

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHLANDS SCHOOL

London N21

LEA area: Enfield

Unique reference number: 132256

Headteacher: Mrs Monica Cross

Reporting inspector: Mr Martin Beale
19385

Dates of inspection: 24 – 27 March 2003

Inspection number: 249591

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:	11-18 (but with only pupils from 11 to 14 at present)
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	148 Worlds End Lane London
Postcode:	N21 1QQ
Telephone number:	020 8370 1100
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Phil Browne
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19385	Martin Beale	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>a) The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9275	Candy Kalms	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
27201	Clive Ashworth	Team inspector	English	
32379	Bob Brewster	Team inspector	Mathematics	
1249	Joe Edge	Team inspector	Science	
15918	Margaret Goodchild	Team inspector	Art and design	
1990	Graham Preston	Team inspector	<p>Design and technology</p> <p>Information and communication technology</p>	
11300	Barry Smith	Team inspector	<p>Geography</p> <p>Special educational needs</p>	
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	<p>History</p> <p>Religious education</p>	
19404	Les Schubeler	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
15472	Paul Andrews	Team inspector	<p>Music</p> <p>Educational inclusion</p>	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
23268	Kevin Corrigan	Team inspector	<p>Citizenship</p> <p>Physical education</p>	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	11
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	15
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	17
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	18
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	20
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	22
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Highlands was the first new secondary school in the country to be built entirely through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Designated for pupils from 11 to 18 years of age, it currently has 696 boys and girls in Years 7 to 9. It is heavily oversubscribed. The attainment of the pupils on entry is well above average for the current Year 7, but is slightly lower in the other two year groups. The vast majority are from white ethnic backgrounds. There is one refugee pupil. Although 98 pupils have English as an additional language, only one is at an early stage. The main languages spoken are Greek and Turkish – these communities being strongly established in the area. The proportion of the pupils entitled to a free school meal is below average. A greater than average proportion of the pupils have special educational needs and the number with statements is also above average, partly because the school has been designed to be accessible for the physically disabled. The school receives funding through the Excellence in Cities initiative for learning mentors and to provide programmes for gifted and talented pupils.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This new school is becoming well-established and is moving in the right direction. It has developed a distinctive ethos because of the hard work and determination of staff and governors to overcome many unforeseen difficulties. It is providing a satisfactory and improving education for its pupils and is in a secure position to improve further. There have been teething problems, associated in part with the unique nature of the funding of the school's construction and particular shortcomings in the contract. These have not been entirely resolved. This, the small size of the management team and the large number of new staff each year have taken much of the headteacher's time and energy and mean that some policies and practices are not fully embedded. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The substantial majority of the teaching is of a good quality and in these lessons the pupils learn rapidly. There is a considerable variation in teaching quality and in a proportion of lessons the pupils do not make enough progress. Standards are above average in Year 9 and are higher in Years 7 and 8. Satisfactory value for money is being achieved in spite of the high expenditure needed to start up the school.

What the school does well

- A considerable proportion of the teaching is very good or excellent from a core of highly skilled and expert teachers.
- The provision and teaching in art is very good.
- The pupils with special educational needs are very well catered for and make good progress.
- Senior and other staff with management responsibilities have worked successfully to establish the new school and, along with the original governing body, have established its clear and distinctive ethos and direction.
- Staff are encouraged to be innovative in their teaching and to exploit links between subjects to the considerable benefit of the pupils' learning.

What could be improved

- The pupils are not achieving as well as they should in music.
- Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning in subjects.
- The school has not established with some pupils its expectations for their behaviour in lessons and around the school, and some staff are unclear as to how good behaviour is to be achieved.
- Greater attention needs to be paid to the induction of the large number of staff who are appointed each year.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

This is the school's first inspection.

STANDARDS

There are no test and examination results to report. The standard of work of the pupils in Year 9 is above average overall and the pupils have mostly made satisfactory progress from their entry to the school, although several pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, but the progress of gifted and talented pupils is less consistent and only satisfactory overall. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Standards are above average in English and mathematics by Year 9 and average in science. Standards are also above average in art, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and religious education but are well below average in music. The pupils in Years 7 and 8 are making better progress and standards are higher in both of these year groups. A considerable proportion of the pupils in these year groups are achieving higher standards than might have been expected from their attainment on entry to the school, particularly where the teaching is of a high quality. Standards of literacy and numeracy are good, but the pupils do not develop their skills in ICT sufficiently through their application in other subjects. There is no significant variation in the standards achieved or the progress being made by pupils of different ethnic backgrounds.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	The vast majority of the pupils are keen to learn and respond well when the teaching is lively and interesting. However, several have not developed a sufficiently positive approach to their studies and display unsatisfactory work habits.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Most pupils behave well, but a significant number of pupils particularly in Year 9 are causing difficulties in lessons and around the school. This can result in disruption to learning and to the harmonious and calm atmosphere that the school is striving to generate.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils are warm and friendly but some show disrespect to their teachers. Personal development is variable. Some pupils willingly accept significant responsibility for their learning but opportunities to exercise other responsibilities around the school are not extensive.
Attendance	Attendance is well above average and pupils are mostly punctual to lessons and to school.

The lack of older pupils means that Year 9 pupils do not have mature role models to follow and emulate. Several are causing problems with their attitudes and behaviour, a matter that is causing concern to parents and staff. This is not only having a detrimental effect on their learning and progress but also on others in the class.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory

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

The school has a considerable number of teachers who regularly teach lessons that are good or better. A considerable proportion of the lessons are very good or excellent and result in the pupils learning new skills and ideas at pace. Much of the teaching in these lessons is lively and interesting and is promoting well the school's aim to develop the pupils as independent learners; however, there is some variation and a significant number of lessons have shortcomings. The pupils mostly respond well to expert and challenging teaching from staff who utilise a variety of methods by concentrating, working hard and collaborating well when asked to work in groups. Teaching of English and mathematics is good, and

science teaching is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in lessons and are taught effectively when withdrawn for individual and group teaching. The teaching overall of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy are promoted satisfactorily, but insufficient use is made of ICT as a tool to support learning in spite of good examples in subjects such as religious education. The main weaknesses in teaching are that some staff do not set clear boundaries for the behaviour of the pupils and do not adopt effective methods to retain their attention. In some cases, expectations for the work to be undertaken and completed by pupils are not made explicit and this is exploited by some who do the minimum. Marking, while thorough and informative in many cases such as English, is cursory and unhelpful in others and is not undertaken regularly by some teachers. Newer staff in particular, but not exclusively, have not always developed the skills and methods to promote independent learning within and beyond the classroom.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is broad and balanced and enhanced considerably by the range of extra-curricular activities and theme weeks. Several subjects are exploiting well opportunities for working together on aspects of their courses.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The very careful assessment of the pupils' needs, rigorous record-keeping and carefully targeted support are enabling these pupils to achieve well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The needs of the early stage learner of English are being met well. There is little planned provision for others who are at a more advanced stage, but they are not disadvantaged because of this.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for the pupils' personal development is satisfactory. There is no overall school plan of how these areas are to be developed. Consequently, although there are some good features these are inconsistent and opportunities missed to promote these aspects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Procedures to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pupils are effective, but policy and procedures to promote good behaviour are not fully established.

All National Curriculum requirements are being met, with the exception of the use of ICT in subjects and its assessment. Health and safety procedures, while secure, have not been formally agreed between the school and the company managing the site. Good procedures have been established through year heads and their tutors to monitor and support the personal development of the pupils in their care. One area needing attention is that the school has not developed a full and constructive partnership with all parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides the school with strong leadership and a clear direction. She is ably supported in this by a small senior team and effective faculty heads and other staff with management responsibilities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors initially helped to shape the school's direction and aims and have been instrumental in promoting these through the appointments of senior staff. Subsequently, they have not been sufficiently involved in shaping the strategic development of the school or in introducing structures through which the governing body can evaluate the school's progress.

The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has established appropriate procedures to gather and analyse data once it becomes available. A system for the review of the work of the school is in place, but it has not had sufficient time to have an impact on the consistency with which staff implement school policies or in eliminating shortcomings in some aspects of teaching.
The strategic use of resources	The unique nature of the school's circumstances ties its hands over some areas of spending, such as on the maintenance and management of the site and buildings. Resources are otherwise used well to meet the school's main aims. Funding has been used well to fulfil one major aim to reduce teacher workload by employing support and administrative staff.

The rapid development of the school and some problems with the specification of its construction and the contract with the management company have resulted in the headteacher and senior staff spending an excessive amount of time in dealing with difficulties that have arisen. One consequence of this is that the headteacher is not sufficiently visible around the school – a concern to herself, the staff, governors and parents. Staffing and resource levels are good, although the number of computers and other ICT equipment is low for a school of this size. The accommodation offers very good facilities, although there are surprising shortcomings in such a new and purpose-built school. Circulation routes have not been well-thought out and some rooms become excessively hot when the sun is on them. The school takes care to secure value for money when purchasing goods and services for which it is responsible.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Many parents think that teaching is good. • They are pleased with the progress that their children are making. • They are happy with the extra-curricular activities on offer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many are not happy with the behaviour of some of the pupils. • Several parents are not happy with the amount of homework, its quality or the frequency with which it is set. • They do not feel informed sufficiently about their child's progress. • A considerable number do not feel that the school management has done enough to establish a close partnership between home and the school.

Parents have several concerns about the work of the school, not all of which have foundation. For example, the information provided about the curriculum and the pupils' progress is more extensive than in many schools. Homework is generally satisfactory, although there are several instances where it is not adequately marked. However, the team concurs that some pupils are not as well behaved as they should be and that more needs to be done to strengthen links between the school and home.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school has varied over the three years in which it has been open. This is partly as local parents gain greater confidence as the new school becomes established. The overall attainment of the current Year 9 on entry to the school was at least above average. These pupils have made satisfactory progress overall since then, although a few pupils have not achieved as well as they should. This is because a significant minority in some classes have not developed positive attitudes to their work and cause some disruptions in lessons. They have suffered most as a year group from changes to staff teaching them as the school has rapidly expanded. These pupils have also not had the benefit of older pupils as role models to look up to. In spite of this, standards are above average overall in many subjects by Year 9, including English, mathematics, art, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages and religious education. The school's own assessment data indicates that standards in science are slightly lower. Standards are average in all other subjects with the exception of music in which there is significant underachievement and where standards are well below average. There is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils in Year 9 are on line to meet the school's targets for National Curriculum test results in English and mathematics, but are falling below the target in science.
2. The school was required to take more than 30 extra pupils at short notice into Year 8. Many of these were lower-attaining or with special educational needs. As a consequence, this year group has a larger tail of low attainers, while still having a significant proportion of high attaining pupils. Year 7 is, if anything, the year group with the greatest potential. Their attainment on entry as measured by National Curriculum results and other standardised tests is well above average overall. The pupils in Year 7 and 8 have a more positive approach to their studies than Year 9 and many are making good progress. This is leading to improving and higher standards than in Year 9 in virtually all subjects.
3. The learning support faculty maintains very good records of the progress of pupils with special educational needs, using Key Stage 2 results and initial screening scores as baseline data. This enables teachers to carefully track individual progress throughout the pupils' stay in the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good and at times very good progress both in normal lessons and when they are occasionally withdrawn for more specialised teaching. Catch-up courses for pupils who have not achieved the standard expected for their age in literacy and numeracy support this good progress. Gifted and talented pupils are provided for very well in art where they make very good progress. Their needs are given good attention and they make good progress in mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages; however, they have received less attention in the other subjects where their progress is only satisfactory. The pupils with English as an additional language are largely at advanced stages and do not need specific support. There is no evidence to indicate that any of these pupils is disadvantaged by the lack of direct support.
4. Standards of literacy are, overall, in line with expectations and assist most pupils' access to the curriculum. Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar is very variable but is in line with expectations overall. The majority of pupils can write using a defined structure and appropriate syntactical conventions although lower attainers' writing is brief, simple in structure and often has many grammatical and spelling errors. Most pupils read with some fluency and the majority have a good active vocabulary which helps them to understand texts. Higher-attainers read widely and are able to use inference and deduction to access layers of meaning; most lower-attaining pupils are able to read appropriate texts for literal meaning successfully. Speaking and listening skills are good; a majority are confident and fluent speakers, using their reasonably wide active vocabulary accurately to express and explore ideas. Most, even the lower-attainers, are good listeners and can respond to questions, instructions and advice appropriately.
5. Pupils come to the school with differing ICT experiences although most have understanding and skills close to the national average. The school has had technical problems with its computer

system that until recently disrupted attempts to provide a coherent and progressive learning programme. Despite this, most pupils have made satisfactory progress and by Year 9, standards are in line with those expected nationally for the age group. Within the taught ICT lessons pupils use the Internet confidently to research information and ideas and most pupils, particularly those with special educational needs, improve their presentation and accuracy using different applications to present their ideas. The use of ICT across the curriculum is quite limited but many pupils make use of word processing and spreadsheets to produce, for example; design ideas and plans in design and technology, essays in English and oral presentations in religious education. The taught ICT programme, also enables pupils to produce a simple website and the higher-attaining are increasingly able to evaluate their ICT use. Pupils also have some experience of numerical data handling but because of few ICT opportunities to measure data and control devices skills in those areas are less developed.

6. Data held by the mathematics faculty indicates that the numeracy skills of pupils across Years 7 to 9 are above average. Progress in the various curriculum areas is not being affected by a lack of number skills. Several staff promote numeracy in the normal course of their work, for example computation and graphs in science, formulae in ICT, measuring in design and technology. In addition there has been some good work between mathematics and history using data analysis and shapes, with physical education on pulse rates and with modern foreign languages. While these have given opportunities to practise numeracy skills, the actual development of those skills in areas other than mathematics is unsatisfactory and at a very early stage of development.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

7. There are considerable variations in the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils in different year groups, but no overall difference between boys and girls or pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. Parents pointed this out before the inspection. It is certainly the case that Year 9 pupils (the eldest year group in the school) have less positive attitudes and in some classes have a significant incidence of inappropriate behaviour. These pupils have no older, more mature pupils to act as positive role models. This is having a detrimental effect on the progress of several pupils in this year group. Overall, the pupils' attitudes to school and work are good and their behaviour is satisfactory.
8. The majority of pupils enjoy school and want to learn. They concentrate in class, listen attentively to their teachers, and respond well, especially in lessons where the work is interesting and the teaching good. They particularly enjoy practical activities such as design and technology, art and physical education. On occasions, the pupils can be quiet and reluctant to take an active part in lessons but generally they participate well, asking and answering questions and joining in discussions. In a Year 9 English lesson on persuasive language, the mature manner in which pupils put forward their ideas on presenting a chocolate bar to a client demonstrated their excellent learning. In contrast a small minority of pupils in all year groups have unsatisfactory and occasionally poor attitudes. They are noisy, show an unwillingness to learn and often show disrespect for the teacher. This was more noticeable where teachers lacked the skills to deal with poor behaviour and resulted in lessons being disrupted, preventing pupils from making the progress they should.
9. Behaviour is good in the majority of lessons and on occasions very good, especially where teaching is interesting and staff set clear expectations. A high proportion of parents raised concerns about behaviour. The inspection found that a small but significant number of pupils were poorly behaved and disruptive. Some teachers coped well with disruptive pupils and the flow of lessons was not seriously disrupted. In other lessons where the teachers lacked the skills to manage these pupils it had an adverse effect both on the learning of the pupils themselves and the whole class. In general, behaviour around the school and playground is good, although there is occasional jostling and shouting in corridors, particularly during movement between lessons. Figures for exclusions are low. Exclusion is in response to specific incidents and not used as part of a structured scheme of sanctions. Pupils work in an atmosphere that is free from oppressive behaviour and where bullying and harassment are rare.
10. Pupils with special educational needs generally behave well and show interest in lessons. In some lessons pupils are noted for high levels of participation and involvement. In others, teachers' good management of their pupils helps potentially disruptive pupils to be focused and to adopt the correct approach to learning. Pupils are very well behaved in withdrawal groups and show a very positive

desire to improve. This was seen to advantage in a Year 7 'catch-up' lesson where pupils were gaining confidence in good group work.

11. Relationships between pupils are good. Many teachers and pupils have developed good relationships and this benefits both interest and learning. In most lessons, the pupils settle to work quickly and work well independently in pairs or in small groups. Their ability to co-operate and work well together helps them progress in their learning, such as in a Year 8 history lesson on the French Revolution. The pupils' respect other people's feelings, values and beliefs. This was illustrated in religious education lessons when they considered the traditions and beliefs of a range of religions with interest. They listen to each other's points of views. Most pupils treat each other, staff and the facilities with respect but the graffiti and the amount of discarded litter around the building are evidence that a small minority do not. Most are aware of the impact that their actions can have on others but a small number do not appreciate that their disruptive behaviour in lessons impacts on the rights of others to learn.
12. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. A significant number of pupils are gaining a sense of maturity and confidence and developing independent learning skills as they move through the school. Others, however, have not developed a sense of personal responsibility as is shown by their attitudes and behaviour. Older pupils have few opportunities to take on worthwhile responsibilities around the school although each day two Year 9 pupils conscientiously act as school receptionists and some pupils are mentoring younger pupils in physical education. Elected representatives for each tutor group serve on both the year group forum and the school council. Although embryonic, they are developing an understanding of the issues involved in improving the school facilities.
13. Overall levels of attendance are very good. Punctuality is not as good as it could be. A small number of pupils arrive after the bell has sounded and some regularly arrive late.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

14. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but vary considerably between teachers. A substantial proportion of lessons are very good or excellent, but a large number are less than satisfactory. There are variations also between the overall quality of teaching in different subjects. Art teaching is very good. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. It is satisfactory elsewhere, with the exception of music where teaching is poor. In the best lessons, the pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations, carefully planned and well prepared activities and lively and enthusiastic teaching by working hard and with much interest. New skills and ideas are learnt quickly, the pupils enjoy what they are doing and several are meeting the school's aim of becoming independent learners.
15. Lessons are generally well-planned with clear objectives for what the pupils are expected to learn. In the best cases lessons are pitched at a variety of levels to take account of the pupils' prior level of knowledge and understanding. These plans are then converted into well thought-out activities. Where there are weaknesses in planning it is generally because objectives are too broad, not varied or are just a list of areas to be covered in the lesson. This results in inappropriate activities which are not matched carefully to the next stages of the pupils' learning, a lack of challenge and poor use of time in some double lessons. Many teachers make their lesson aims quite clear to the pupils from the outset and return to them at regular intervals as the lesson progresses. They are then used as a very good focus for reviewing learning at the end. The pupils have a very clear picture of how well they are getting on and remain focused on the work in hand when these methods are coupled with good discussion and feedback to individuals or groups. Marking of the pupils' work also plays a significant part here. The best marking is thorough, regular and rigorous. It includes helpful comments which are then followed up later. Unfortunately, this is far from consistent. There are many examples of cursory marking that is of little value and in some cases work is unmarked for considerable periods of time.
16. The best lessons build on well from thorough planning and preparation. They have a structure that promotes the learning of new skills well, while ensuring that what has been learnt before is reviewed and consolidated. The format recommended by the Key Stage 3 strategy is evident in very many lessons. It is used effectively by many teachers to structure learning systematically and to build on well from lesson to lesson. Starter activities review previous learning while setting the scene for what is to come, such as when the activity engaged and interested the pupils at the start of a Year

7 geography lesson investigating housing in the locality. The ends of lessons are used effectively to go over what has been learnt and to evaluate the success in achieving the lessons aims. This was seen to good effect in a brisk and well-planned Year 9 English lesson where the full use was made of the available time and a useful plenary session reviewed the work groups of pupils had undertaken preparing an advertising campaign. This structure is not evident in all lessons, some of which end without a focus on what has been covered and are poorly constructed, resulting in the pupils having little chance to reflect and leaving the teacher unsure about what has been learnt.

17. Pupils with special educational needs are taught almost entirely in classes in which they are fully integrated with their peers. They receive good in-class support from the team of experienced and well-directed learning support assistants (LSAs). The LSAs liaise very well with subject areas and are able to assess pupil progress effectively through the use of detailed in-class reports. Individual education plans (IEPs) are written for each pupil with special educational needs. They are clear and contain considerable information and achievable targets. IEPs are available on the school network and this allows valuable opportunities for monitoring progress. At present some departments are not downloading copies of IEPs, which limits the use that can be made of them. There is also scope for adding more subject-specific targets. All LSAs have very good information on their pupils through departmental contact. In addition, a third strand of support is the use of generally good, appropriate, learning materials for pupils with special educational needs, many of which concentrate on improving literacy.
18. A significant number of teachers are skilled at promoting the school's aim of creating independent learners. Their lessons are lively, interesting and challenging such as in an excellent Year 7 English lesson on Greek myths where the pupils' understanding, progress and knowledge were marked as a result of the teacher's stimulating, interesting and well-prepared teaching which engaged the pupils throughout. These teachers are good role models and provide examples of high quality practice that needs to be shared more extensively. Their lessons are carefully structured. They include a variety of activities with clear guidance on how these are to be carried out, such as when the teacher encouraged Year 7 pupils in a French lesson to work to the best of their ability by employing a variety of activities, using attractive resources, well matched to the pupils' needs and teaching with energy and enthusiasm. Teachers such as in this example also employ skilled and probing questioning. These attributes were evident as the teacher of a very good lesson for a top set Year 8 mathematics class pushed learning along at a very good pace. Pupils of all abilities were challenged through good questioning and use of differentiated texts. Their questions require substantial and carefully thought-out answers from the most able while providing encouragement for weaker pupils. Expectations of what is to be completed are made clear to all. There are many examples of lessons where these attributes are seen in abundance. Homework from these lessons is sometimes open-ended or contains research activities, which develop the skills of independence further.
19. One particular strength is that teachers are encouraged to be innovative and to develop and exploit the links between subjects. This works well when carefully planned as in a very well structured Year 8 history lesson on French society before the Revolution, where the teacher allowed the pupils to work independently but with enough structure to keep them focused. The school has started to pull together the provision that individual subjects make for gifted and talented pupils into a coherent programme. These pupils are well catered for in subjects such as mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages and teaching in art is very good.
20. The aims of independence are not fully embedded in several classrooms. Some staff are much less successful at this and do not understand clearly how these skills are to be developed. The learning in some lessons lacks the structure to enable pupils to develop these skills. Their lesson aims are often unclear, and the pupils are not given a secure framework in which to work. Neither are they given expectations of what is to be completed in the allotted time. Some pupils exploit this vagueness by being disruptive, not participating in group-work and not doing what is asked of them. Homework set often does not build on from the work undertaken. It is insubstantial and is not varied according to the ability and prior attainment of the pupils. While there are some quite valuable examples of the use of ICT as a tool to support learning, this is an area that has not been developed sufficiently in many subjects and is therefore an impediment to achieving the school's aims. This is in part because of poor decisions initially over the hardware chosen.

21. There is one major weakness that slows learning in several lessons such as music and some science lessons, and further impedes the school's success in achieving its stated aims. This is the inconsistency with which staff manage the behaviour of the pupils in their lessons. This is in part because there has been a large increase in staff this year, but is also because there is a lack of clear understanding on the part of staff and pupils about how good order and discipline are to be achieved. Where there are perceived weaknesses, the pupils exploit this and several disrupt not only their own learning but that of others. In these less than satisfactory lessons, the pupils become bored, their behaviour is not well managed, attitudes are negative and a substantial number do not achieve as well as they should.

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

22. The school offers a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. Statutory requirements for the teaching of the National Curriculum are met, with the exception of ICT. Insufficient time is made available for physical education and music, and the poor quality of music teaching further limits the opportunities on offer. This weakness is to some extent offset by the provision of dance and drama lessons for all pupils. As the school does not offer pupils the opportunity to study two modern foreign languages during school time in Years 8 and 9, it is not a good use of time to teach both French and Spanish in Year 7.
23. In its policies and other documentation, the school emphasises its determination to meet the needs of all pupils. In recent months a member of the senior leadership team has developed, for Year 7 pupils, a system of academic monitoring that could enable teachers effectively to track individual pupils' academic progress through their school careers. This is an important starting point for the development of a fully inclusive school. Once this system is in place, the school will be able to judge whether it really is providing equal access for all pupils to all areas of the curriculum. It will be able to target more accurately the attainment levels that each pupil is capable of achieving.
24. The school has identified a small percentage of its pupils as gifted and talented, and has recently published a draft policy to guide teachers as they seek to develop appropriately challenging learning programmes for these pupils. Teachers already have a well-established habit of planning their lessons to take account of pupils working at different National Curriculum levels, and this could prove to be a helpful foundation for the improvement of their teaching of high achieving pupils. Additional funding for provision for gifted and talented pupils has not been well used to date, but there are plans this year to allocate these funds more effectively.
25. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated into all aspects of school life and have access to the same full curriculum as their peers. This includes those pupils, currently numbering eight, who have physical disabilities. The special educational needs department provides laptops for those who need them and subject areas are properly equipped with appropriate furnishings. Initial assessment is thorough and effective and ensures that all those with needs receive prompt and appropriate care. This is made more effective by joint preliminary evaluation with primary feeders and fruitful liaison. All pupils are carefully screened and after assessment they are catered for in a number of ways, which focus appropriate types of support, particularly in the area of literacy deficiencies. These include 'Toe-to-Toe' groups, catch-up lessons in Year 7 and literacy support lessons in Year 8. All needs are well addressed. The organisation of these groups is such that a minimum of disruption is caused to a pupil's mainstream education. In all aspects of the work of the special educational needs department one of the chief objectives is to maintain pupils within the mainstream curriculum. To this end many of the withdrawal groups are run during registration and library periods. In addition there are lunchtime clubs in which pupils pursue improvement. The effectiveness of this provision is noted in a Toe-to-Toe literacy support group in which eight pupils received very good one-to-one teaching in reading, spelling and comprehension. They were very enthusiastic and learning very well.
26. There is no provision of additional support for more advanced bilingual learners, and there is no monitoring of their attainment by ethnicity. A refugee pupil had received language support for English through the special educational needs department.

27. Through its 'Education Extra' programme the school offers a rich range of extra-curricular sporting activities and some other activities. Homework club takes place on three afternoons a week and is well staffed by two or more teachers. Some departments offer a drop-in service for pupils who need extra help with their work. There is no community service and no foreign exchange. The school has not yet established strengths in these areas as it prepares for the introduction of an International Baccalaureate programme. There is no formal monitoring and evaluation of the contribution of 'Education Extra' to the pupils' attainment and attitudes.
28. Opportunities for cross-curricular activities are well-developed in mathematics, religious education, history and geography. The school is lagging behind with ICT development. As yet there is very little use of ICT and the new technologies to support learning across the curriculum. The Theme Weeks provide an opportunity for teachers and pupils to think outside the normal curriculum. They are undoubtedly much enjoyed and are a valuable and creative addition to the curriculum.
29. The new programme for lessons in citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE) is well planned but the teaching is of variable quality. Plans to introduce work-related education are as yet only in their very earliest stages of development. There are at present no school-business partnerships.
30. Until this year there had been no attempts to establish links with the local community or the feeder schools, but in recent months the school has begun to establish links, adopting a part of the local neighbourhood for conservation purposes, and visiting feeder primary schools to share information about the curriculum and pupils' attainment levels. There is a great deal of scope for further development of good community links, locally, internationally and via the Internet, to contribute to and enrich the pupils' learning.
31. Provision for pupils' personal development is satisfactory overall and includes satisfactory provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, opportunities are lost because there is no overall strategy for the promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, there is no definition, centrally or in faculties, of pupils' entitlement in relation to these important areas, and no formal monitoring to see how well the school is doing.
32. There was a strong spiritual dimension in the best lessons observed. Pupils were encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and the beliefs of others in a religious education lesson focusing on conflict in the Middle East. Pictures and displays around the school encourage a sense of curiosity about the lives of others and their different experiences of the world. Assemblies seen during the inspection were less effective in this respect because they were unimaginative and heavily teacher-dominated, with the pupils generally compliant but not engaged. Teachers delivered simple, caring moral messages, sometimes at a level more appropriate for a primary school, without a sense of spirituality, awe or surprise. No act of collective worship was observed during the inspection.
33. Teachers generally adopt a satisfactory approach to the promotion of principles that distinguish right from wrong, and the school has made a start, through its assemblies, its behaviour policy and code of conduct, in establishing a framework of values that regulate personal behaviour. However, this framework has not yet become embedded throughout the school. There are many indications that some pupils are not yet sufficiently aware of the basic rights and wrongs of behaviour around the buildings. There is an easy acceptance that things brought into the building get stolen. The pupils' behaviour varies greatly from class to class: it is more than usually dependent upon the individual influence of the teacher. The framework of values is insufficiently visible to a significant number of pupils.
34. There are satisfactory opportunities for social development through paired and group work in class, through the many teamwork activities in sports and the performing arts department and through the formal and informal support systems provided to enable pupils to resolve relationship problems and develop good social behaviour. As yet, though, pupils have limited opportunities to take on responsibility for their lives in school, to take initiatives to improve the quality of their school environment, to contribute to the life of the school and wider community and to develop their leadership skills.
35. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. There is very good art teaching, a diversity of performing arts provision, involvement of authors and performers alongside the pupils and recognition of the contribution of many cultures to scientific development. Through the Theme

Weeks, pupils have the opportunity to extend their experience of their own cultural traditions and those of others. However, the school has no clear definition of what is required for a good cultural education. There is a need for the school to be more active in respect of this.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school provides effective support and care for its pupils. Several areas offer good support and some systems are currently being reviewed. For example, the school is considering an alternative pastoral team structure and reviewing the way pupils are rewarded in lessons.
37. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. Teachers and other staff know that they must refer any child protection issues to the designated person. Medical care and first aid arrangements are good. The health and safety arrangements are shared between the school and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contractor. Both carry out frequent checks of the site and building and appropriate action is taken, although a more formal structure, in line with the health and safety policy, has yet to be established.
38. The support for and the monitoring of pupils' personal development are good. Year heads have overall responsibility for their year groups and together with tutors they are becoming aware of pupils' individual needs and difficulties. The inevitable changes in staff have, however, reduced their knowledge and daily form time is not being constructively used to deal with any personal development issues. Heads of year share any issues or concerns about the pupils with tutors through frequent informal discussions, electronic communications and a year group meeting each half term. Weekly meetings enable a variety of pastoral issues to be shared with the deputy headteacher responsible for pastoral care, heads of year and the student care manager who know the pupils well. The learning mentor, funded through Excellence in Cities, and the matron play an important role in the care and support given to pupils. The system of recognising and rewarding pupils' achievements is in a transitional stage and the resulting inconsistencies mean that pupils are often not aware that their achievements have been rewarded.
39. Procedures to monitor and improve behaviour are not consistently implemented and as such cause confusion and lead to some problems around the school and in classrooms. Class teachers do not have suitable guidance on how to promote good behaviour or how unacceptable behaviour should be dealt with. Teachers manage behaviour individually, and this results in inconsistencies. Some manage it well but others have considerable difficulty managing pupils in their lessons, especially those pupils with particularly challenging behaviour. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are recorded and informally monitored by heads of year. When necessary, individual targets are introduced to monitor pupils whose behaviour and attitudes give rise to concern. Bullying does occasionally occur but any incidents are appropriately dealt with.
40. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. Data is routinely used to identify pupils with attendance below 90 per cent. They are monitored by heads of year who work closely with the education welfare officer to follow up the most serious cases.
41. The school has made a very slow start in developing good assessment practice. It is only now beginning to establish effective systems of data analysis that will enable teachers to monitor and review individual pupils' progress and to identify underachievement. Assessment in science has led to some inconsistencies and an apparent decline in the performance of the pupils. The science department's marking of Year 9 test papers may also require re-moderation as the teacher assessments appear to be very low. This confusing picture of performance in science illustrates the extent to which improving assessment needs to be tackled throughout the school before the school can feel confident about the good quality of its academic monitoring. Because of this, some teachers find it hard to understand the distinction between a pupil's predicted grade and the same pupil's target grade. There is nonetheless some very good assessment practice in English, modern foreign languages and design and technology. In these subjects, pupils are fully aware of exactly what they must do in order to gain high marks and to improve their work. They receive very helpful, detailed guidance and advice from their teachers. Their work is well marked, with detailed comments linked to National Curriculum levels, and their progress is monitored regularly and thoroughly. They work towards individual target grades. Assessment in music and ICT is unsatisfactory; there is no effective assessment in either of these subjects.
42. The school fully meets the statutory requirements for provision, as outlined in pupils' statements of special education needs. The special educational needs department has moved very efficiently to the new Code of Practice and an up-to-date register and year progression database is available to

all teachers. Assessment of progress is thorough, with pupils tracked and reviews of IEPs carried out twice yearly. Other reviews are carried out according to requirements.

43. Tutors are not sufficiently involved in the monitoring of the pupils' progress. The daily half-hour of tutorial time is poorly used for the most part and at its worst it can be an unsettling start to the day for many pupils, marred by noisy behaviour and time-wasting. Opportunities here are also missed for tutors to take on a key role in discussing overall progress with the pupils in their groups. The pupil planner is not well used by pupils in Years 8 and 9, and as yet the school has not succeeded in forging a strong partnership with parents to help pupils achieve their best.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

44. Whilst the majority of parents have positive views of the school, a significant number who completed the questionnaire and attended the parents' meeting are unhappy about many aspects of school life. In addition a sizeable number of parents who completed the questionnaires raised other matters of concern.
45. Approximately 40 per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire do not feel sufficiently informed about their children's progress and are concerned about the levels and consistency of homework. Inspection evidence does not support these views. The information provided for parents' is good. Newsletters are infrequent but, with additional letters, do provide information about school matters, diary dates and forthcoming events. The brief prospectus is supplemented by a helpful induction booklet for new parents, on school routines. Well-presented booklets issued each year provide full details of the curriculum. Occasional meetings are held to explain curriculum initiatives, for example the recent design and technology meeting explaining resistant materials to Year 7 parents. Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress through an interim report and a full written report on individual subjects. In addition they are invited to meet individual subject teachers to discuss progress and have another meeting with the form tutor to discuss reports and set targets. There is no school homework policy but the home/school planner provides parents with the timetable of the work pupils are expected to receive each week. A satisfactory amount of homework is set but there is inconsistency in the amount from departments and the regularity. Many parents ensure homework is completed, checking and signing the records in the planner.
46. Similar numbers do not think the school works closely with them. This has some foundation. The school has not developed an effective partnership with parents. Suitable, but not extensive, induction procedures are in place but this initial link is not being developed. There is no home/school agreement - as is legally required - defining the school's expectations and making clear the role parents have in supporting their child's learning both at home and in school. The ICT department has arranged computer lessons for parents but few other activities have been arranged to encourage parents to work with the school. On occasions, heads of year contact parents if behaviour or achievements are causing concern but rarely make contact informing them of their child's achievements; however, parents are invited to attend the annual achievement evening if their child is being rewarded. The home/school planner is an important link between school and home but is not being used consistently. E-mail and voice-mail facilities are provided for parents to contact the school, but the school website, which is seen as potentially an important part of the school's communication system is not yet accessible. Although parents have little involvement with the work of the school, an active parents and friends association organises social events that raise funds to help provide additional resources and some parents support school sports teams. The involvement of parents has a beneficial effect on their child's learning. There are good levels of attendance at consultation evenings. Parents are interested in the work their children do at home.
47. The learning support faculty has fostered good relationships with parents who are supportive and are prepared to record their appreciation in encouraging letters and e-mails. Parents are well-informed at every stage of assessment and attendance at reviews is high.
48. A further concern of parents is they feel that the headteacher does not have a visible presence in the school. In addition, around a quarter of parents do not consider the school to be well led and managed. It is the case in establishing the school and dealing with the unique nature of the Private Finance Initiative that the headteacher has not developed a visible presence in the school, a matter

that is also of concern to her. This has not helped to lay the foundations for a good parental relationship.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The leadership of the headteacher, senior staff and governors has been instrumental in establishing the school and giving its identity. The burden of opening and establishing a new school has been greater than was initially envisaged. Most of this has fallen to the headteacher and a very small management team. A testament to the hard work and effort that this has involved from staff and governors is that the school is now established and has developed a unique ethos. One consequence of this, however, is that the headteacher has not been able to project herself to pupils and parents sufficiently. This is a concern to parents and the headteacher herself, but it is intended that a new group of appointments of senior managers should go some way towards alleviating this problem. The core of faculty heads and year team staff has also played a significant part in helping to establish practice in their areas of responsibility and are starting to take a greater role in monitoring to ensure quality as staffing levels expand. The school is starting to achieve success in meeting its main aims, such as developing the pupils as independent learners. Its priorities for development are focused on the important educational issues facing the school and it is moving in the right direction to secure future success.
50. The nature of the establishment of the school through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), and the subsequent difficulties with some aspects of the specification and contract have placed an excessive workload on the headteacher and senior staff. Some teething problems have not been fully resolved and the governing body has not yet signed its acceptance. While the school has been funded quite generously to support additional start-up costs, there are constraints on financial management not faced by other schools. The management company receives a sum of money to maintain the buildings to an agreed standard and to provide additional services. Unlike other schools, Highlands does not have the ability to transfer part of these funds to other priorities as the need arises. The school has also found it necessary to employ someone to monitor the work of the management company. This is not the best use of its funds. In other respects the principles of best value have been adopted and are applied to financial decisions where possible. Funding and resources are used well otherwise to meet the school's main educational priorities.
51. The governing body has not had the smoothest of starts. There have been changes in its leadership and the governing body has not established a full and productive relationship with the school in some aspects of its work. There are some tensions about how governors are to fulfil their roles and responsibilities that have not been fully resolved. Individual governors bring quite different experiences of school governance, and many have put in much time and effort to support the establishment and development of the school. They are justifiably proud of the work that they and staff have done and the considerable achievement that have taken place in getting the school to its current position since its opening. A clear and shared view of how they are to fulfil their role is only emerging gradually. The wide professional expertise that many governors bring is of much value to the school. One major achievement of the governing body in its temporary form was to establish the initial strategic direction through its mission statement, before the opening of the school. Subsequent appointments, particularly at management level, have been of staff who support these aims. Hence staff are very much committed to the development of independence in the pupils. Where governors have not been sufficiently involved subsequently is in shaping the next stage in the school's development, including participating fully in discussions and decisions about applying for specialist school status. Governors have also not developed effective procedures for establishing a clear understanding of the school's strengths and its shortcomings.
52. The number of teaching, support staff and administrative assistants is at a good level for the number of pupils. One aim has been to reduce teacher workload by removing as many administrative tasks from their responsibility as possible. A considerable investment has also been made in classroom assistants to support teaching and learning. The rapid increase in teaching and other staff, particularly since September 2002, has not been supported by an effective programme of induction. In addition, the school has not clarified policies and the subsequent practice that staff should adopt in all areas. One consequence is that some new staff are unsure of how best to promote independent learning and how behaviour is to be managed. Some pupils exploit these and other inconsistencies. There is potentially a thorough process that reviews the work of staff and faculties, however, this is not yet generating consistency, high quality and in some cases an understanding by senior staff of where weaknesses exist. One consequence of this is the wide variation in the quality of teaching across the school, and in some instances, across faculties. The monitoring of

- the performance of staff needs greater rigour with a subsequent programme to improve teaching through training and the sharing of the skills of the high quality staff.
53. All legal requirements for the provision for pupils with special educational needs are met. This includes the identification of a governor with responsibility for oversight of provision who participates in departmental activities. Information to parents from the governors is good. There is a useful policy setting out responsibilities and generally very good documentation covering all aspects of work with special educational needs pupils. There is good, clear guidance for all staff and this includes appropriate training on the new code of practice. Support staff are deployed effectively, with some support time in every faculty. Management is strong and efficient, supported by a dedicated and expert team with the potential to secure progress along the carefully planned route for the future. The provision for gifted and talented pupils has been quite varied, but is now benefiting from being more effectively co-ordinated across the school. The provision for the very few early learners of English as an additional language is also managed well and is enabling them to make good progress.
54. Accommodation is very good. The school is a new purpose built building that provides very good and sometimes excellent facilities in curriculum areas, for example art and music. The buildings are well designed to take account of pupils with disabilities. It also benefits from a large outdoor area that provides good facilities for physical education. Poor ventilation is a significant shortcoming of the building. In particular the lack of ventilation makes some of the specialist design and technology areas very hot and uncomfortable. The computer suite is small and although it limits more flexible teaching, it is not significantly affecting progress.
55. The good resources in the school have a positive impact on teaching and learning. The one exception is in information and communication technology where the number of computers is below that found nationally in secondary schools. Although the systems are modern, they have experienced considerable technical problems and this has inhibited the development of skills across the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. The school faces many challenges ahead as it enters the next stages of its development. These can best be achieved through a closer and more productive working relationship between the school, governors and parents and by the preparation of clear policies for the practice to be adopted in all areas of the life of the school. To build on the school's successful start, to achieve its aims more effectively and to raise the quality of education and the standards that the pupils achieve, governors and staff should work together to:
- (1) improve the quality of teaching and provision in music and ensure that the health and safety concerns in the report that relate to music are dealt with; (paragraphs 14, 21 and 100-103)
 - (2) improve access to computer facilities in subjects for all pupils, monitor rigorously the use of ICT in subjects to ensure that all National Curriculum requirements are met and establish arrangements for the assessment of the pupils' ICT capability*; (paragraphs 20, 22, 28, 41, 93 and 96)
 - (3) clarify with staff, parents and pupils the school's expectations for the behaviour of the pupils, establish clear rewards and sanctions, monitor with vigour to ensure that staff are consistently fulfilling this policy and increase levels of supervision as pupils move around the site; (paragraphs 7-9, 11, 21 and 39)
 - (4) introduce a thorough process for the induction of new staff, monitor the work and performance of all staff more rigorously and provide a programme of individual support and training where necessary so that the school's aims for the development of independent learners can be better met*. (paragraphs 49 and 52)

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

57. In addition to the items above, the governors may wish to consider the inclusion of the following points in their action plan:
- prepare and issue a home/school agreement; (paragraph 46)
 - reconsider the arrangements for teaching two modern foreign languages in Year 7 to 9; (paragraphs 22 and 99)
 - prepare a policy and guidance on how the school wishes to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; (paragraphs 31-35)
 - seek ways to improve and strengthen the partnership with parents. (paragraphs 44-46 and 48)

* These items have been identified as priorities for attention in the school's improvement plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	130
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	36	45	27	13	4	0
Percentage	4	28	35	21	10	3	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y9
Number of pupils on the school's roll	696
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	51

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y9
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	28
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	146

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	98

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	1.2

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
446	19	0
9	0	0
151	1	0
9	0	0
2	0	0
11	1	0
17	0	0
8	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
6	0	0
12	2	0
4	0	0
5	1	0
3	0	0
5	1	0
7	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	44.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	430

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	67
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y9

Key Stage 3	24.5
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	1,836,718
Total expenditure	1,788,989
Expenditure per pupil	3932
Balance brought forward from previous year	- 20,620
Balance carried forward to next year	27,109

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	34

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

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	696
Number of questionnaires returned	266

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	33	55	9	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	18	64	11	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	7	44	27	9	14
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	12	44	32	9	3
The teaching is good.	12	64	6	2	15
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	11	44	33	8	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	30	52	9	5	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	32	53	8	3	4
The school works closely with parents.	12	40	31	8	8
The school is well led and managed.	14	38	12	12	24
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	17	56	13	2	12
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	51	8	1	6

Other issues raised by parents

Parents who attended the meeting and the considerable number who took the opportunity to write to the inspection team expressed concerns about the behaviour of some of the pupils, the links between the school and home and inconsistencies in the work of staff. Many were also concerned that the headteacher and senior staff are not sufficiently visible around the school.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and often very good and is leading to the pupils making good progress.
- The subject is very well led and managed and as a result there is a committed team of English teachers who work well together.
- The procedures are good for assessing the pupils, tracking their progress and targeting any subsequent support.

Areas for improvement:

- Pupils do not undertake sufficient extended writing tasks.
- The procedures for monitoring and reviewing the work of staff, particularly teaching, learning and homework, are not entirely effective.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT as a tool for learning.
- A co-ordinated programme for the extension and support of gifted and talented pupils is needed.

58. Standards in English are above average, overall, by the end of Year 9. The pupils make good progress, this being most marked in Years 7 and 8. Progress in speaking and listening and reading is more evident than that in writing. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are well understood and they are usually well supported in class. Gifted and talented pupils make only satisfactory progress because, although they are generally identified clearly, there is not always appropriate extension work for them. There is no significant difference in attainment or achievement between boys and girls.
59. Standards in speaking and listening are above average. Many pupils talk with confidence, use a wide and appropriate vocabulary and a register appropriate to the situation, for example, when Year 8 pupils speak as Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or Year 9 make presentations as advertising executives. The responses of lower-attaining pupils are generally confident but employ less extensive vocabulary and do not develop ideas fully. Speaking and listening are enhanced through drama activities. The teaching of drama is good and sometimes very good. Teaching is well planned, lively and interesting. Lessons are well paced and varied and encourage collaborative work. Boys and girls of different abilities work well together in groups to produce, for example, improvisations, mime or depict emotions and attitudes. The level of challenge is appropriate.
60. Reading standards are above average overall. The majority of pupils show good understanding of plot, character and theme in texts: for example, *A Midsummer Nights Dream*, *Macbeth*, *Across the Barricades*. The teaching of Shakespeare for the end of Year 9 national tests is given an extra dimension by the well considered drama exercises on language and character. Year 9 pupils can effectively analyse a persuasive writing leaflet. Reading records suggest that many pupils read widely; this practice is well supported by the developing school library.
61. Writing standards are also above average overall. Lessons are often interesting and well paced, maintaining the interest of pupils and leading to good learning. For example, a lesson in which Year 9 explored the persuasive language of a leaflet was delivered with great energy. Pupils were actively involved at all times and tasks were varied and as a result rapid learning ensued. The good teacher-pupil relationships also supported learning well as groups of pupils presented advertising related material to the teacher (who acted as the client). Pupils were confident in their high quality work because they felt secure, received praise and suggestions and engaged in humour. At other times, the pupils produce suitable written work such as brochures, letters, poetry and some narrative but there is too little emphasis on extended writing.
62. Teaching and learning are good overall. During the inspection week several lessons were seen which were very good or excellent. The best lessons are well planned so that learning is well structured. Several teachers are skilful at managing the pupils. This allows teaching to take place in a controlled and positive environment. These teachers establish a very positive, calm ethos of

intellectual effort. In these lessons, pupils behave well, showing interest in the content of the lesson and working hard. This is not always the case. On a small number of occasions the behaviour of the pupils is not controlled effectively and as a result the pace of learning slows. A particular strength is that the very good marking provides pupils with clear indications of the level at which they are currently working and details of how they can improve. Sometimes the provision of the same material for everyone in the class, despite differences in ability, and occasional lapses in the quality of planning and timing weaken the overall lesson quality.

63. One particular strength is that several teachers successfully promote the school's aim to develop independent learners. For example, a Year 8 class studying *A Midsummer Night's Dream* prepared, through a variety of activities, to write a letter from Hermia. Varied tasks enabled them to develop an understanding of characters, language and dramatic expression. Clear emphasis was placed on raising the pupils' awareness of National Curriculum level criteria. This is a further strength of many good lessons in the department. Year 9 pupils preparing for their end of year national tests receive particularly good quality guidance.
64. Provision for literacy is developing and is satisfactory overall. There is a well considered whole school policy and there are several departmental policies on literacy though not all have yet produced these. Some departments have received training in literacy but there has been no whole-school training. Most departments cover some of the required areas for literacy development, but as yet there is no consistency of provision across the school. Most departments, for example, display subject specific key words prominently and some, though not all, require extended reading beyond the information needs of the curriculum. The majority of departments ensure that spelling, punctuation and grammar are corrected on a regular basis but this does not happen in mathematics and science. There is a general lack of extended writing across most departments. The practice of drafting work to develop accuracy is well developed in English, modern foreign languages and religious education, for example, but not consistently throughout the school. Most subjects provide a range of situations to encourage speaking and listening development. The attractive library, which houses a developing book stock, supports literacy well.
65. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The department has made good progress in developing effective systems. There are good schemes of work and appropriate development plans are in place. The use of ICT is limited at present but the work seen was of good quality. Systems of assessment, tracking and target-setting are well established and the use of data for prediction is also developing. Pupil self-assessment procedures are very good. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place but requires further extension. The teachers are hard working and committed specialists who work well as a team. Staffing, accommodation and resources are very good. Given these factors, the department is well placed to continue to improve.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The faculty is well led and managed.
- The good relations within the faculty ensure the team members support each other and work together for the benefit of the pupils.
- There is close and effective co-operation with the special educational needs faculty; this is leading to good progress by pupils with special educational needs.
- Teaching staff share high expectations of the pupils, to which they mostly respond well.
- The pupils are making good progress.

Areas for improvement

- The clarification of plans in advance of the introduction of Key Stage 4 and sixth form teaching.
- The formal monitoring of the work of the faculty is not sufficiently systematic.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT as an aid to teaching and learning.

66. Teaching, and the pupils' subsequent learning, across Years 7 to 9 are good overall and as a result the pupils make good progress. The standards of work seen are above average by Year 9. Pupils

produce good quantities of work on topics at above the expected National Curriculum level for their age. Good progress over time is also evident from the increasing difficulty of the topics covered. For example, pupils quickly progress from linear equations to quadratics and simultaneous equations. The level of co-operation between class teachers and staff from the special educational needs faculty is a strength and contributes to the good learning of pupils with special educational needs. Although the documentation mentions pupils with English as an additional language, there is no evidence that a lack of language skills is having a detrimental effect on pupil progress.

67. Good lessons are well planned with a good use of time, ensuring a brisk pace to learning, which also benefits from the structure to lessons recommended by the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils revise past work appropriately, are made aware of the lesson aims and are encouraged to review their learning at the end. Care is taken to ensure that homework requirements are understood by all pupils. Homework is set regularly and aids learning. However, discussions with pupils indicate that the quantity often does not fill the time allocated. Although there are a few gaps, books are marked regularly in accord with department policy, although there is no indication of National Curriculum levels on the work to keep pupils fully informed about their progress and helpful comments are few. Learning is helped by good use of questions. Progress in the use and application of mathematics is satisfactory. The pupils are able to explain their answers using mathematical terms, although more opportunities to develop the skills in this area are required to match the good progress across the rest of the subject. The school's aim to develop the individual is supported further by the encouragement of pupils to explain answers in front of the class, something they do with confidence. The majority of pupils had a good attitude to their work. They were willing to tackle difficult challenges and maintained a good level of interest and concentration. Where lessons were judged to be only satisfactory, planning made less good use of time and did not allow for a the benefits of a well organised plenary session to be realised.
68. There are many good examples of extension work and differentiation, including differentiated homework tasks. In addition, gifted and talented pupils are placed together in sets where staff ensure through their questioning and the challenging tasks set that this group of pupils makes good progress. Use of a national mathematics competition provides further challenge for this group, who have been pleased to receive certificates of their success.
69. The progress of the pupils is fostered through co-operation with teaching staff from partner primary schools and use of transition materials. Teaching and learning also benefit from links with work in history, modern foreign languages and physical education. Rooms are bright with displays of work and technical words are clearly displayed, providing a good environment for learning. However, there is a major difficulty with access to computers, which is limiting the options for teaching.
70. Leadership and management of the faculty are good. It is recognised that in this new school a great deal of work has been done to achieve a good provision for the subject. Despite constant additions to the staff, a team who support each other and work well together has been developed which promotes good learning. The head of faculty has a clear view of what is required both now and in the future, and is taking appropriate steps with his team to develop practice that supports the school's aims. Classroom practice is monitored only on an informal basis. Even with a small team who work closely together this does not provide the rigour to the process that a formal structure would bring. The faculty has a good database, including National Curriculum levels attained at the end of each year. Good use is made of the data available to set targets and to keep parents informed of their child's progress more often than school policy requires.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The pupils make good progress during Years 7 and 8 and their attainment is above average.
- The department has successfully developed independent and practical-based learning.
- The subject and the pupils' learning benefit considerably from very good accommodation and plenty of resources.

Areas for improvement

- Many pupils in Year 9 are not making sufficient progress partly because of weaknesses in their attitudes to learning.
- The procedures for monitoring the work of staff are not having a significant impact on improving teaching and the pupils' standards.
- The assessment of standard of pupils' work is unsatisfactory, both in the collection of information and then the way in which it is used.

71. Standards of work attained are in line with national expectations the end of Year 9. This represents significantly slower progress than might have been expected for many pupils from their attainment on entry to the school. The progress of pupils is more rapid in Years 7 and 8, where the pupils learn well because they are interested and willing to make the effort. Too often significant numbers of Year 9 pupils show limited interest and effort. This restricts improvement in their knowledge and understanding.
72. Overall both the teaching and pupils' learning are satisfactory. However, the quality of teaching varies too widely, from excellent to unsatisfactory. The strengths for most, although not all, teaching are good planning and the help given to pupils about how to improve their work. A key factor limiting the achievements of Year 9 is that some teachers do not motivate the pupils to give of their best. At times very firm, precise interventions by the teachers contain and even improve this situation. The learning of Years 7 and 8 is consistently better than that of Year 9. Overall progress by gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties is overall good, because provision planned by teachers, and the work of support staff, are both effective.
73. There are some shortcomings in teaching, which need to be tackled. For example, in an unsatisfactory scientific investigation lesson with Year 9 pupils, the teacher did not establish a clear focus on what level of work was required. Many pupils avoided work. Misbehaviour built up so that even hard-working pupils became distracted. In contrast, a Year 8 class revised digestion. The teacher kept everyone thinking hard, and added enjoyment and verve. The display of images screened from the teacher's computer constantly surprised pupils; worksheets, textbooks and quizzes were used to clarify the topic. The pupils worked in groups, then sometimes alone in silence, then as a class. There was ample feedback about how to improve. Slower learners learnt the main points, and gifted and high-attaining pupils were given work well beyond the average level for their age.
74. Other factors have an impact on standards. Overall, both leadership and management are satisfactory. The original small leadership team successfully established the current very interesting learning environment, with its many opportunities for independent practical-based work. The schemes of work cover the required elements of science thoroughly, and staff follow the plans well. More could be done to improve the ways science teachers seek to improve the pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy, including better links with methods in use in other subjects. There are plenty of science resources, used well in lessons, plus very attractive, modern accommodation. ICT resources are available but under-used. Recent changes to leadership systems are wise. Duties have been delegated amongst the enlarged staff team. Systems are being set up for monitoring the quality of provision. As yet the monitoring is not resolving the disparities in the quality of teaching. Assessment systems are amongst the delegated duties. The assessment systems in use now are unsatisfactory. They do not provide up-to-date, accurate and reliable information. This means the use of assessment is also unsatisfactory such as to support quality monitoring, to give support to pupils, and by teachers as part of their lesson planning.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good overall and never less than good.
- Pupils' attainment is above average; achievement from Years 7 to 9 is good, and in recent projects many pupils have made very good progress.
- The facilities for art are excellent and the subject is supported very well by technician time.
- The subject is led very effectively and this is giving rise to improved standards and to improvements in the quality of education.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and behave very well in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The assessment system needs to be developed further; it does not provide clear information about pupils' achievement.
- There is a lack of ICT resources within the department; consequently, pupils do not use computers enough in their creative work.
- Curriculum planning is good; further refinement in planning is needed to ensure that the pupils make equal progress in all areas of the subject.

75. Pupils enter the school with prior attainment in art that is in line with the national average. From Years 7 to 9, they have made good progress and in Year 9, pupils' attainment is above national expectations. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Pupils' progress, evident in recent work and in lessons during the inspection, shows that standards are now rising, and some work in all years is well above the standard expected nationally. The very good teaching that is found in two thirds of lessons and the challenge inherent in current projects is extending the pupils' skills and knowledge. Higher-attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented are doing particularly well and making the most of the opportunities for independent learning that homework tasks provide. This was seen, for example, in the thorough research and exciting visual references collected by a Year 7 pupil on the theme of medieval architecture. Pupils have very good opportunities to study the work of other artists and are able to use the techniques and ideas in their own practice. The subject makes a good contribution to the development of literacy skills through the display of subject vocabulary and the setting of tasks that involve writing about famous artists. Pupils are all confident in selecting and combining imagery. The development of ideas and in-depth visual analysis – evident, for instance, in projects on Cubism, Op Art and cultures - provide a very good preparation for GCSE. Teachers' high expectations and their excellent management of the pupils' behaviour ensure that pupils work quietly and thoughtfully. They are clear about what they are meant to do, questioning is often very good and pupils are articulate in expressing their ideas. Currently, an artist-in-residence is working with pupils, expanding their horizons and enabling them to work on large-scale collaborative projects.

76. The head of department, who took up post at the beginning of this academic year, is providing very good leadership. She has identified appropriate priorities for development. Rightly, she has recognised the need to refine curriculum planning to ensure that the pupils are equally challenged in all areas of the subject. She liaises closely with the other art teacher and oversees standards effectively. The pupils' work is marked regularly and marks are recorded, but assessment is not related to a clear set of criteria. As a result, assessment records do not provide as much information as they should for tracking the progress of individuals and groups or for future planning.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The member of staff responsible for the subject shows considerable commitment and has prepared secure plans.
- The subject benefits from well-planned and very clear schemes of work.
- Citizenship is integrated well into the work of several subjects.

- There is a very positive attitude from the pupils who contribute to the community.
- Areas for improvement
- The delivery and teaching of the subject in timetabled lessons need to become positive experiences for all pupils.
 - Citizenship is not integrated into the work of all departments, particularly those that could make a significant contribution.
 - Staff have not set clear targets for the success of the subject.

77. The school has made a good start to developing this new subject with the dedicated and committed member of staff providing very clear guidance to departments on how they can contribute to the pupils' knowledge and understanding of citizenship. Standards overall are at least satisfactory, and good in those departments where the subject has been fully integrated into programmes of study. For example, in history and religious education where pupils are gaining the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding, particularly about becoming informed citizens and developing skills of enquiry and communication.
78. Pupils in an excellent Year 9 history lesson on 'conflict in the twentieth century' were able to analyse how conflicts arise and link these to the war in Iraq. Through the dedicated citizenship lessons, delivered as part of the PSHE programme, and in tutorial periods, pupils' progress as informed citizens is further enhanced. Teaching is satisfactory in these lessons but is often good or very good in those areas which deliver the subject as an integrated theme within the subject. Unfortunately, in a dedicated Year 9 citizenship lesson where pupils prepared a presentation for primary schools on 'what is citizenship' learning was unsatisfactory. The pupils' attitude to the subject was not positive and without a sharp introduction to the lesson which engaged all pupils, it was very difficult to get them to focus on the tasks set. Pupils with special educational needs make progress which is as good as their peers. The subject makes a positive contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills particularly through its work on presentation skills and reading aloud in class.
79. There are many instances where pupils are demonstrating a very positive approach to being good citizens and working for the community. These examples include working on the school council to provide a voice for their peers, membership of the Enfield Youth Council and work with feeder schools. Girls in a Year 7 assembly were appropriately rewarded and praised for their efforts in fundraising and one form is now providing regular assistance for the upkeep of a guide dog.
80. The teacher with responsibility for citizenship is providing satisfactory leadership and management of the subject with many very good initiatives undertaken. These include regular meetings, support and guidance on how to identify citizenship themes in a department's work and the use of certificates and other rewards as recognition of the pupils' work in this area. There is now a need to ensure that all departments have integrated citizenship into their schemes of work and that there are clear targets set for measuring the success of citizenship at the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The pupils enjoy the subject, make good progress and attain above average standards.
- The teaching is almost always good with numerous instances of very good practice.
- The very good and well organised facilities enhance learning opportunities.
- Subject leadership is very good in creating a strong and cohesive team.

Areas for improvement

- ICT, especially computer-aided design and manufacture, is not fully developed.

81. Pupils come to the school with secure literacy and numeracy skills and, although practical making skills are less developed, standards on entry are broadly in line with national average. Pupils benefit from a wider than average range of design and make experiences using different materials such as food, textiles, metal, wood and acrylic. In these areas they benefit from consistently good

teaching with numerous instances of very good practice. These strengths enable the pupils to learn well and make good progress so that by the end of Year 9, overall standards are above those expected nationally for that age group.

82. The faculty shares a common approach to teaching the subject. Staff expect and largely get good quality work from the pupils. Teachers place a strong emphasis on pupils researching, developing their ideas and preparing making plans, all of which improve literacy and ICT presentation skills. The subject makes satisfactory provision for the use of ICT but the excellent facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture do not become operational until September 2003. The pupils' folder work shows understanding of a design process and higher-attaining pupils are further able to carefully analyse their research and evaluate their work. The teachers are all specialists and are able to use the very good accommodation and resources to enable the pupils to make good progress in developing their practical skills. This was evident in the quality of decorative techniques and machining accuracy in a textiles technology project on wall project. The care and application that the pupils showed was also a feature of work preparing a metal mould as part of an injection moulding project. Across all areas, teachers succeed in sustaining the interest of the pupils and if on occasion the pace of learning is leisurely, pupils are consistently well-behaved and concentrate on their tasks. This is particularly true of pupils with behavioural and learning needs who respond well to more varied and active learning and make good progress.
83. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. It has benefited from having a skilled and well informed faculty head for the first three years of the new school and a cohesive specialist team that include experienced subject leaders for food and textiles. The team has developed very good monitoring and assessment procedures that enable the pupils to recognise their progress in terms of National Curriculum levels. The team regularly evaluates its learning schemes and more formal staff review and development procedures are in place. These all contribute positively to a strong and developing subject provision. This provision also benefits from very good resources and accommodation.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards are improving in Years 7 and 8.
- There is much independent work, which fosters enquiry and investigative skills.
- Teachers are skilled at the reinforcement of knowledge through repetition and good question and answer.
- Many lessons are both challenging and provide good support for pupils with special educational needs.

Areas for improvement

- The good practice in managing the behaviour of pupils evident in some lessons is not shared effectively between teachers.
- Access to ICT is inadequate.
- The subject has the potential to contribute further to the promotion of literacy.

84. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are not uniform, but evidence indicates that they are improving. The current Year 9 are attaining in line with the national average, but with some considerable variation between tutor groups. Attainment in geography skills on entry is in line with the national average so that for Year 9 achievement is satisfactory. Written skills and the volume of work have not developed sufficiently in Year 9 because of a mix of unsatisfactory attitudes to the subject, some inappropriate behaviour and weaknesses in the management of the pupils in some lessons. Standards are higher in Years 7 and 8 and a larger proportion of pupils are attaining above the national average. Work seen in Year 7 indicates that both geographical and written standards are improving and that achievement is good. Pupils' attitudes are noticeably more positive in Years 7 and 8.

85. Achievement in Years 7 and 8 is high as a result of well planned and presented lessons, and teaching that offers challenge and variety, resulting in good progress by the great majority. There is an emphasis on the development of written skills and pupils produce a good volume of extended and imaginative writing, but the use of a technical vocabulary needs to be improved.

86. Pupils learn to think for themselves in investigative work that will be most useful in coursework in Years 10 and 11. They further develop their judgement in decision-making exercises that increase moral understanding and give them a sense of global citizenship. Much of this work is improved by the use of ICT, and pupils are able to word process their work and carry out research on the Internet. However, greater access to ICT resources is needed to improve opportunities for all year groups on a regular basis. Teaching overall is good and is very well represented by a Year 7 lesson in which housing characteristics in Enfield were investigated in a case study of urban modelling. In Year 8 there is good word-processed appreciation of the Rainforest. Basic geography, mapping and number skills are put in place in Year 7 and, like much of the learning, is revisited and reinforced throughout Years 7 to 9 by repetition and good question and answer sessions in lessons. Pupils are able to use well the number skills that they have learned in mathematics in map work and enquiry work - gathering, analysing and graphing data in a variety of ways. Pupils who have special educational needs are very well provided for. They are able to use the most appropriate learning materials to help them to make good progress in lessons. The pupils' growing understanding of geographical processes and patterns is seen in Year 8 work on coastal features.
87. Progress has not been as consistent in Year 9 as in Years 7 and 8. After staffing changes, a more settled environment is in place and beginning to have a beneficial effect on Year 9 standards. This was seen in a good lesson in which the pupils were suitably stretched in an engaging lesson as they investigated the characteristics of Namibia. Although there needs to be further attention given to the behaviour of one or two groups in Year 9 and good practice on pupil management shared between teachers, the positive attitudes and good behaviour seen in Years 7 and 8 are being reflected in Year 9 lessons.
88. The head of department has recently joined a well led and organised faculty with a number of new staff. His ideas for progress and improvement are clear and backed by good administration. After a period of staffing disruption there is good and effective leadership in place, intent on further improving teaching and learning across all year groups through keen monitoring.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and are improving.
- Teaching is good overall and the pupils are enabled to develop their own history skills in a supportive and structured environment.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Links with other subjects are a strength.

Areas for improvement

- There is only one television/video in the whole faculty. This creates problems if more than one teacher needs to use it in the same period.
- The department needs to review its strategies for coping with the very small percentage of disaffected Year 9 pupils.

89. When pupils enter the school, standards in history are average. By the time they reach Year 9 they are just above average. This represents good achievement. The available evidence indicates that standards are improving and that a higher percentage of pupils in Years 7 and 8 are achieving above average levels of attainment than in Year 9. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of a range of historical facts, situations and characters. For example, pupils in Year 8 show a good understanding of what French society was like before the Revolution. They understand that historical situations have both causes and effects and that some of these effects are still being felt today. A lesson on historical conflicts, for example, began by looking at the current war with Iraq. Pupils with special educational needs develop their understanding of topics at a steady rate and, with effective support, continue to improve their work. Teachers have worked hard to improve the writing skills of average and below average pupils so that the structure of their work is improving. Pupils are usually able to explain their answers verbally even when they have

- difficulty in writing down exactly what they mean. Higher-attaining pupils write accurately and with growing confidence. Skills taught in these years will provide a good foundation for GCSE.
90. Pupils throughout the age range make regular use of ICT to develop their skills in history. During the week of the inspection, for example, Year 9 pupils used the Internet to research a variety of 20th century political conflicts.
91. The quality of teaching is good overall with many very good features. Occasionally it is excellent. In a small minority of Year 9 lessons, teachers sometimes have to struggle to maintain good discipline. This is because a small number of pupils are disruptive and exhibit challenging behaviour. In most classes, however, attitudes are positive. Pupils enjoy their history lessons and are prepared to work hard and match the commitment of their teachers. Teachers are enthusiastic and work well as a team. They explain things clearly and ask questions that build effectively on the pupils' answers, thus extending and reinforcing their knowledge and understanding. A particularly strong feature of the teaching is the way in which pupils are enabled to develop their own skills without being spoon-fed by their teachers. This is done in a supportive and structured environment that enables the pupils to achieve well. This was evident in a Year 7 lesson where different groups of pupils researched different aspects of the Islamic empire and then exchanged the information with their classmates. Similarly in Year 8, the pupils were engaged in making a television programme about the French Revolution. In the best lessons, teachers have very clear behavioural expectations and have established good classroom routines. Most marking of the pupils' work is thorough and helpful with comments that show how to improve their work. In discussions, pupils cited marking in history as a positive feature of their learning.
92. Leadership and management are very good. The new teacher in charge of history, in post only since January, has made a very effective start in setting clear priorities for the future. Plans to introduce a GCSE course are well advanced and over 100 pupils have opted to study it next year. Teachers work very well together as a team and there are good structures in place to share good practice. The subject functions effectively as part of a dynamic and cohesive faculty. Classrooms have been created as positive learning environments with very good displays of pupils' work and other historical materials. Resources are used well, although there is only one television/video in the whole faculty. This creates problems if more than one teacher needs to use it. Cross-curricular links are a particular strength of the department. In Year 7, for example, pupils look at Islamic art and good links have been established with mathematics in a Doomsday project. The department has chosen Islamic civilisations as a world history unit in order to broaden the pupils' understanding of cultural diversity.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Strengths

- Despite problems in establishing the ICT facilities, the pupils make satisfactory progress and reach standards in line with national average.
- The specialist teaching is well informed and challenging.
- Subject leadership is committed and the developing systems are well planned.

Areas for Improvement

- The use of ICT across the different subject areas is limited.
- The assessment procedures have yet to be implemented.
- ICT accommodation and facilities do not match the needs of the school.
- The overall school management of ICT lacks coherence.

93. Pupils come to the school with differing ICT experiences although most have understanding and skills close to the national average. The school has had technical problems with its computer system that until recently disrupted attempts to provide a coherent and progressive learning programme. Despite this, most pupils have made satisfactory progress and by Year 9, standards are in line with those expected nationally for the age group.

94. This progress results from consistently satisfactory teaching that has some good features. Staff share good technical understanding of ICT and use this well to provide the pupils with individual support that helps them to acquire skills in different applications. The teachers' secure subject knowledge particularly aids the higher-attaining pupils who are more able to exploit the sophisticated features of software. This was evident in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were designing their own website. The taught lessons ensure that the pupils use the Internet to research information and ideas. Most use ICT well to enhance their literacy and numeracy evident in written work, spoken presentations and numerical data handling.
95. Pupils like using ICT and some of those with special educational needs gain a strong sense of achievement in learning to use graphics, animation and sound. The more experienced teaching, supported by a classroom assistant, maintains good lesson pace through firm and effective class management. However, teaching by unqualified staff, while satisfactory, is less skilled in managing behaviour and monitoring progress in the large ICT teaching groups. School based induction and training has been less supportive in this instance.
96. The leadership and management exhibit both clear strengths and areas for further improvement and are satisfactory overall. Network problems and other factors have slowed the development of the taught curriculum and the monitoring and assessment systems are not fully in place so that the pupils are unclear about their progress and standards. More positively, there is provision for ICT training for both staff and parents and effective support for the good use of ICT within religious education as part of a plan to develop ICT across the curriculum. However, regular ICT use in most curriculum areas is limited in part because of the modest levels of ICT equipment and which are considerably below the average for secondary schools nationally. The school is seeking to improve the staffing and management structure but currently there are too few qualified ICT teachers and the overall management of ICT lacks coherence. Responsibility for, and links between, whole school strategic development, ICT course management and network and resource management have yet to be clearly established.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Very good leadership of the faculty ensures that there is a commitment to the achievement of high standards.
- Good teaching challenges pupils of all abilities.
- Very good assessment procedures enable the pupils to know how they can improve their performance.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to help pupils with their learning is under-developed.
- The current arrangements for the learning of a second foreign language are unsatisfactory.

French and Spanish

97. As a result of good teaching in Years 7 to 9, the pupils learn French or Spanish well. Standards are above average by Year 9. Teachers help the pupils to develop their language skills as individuals by matching their needs to carefully-planned learning activities. Consequently, all pupils, including those with special educational needs as well as the talented, achieve well. The principle of matching work to individual needs and abilities is regularly well practised in both classroom and homework activities. For example, a Year 8 class was told that all pupils must prepare a dialogue based on ordering food and drink in a café; some should extend their learning by incorporating some general conversation into the dialogue; and others could go even further and be sure that the general conversation included the use of verbs in the past tense. The homework was then to prepare to act out the dialogue without using notes. Pupils are thus challenged to do their best, and they respond accordingly. The pupils contribute effectively to their literacy development by using grammatical terms in their lessons and by using dictionaries to broaden their vocabulary.

98. Extensive use of the foreign language by teachers sets a suitable challenge to the pupils. The teachers also insist upon the independent use of the foreign language by pupils in routine classroom transactions whenever it is possible. Good habits are inculcated in Year 7. For example, pupils ask in the foreign language for permission to remove their coats or apologise for arriving late to a lesson. Teachers generate a lively pace in a variety of appropriate learning activities, which help to sustain the pupils' interest. Good control ensures that behaviour is good in the large majority of lessons.
99. The leadership and management of the faculty are very good. The head of faculty, well supported by her deputy, has a strong commitment to the achievement of high standards. This has been a major factor in the establishment of a successful faculty since the school opened. She regularly observes her colleagues in the classroom and provides effective support in their efforts to improve. All members of the department respond positively to the strong leadership, and so the capacity for further improvement is good. Documentation is comprehensive and the faculty's curriculum includes an appropriate range of learning experiences for pupils of all abilities. However, the current arrangements for learning a second foreign language, whereby pupils are obliged to attend classes after school, are unsatisfactory. Opportunities for using ICT are built into the schemes of work, but in practice the use of ICT to help pupils with their language learning is under-developed because of problems with some of the computers. Assessment procedures are very good. Regular marking, coupled with constructive comments on their work, enables the pupils to be aware of their level of performance and of how they can improve. Very good record-keeping ensures that teachers can clearly track the progress of individual pupils over time.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The excellent accommodation and resources provide the pre-conditions for high achievement.
- Over 100 pupils take instrumental lessons at the school.

Areas for improvement

- Most pupils are underachieving because the teaching fails to make a positive impact upon them.

100. Although the accommodation for music is excellent, the department is very well resourced, and many pupils have good potential and strong interest in this subject, there is underachievement throughout the department and standards are low. Pupils do not sing well together or individually in class, their percussion work is simplistic and often inaccurate, their keyboard skills are limited and their ensemble work crude and basic. They know little about the elements of music and little of their own rich musical heritage. For the most part they remain ignorant of the wealth of musical opportunities that are available to them. Those taking instrumental lessons with the visiting peripatetic teachers make better progress but, with few exceptions, performance standards remain low. Many pupils enjoy the sense of freedom they encounter during their music lessons but the cost of this freedom is that they learn little or nothing. Some are clearly disappointed and frustrated, such as in a Year 7 lesson marred by ongoing disruptive behaviour and rudeness. A few manage to make a little progress largely because they already possess musical skills, take instrumental lessons and want to improve.
101. The department's approach to teaching lacks rigour and structure. Objectives are vague, there is little sense of progression through a planned learning programme, lesson plans are not followed, learning outcomes are unclear, pupils are unfamiliar with National Curriculum levels, and they are not required to produce written work. A typical lesson consists of a brief opening session followed by the dispersal of pupils to practice rooms where, in the words of one pupil, "you can do anything". In one Year 9 class, one group of pupils chose to complete a worksheet for geography whilst listening to music, another to play a CD, another to sit chatting and listening to reggae music. Two pupils attempted the task outlined at the start of the lesson, making limited progress. The teacher circulated, accepting for the most part the pupils' descriptions of the validity of their chosen activity and offering advice with kindness and warmth. When the bell sounded for the end of the lesson, pupils left without any conclusion or formal closure of the lesson.

102. The practice of allowing pupils to lock themselves into practice rooms is unsafe, unacceptable and must be discontinued immediately.
103. There is great potential for the creation of a strong music department at this school, but at present the leadership and management of the department are very poor and as a consequence the school is failing to provide appropriate musical experiences and training for its pupils. In order to enable the pupils to learn and progress as they should, the school's managers must tackle the department's serious weaknesses by regular monitoring of the quality of teaching with concerted action planning to create a rich range of extra-curricular musical opportunities. This could be done through far more effective use of the performance management system, with regular lesson observations and a structured programme of development according to clearly defined objectives for improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good, with teachers setting high expectations of pupils in terms of participation, performance and behaviour. As a result, learning and progress are good.
- Pupils have a positive and lively attitude towards physical education and feel valued for both effort and achievement.
- Extra-curricular activities are very good and make a significant contribution to the pupils' experiences of physical education.
- The department makes effective and extensive use of the very good on-site facilities.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment information is not used sufficiently either to guide planning, to monitor the progress of pupils or to set targets for further progress.
- The formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching needs to be extended, not least to ensure the sharing of good practice.
- There is insufficient curriculum time to fully develop pupils' skills in the full range of sports and activities.
- Some whole-school policies are yet to be fully implemented.

104. The majority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are attaining at the level expected nationally in both physical education and dance. They are able to copy simple skills with control and co-ordination and are beginning to understand how to improve their own performance. The more able pupils, particularly those identified in Year 7, perform with precision and consistency. In all year groups there is a wide range of attainment. The teachers accommodate this through individual support and encouragement, and as a consequence all pupils achieve well. Pupils have a lively and positive approach to physical education and the majority make clear progress in lessons by listening carefully to the teacher and practising conscientiously as individuals and in groups.
105. Teaching and learning are good with strengths in both physical education and dance. All teachers set high expectations of the pupils' performance and behaviour and, as a consequence, pupils learn well in lessons. However, lesson planning does not always include clear and measurable outcomes, particularly for the more able, linked to simple, clearly defined teaching points. The teachers provide an environment in lessons in which all pupils, regardless of ability, gender or background, feel valued for both effort and achievement; pupils with special educational needs make progress at least as good as their peers.
106. In a good Year 7 lesson on basketball, the teacher gave very clear explanations in setting up a challenging practice involving passing and shooting in groups. Pupils in another very good Year 7 hockey lesson built on previously acquired techniques of passing and dribbling to add tackling to their range of individual skills. The teacher's enthusiastic presentation and use of relevant video clips in a good Year 8 dance class ensured all made progress in producing a choreographed piece of movement. Girls in Year 9 have a good understanding of the importance of health-related fitness

and how to promote it. In a good Year 9 boys football lesson, the teacher's carefully prepared lesson and excellent management of a lively group of pupils ensured all made progress in understanding important aspects of attacking and defending in game situations.

107. Leadership and management of the physical education department are good. The newly appointed head of physical education is developing assessment procedures to record the pupils' performance. This will enable teachers to monitor and evaluate the progress of pupils more effectively and use this information to inform the planning of the physical education curriculum. Unfortunately, there are no formal procedures in place to monitor and evaluate teaching within the department, not least as a means of sharing the excellent examples of good practice.

108. The timetabled curriculum meets statutory requirements. The many extra-curricular activities, clubs and school teams provide additional opportunities for pupils to enjoy physical activity and improve their skills in both physical education and dance, where teachers make effective and extensive use of the very good on-site facilities. However, the two weekly fifty-minute lessons are barely adequate to provide the necessary time to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding of all the sports studied on the physical education curriculum. The enthusiastic and knowledgeable teacher in charge of dance has developed a well-planned and stimulating curriculum for all pupils. Further development of the pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical education and dance can occur with the development and implementation of additional whole-school policies, for example, in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and in the use of ICT.
109. The physical education department has begun developing a literacy policy which includes displaying key sporting terms and by encouraging pupils to define and explain sporting terminology in lessons. For example, Year 9 girls were able to explain very clearly the importance of the warm-up and warm-down before and after physical activity and the effect physical activity has on the body. Numeracy is supported when pupils are encouraged to explain the dimensions of playing areas and their relationship with team tactics and decision-making in games, for example, when and where to shoot in basketball to gain maximum points. The department is not yet using ICT to any great length apart from the assessment and recording of pupils' performance.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and are improving.
- The teaching is good and enables the pupils to make clear gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- Lessons are challenging and make the pupils think.
- Leadership and management are very good. The subject fits in well to a cohesive and energetic faculty.
- Cross-curricular links are a strength of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The department needs to review its strategies for ensuring that all pupils participate actively in all lessons.
- Time allocated to the subject is light and not all topics can be covered in sufficient depth.
- Religious education has to share a television/video with geography and history. This is unsatisfactory and limits the number of times teachers can make use of the resource.

110. Teaching is good in Year 7 to 9. This means that pupils learn well and make good progress. Standards are just above average in Year 9. The evidence indicates that standards are improving and are higher in Years 7 and 8 than they are in Year 9.
111. By the time they are in Year 9, pupils have developed a secure knowledge and understanding of the different faiths represented in Britain. The teaching enables the pupils to understand the relevance of what they are studying for their own lives and experiences through considering a full range of moral and ethical issues in the light of secular and religious belief. Pupils of all abilities make good progress overall. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls or between pupils of different ethnic groups. Progress, however, is particularly noticeable in Years 7 and 8. This is largely because the pupils' attitudes are more consistently positive in these years than in Year 9 where behaviour is more variable. In a small number of classes in Year 9 a significant minority of pupils are inattentive and disruptive.
112. The quality of the teaching enables pupils to respond well to difficult challenges. This was evident, for example, in Year 7 where the pupils are expected to probe their own and others' beliefs through exploring religious perspectives on issues such as suicide bombing. A distinctive feature of many lessons is the way in which the teachers use questions to reinforce the pupils' understanding of difficult concepts or ideas. As a result, the pupils are prepared to think carefully about what they

say and are keen to answer questions or offer opinions. Enthusiasm combined with a calm and positive ethos are characteristics of all lessons. As a result, pupils are prepared to work hard and they show high levels of concentration and interest. Teachers make very good use of religious artefacts to illustrate what they are saying and to engage the pupils' interest. This was evident in a Year 8 lesson where, in order to stress the symbolism of Lent, pupils were asked to look around the room and find something purple. They found a candle and the teacher's scarf and the ensuing discussion centred on the religious significance of the colour purple in Christianity. Similarly, ICT is used to help the pupils to present their work carefully and positively. In Year 7, for example, pupils draw up their own covenants of behaviour using desktop publishing. Teachers are working hard to help pupils improve their literacy. As a result, pupils are beginning to make use of appropriate vocabulary and tackle writing tasks with growing confidence.

113. In order to raise the standards of teaching further, the department needs to review its strategies for ensuring that all pupils are fully engaged in tasks set: a small number of pupils in a small number of lessons are inattentive or quietly disruptive.
114. Leadership and management are very good. The new teacher in charge of religious education has made an effective start in establishing priorities and taking action to achieve them. Teachers are enthusiastic, energetic and committed to raising the profile of religious education. The subject is part of a cohesive and energetic humanities faculty. The staffing situation is now stable. Schemes of work are being reviewed and plans to establish the subject in Years 10 and 11 are well advanced. Cross-curricular links are a particular strength of the subject. For example, effective links have been established with a focus on literacy and on ICT. Very good use is made of existing resources, although there is only a very limited range of religious artefacts and the subject has to share a television/video with the rest of the humanities faculty. Time allocated to the subject is rather light and this means that not all topics can be covered in equal depth.