various units of work studied, which assists students in improving their work. Each member of staff ensures that they have up to date examples to share with students, which assists students in planning their own research.

## HUMANITIES

279. Some history lessons were seen and students make overall sound progress. The work of Government and Politics and religious education was sampled in detail. Achievement is good. Standards in religious education are below average but there is good provision and standards are rising.

### Politics

Overall provision in this subject is **good**

#### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good, and on occasions very good.
- The achievement of students is good.
- Very good levels of discussion in some lessons.
- Student attitudes to the subject are positive.
- Visits and visitors are used effectively.

#### Areas for development

- Further raise attainment in the subject.
- Raise students' awareness of current affairs and how to apply such knowledge in their work.
- Develop detailed schemes of work.
- Develop an introductory module to inform all students.

280. Some small groups of students take the subject, making comparisons with national figures unreliable. Last year there was no A level group but the department taught the AS syllabus. The AS results do suggest generally below average attainment at the higher grades of A to C, although the numbers obtaining a pass grade is approaching national expectations. This pattern is reflected in past A level results. The inspection revealed that present classes have a wide spread of ability but are judged, overall, to be in line with national expectations for grades A to E. This is good achievement for these students who start the course with modest GCSE grades.

281. AS students add satisfactorily to their knowledge when studying issues such as the use of identity cards, civil rights and the use of referenda. Most suggest arguments such as the costs and effectiveness of identity cards in controlling crime, illegal immigration and terrorism. The students are prone to making general statements and their arguments are not consistently backed up with examples and views of prominent people or groups. High attainers are able to relate to a range of current events and consider the different views of interested groups such as the police, pressure groups as well as the public. Sound progress is made when students consider how bodies such as the law courts, Parliament, the media and pressure groups can protect civil rights. Most students recognise the basic role of such bodies but do not have sufficient background knowledge to raise questions about their effectiveness. Again high attainers are able to relate their learning to on-going events.

282. Good progress is noted when students in year 13 study the role of political ideologies. Students observed discussed the difficulties associated with the ideology of Anarchism. Students have

prepared well for the lesson and their prior learning and reading results in a good level of debate. Students disagree amongst themselves about such ideas as to how anarchists would treat the problems of lawbreakers such as psychopaths. Of particular encouragement was that students could and did disagree yet consistently showed respect for the opinions of others. Written work of students demonstrate sound levels of knowledge although many students find difficulties in developing their argument using information gained from a wide variety of sources. High attaining students demonstrated very good levels of understanding when asked to develop a Marxist critique of Liberalism. The essays were well argued and written, showed good levels of understanding about differing opinions, and were able to relate their learning to present views on liberalism and Marxism.

283. Overall, teaching is good, with an example of very good teaching being observed. The very best teaching served as a model of good practice. A very positive learning environment was established where students felt confident to give their views. The teacher uses very good skills when promoting and controlling class discussion. The lesson and argument was skilfully developed at a good pace, making use of very good levels of subject knowledge. Students were enabled to settle quickly to work as a result of good preparatory work by the teacher. They knew what was expected of them because the teacher made it clear and constantly referred back to the aims of the lesson, and ended with an effective summing-up session. Occasionally in lessons the pace drops because of prolonged teacher-led sessions, and work that challenges all students has not been sufficiently developed. Marking is supportive and encouraging although the setting of short-term targets is inconsistently delivered.
284. Attitudes of the students to the subject are positive. They respond well to any opportunity to discuss issues, and commendably, show respect for others views. A significant minority have yet to fully recognise the need to fully commit themselves to work at this level, complete homework and lesson preparation thoroughly and keep abreast of current political events. Students spoken to enjoy the subject, feel that they benefit from good teaching and are generally aware of what they must do to improve their grades. The students coming from other schools feel welcome and are helped to settle to work in the subject. Given the different experiences of students it would be helpful if they could experience a short introduction to politics at the start of the course.
285. The curriculum is satisfactory and statutory requirements are met. Staff have developed programmes of study to guide their teaching. However they are in need of further development for learning objectives are not specific enough. Also levels of work for students of different abilities and possible problem-solving opportunities are not identified, while opportunities to use a full range of modern technologies are insufficiently explored. The visit to Parliament is appreciated, which along with visitors into the school from organisations such as pressure groups, undoubtedly motivate and add to the achievements of the students.
286. The subject has recently developed good procedures for the monitoring of student performance. At regular intervals the students complete an assessment and a grade is established. These are recorded on a student profile, compared to previous set targets and discussed with students on review days. The subject also benefits from a range of assessment information from other sources that can be used to inform lesson planning and curriculum design. The recent decision to move exam boards is a consequence of such analysis, but further use of the data is required if its value is to be maximised. The students benefit from good course booklets that give details about the course, study habits in the sixth form and expectations.
287. Management is satisfactory with meetings take place between teaching staff, and with results and the course being regularly reviewed. All teaching staff is in agreement with the development programme of the Liberal Arts' faculty, and support the declared aims of the school. However there is a need for a subject-specific development plan that addresses such issues as in-service training needs and also how to raise the profile of the subject throughout the school.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is always very good and occasionally excellent.
- Student management is excellent.
- Departmental management is very good.
- Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good.

### Areas for improvement

- As identified in the department's development plan.

288. Standards in 2002 examinations are below average in both the AS and A level courses. Standards in the work seen are in line with expectations.

289. In lessons and work seen in years 12 and 13, students demonstrate a good understanding of religious concepts. Students demonstrate their ability to produce well-structured and balanced arguments. Teachers challenge students to analyse material and form judgements from a number of viewpoints. In one lesson, students demonstrated a clear understanding of the festival of Pesach and its importance to Jews today. A very good exercise enabled students to demonstrate that they are developing their analytical and evaluative skills. The teacher's very good use of discussion, and high expectations, contributed very well to students' ability to think independently. They demonstrated their ability to use keywords and relate these to the topic studied. Through the teacher's challenging and enabling approach, students use their skills of analysis to draw out ideas and to make distinctions between opinions, beliefs and facts. Paired discussion enabled students to deepen their learning and respect the views of others. Excellent teacher intervention enabled students to challenge the traditional wisdom and expand their understanding. Teachers have very high expectations of students and, as a consequence, students have equally high expectations of themselves. Greater availability of ICT facilities would enable students to develop their research skills and raise standards even further. They achieve well and make very good progress. Overall, learning is very good.

290. Overall, students' attitudes to learning are excellent. They behave extremely well, are very well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and students is excellent, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Student behaviour makes an excellent contribution to students' overall achievement and progress.

291. Teaching is always very good and occasionally excellent. The teaching is of high quality and has a significant impact on pupil achievement. Teachers make very good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles that enable students to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion. This assists students to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Teachers manage pupil behaviour exceptionally well, contributing to an excellent climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to very good effect in allowing students to reflect on the information they have gained in class and to conduct their own research. This develops their ability to work independently. Teachers have very high expectations of students and challenge them to succeed, and these are very effective in contributing to their achievement.

292. Assessment of students' work is generally very good and very helpful comments are made on their work. The procedures provide a good basis for assessing what students know and understand. Assessment informs the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work. The department sets specific targets, and students are aware of what they need to do to improve. Assessment of students' attitudes is an area for development.

293. Religious education makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, so providing opportunities for students to explore world issues of justice,

relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages students to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues.

294. Departmental management is outstanding, with an extremely clear sense of purpose and direction. Students are provided with a very rich diet of religious education. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment.
295. Since the last inspection, standards have continued to rise. The number of students now taking religious studies at AS/A2 level has risen considerably. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

296. The focus of the inspection was on the AS-level and A2 English literature courses offered in the sixth form within the consortium. There is very good provision for those re-sitting the one-year GCSE English examination. One lesson was sampled. The teaching of communication skills leading to Level 3 of the communication skill qualification is offered to all students in Year 12 through the general studies course. Twenty-five students completed the course and all gained the Level 3 qualification.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Students make better progress than expected from a modest start.
- They have confidence in their teachers and relationships are good.
- Teaching is a strength.
- Extra-curricular activities support their learning.
- The use of talk as a central activity to approach their learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Structuring their written responses and developing the quality of written expression to improve standards.
- Sustained and thorough analysis of texts.

297. Standards are improving and apart from a dip in 2001, results are now close to the national average. Over the last three years, a small number of students, typically between four to eight followed the advanced level course. In 2000, all but one achieved a grade with a quarter obtaining the higher grades A or B. Results were lower in 2001. However, provisional results in 2002 show an upward trend in the point scores gained by students and there was a 100 per cent pass rate. The 2002 AS-level results confirm the marked improvement in attainment. All of the 18 students gained a grade with over 55 per cent achieving a grade A to C. High attaining students achieve well at AS-level. The 2002 results represent good achievement overall based on their modest qualification on entry. There has been a significant increase in the numbers of students choosing the new AS and A2 courses.
298. From inspection evidence standards are broadly in line with the national average and achievement is consistently good. High attaining students achieve very well in all areas of their work. Students reach good standards in speaking and listening and confidently articulate their ideas with clarity and understanding when giving a presentation. By Year 13, they use debating skills and contribute well to discussion when arguing a viewpoint as illustrated in their work on Blake's poems. Textual grasp and appreciation are satisfactory overall and very good for the small number of higher attaining students. Students achieve well in analysis, interpretation and giving a personal response because of the attention given to discussing texts and using their good knowledge of historical, social and political background to develop their reading. Most reach satisfactory standards in critical writing and use mind mapping extensively to plan and develop

their ideas. Whilst the higher attaining students produce well crafted extended writing, there are weaknesses in the structure and written expression of middle and lower attaining students.

299. The teaching in English is good, and often very good. Teachers know their subject very well and demonstrate a clear understanding of students' needs when planning activities to increase their understanding of literary texts. Planning to ensure progress is a particular feature of lessons. Activities are therefore structured well and students are challenged effectively to use skills of debate and argument to increase their interpretation of texts. There is a consistent approach to developing students' critical thinking and independence, which teachers largely achieve through the paired and group work and whole class discussion. Students make good progress because of the pace, challenge, effective questioning, exposition and commentary during group work and feedback. Teachers ensure that students have access to a range of resources to aid their research and preparation for lessons. For example, they have detailed outlines of units of work and activities.
300. Students persevere with their work and work at full stretch throughout the blocked three-hour sessions. They take control of their learning and work well collaboratively with engagement. Discussion with students indicates that they value the quality of teaching, assessment, enrichment activities and the use of talk as a central activity to explore texts.
301. The recent interim arrangement for the management of the department is good. Teachers in the absence of the head of department have maintained the good provision within the consortium. There are effective assessment procedures and arrangements within the consortium for delivering the courses. The strong teaching and a clear sense of direction are contributing to the upward trend in results and students enjoyment of the course.