

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PRENDERGAST SCHOOL**

Lewisham, London

LEA area: Lewisham

Unique reference number: 100750

Headteacher: Miss E Pienaar

Reporting inspector: Mr M Pavey  
17650

Dates of inspection: 3 - 6 March 2003

Inspection number: 249601

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:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Girls
School address:	Hilly Fields Adelaide Avenue London
Postcode:	SE4 1LE
Telephone number:	020 8690 3710
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Appropriate authority:	The Governors of Prendergast School
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Riddell
Date of previous inspection:	8 May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17650	Martin Pavey	Registered inspector	Special educational needs Educational inclusion	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students? What should the school do to improve further?
9958	Tim Page	Lay inspector		How high are standards? b) Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
32266	Simon Lockwood	Team inspector	History	
31850	David Nevens	Team inspector	Music	
28097	Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well is the school led and managed?
20497	Vernon Williams	Team inspector	Geography Business education (sixth form)	
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
8361	Malcolm Burley	Team inspector	Science	
31693	Tim Hanafin	Team inspector	Art and design	
12844	Michael Saunders	Team inspector	English and drama English as an additional language	
15485	Roger Butler	Team inspector	Religious education	
13624	Anne Farren	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
14573	Hugh Wareing	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

20619	Jennifer Hazlewood	Team inspector	Health and social care (sixth form)	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
15163	Eric Deeson	Team inspector	Design and technology	
8682	Martin Trevor	Team inspector	Design and technology (sixth form)	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Prendergast School is an 11-18 voluntary aided girls' comprehensive school in Lewisham, London. There are 730 girls now on the roll, including 162 in the sixth form. There are 82 pupils on the roll of those with special educational needs (SEN), of whom 16 have statements. This is less than the national average. Of those whose ethnic backgrounds have been declared, 394 students are of White heritage, 30 of Asian, 153 of Black and 104 of other backgrounds. One hundred and eighty-five pupils have English as an additional language, of whom four are at an early stage of acquisition. The percentage of those entitled to free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The attainment of students entering the school is above the national average, on the basis of the national tests taken by present Year 7 pupils in their primary schools, though the whole ability range is present. The social circumstances of the surrounding area are average. The school is heavily over-subscribed. Though the school is governed by an independent body of trustees, it benefits from its long association with the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers, four of whose members are on the school's governing body. The school has grown since the last inspection, when there were 621 students. It has also acquired the status of a Beacon School, and offers expertise to other schools in the professional development of staff, school governance and curriculum support.

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

The school provides a very good education, with some outstanding features. Results in examinations and tests taken at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE are well above average. Results at A level have been rising and are now average. Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Leadership of the school is very good. Together, senior staff have created a first rate ethos. Their success in providing an equal opportunity for all pupils, from every background and ethnic heritage, to make good progress and succeed, is exemplary. As a result, pupils make very good progress by the time they reach GCSE, and leave as confident, articulate and ambitious young women. A high proportion goes on to study at university. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- Pupils make good progress in their work in Years 7-9, achieving high results in tests at the end of Year 9. They make very good progress in Years 10 and 11. Results are very high at these stages, when compared with those achieved in similar schools.
- Relationships are excellent. Pupils' very good attitudes, combined with good teaching, lead to these very high results.
- The leadership of the governors and headteacher is excellent, and that of senior staff very good. There are particular strengths in the professional development of staff.
- The sixth form curriculum is very good. Its range of subjects has greatly increased and results at AS and A2 levels are improving.
- Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good. There is an excellent programme of visits and extra-curricular activities.
- Assessment procedures, for encouraging and monitoring pupils' academic progress, are excellent.
- The learning support department helps those with learning difficulties very well.
- Links with parents are first rate and parents think very highly of the school.

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

- Though the leadership and daily management of subject departments are good, the school's leadership is planning further to strengthen its links with departments, to improve:
  - the monitoring of teaching and learning within departments;
  - the teaching of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum; and
  - assessment procedures within departments.
- Senior staff and governors are already planning a major review of the whole curriculum. This is needed, particularly, to resolve:
  - how a second language and Latin should be taught without reducing the time available for other subjects;
  - the balance of time allocated to subjects;
  - how to avoid teaching Latin and ICT outside normal lesson times;
  - the provision of religious education (RE) in Years 7 and 8, in line with the locally agreed syllabus, and in Years 9, 10 and 11 for all pupils; and
  - the place of drama in the curriculum.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1997 and received a very good report. Since then, improvement has been good in the school overall, and very good in the sixth form. Results have risen considerably, and the proportion of good and very good teaching has further increased. Courses and student numbers in the sixth form have greatly increased. Procedures for assessment and target setting have greatly improved, and are now a leading factor in the achievement of improving academic results. Leadership and management in departments are now far stronger. The key issues in the last report, almost all concerned with the curriculum, have been partly met, but there is more to do, as the governors and the headteacher acknowledge.

## STANDARDS

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

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

**Key**

well above average    A

above average        B

average                C

below average        D

well below average   E

\* national average results for A level in 2002 were not available at the time of the inspection.

When pupils join the school, their overall attainment is above the national average for all pupils, based on the national tests which present Year 7 pupils took in their primary schools. Results in the national tests for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science taken at the end of Year 9 were well above average in 2002 and in the two previous years. In 2002, English results were very high, science results were well above average and mathematics results above average.

The school's results at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were in the highest five per cent nationally when compared both with these pupils' Year 6 test performance and with the performance of pupils in schools with a similar allocation of free school meals. The school's performance in the tests at the end of Year 9 has been rising in all subjects, most notably in English. Results have been rising faster than the average trend.

In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, results were well above average in 2002 and for the last three years, both for five or more A\*-C grades and for five or more A\*-G grades. The school's GCSE results have been rising faster than the national trend. When compared with girls' results nationally, GCSE results in this school in 2002 were well above average in every subject except art and physical education (PE). The school is in 23<sup>rd</sup> position out of some 3000 schools in the whole country for its 'added value', that is the extra achievement seen in tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE, compared with what these pupils might have achieved.

Sixth form results in the AS and A2 examinations were average in 2001, and improved further in 2002. In lessons at all levels, pupils and students were making very good progress and achieving high standards in their work.

Because it has very good assessment and target-setting systems, the school can confidently set pupils demanding targets for achievement. In 2002, the school achieved its GCSE targets, reaching a higher overall points score than it had set out to achieve.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very positive about their school and like coming.
Behaviour, in and out of	Very good. Though parents reported some unsatisfactory behaviour, none was seen during the inspection. The high standard of behaviour is a leading

classrooms	cause of pupils' good progress and results.
Personal development and relationships	These are excellent. Pupils have a very high degree of responsibility for themselves and each other, and relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Very good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

Teaching and learning are good at all stages. In Years 7-9, teaching and learning are good in all subjects, though satisfactory in RE. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good in all subjects, though very good in geography, RE and modern foreign languages and satisfactory in design and technology (DT). In the sixth form, teaching in the subjects seen in detail was very good in English, modern foreign languages, business studies, and health and social care. It was good in mathematics, biology, art and geography, and satisfactory in design and technology. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching, at any stage. In this school, the proportion of teaching which is simply satisfactory is low. By contrast, much teaching is good; there is a high proportion of very good teaching, and more excellent teaching than is generally seen.

Teaching in English is good for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and very good for those in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good in mathematics and science, at both stages. This good teaching in these core subjects makes a sure base for the good progress pupils make, giving them a very good basis of knowledge and skill, which they successfully apply to their other subjects.

Strong aspects of teaching are teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects, their expectations of what pupils can do, and their management of lessons. There are no weak points, although the regular assessment of work is satisfactory rather than good. Teaching of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT is good for pupils in Years 7-11, and satisfactory in the sixth form. Teaching for pupils with SEN is good overall. Because teaching is good, pupils learn well. The best aspects of pupils' learning are the effort they make and the good pace they help to set by working so well with their teachers.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good for pupils in Years 7-11 and very good in the sixth form. Provision for extra-curricular activities and for PSHE is excellent. The community and the school's partner institutions make a very good contribution to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The learning support department has planned its provision carefully, so that experienced support teachers and assistants look after pupils' interests very well.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Though there is a large number of these pupils, few are at an early stage in acquiring English. These pupils are carefully supported. Pupils who are more advanced in acquiring English are well taught, as are all other pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision is strong in all respects. Pupils' social development is excellent, and provision for pupils' moral and cultural development is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Pupils are very well looked after. Tutorial guidance is good, and the school's procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress are excellent.



The school works extremely well with parents. Links between home and school are first rate.

The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements in its provision of RE. In Years 7 and 8, RE is not sufficiently taught in line with the locally agreed syllabus, and not all pupils are able to take RE in Years 10 and 11.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and that of senior staff very good. Heads of department lead their subjects well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent. Governors are very well informed about the school, take a close interest in all it does, and give it warm and well-judged support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Monitoring of teaching is good, and the evaluation of results and planning for their improvement are excellent. The headteacher's evaluation of the school's overall performance is accurate and clear.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school plans its budget very carefully and makes good use of the grants and funds it receives.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good. The school is fully staffed and resources for learning are well chosen and used. Accommodation is just sufficient. The school is cost-effective in all areas and gives very good value for money.

The leadership of the school has many strengths. The headteacher and senior staff ensure very clear educational direction for the school. Their approach to the professional development of staff is very clear, detailed and effective. They take very clear action to meet the school's targets and make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to do well. Senior staff care greatly for the progress and welfare of their pupils; this care communicates itself to all staff, whether teachers or support staff, and leads to the first rate ethos which is so noticeable in the school.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school, are expected to work hard, and are making good progress.</li> <li>• Teaching and behaviour are good.</li> <li>• The school works closely with parents, who are well informed about how their children are getting on. They feel comfortable in approaching the school.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some parents do not think their children get the right amount of homework.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. In general, they feel that homework is well set and useful. In this, they agree with the view of most parents at the parents' meeting.

# ANNEX: THE SIXTH PRENDERGAST SCHOOL FORM

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The growing sixth form now has 162 students. The great majority join from Year 11, though some students join from outside. Sixteen subjects are offered at AS level and 18 at A2 level. In addition, health and social care is taught as an advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) course, and also as a general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) course at intermediate level. The school provides courses in the key skills of communications, and ICT. All students attend a course, 'enrichment', which covers aspects of personal development and which attracts a wide range of speakers from outside the school. The course in performance studies is offered jointly with a local school, at the other school.

Students come from a range of heritage backgrounds. As in the main school, just over half the students come from White backgrounds. Of those from ethnic minority backgrounds, the majority come from Black backgrounds, and there are some pupils from Asian and other backgrounds. There are two students at present with statements of special educational needs (SEN), for medical reasons, and a further student is on the school's SEN roll. There is a range of ability in the sixth form, but overall the ability of the students joining the sixth is average for courses leading to A2 level. Generally, the school expects students to have gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A\*-C for entry to the sixth form. Most students have achieved this, but the school will consider individual cases and welcomes students with more modest qualifications to its vocational courses.

Since the last inspection, the sixth form has grown considerably and the number of courses has also expanded.

## HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a good standard of education. Results in the A2 examinations for students in Year 13 have been improving in recent years. They were in line with the national average in 2001, and were higher than the 2001 results in 2002. Teaching is good, often very good, and students learn well. The sixth form is very well led and managed. Students are very pleased to be in the sixth form, which meets their academic, individual and cultural needs very well. Relationships between staff and students are excellent. The sixth form is cost effective. Though the sixth form budget receives a little less than it spends, growing numbers mean that it should break even in the next two years.

### Strengths

- Sixth formers make good progress in both years, and results at AS and A2 levels are now around the national average. A high proportion of students continues from AS to A2 level, and some three quarters of students in Year 13 go on to higher education.
- Teaching was good, often very good, in around three-quarters of the lessons seen. Teachers enjoy excellent relationships with students, and these are the basis for the successful teaching and good learning which the school achieves.
- The governors and the headteacher support the sixth form strongly. Leadership of the sixth form and the management of its subjects and tutorial activities are very good.
- The curriculum is very good. Its range of subjects has greatly increased and results at AS and A2 levels are improving.
- Provision for students' social development is excellent. The school provides an extremely good range of activities, which are well supported by students.
- Procedures for encouraging and monitoring students' academic progress are very good.

### What could be improved

- The teaching of the key skills of communication, application of number and ICT across the curriculum is not yet well co-ordinated.
- Attendance is satisfactory, but could be better, as could punctuality to school at the start of the day.
- Careers provision for those not considering higher education is in need of improvement.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

*Note: comparisons for AS and A2 examinations are made with national results in 2001. National results for 2002 have not yet been published.*

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> In 2001, standards in the AS level and A2 level examinations were very high compared to national figures, and rose further in 2002. There is a year-on-year increase in the number of students studying mathematics successfully. Teaching and learning are good.
Biology	<b>Good.</b> Standards in AS and A2 level examinations were around the national average in 2001, and results were similar in 2002. Teaching is good, so that students achieve well and have a positive attitude to learning.
Design and technology	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards in AS and A2 level examinations were around the national average in 2001 and rose further in 2002. In lessons seen, standards vary between courses, and are improving as teachers become more familiar with this recently established course. Teaching is satisfactory and students make sound progress.
Business studies	<b>Very good.</b> Standards have improved and are now above average, both in lessons seen and in recent AS and A2 level examinations. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Students are well motivated and work hard. Very good leadership and management contribute significantly to students' very good achievement.
Health and social care	<b>Good.</b> Numbers taking the courses have increased considerably, though attainment in examinations has so far been below average. However, results have been good for the levels these students attained in GCSE, and standards of work seen were higher than expected. Teaching is very good and students made good progress, taking a pride in their work.
Art	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve well. Standards have risen steadily. In 2001, results matched the national average and rose further in 2002. Teaching and learning are consistently good and students benefit from very good guidance and support.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Results at A2 level were in line with the national average in 2001. Though results for top grades fell in 2002, all students passed. Overall, students make good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teaching is good.
English	<b>Very good.</b> Though results in AS and A2 examinations were below average in 2001, they rose at AS level in 2002. Teaching is often outstanding. Students' progress is carefully monitored. This enables most students to achieve beyond expected levels.
Modern foreign languages	<b>Very good.</b> Standards in the AS and A2 level French and Spanish courses are very high and AS and A2 results have been well above average. Staff have strong subject knowledge and teaching is consistently very good.

Overall, results in AS and A2 examinations were at the national average level in 2001 and improved further in 2002.

Eight other subjects were seen. Overall, teaching was good and students learnt well. In history and chemistry, results at top grades were below average in 2001, but standards seen in lessons were good,

helped by good teaching. In music, results have been above average, thanks to very effective teaching and learning. Standards seen in PE lessons are good, and students learn well, supported by good teaching. In sociology, standards were above average in 2001, and teaching seen was good. Results in government and politics were in line with the average in 2001, and teaching and learning seen were satisfactory. Teaching and learning in the AS philosophy course were very good and standards were higher than expected. Standards in the ICT key skills lesson were in line with expected levels, and teaching was good for this small group, who learnt well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The school provides very good care and guidance for its sixth formers. There is a good programme of careers advice, particularly for the majority who are heading for university, though advice for those not considering higher education is in need of improvement. The school has good procedures to ensure and improve attendance, though more work is needed to improve punctuality to school in the mornings. Procedures for assessing students' work, and for monitoring and supporting their progress, are excellent.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	As for the main school, the leadership of the headteacher and governors is excellent. The leadership of the assistant head in charge of the sixth form is very good in all respects. Under her guidance, the curriculum in the sixth form has become one of its leading strengths. Very good leadership encourages a first rate attitude to work and the excellent relationships which exist between staff and students of every ethnic background. Very good leadership of the sixth form assessment and target setting procedure has led to improved standards and a shared desire to improve further. The very good ethos, with a wide curriculum and good learning support, promote equality of opportunity very effectively.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching is good and staff are readily accessible to help them.</li> <li>Courses are well suited to their talents and aspirations.</li> <li>Information about subjects and courses is clear and helpful. The school helps students settle in to the sixth form well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A large minority of students do not feel they are well advised about what to do after leaving school.</li> <li>Half the students feel that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside main subjects.</li> <li>A large minority of students feel they are not treated as responsible young adults.</li> <li>A third of students do not feel that work is thoroughly assessed.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views of students. They find that advice for higher education is very good, but that advice for a minority not intending to go into higher education is not as strong. Evidence from this inspection confirms that there is an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and a very good programme of talks on important topics. Education in key skills, though satisfactory, could be improved further. From the excellent relationships and trust seen in all aspects of school life, inspectors consider that students are very well treated as young adults. They find that assessment systems are excellent; the daily assessment of students' work is generally good, but could be improved in some areas.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. When pupils join the school at the age of 11, their average level of attainment is above the national average for all pupils. This is seen in the results of the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 in their previous schools, when the number of higher levels achieved was above average. Results in English and science were far higher than in mathematics in these tests in 2002. Results of nationally validated tests taken on entry also confirm that overall attainment is above average.
2. Results in the national tests for the core subjects of English, mathematics and science taken at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average for all schools (all pupils - boys and girls) in 2002 and in the two previous years. In 2002, English results were highest, being very high compared with the performance of boys and girls nationally; they have been well above the results of girls nationally in recent years. In 2002, science results were well above the national average for all schools, and mathematics results above the national average. Compared with national average results for girls, results in mathematics and science have been above average in recent years. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 and above in English was far higher than predicted by the tests taken on entry to the school for these pupils, and was above for mathematics and science also. Results for these pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were very high when compared both with their performance in the national tests taken in Year 6 and with the performance of pupils in similar schools (i.e. those schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to receive free school meals). The school's performance in the tests at the end of Year 9 has been rising in all subjects, most notably in English. Results have been rising faster than the average trend for all schools.
3. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, results were well above the national average for all schools (boys and girls) in 2002 and for the last three years, both for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more A\*-C grades and for five or more A\*-G grades. As in its achievement at the end of Year 9, the school's GCSE results have been rising faster than the national trend. When compared with girls' results nationally, GCSE results in this school in 2002 were also well above average, both overall and in every subject except art and physical education (PE). Art results have suffered from a change in assessment procedure, and the school has only recently introduced a GCSE examination in PE. When results of individual pupils are compared with their results in all their other subjects, pupils do particularly well in geography and Spanish, and well in French, music and history. Geography and Spanish have yielded the highest results for individual pupils. Results in science and sociology are somewhat below average, and those in art and PE are well below average.
4. Over their time in Years 7-11, pupils add considerably to the level of achievement predicted for them in the tests taken on entry to the school, and repeated at yearly intervals for the next two years. In other words, the school adds considerable value to its pupils' results and pupils make very good progress over the five years to GCSE. This is due to good teaching, a first rate attitude from the pupils towards work and achievement, very good behaviour and excellent relationships. These factors allow the school to predict very positively how well their pupils will do, and to set them demanding targets for achievement. In 2002, the school achieved its GCSE targets, achieving a higher overall points score than it had predicted.
5. Attainment seen in lessons during the inspection confirms these high results. Younger pupils in Years 7-9 make rapid progress to levels higher than expected. For example, pupils in a Year 7 French lesson, talking about the school day, reached expected standards in their work on verbs, but their keenness and good behaviour, as they responded to clear and well informed teaching, led them to make good progress. By the end of Year 9, overall standards in French have risen to above those expected nationally. The same is true for all other subjects except religious education (RE), where standards are at the expected level at the end of Year 9. Standards are already well above the expected level by this stage in English, science, art, design and technology (DT), history and music.
6. Standards seen in lessons for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well above average, and these pupils make very good progress. For example, Year 10 pupils in an information and communication technology (ICT) lesson reached very high standards in their GCSE coursework, achieving the clear goals set by the teacher and making very good progress, thanks to his able management of the lesson. In a Year 11 PE lesson, pupils achieved very high standards in their revision of practical work in badminton, while

- in a Year 11 geography lesson, pupils reached very high standards and made good progress in their study of coastal erosion.
7. Attainment is very high in English. Standards of writing are very high, and pupils write convincingly, in a range of styles. Standards of reading are of a high order, and pupils cover an increasing range of demanding texts. Pupils read aloud confidently and well and respond critically and capably to poems, plays, novels and visual texts. Standards of speaking and listening are good across all years. Where opportunities are provided for discussion and presentation to the class, pupils take them responsibly and do very well.
  8. In mathematics, attainment is generally above the expected level by the end of Year 9, and well above by the end of Year 11. In all years, attainment ranges from well above to below average. Pupils in higher sets achieve well across all aspects of mathematics. Those in lower sets find greater difficulty, but mostly persevere well and achieve a sound grasp of the subject. Some pupils, though, are prone to give up and have an insecure grasp of basic numerical concepts.
  9. In science, standards towards the end of Year 9 are well above nationally expected levels. Most pupils have a good grasp of the topics in all four attainment targets. By the end of Year 11, standards seen in lessons are above, rather than well above, expected levels. Most pupils are developing a good understanding of the examination syllabus. Most pupils now in Year 11 are achieving well and making satisfactory progress in the course.
  10. Pupils with SEN make good progress in their work in normal class lessons. In English, pupils progress well, thanks to good recognition of their needs and careful provision for them in the materials presented. In mathematics, progress is good and pupils' needs are met with suitable work. In science, these pupils make good progress, particularly when specialist help is available for them. In all other subjects, progress is good because teachers are aware of pupils' needs and provide well structured work for them. For example, in a Year 7 hockey lesson, four pupils with special needs made very good progress because the tasks had been suitably modified for them.
  11. Pupils who are withdrawn from lessons for special help make very good progress while they are receiving this help. In many cases, reading tests taken some five months after an initial test record very good gains in reading ages. For example, six Year 8 pupils had gained an average of nine months over this period.
  12. Pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds achieve as highly and make equal progress to all other pupils. The school has carefully monitored results in tests and examinations by ethnic group, and has no evidence that one group is performing more or less strongly than another. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress also. There are very few whose English is at an early stage of acquisition, and these pupils are carefully helped, for example in their reading of English texts. Gifted and talented pupils make very good progress, thanks to the school's policy of encouraging departments to provide challenging material, and to the excellent range of extra-curricular activities provided.
  13. Since the last inspection, the school has made very good progress in raising its levels of attainment yet further. Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE have improved considerably. At the time of the last inspection, there was some reported under-achievement in the GCSE years, but in no subject is the standard of work now seen below the expected level, and in the great majority of subjects it is above or well above this level.

***Attainment in the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT for pupils in Years 7-11, across the curriculum.***

14. Attainment in literacy is high. Literacy development is central to the English curriculum, where pupils often reach very high standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Teaching in most other departments contributes well to pupils' literacy skills. In mathematics, pupils have sufficient literacy to cope with the demands of the curriculum, though there is no specific encouragement for its development. In science, standards are high, and pupils pay very good attention to the spelling of technical words; they read aloud well and respond positively to teachers' good lead in encouraging them to speak about their work. In other subjects, for example music, art, geography and provision for special educational needs, pupils' levels of literacy are high and improving, thanks to teachers' very good support for the development of the understanding and practice of reading, writing, and discussion in the context of the subject. Only in DT was provision for literacy judged to be unsatisfactory.



15. Pupils' standards of attainment in numeracy are generally above average. Generally, pupils show reasonable facility in basic calculations. For example, a Year 11 middle mathematics group was very confident in using mental methods to calculate percentages of quantities. Their number skills support their work very well in other curriculum areas. When required to do so, pupils use calculators sensibly and efficiently.
16. In science, pupils can use formulae accurately and convert units with relative ease. Tabulation and graphical skills are less strong, but still adequate for pupils' work. Students studying advanced science courses use mathematical skills competently. In geography, numeracy is of a good standard, with data analysis a particular strength. However, the quality of pupils' pictorial presentation of data is variable across the department, with inaccurate diagrams accepted in some classes. In PE, pupils apply mathematical skills well, for example in analysing fitness levels. However, DT courses do not encourage accuracy in measurement or skills of estimation. In some areas such as food technology, pupils do not always work with quantities given in metric units.
17. Standards of attainment in ICT across the curriculum are high when the subject is regularly provided. Though ICT is taught in many subjects, it is not yet fully provided in some, and standards therefore vary between subjects. For example, in English, it is incorporated into schemes of work and is taught to all pupils when an ICT suite can be booked. There is a similar arrangement for mathematics, but only in Year 7; in subsequent years, ICT development is left to the class teacher's discretion. In science, the use of ICT in the classroom is limited, as the lack of sufficient suitable hardware inhibits progress in several areas of the science curriculum. In music and art, ICT is present in schemes of work for pupils in Years 10 and 11, but is not provided for younger pupils. In DT, though an element of ICT is planned in Years 7 and 8, it is insufficiently used and standards are generally below expected levels. In other subjects, ICT is taught to some classes, but not to all.
18. The school's policy has been to provide several PC stations on the school network to classrooms once the subject department has completed its national ICT training. An audit of possible provision by subject departments was carried out ahead of this training. Provision does not yet match the possibility indicated in this document. As most subject leaders report difficulties in booking the ICT suites for lessons, and the number of computers in classrooms does not yet match the total identified in the audit, further training for staff is needed to speed up the provision of computers in classrooms.
19. The position of ICT within the curriculum has improved since the last inspection; a head of department has recently been appointed to lead the subject as a department and across the curriculum. Pupils' work is assessed to National Curriculum levels and attainment is fed back to the pupils in their separate ICT lessons. ICT work from subjects is not assessed to ICT levels and does not form part of teachers' assessment of Year 9 work. The school's intentions for the future of ICT are laid out clearly in its detailed ICT development plan.

## **Sixth form**

20. Most students enter the sixth form from the main school, though some join from elsewhere. Generally, levels of ability for those starting A-level courses are as expected, though the good teaching and very good progress they have made in the main school gives them a very good basis for further rapid progress. These students know how to work effectively, and do so from the week they start in the sixth form. For example, though the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are not strongly co-ordinated across sixth form courses, most students already have high standards of literacy and numeracy, and apply them with relish to their new work. Retention of students from AS to A2 courses is generally very good. A number of students also continue into the sixth form to pursue the GNVQ or ACVE courses in health and social care. Their attainment, though lower than that of A-level students, is appropriate for the courses. Thanks to good teaching, these students make good progress and reach higher standards than expected. They reach the demanding targets which teachers set them in their various subjects. They also make good progress towards their individual goals, some of them greatly helped by being able to pursue a NVQ and a higher level course at the same time. In 2002, 70 per cent of leavers went on to university courses and a further 15 per cent joined courses of further education. True figures are probably higher, as a growing number take a gap year before going on to university. A high proportion of university entrants join London colleges which impose demanding entry qualifications. A number of students also join other leading universities. This is a very good achievement for students from an urban comprehensive school, and reflects the very good standard of education which all have received. Students from all racial heritage backgrounds do equally well and achieve these high levels of success at school, with every promise of continued success beyond.



21. In the AS and A2-level examinations taken in 2001, standards were around the national average. In both examinations, standards rose further in 2002, to levels above the national average for 2001. These rising standards are confirmed by the levels of attainment seen during the inspection; in lessons seen and work inspected, standards are high in relation to the expected levels, and students make good progress.
22. In the subjects inspected in detail, overall standards are high and progress good. Standards in the A2 and AS-level examinations are very high in mathematics compared to national figures; students' progress in work seen is very good. In biology, results have been in line with the national average; students were making good progress in their work seen during the inspection. In design technology, results were around the national average in 2001 and rose further in 2002; students were achieving well in their work seen during the inspection. In business studies, standards have improved and are now above average; students made very good progress in their work seen during the inspection. In the health and social care ACVE examinations, attainment has so far been below average. However, results have been good for the levels these students attained in GCSE, and standards of work seen were higher than expected. In art, standards have risen steadily and students achieve well; in 2001, results matched the national average and exceeded the 2001 average in 2002. In geography in 2001, results at A level were in line with the national average. In 2002, the proportion achieving top grades fell, but all students passed; all were making good progress in the work seen during inspection. In English, though results have been below the 2001 average in the last two years, progress was good in the work seen in the inspection. In French and Spanish, attainment in examinations has been very high; students were making very good progress in their work during the inspection.
23. Since the last inspection, the numbers taking A-level qualifications have greatly increased, as has the number of courses available. Results have been rising as abler students decide to remain at the school for A-level study, and are now considerably higher than at the time of the last inspection.

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

24. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good, as they were at the time of the last inspection. They commit themselves to work hard, and enjoy the time that they spend in school. In classrooms, their very good speaking and listening skills, and their very good behaviour, enable lessons to proceed with the minimum of disruption and maximum productivity. All pupils quickly become involved in the many extra-curricular opportunities that the school provides, and are caught up in the school's very positive ethos of achievement.
25. Pupils are courteous, caring, and responsible. They can be trusted to use the school's facilities with the minimum of supervision. This enables the school to meet pupils' need for independent research, for example in the library and computer suite, which are very well equipped to help them extend their learning.
26. Relationships among pupils, and between pupils and teachers and other staff, are excellent. Everyone shares the common purpose of making the most of all the opportunities available. In classrooms and assemblies, pupils are quick to recognise and acknowledge the achievement of their peers and to give them every encouragement. There is very little evidence of oppressive behaviour, and none was seen during the inspection. Excellent relationships extend to all pupils, from all ethnic heritage backgrounds; the school is a real celebration of how people can get on together, valuing each other and sharing common interests.
27. Pupils have a clear and positive understanding of how their opinions and actions can affect others, and they put this to good use by supporting the charities they select. For example, in Years 8 and 9 pupils are raising money for Farm Animal Action, which is dedicated to stopping cruel farming methods. They respect other peoples' feelings, values and beliefs. For example, in a Year 8 tutor period, pupils researched and discussed the impact of illnesses and disabilities on families. A Year 11 class examined human rights and had lobbied against a case of deportation after informing themselves from press articles and Internet sites.
28. Their mature, considerate attitudes mean that pupils naturally show initiative, and are willing to take responsibility. Elected form captains, monitors, and prefects all contribute to the smooth running of the school. Year 11 prefects are assigned to younger tutor groups, for example helping pupils maintain their homework diaries. There is a school council that discusses issues raised by pupils and is effective in influencing management decisions.



29. Attendance is very good, being well above the national average. There have been 31 fixed period exclusions in the school year 2001-02. These have mostly been very short. There have been no permanent exclusions, and no pupil has been excluded more than once. By making use of temporary exclusions, the school reminds pupils of the high standards of courtesy and co-operation it expects, and exclusion is clearly effective in achieving this aim.

### **Sixth form**

30. Sixth form students have very good attitudes and values. They are friendly, courteous and well behaved. They get on very well with their teachers, reflect the positive ethos of the school, and work very well with staff to make the whole school a good place to be in. The vast majority have set their sights on university, work hard to achieve their goals, and make the most of everything the school offers. A minority of entrants in Year 12 have difficulty in reconciling themselves to a school-based sixth form and do not maintain the very good level of attendance seen elsewhere in the school.
31. Students' personal development is very good. They benefit greatly from the school's enrichment programme that expands their horizons through a very wide range of visits and visitors. They continue to take an active interest and are involved in the running of the school through the head girl and prefect system.

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

32. Teaching and learning are good in both key stages. For pupils in Years 7-9, teaching and learning were good in almost half the 72 lessons seen, very good in almost a third, and satisfactory in one lesson in six. They were excellent in a few lessons, and unsatisfactory in three only. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning were good in a third of the 46 lessons seen, very good in a further third, excellent in one lesson in ten, and satisfactory in one lesson in five. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen at this stage. These are good results, indicating that teaching and learning were at least good in three-quarters of the 124 lessons seen in Years 7-11. Teaching is clearly effective, and with pupils' good response and behaviour, is a leading reason why pupils make such good progress and achieve such good results. This finding confirms the views of parents, almost all of whom agree that teaching is good and that their children are making good progress. Good teaching is the norm in this school. There are relatively few lessons that are satisfactory only. A large number are very good rather than good. In turn, a few are excellent rather than very good.
33. In Years 7-9, teaching and learning are good in all subjects, though satisfactory in RE. In Years 10 and 11, they are good in all subjects, though very good in geography, RE and modern languages, and satisfactory in DT.
34. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, which allows them to plan very well. This encourages pupils to make a very good effort in their work, secure in the knowledge that their teachers have planned their lessons on the basis of a clear knowledge of the matter in hand. For example, in a Year 8 music lesson on Indian music, the teacher's grasp of how to compose and record the music enabled her to plan a very clear session, so that pupils were absolutely clear what they had to do, and made every effort to achieve success. In a Year 8 Spanish lesson, the teacher's very good knowledge of the language enabled her to use Spanish to the maximum extent and plan for pupils to do the same through a very active lesson. Pupils made a great effort to speak accurately and with complete attention, so that they made very good progress.
35. Teachers' expectations are very high, and their management of lessons very good. Pupils respond very well to these positive qualities, working at very good pace and making sure and rapid progress. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson on the environmental issues in the debate about green belt land, the teacher signalled her expectations by issuing pupils with a first rate information pack and sharing the aims of the lesson very clearly with them. Very clear intentions, expressed in very good management of time and pupils, enabled pupils to cover a great deal of ground, arguing forcibly for and against the propositions made. In a Year 10 English lesson on Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, the teacher had very high expectations of how much this middle set could achieve, led the questioning very skilfully, and managed the different activities within the lesson very well. Pupils worked with very good commitment and pace, so that everyone had a satisfying lesson and was pleased to have learnt at such good pace.

36. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory, though its quality and usefulness vary from subject to subject, and sometimes within subjects. For example it is very good in English, good in a number of subjects, satisfactory in mathematics, DT and modern languages, and unsatisfactory in art. Overall, teachers' assessment does not impede pupils' learning, but could become a more effective way of helping them to make even better progress. The excellent systems for the central gathering, analysing and use of assessment data are not yet well applied in all departments.
37. In all other respects, teaching and learning are good. Teachers teach the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT well, though there are shortcomings in DT. Homework is generally useful, well set and marked; it is very well used in English, mathematics and modern languages. Good teaching of basic skills and regular enough homework help pupils to acquire knowledge at a good pace. Teachers' methods and use of time and resources are good. Pupils can therefore work confidently, knowing that the lesson will be well structured, with helpful resources, and suited to their needs. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson on the investigation of halogens, the teacher's very challenging use of questioning and good use of resources in his demonstration helped pupils to work with concentration and to acquire an independence of judgement in their sure grasp of the principles behind the demonstration. In this lesson, the needs of gifted pupils were well acknowledged and provided for.
38. Though most teaching is good or very good, there is some that is satisfactory. In these lessons, teachers deliver sound instruction on the basis of good subject knowledge, while pupils respond sensibly, getting the work done as required and making reasonable gains in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. For example, in a Year 11 DT coursework session, the teacher had provided a useful introductory discussion, followed by a necessary session of individual practical work. In a Year 7 RE lesson on the leaders of the Old Testament, the teacher combined commentary with some video material, leading to the production of a worksheet. Pupils worked diligently, though without great conviction, and made satisfactory progress in revising their knowledge.
39. The good progress made by pupils with special educational needs (SEN) comes from good teaching, in subject lessons and by specialist staff. In subjects, teachers prepare lessons carefully, are aware of pupils' individual education plans (IEPs), and often provide well varied work to suit the differing abilities in the class. Teaching given by teaching assistants to pupils withdrawn from lessons is good, sometimes very good. For example, in science an assistant was carefully preparing a Year 11 pupil for an examination. Thanks to this, the pupil gained the confidence she needed to attempt the written paper. The reading support teacher provides a valuable service for individual pupils, all of whom have made good progress in increasing their reading abilities. Individual support teachers, members of the teaching staff, provide well informed support for individual pupils. For example, a teacher of English had prepared an excellent lesson, with very good subject knowledge, to help a pupil recognise words and syllabic structures. The pupil made extremely good progress as the result of her teacher's knowledge and very supporting approach.
40. Teaching in the 'lifeskills' course for pupils opting to take this course rather than a further GCSE was good in the lesson seen, when the teacher helped pupils with their coursework for various subjects. Thanks to very good relationships and class management, pupils gained in confidence, working with determination throughout the lesson. The teaching provided for a Year 8 pupil, who requires constant support because of Down's Syndrome, is very good, and was excellent in an ICT lesson, when the assistant very skilfully adjusted the lesson task – to make a weather graph – to the ability of the pupil, who learnt well as a result.
41. Teaching of gifted and talented pupils is first rate. The school's decision to raise the level of challenge in daily lessons in order to meet their needs has led to some adventurous and satisfying learning by these pupils. For example, dance is very well taught, and in one such lesson for Year 9 pupils, a high proportion were on target to achieve well above average results, so allowing some talented pupils to realise some of the very high potential they have. In the music assembly, some of the solo singing was of a very high order, performed to a full school audience, and reflected the teacher's very perceptive encouragement of this talent. The school is good at providing such opportunities for individuals to practise their talents. In a memorable Year 11 English lesson on Hartley's *The Go-Between*, pupils gifted with a high degree of literary insight were brought by expert teaching to appreciate the author's intention far more clearly than they had before. Examples such as these reflect the school's deliberate policy of seeking out talent and helping it to develop.
42. The good standards of teaching and learning reported in 1997 have been well maintained and the proportion of good and very good teaching has increased.



## Sixth form

43. As in the main school, teaching is good and students learn well and make good progress. Only in one lesson was teaching unsatisfactory, and in the great majority of the 52 lessons seen teaching was good or very good. Almost all parents agree that teaching is good, and the great majority of students consider they are well taught and challenged to do their best. They feel that teachers are available to help them should they have difficulties. The excellent relationships between teachers and sixth formers are the basis for the successful teaching at this level, and of students' clear and rapid progress in their work. Teaching is never less than good in all subjects seen, and is very good in English, modern foreign languages and business studies.
44. Particular strengths of teaching in the sixth form include teachers' knowledge and understanding, good planning and high expectations, which enable them to prepare demanding lessons and expect a very good pace from students. This encourages students to make a good effort and learn rapidly. For example, in a Year 13 business studies lesson on decision-making in business, the teacher's very good knowledge of the topic and how best to teach it led to rapid and secure learning. Because the lesson was very well planned, with high expectations of what students would achieve, the teacher was able to teach at a rapid pace, and students to learn with equal pace and assurance. As a result, everyone could draw up the required analyses by the end of the lesson.
45. Teachers' management of lessons is very good. This enables them to get a lot done in the time available, and to comment helpfully on work and set good homework tasks. Students acquire knowledge well and work with concentration as a result. For example, in a Year 12 mathematics lesson in mechanics, the teacher had planned to use the website. Very good management of students in the absence of the central resource led to a very relevant lesson on related types of question, conducted with pace and very good relationships. So students learnt well, working hard on topics useful for their coursework.
46. In all other respects, teaching is good. Teachers use time well. In most subjects, teachers assess students' work constructively, so that students have a good knowledge of how to learn and make progress. The teaching of the key skills of communication and ICT is satisfactory. The school has elected to teach the skills of communication and ICT. It was possible to see two lessons of ICT, one very good and one satisfactory. Further development in the provision of the sixth form key skills courses is needed, so that the teaching of these courses increases in popularity and effectiveness.
47. The school meets the needs of all its students well. There are two sixth formers with statements of SEN, for medical conditions, and the learning support department meets their needs well, monitoring their progress to ensure they are not unnecessarily disadvantaged in their work and aspirations. Through its policy of providing challenge within subjects and a very wide range of extra activities and visits, the school gives gifted and talented students a good chance to develop and use their gifts. For example, the chance for sixth formers to visit Paris and New York gives real stimulus to gifted students, whether artists, scientists or historians. The standard of music teaching gives talented students every chance to realise their gifts. Teaching provides well for students from all ethnic heritage backgrounds; whatever their background, students learn well in the friendly but rigorous atmosphere of the sixth form. Though there are many students whose homes have English as an additional language, all speak English well, so that particular teaching approaches are not needed.
48. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained and improved its previous standard of good teaching and learning.

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

49. Overall, the curriculum provides a good range of subjects and other activities, though there are some problems in how it is organised.
50. For pupils in Years 7-9, there is an appropriate range of subjects. Personal, health and social education (PSHE) and citizenship are provided in all years. Good features include a lesson of singing for everyone in Year 7, the addition of Spanish as a second language in Year 8 and the further option of taking Latin in Year 9. However, fitting these subjects into the limited time available has caused problems. As an alternative to the two periods of Spanish in Year 8, one lesson each of English and

mathematics enrichment is provided; this time is well spent, but is not designed to be available for all. Pupils taking Latin, which begins in Year 9, do no RE, and have two further Latin classes outside lesson time. In Year 9, those taking Spanish miss the alternating drama and careers lessons that are fitted in at this time. Drama is not taught for all pupils beyond Year 8. There is insufficient time for DT. The very good decision to enable pupils to take a half GCSE course in ICT at the end of Year 10 means that they must attend an extra lesson after school in Year 10.

51. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, there is a good range of subjects. There is a generous choice of four optional subjects, including sociology and business studies, while Spanish and Latin continue. In addition to the chance of an early examination in ICT, the English department has now started to teach AS-level English to the top set in Year 10, for examination at the end of Year 11, so giving pupils the chance of taking A2 level (i.e. A level) English over a complete two year course in the sixth form. Drawbacks at this stage include the continuing problem with Latin and RE and the lack of any drama.
52. The withdrawal of the Latin pupils from RE means that the curriculum fails to meet statutory requirements in Years 9, 10 and 11.
53. Literacy skills are well provided across the curriculum in most subjects, though these could be further improved by more regular emphasis within departmental planning and schemes of work. Such emphasis could further improve the provision of numeracy across the curriculum, which is satisfactory at present. Skills in ICT are well provided for in separate ICT lessons, but their provision across the curriculum is patchy, partly because of difficulties in gaining access for whole classes to computer classrooms and partly because the incorporation of ICT within subjects is variable.
54. The curriculum in these years has considerable further strengths. First, it provides excellent equality of access and opportunity to pupils of all abilities. For abler pupils, the acceleration in English teaching for top sets in Years 10 and 11 gives them an excellent chance to get more from their lessons, while all pupils can benefit from the accelerated course in ICT. Linguists get a very good chance to diversify their language skills, in Spanish and Latin. Lower-attaining pupils, or simply those for whom the full range of potential GCSEs is not appropriate, can benefit from the 'lifeskills' support course in Years 10 and 11, which successfully builds up their skills of organisation and planning, and gives them the chance to prepare work for other subjects, with qualified help available. The school is extremely good at finding opportunities for individuals to develop their talents. This is seen not only in such activities as the residential university visits, designed to open pupils' eyes to what they could achieve, but also in the many individual chances it helps provide. For example, a gifted sixth former who wants to read classics has been found a student in an Oxford college to act as tutor, and is preparing to take A2 level Latin with her help. In sports, the school has found expert coaching for a pupil who is an international sprinter, and also for expert tennis and swimming coaching.
55. Second, the school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. These are very carefully planned to support the curriculum in a positive way. There are residential visits in each of Years 7, 8 and 9. These are designed to help pupils live together, for example by making two such visits entirely self-catering ones, and to challenge them to do adventurous things in a safe way. As the deputy head for the curriculum says, these courses are there to provide the answer to 'I can't', when faced with something challenging. The Year 9 visit is for a whole week, in Shropshire. In the GCSE years, residential visits are designed to support the various courses, for example the Latin visit to Italy – a major attraction of the subject – and the 'lifeskills' residential visit, which builds pupils' social and planning skills. Within school, there is a range of activities which supports and extends the curriculum. For example, Year 7 pupils receive reading support from pupils in Year 10; selected Year 8 pupils have a mentoring programme to help develop their skills and confidence, given by trained Year 12 students. There is a special project for possible under-achievers in Year 9. University visits begin in Year 10, when the school provides, among several day visits, a four-day residential visit at the University of East Anglia, particularly for those pupils who might not have thought of university or who need the challenge. Easter holiday revision is a feature of Year 11.
56. There is also a very good range of further courses and programmes. Sports clubs and teams are strong, with success gained at local and regional level. Music is a particular strength, with a performance at every assembly, a weekly musical assembly, and orchestra, wind group, string group and choirs. There are regular drama productions, involving a large number of pupils and staff. There is a good range of other activities at lunch times and after school, for example computing, library, homework club and Christian Union. The school prepares pupils for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, while Year 10 'lifeskills' pupils take a valuable British Red Cross babysitting certificate course. The school takes advantage of several special conferences, for example for young women in

business. In these ways, the local and wider community makes a very good contribution to the curriculum. The school attracts a large number of speakers, locally and nationally.

57. Third, relationships with partner institutions are very good. The school's Beacon School status enables it to make a very useful contribution to learning in local schools, for example in sharing its expertise in staff professional development and school governance. It has shared ideas about the curriculum with other schools, for example for integrating ICT into the curriculum, and is planning to consult other schools about its planned curriculum review. It has taken a leading part in advancing education for gifted and talented pupils, in a consortium of local schools. The school has good links with the primary schools that send it most pupils, though the fact that there have been as many as sixty of these makes close liaison difficult. The school takes a leading part in the South London Initial Teacher Training Scheme, offering its expertise to this consortium. It accepts students from local universities, as part of their student training.
58. Fourth, the school's PSHE provision is very good. The health education element is excellent and benefits greatly from outside speakers and the expertise of the school nurse. Subject coverage includes settling into school for Year 7 pupils, friendship and relationships, study skills and life skills, sex and drugs education, and aspects of the citizenship curriculum. The curriculum is overseen by the heads of the key stages and taught by form tutors. It is flexible and can be adjusted to keep pace with the needs of the pupils.
59. Fifth, careers education is good. The teacher moves naturally from the teaching of life skills to the giving of careers advice. Very good support is provided for Year 9 pupils' choice of options. Options meetings benefit from expert support, and engage the involvement of parents. The school's friends in the community play a very useful role in providing work placement opportunities for all pupils, as well as offering support on interview techniques, and the completion of application forms.
60. As well as providing a curriculum that gives very good equality of access and opportunity to pupils of all abilities, the school is very successful in including all pupils in the education it provides. The curriculum of the learning support department is very good. It has good liaison with the various subjects, so that work is often carefully provided, enabling pupils with SEN to make equal progress to all others in the class. Results in tests and examinations are often higher than might be expected for these pupils. The department has devised a very effective programme of its own for supporting pupils with particular needs. Skilled members of the teaching staff, the individual support teachers, give specialist support in lessons and withdraw individuals from class, for example providing a course for individuals in phonetic recognition. In addition, teaching assistants support pupils in selected lessons in almost every subject, and give help in reading practice. The curriculum in English and mathematics and science is carefully varied for one small set of pupils which needs particular support. These sets are carefully taught, either by the individual support teachers or with such a teacher acting as a support for pupils in the class.
61. The school has good procedures, also, for helping gifted and talented pupils to get the most from school. Though it has a register of such pupils in every year, and monitors their progress to ensure their needs are met, it has decided that the interests of these pupils are best served by raising the level of challenge for all pupils, particularly in the top sets. This policy has led the school to offer GCSE examinations early in English and ICT, and to make Latin available. The school has paid people to write extra material for any pupil who can benefit from it, while the interests of gifted and talented pupils are raised as standing items in departmental meetings and are provided for in staff training. There are plenty of challenges for these pupils, particularly in English, mathematics, science, languages, music and games.
62. The school's curriculum and the many other opportunities offered make sure that pupils from every ethnic heritage background can feel equally included in the education it provides. Its monitoring of achievement confirms that every group is making equally good progress. Pupils from every background hold office, for example as prefects. The first rate extra-curricular programme overcomes any possibility that one group could feel left out. The curriculum makes sure that everyone gets the chance of a rich and positive education.
63. Since the last inspection, the considerable strengths reported in 1997 have been maintained. Though the key issues for action then reported are now not so pressing, solving a range of problems, reported above, remains a key issue for the school.

### ***Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the main school***

64. Overall, provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.



65. Opportunities for spiritual development are good, both in and outside lessons. Assemblies, which are attended by all pupils regardless of their religion, give the chance for prayer and reflection. In particular, pupils are invited to consider the needs of others who are less fortunate than themselves and to give thanks for the generous support by pupils to a number of charities through sponsorship. School musicians contribute to the spiritual ethos of all assemblies, and the celebration of the successes of pupils' achievement is an important element at the start of the school day. In lessons, particularly in art, English and music, there is an ethos which values pupils' own ideas, thoughts and beliefs; in geography, pupils experience the wonder of power and energy in volcanoes. The headteacher leads through personal example and, with the rest of the staff, provides positive encouragement for pupils to 'be the best that they can'. However, some shortcomings in the RE curriculum lessen the spiritual impact of the subject. RE is not offered to all pupils in Years 9-11 and its curriculum in Years 7 and 8 is in need of improvement.
66. Opportunities for moral development are very good and occur in most aspects of the school's daily life. Teachers are very good role models, encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own actions and develop an awareness of the actions of others, as they did in a passionate debate in history on Nazism, where pupils explored issues of evil and suffering. Pupils adhere strongly to school rules and show respect for each other, their work and that of others. Well guided by their teachers, they have a clear knowledge of right and wrong, and this contributes to the very high standards of behaviour and excellent relationships.
67. The promotion of pupils' social development is excellent. There are many and varied opportunities for pupils to collaborate and exercise responsibility. Older pupils act as role models and mentors to younger pupils in their involvement with the paired reading scheme, running homework clubs and assisting librarians. Participation in the school council, music and sports clubs leads to positive attitudes in all pupils. In Year 7, pupils are proud to show visitors on open days how well they have settled in to their new school, and invite and entertain their primary headteachers to a specially organised reception. All pupils in the first three years take part in residential weekends at outdoor centres where they strengthen relationships through problem solving and outdoor challenges.
68. Provision for cultural development is very good. Opportunities for developing multi-cultural understanding across all races and cultures are strong, and there are positive and harmonious relationships amongst all pupils in school. This is seen most notably in the very harmonious relationships between pupils of all heritage backgrounds; whatever their backgrounds, pupils get on very positively together. In lessons such as PE, English, art, geography and music, pupils are encouraged to study the diversity and richness of traditional and other cultures. There is a huge programme of cultural visits, including London museums, galleries and theatres.

## **Sixth form**

69. The curriculum in the sixth form is very good. It provides a good range of 16 AS-level and 18 A2-level subjects. The great majority of students go into higher or further education, but the school provides well for those students who are not likely to thrive on four AS and three A2 subjects. It provides a course called complementary studies, which gives these students the chance of regular work experience. There is a NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) course in administration; in health and social care there is a one-year GNVQ course in Year 12 and a two-year AVCE course. Special arrangements have been made for some Year 13 students to follow one Year 12 AS subject, so that they can accumulate the equivalent of two A2 levels by the end of the course. Students can retake GCSE in English and mathematics in Year 12. Students with SEN are well provided for; there are two sixth formers with statements for medical conditions, who are carefully helped and supported. A further student, with a statement for learning difficulties, has just left the school after very positive support, and is returning to complete some modules of work. Support for gifted and talented students is very good, with a range of visits and lectures to attend, and a very full programme of preparation for university. There are residential courses, for example at Oxford, and all students are offered two interviews in their chosen university subject by those practising in the field, for example university staff or governors of the school. In ways such as these, provision for the gifted is available to all.
70. The course in key skills is satisfactory, and contains communication and ICT. Students also have a tutor period, games, and an excellent PSHE course called 'enrichment', which is again of great benefit to gifted students. This term, ten speakers have been booked, talking on topics as diverse as the Holocaust, when two survivors shared their early experiences with the students, and workers' rights, in which a trades union expert introduced the field of labour relations and individual rights. This course

illustrates the school's very good use of the local community to enrich the curriculum it offers. The school is developing a partnership with a local girls' school so that some sixth form subjects can be offered jointly; at present, performance studies is offered at the other school, and discussions about running joint modern language courses with this school are taking place. The complementary studies course makes very good use of local contacts for the work experience placements it offers. The school's links with partner institutions is very good, seen for example in the AS and A2 joint courses and the very close links between the school and the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers. The Company supports all pupils through its hospitality and grants to the school. Some of its members give sixth formers valuable help in interview practice.

71. Careers education in the sixth form is directed towards university entry. The school arranges visits to higher education conventions, taster sessions at universities, and further work on filling in university application forms. In contrast, there is little information or careers guidance for those who are thinking of work rather than further or higher education, and a lack of written information in the careers section of the school library.
72. The provision of extra-curricular activities is excellent. Sixth formers enjoy the full range provided for all years, and their visits programme is outstanding. As well as residential visits in biology and geography, there is a series of modern language visits and a major visit each year, either to Paris or New York. Visits alternate, so that students all get the chance to visit two of the world's great cities during their time at the school. This gives these Londoners a wonderful chance to get to know something of London's leading rival great cities. This term, over 70 students visited New York, appeared on the international news outside the United Nations headquarters, experienced the history of American immigration, and toured art galleries and science museums, as well as experiencing some of the city's great sites. This visit is a vivid illustration of how much the school does for its students and how it helps them get the most out of their time in the sixth form.
73. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Particularly noteworthy in the sixth form are the opportunities to deepen a spiritual and moral awareness of the needs and condition of others. This is provided by aspects of the enrichment course, for example in discussions of topical issues such as racism, sexism, conflict in land use, and euthanasia. This course takes the place of a more formal RE course at this level, and provides well for students' spiritual needs as seen in current society; it does not attempt to be a specific course of religious instruction. The active role which sixth formers play in helping younger pupils, for example in their mentoring of Year 8 pupils, and their duties as prefects, gives them very valuable social experience, as do the very good relationships between sixth formers and staff. In the complementary studies programme and vocational subjects, students have a valuable chance to interact with adults when they take part in work experience. Provision for students' cultural development is very good also, for example in all the musical, dramatic and arts activities of the school, with particular highlights in the Paris and New York visits, very ably organised by the art department.
74. All these courses and extra activities give students very good equality of access to the full range of what a good sixth form can offer. Overall, they meet the needs of all individuals well, allowing them to make good progress in their studies and to gain a relevant and useful range of qualifications.
75. Since the last inspection, the sixth form curriculum has improved considerably, in the range of courses offered and the scope of its extra programmes.

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

76. Overall, the steps taken to ensure pupils' health and safety are very good, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Child protection procedures follow local education authority guidance and members of staff are aware of their responsibilities for reporting concerns.
77. Premises safety is very well managed. Formal risk assessment is undertaken annually on a room-by-room basis, and involves all departments making a return. All reasonable steps are taken to manage the safety and security of pupils moving about this split site. The school has evaluated the risk of pupils having to cross a busy main road and evidence confirms that it has made them fully aware of the need for vigilance, and for compliance with the signals on the pedestrian controlled crossing.

78. The school also has very good off-site health and safety policies and procedures, which provide effective support for pupils engaged on school trips and when undertaking work experience.
79. There is excellent provision for pupils' health, and pastoral care. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle through the curriculum, through extra-curricular opportunities for sport, and healthy eating options in the school's cafeteria. The positive contribution made by the school nurse cannot be overstated. She is a friend to all the pupils, able to share confidences and offer expert advice, allay pupils' worries, and remove pressures that might otherwise have a detrimental impact on their schoolwork.
80. Form tutors, overseen by the co-ordinators of key stages, provide particularly effective pastoral support for pupils' academic progress, through discussions with pupils and agreeing targets, and by monitoring their personal development. Issues that arise from their daily work are taken into account in framing the school's PSHE programme, so that the curriculum is topical and relevant to pupils' needs.
81. The school has very effective measures to monitor and promote good attendance. The strong support of parents underpins the well above average attendance figures. Good behaviour is essentially promoted by the maintenance of a first rate ethos, and by the excellent relationships which exist between staff and pupils. High expectations, short but effective sanctions applied consistently, pastoral support plans, parental involvement, and the strong presence of the head-teacher, all play their part in maintaining very good behaviour.
82. The school has an effective anti-bullying policy and procedures; pupils say that bullying is rare because there are lots of people ready to help at all levels. These include prefects, mentors, teachers, and the very approachable headteacher.
83. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment, and for monitoring and supporting their progress, are excellent. These begin well before pupils join the school, with visits to their primary schools and the collection of a large amount of data on their performance there. On arrival, pupils are given nationally recognised tests to assess the range of their abilities, and are also tested in reading and spelling. These tests are taken again in the following two years; results are shared with all teachers and tutors in an assessment file containing a very clear series of tables, and the progress of individuals carefully compared. Very good use is made of this information by form tutors, who hold individual interviews with pupils to review progress and set targets for further improvement at least twice a year – more often for those needing particular help. The school gives considerable prominence to these interviews, one of which is held on an academic review day, when all pupils have an individual session with their tutor, preceded by very careful collection of data on their current performance. The content of these interviews is carefully recorded. Interim and annual reports provide detailed information for discussion with pupils and consultation with parents. Pupils make assessments of their own progress in each subject for these reports. A careful checklist of pupils' individual progress is compiled before the meeting between parents and staff to discuss the pupils' annual reports, so that teachers, tutors and parents are clearly aware of how well a pupil is progressing. The school's policy of holding parents' meetings at a different time of the year from the annual report means that there are two distinct opportunities to review individual progress with them.
84. After the national tests and assessments by teachers at the end of Year 9, a careful record of grades is again produced, and given to all teachers in the school's central assessment file. Information gathered in these tests is compared with national data issued in the autumn, and graphs of predicted GCSE performance are issued to all departments and teachers. Careful comparison of data leads to its presentation to governors and the setting of overall targets for GCSE performance. Teachers are starting to make use of the very detailed information they now hold on the chances of a pupil achieving a particular grade in GCSE, and to share this information with pupils. In this way, the school is starting to use these data to indicate how high a pupil can aspire and to help her reach the highest level she can. This process is greatly helped by the individual interview given to each pupil in Year 11 by a senior member of staff.
85. Within departments, procedures for assessment are good, though they vary between and within departments, so that pupils do not always get the analysis, based on evidence, which the school makes available to all teachers. However, teachers generally assess work well, discussing achievement with pupils at the end of units of work, and setting relevant and practical targets for improvement. They are greatly helped in this by the school's first rate procedures for the collection and application of assessment data.

86. Since the last inspection, high standards of care and welfare have been maintained, while assessment procedures have greatly improved. In 1997, only pupils with SEN assessed their own progress, while this is now standard practice for all. Teachers' use of data was sketchy, but is now very well established.

## **Sixth form**

### ***Assessment***

87. Procedures for assessing sixth form students' attainment, and for monitoring and supporting their progress, are excellent. All teachers have full details of students' performance in previous tests and examinations, in all the subjects they took. The school has subscribed to a nationally recognised A-level information service for the last four years. Without waiting for this service to produce its forecasts for the performance of students in AS examinations, the head of sixth calculates this information from the organisation's website, and gives teachers and tutors the necessary forecasts in time for them to prepare for the Year 13 academic review day in October. This gives students the advice and guidance they need to agree targets for A2-level examinations. These targets are reviewed at regular intervals and the outcomes of these discussions are carefully recorded on students' review sheets. As the course develops, tutors calculate with students the amount of extra value they are adding or otherwise to the grades forecast for their examination performance.
88. A similar process occurs after the AS-level examinations at the end of Year 12, so that school and students are very clearly aware of the grades they can expect to reach, before they begin the process of application to higher and further education. The governors are closely involved in the review of the nationally validated data collected, which helps them set the required targets for examination grades. As in previous stages, students and parents are informed in detail of attainment, progress and prospects. Though the process of collecting and analysing data is rightly focussed on helping the student get the clearest idea of her prospects, and so of helping her to improve, it also serves to inform the school very clearly about the effectiveness of subject departments and teachers, and is used for the very close monitoring of academic performance after results are known.
89. The school takes great care to ensure that its assessment procedures follow the requirements of the awarding bodies. Its assessment of coursework is clear and helpful for students, while procedures for the assessment of course material in vocational examinations are very good. For example, the unit recording sheets in GNVQ examinations clearly show that the criteria for assessment have been reached, and this is confirmed by the assessor's positive comments. Within departments, teachers generally assess pupils' work carefully and give them helpful support to reach the standards they aspire to. The example of the GNVQ course illustrates the very good level of support that students can receive, with detailed and helpful commentary on students' work and how it can be improved.
90. Since the last inspection, the assessment of students' work has greatly improved and is now a very effective feature in their education.

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

91. The school's very good commitment to the care of its pupils and students continues into the sixth form, where again the school's first rate ethos and the positive way it involves its students means that all students are well known and valued. The head of sixth and tutors provide very good guidance from day to day. However, the promotion of good attendance is not as effective for Year 12 students as it is for the rest of the school. Sixth form students have some grounds for drawing attention, in their pre-inspection questionnaires, to a perceived lack of careers advice. Whilst the provision of information and level of support for students about academic courses is very good, advice for those not heading for higher education is thin by comparison. The school is working to improve this provision.
92. Since the last inspection, despite the two reservations above, the good quality of advice and guidance to sixth formers has been well maintained.

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

93. Parents' views of the school are very positive indeed. Very few parents expressed any concerns through their pre-inspection questionnaires. Virtually all agreed that their daughters make good progress and that the school expects them to work hard. Approximately ten per cent of parents disagreed that the right amount of homework is being set, and a similar minority did not think that the school provided an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Thirty-nine parents attended the pre-inspection meeting and spoke very enthusiastically about the school. Inspectors share parents' positive opinions. Inspectors think that homework expectations are high but not beyond the

capabilities of the pupils; and that homework makes a meaningful contribution to the pupils' attainment. Inspectors judge activities outside lessons to be very good, compared with their experience of schools nationally, and do not therefore agree with parents who hold a contrary view.

94. Communications with parents, especially about their daughters' progress, are excellent. They are based on openness and trust, and a clear understanding of the school's high expectations, which are explained at parents' information evenings shortly before their daughters transfer from primary school. The fact that places at the school are up to seven times over-subscribed confirms that the school is held in high regard in the local community.
95. A termly newsletter provides parents with a comprehensive account of what is happening in school, with an emphasis on pupils' involvement, and the celebration of success. The governors' annual report to parents is full, interesting and informative, and gives very well informed accounts of governors' experiences of the school. Booklets on the curriculum for the various years are very well presented; the school is very good at communicating its curriculum and courses. The main school and sixth form prospectuses are very attractive and informative. The home/school contract reaffirms the school's high expectations that are set out on entry. Parents are encouraged to support the Friends of Prendergast School Association, (FOPSA). Social events are arranged to raise money, which covers the running costs of the school minibus, makes a small contribution to the school's extensive residential programmes, and provides for the gift of a small dictionary for all new Year 7 pupils.
96. Parents have many opportunities to keep up to date with their daughters' progress. The homework diary is a well-used and effective vehicle for communication. Not only does it keep parents in touch with what is being taught, it also provides information on targets, records successes, and notes concerns. Parents are generally very good at signing the diaries on a weekly basis to acknowledge that they have been read. A year group parents' consultation evening, which is typically attended by over 95 per cent of the parents concerned, and interim and annual pupils' reports, help to maintain a very effective dialogue, which involves parents well in their daughters' education.
97. Pupils' annual reports are very good. They present a brief summary of subject coverage, levels of attainment, and targets for improvement in a clear and accessible style. The interim reports provide effort and attainment grades, and pupils' own evaluation of the progress that they are making. In addition to these reports, teachers are encouraged to write personally to parents if urgent or specific advice and guidance are needed.
98. Sixth form students agree that teachers are accessible if they want help to overcome difficulties with work. They confirm that teaching is good, and that their choice of courses is suited to their talents and career aspirations. These opinions are well founded. They are more critical of careers advice, in a work-based context, a criticism that inspection supports. In their pre-inspection questionnaires almost half disagreed that they are treated as responsible young adults, that they receive strong and sensitive support for personal problems and that a good range of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses are provided. None of these criticisms is supported by the inspection.
99. Extremely positive standards in the partnership between the school and its parents have been maintained since the last inspection.

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

100. The school is very well led. The leadership group, including the deputy head teachers, the bursar and the assistant heads in charge of sections of the school, promotes a strong, shared purpose to raise pupils' achievements. Members of staff, including support and administrative staff, want pupils to succeed and work very hard on their behalf. There is a strong sense of teamwork across the school that is reflected in the consistent, committed and effective way teachers and pupils work together.
101. Leadership by the headteacher is excellent. The headteacher, working closely with the governors and the leadership group, provides a very clear educational vision for the school. She has built solidly on the school's previous successes while identifying systematically areas for improvement and future directions. Her robust, open, yet caring leadership, and close teamwork with an extended leadership group, has resulted in a school ethos that reflects the search for excellence and achievement. The

morale of staff and pupils alike is high. Under her leadership, the sustained whole-school focus on raising pupils' achievements, combined with the effective monitoring of

examination results, behaviour, attitudes and attendance, have resulted in year-on-year improvement, both academic and pastoral. The sixth form has expanded significantly and now achieves much academic success.

102. The assistant heads in charge of each key stage provide very good leadership and management of all aspects of education in their stage. They have a very clear overview of the pastoral care and academic progress of each pupil in their section, working closely with tutors who have well-defined and significant roles in caring for their pupils. As a result, individual pupils are very well known, feel valued and are challenged to achieve their best. Very good communication between members of the group lead to consistency in school procedures, so that pupils and staff are clear as to what is expected of them. Deputy headteachers provide strategic guidance and a very good overview of the work of each key stage area.
103. Across the school, heads of department provide good professional leadership. Middle managers have benefited well from the development of their roles in recent years. They now accept responsibility and accountability for curriculum development, staffing, finance, and the construction and delivery of the school development plan. Through regular meetings with the headteacher, they are challenged to reflect critically on their practice and to review and assess departmental progress and needs in the light of whole-school planning. However, the governors, headteacher and leadership team have identified three significant areas for development in their work with middle managers. First, plans are in hand to increase the accountability of departments to the senior leadership, and the support that senior staff can give to departments, so that priority can be given to the development of better monitoring of teaching and learning within departments; second, the co-ordination and development of the teaching of key skills within subjects and across the curriculum; and, third, the consistency of departmental assessment procedures.
104. Though the monitoring of teaching needs further development within several departments, the school's central performance management system is very good and ensures the regular monitoring of individual teachers. These procedures have been used successfully to support and develop staff. In addition, the school has developed a complementary and impressive model of continuous professional development for all staff. Under the guidance of an experienced deputy headteacher, it progressively translates its vision of continuing staff development into practice. There is a regular cycle of staff conferences, which involve governors, administrative and support staff, as well as teachers. Each member of staff benefits from an annual professional interview. Incentives encourage staff to plan their own development as well as taking part in whole-school programmes. Each member of staff, for example, has completed training in ICT. The school has a clear vision for the development of all teachers as reflective practitioners. Its emphasis on very good professional training is one of the leading factors in its achievement of high results and good progress.
105. The school has an excellent statement of its aims and values. It succeeds in its inclusive aims of encouraging hard work, confidence and self-worth for all pupils. The harmonious school community clearly results from the school's promotion of the value of the individual's heritage while respecting that of others. Responsibility and service to others are not promoted only for the girls, but also through the school's involvement in the local learning community. Through its role as a Beacon School, for example, it works closely with the local education authority in developing training activities and in influencing the patterns of educational provision locally. It offers generous support for other schools when the staffing and recruitment challenges they face could hamper the education of their pupils.
106. The school is supported by an outstanding governing body, which is exceptionally well led. The six sub-groups within the governing body enjoy a wide range of expertise, and members are generous in making their wide experience available to the school. Relationships with the school are excellent, but maintain the distinction between governance and management. Governors have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and its areas for improvement. Weekly meetings between the headteacher and the chairman challenge and support the school's work very well. Governors provide very good strategic leadership, for example in school development planning. They are active in appraising the headteacher and are regularly involved in school events, for example participating in joint training activities, and assisting with mock interviews in the main school and sixth form. There is a carefully planned and recorded programme of visits by governors linked to departments, as well as close monitoring of financial management. However, the governors do not fully fulfil their statutory

obligations, as the school is not complying with the requirement to provide religious education for all in Years 9-11, as pupils studying Latin do not participate in religious education.

107. Financial planning is very effective in supporting the school's priorities. The governors' finance committee monitors expenditure meticulously and the school has acted quickly on the recommendations in the most recent auditor's report. Periodic financial donations have been received from the charitable fund of the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers, which have enabled the school to undertake additional development projects. The school's above-average unit costs result mainly from spending on the recruitment and retention of a very experienced staff. Specific grants of money are well used for their intended purpose. Expenditure on staff development is carefully managed and linked closely to the school's priorities for development. The school has earned Investors in People status. Although spending on resources is lower than average, there has been extensive funding for new technology to facilitate efficient, school-wide systems across two sites.
108. The school applies the principles of 'best value' effectively and regularly reviews the performance of its service providers. There is a strong ethos in the school of sharing information, and the open management style encourages teachers at all levels to challenge their own performance. The pupils' results are improving year on year, with the majority of pupils making very good progress. Standards of behaviour and attendance are high and the school increasingly plays a distinctive role in advancing the cause of learning in the local community, sometimes lending support to other schools. Overall, therefore, the school gives very good value for money.
109. The school makes very good use of new technology in its financial and administrative systems. For example, there is a comprehensive database of information on pupils' attainment on entering the school. The senior leadership group uses new technology very well to enhance communication within the group. All members of staff have upgraded their skills through recent training in ICT, and the school has a programme to develop the use of technology to support learning. Work has begun on electronic systems to assist pupils in accessing their work remotely.
110. Overall, the match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is good. All departments have appropriately qualified and experienced teachers, except for RE, in which an unsatisfactory proportion of teaching is taken by non-specialists. Provision in modern foreign languages is excellent; all teaching is taken by well-qualified specialists, ably supported by French and Spanish assistants. The learning support department is very well provided with well-trained teaching and assistant staff.
111. The school is very well supported by the work of the administrative, clerical and technical staff. A very effective team of administrative support staff has been created. This now takes the lead in performing almost all the necessary tasks that were once performed, under stressful conditions, by teachers. As a result, teachers are freed to teach and relate to pupils, while the support tasks, including the management of the school's extensive database, are professionally looked after. There is a very effective performance management system in place. Staff development opportunities are well planned and organised to support staff needs and school initiatives. All staff have recently undertaken government funded training to develop their ICT skills. Arrangements for newly qualified teachers are particularly good and the school is making a valuable contribution to the initial training of teachers.
112. Learning resources are good, with a high proportion of departments having a range of relevant textbooks, equipment and other subject materials. The ratio of pupils to computers is slightly above the national average. Provision of computers in classrooms is good; pupils benefit from the linking of Internet and broadband on both sites. Access for whole classes to computer suites is limited in some subject areas, for example science, geography and design technology. The recently appointed, well-qualified librarian, is rapidly replacing and updating the old stock. The ratio of library books to the number of pupils is below average, but is improving. Resources available within the school are supplemented by visits outside, including theatre visits, and trips to museum and art galleries. The school orchestra undertakes foreign tours; language groups visit Italy and sixth former parties travel to Paris and New York. Annual residential activities are organised for all year groups.
113. Overall, the standard of accommodation is satisfactory. Provision in the purpose-built modern foreign languages block is very good. Accommodation is good in ICT and includes the recent creation of an attractive suite with good resources. Sports facilities are good, with pupils being able to take advantage of extensive playing fields, a sports hall and fitness suite. The large and modern Leathersellers' Centre is a very good building, particularly for large meetings and public examinations. Accommodation in DT is unsatisfactory, because the lack of space in some teaching areas is leading

to overcrowding. Departmental organisation in a high proportion of subject areas is aided by the close grouping of teaching rooms.

114. Since the last inspection, improvement in the leadership and management of the school has been very good, particularly in developing the leadership group, the management of heads of department, assessment systems, and the sixth form. Staffing issues have been successfully solved. There are now clear line management responsibilities and support staff are included in performance management cycles. In resources for learning, good improvement has been made since the last inspection, particularly in ICT provision, the updating of book stock and the indexing of books for less able readers. Overall, good improvement in accommodation has been made since the last inspection.

## **Sixth Form**

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

115. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Governors and staff share a clear vision for its development. The increased size of the sixth form has not sacrificed the quality of its work. The curriculum has expanded to meet the needs of the students very effectively, most of whom are seeking to follow academic routes. At the same time, there are opportunities for those students who prefer to take vocational courses.
116. Financial planning to support the growth of the sixth form is very soundly based. Currently, the sixth form is subsidised to a limited extent from the main school budget, partly resulting from the school's decision to support worthwhile courses where numbers are initially small. Careful planning, increasing liaison with other local institutions, and further planned expansion are likely to achieve a sixth form with self-sufficient funding within the year.
117. The head of sixth gives very good leadership to the tutors, academic staff and the students. Under her active and committed guidance, numbers have grown, while the range of opportunities for students, both within and outside the school day, has further increased. A particular strength of her leadership is the promotion of a scholarly ethos among the students, which increasingly results in high achievement. Independent study skills are strong, and relationships between staff and students excellent. There has been good progress in target setting and in monitoring the added value which students and departments have gained by achieving examination results which are higher than predicted. Improvement since the last inspection is therefore very good, particularly in the promotion of high academic standards.

### ***Resources***

118. As in the main school, staffing and resources for sixth form study are good. Overall, the adequacy of accommodation is satisfactory for the needs of the curriculum.
119. Courses are staffed with knowledgeable, appropriately qualified teachers. Language provision is particularly well served by very good linguists, and specialist teachers cover the wide range of specialisms in health and social care. The quality of accommodation is variable. Governors and senior staff do their very best. For example, they are about to construct a specialist music suite that will release much-needed space for sixth form private study. With this development, the site will be full, and fresh development will be many years away. Meanwhile, good developments have been achieved. For example, students' learning in French is greatly enhanced by the provision of a modern, purpose-built teaching block, and the business studies area includes well-appointed business administration and office practice spaces. Accommodation in art is unsatisfactory; because of the recent increases in numbers, there is now a lack of space for students to undertake private study. The two small science laboratories are inadequate for the number of pupils. The school has plans to provide more, much-needed space for sixth form library, private study and common room accommodation. Access to the rapidly improving ICT resources is satisfactory. The recently appointed librarian is updating the current book stock, with more appropriate sixth form reference material. Provision of textbooks, periodicals, magazines and newspapers, is good.
120. The level of resources for the sixth form was not reported in 1997.

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

121. The governors and headteacher are encouraged to:

- (1) implement their good plans to provide direct leadership from the senior team for academic departments, with priority for the further development of:
  - the monitoring of teaching and learning at departmental level;
  - the teaching of key skills across the curriculum, and
  - assessment procedures within departments.  
(see paragraphs 17, 18, 19, 38, 85, 103 and 104)
- (2) implement their planned review of the whole curriculum, due to begin shortly, with a particular focus on:
  - providing a second language and Latin without detriment to pupils' opportunities to pursue other subjects;
  - further improving the balance of time allocated to subjects;
  - seeking to avoid the teaching of Latin and ICT outside school hours;
  - ensuring that the RE syllabus meets statutory requirements in matching the locally agreed syllabus in Years 7 and 8, and in being taught to all pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11; and
  - resolving the place of drama in the curriculum.  
(see paragraphs 49-52)

### **Sixth form**

The headteacher and senior staff are encouraged to:

- (1) improve co-ordination for the teaching of key skills across the curriculum;  
(see paragraphs 21, 46 and 103)
- (2) improve attendance procedures so that attendance in the sixth form rises to the good level seen in the main school;  
(see paragraphs 31 and 91), and
- (3) further develop the provision of careers advice for students considering work rather than higher education.  
(see paragraphs 71 and 91).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	124
	Sixth form	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		66

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	9	37	49	24	5	0	0
Percentage	7	30	40	19	4	0	0

#### Sixth form

Number	4	17	23	8	0	0	0
Percentage	8	33	44	15	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	568	162
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	87	13

#### Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	80	2

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	185

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

%
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#### Unauthorised absence

%
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School data	4.5
National comparative data	7.8

School data	0.3
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	0	115	115

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	107	87	86
	Total	107	87	86
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	93 (85)	76 (80)	75 (76)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	73 (56)	52 (62)	46 (45)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	83	91	83
	Total	83	91	83
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	73 (79)	80 (81)	73 (73)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	49 (52)	55 (53)	41 (53)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. The national percentages given above are for all schools, and therefore refer to results of both boys and girls. Nationally, girls' results are higher than boys'. Over the last three years, results in this school have been well above the girls' national average for English, and above in mathematics and science.

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	0	110	110

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	82	105	111
	Total	82	105	111
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	75 (72)	95 (100)	100 (100)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year. The national percentages given above are for all schools, and therefore refer to results of both boys and girls. Nationally, girls' results are higher than boys'. Over the last three years, results in this school have been well above the girls' national average, as well as for the average of all schools.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	51.6
	National	39.8

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	0	56

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	0	17.5	17.5	0	0	0
National	16.9	17.7	17.4	-	-	-

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	11	73
	National		75

## Ethnic background of pupils

## Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	244	7	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	150	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	4	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	17	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	20	0	0
Black or Black British – African	20	2	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	113	15	0
Chinese	7	0	0
Any other ethnic group	97	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	21	3	0

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

## Teachers and classes

## Financial information

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	53.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.1

### Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	196.5

### Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76
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### Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	21

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	2722036
Total expenditure	2601694
Expenditure per pupil	3554
Balance brought forward from previous year	161083
Balance carried forward to next year	120342

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9.9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.0
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

702

Number of questionnaires returned

174

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	38	3	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	61	37	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	41	3	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	45	9	2	4
The teaching is good.	51	45	2	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	49	42	6	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	24	4	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	17	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	53	36	8	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	75	22	1	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	27	5	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	39	9	2	5

### Other issues raised by parents

Opinions expressed at the parents' meeting before the inspection were very positive, and the great majority of comments on parents' questionnaire forms, and in letters received, were very positive also.

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Schemes of work and lessons are very well planned.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- Teacher-pupil relationships are respectful, warm and supportive.
- On account of these strengths pupils make good progress in their earlier years and very good progress over the GCSE course.

#### Areas for improvement

- The quality of marking and target setting is inconsistent.
- Pupils' development in drama is limited by inadequate timetabling and staffing.

122. Attainment in the 2002 tests for pupils aged 14 was well above the national average for pupils attaining Levels 5 and 6 and above, compared with all schools nationally. Forty-five per cent of pupils were at Level 7 and above, a very high figure. These results were better than those obtained in mathematics and science and show an improvement on already impressively high attainment over recent years. They indicate good achievement compared to pupils' prior attainment on entry to the school.
123. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A\*-C in the 2002 English language examinations was well above the national average, particularly so for those gaining the highest grades. Results were also well above those for girls nationally. There has been steady improvement over recent years, above the national trend. Standards are well above those noted at the last inspection. Pupils do better than might be expected considering their attainment at the end of Year 9. Achievement is therefore very good. This is also the case for attainment, progress and achievement in English literature, where the proportion of A\*-C grades was also well above the national average for 2002 with a higher proportion of candidates entered than nationally.
124. Standards of achievement observed during the inspection were very good and support the picture given by pupils' outstanding examination performance. Writing, well supported by careful teaching and by most teachers' close marking, is of high standard. Not all marking is sufficiently clear and detailed however. This is a point for improvement within the department. By the age of 14, pupils of all abilities write convincingly in a wide range of forms. This marks a significant improvement since the last inspection. ICT is clearly embedded in teachers' schemes of work, so that pupils reach high standards of presentation. Creative writing (as in nicely managed poems on the theme of friendship) and critical pieces (analyses of Macbeth's motives for action) are equally well managed. By the age of 16, pupils make further clear progress. Tasks and materials, carefully geared to pupils' potential, ensure high achievement across the board. Pupils with SEN and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress. Gifted pupils are particularly well served by the challenge and support they receive. At best, the writing (for instance an evocative description of an examination hall) is remarkably sophisticated and mature. The same is true of reading. Standards are very good throughout the school. Pupils cover a wide range of increasingly demanding texts. They read aloud, confidently and well, and respond critically and capably to poems, plays, novels and visual texts. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on *The Lady of Shalott*, pupils made connections between the impact of paintings and the poem, with impressive understanding. By the age of 16 (as in a lesson on *The Go-Between*) many pupils are able to identify, and offer developed commentaries on, complex intentions and effects. Standards of speaking and listening are good across all years. Where opportunities are provided in lessons for interaction, discussion and presentation, pupils take them responsibly and do very well. In a few lessons, however, because the teacher dominates, pupils' oral skills are not adequately developed.
125. Standards of teaching and learning are very good overall. In Years 7-9, half of the lessons observed were either very good or excellent. In Years 10-11, more than half were in those categories. Teachers plan lessons carefully. Their knowledge of the subject is very strong. Clear objectives and the pace and variety of activities ensure that pupils are motivated and kept on their toes. Much is expected of them. For example, pupils in Year 10 embarking on the AS syllabus engage successfully with the

complexities of Carol Ann Duffy's *The World's Wife*. They respond positively to such challenges because they are well supported by materials, approaches and teacher interventions that make the high demands manageable. Teacher-pupil relationships are warm and supportive. Respect and courtesy characterise nearly all classroom encounters.

126. Two drama lessons were observed. One was satisfactory, the other unsatisfactory. Pupils were expected to listen passively for too long and too often. They had insufficient grasp of drama disciplines, and too little opportunity to practise and actively refine them. Pupils' experience of drama is also negatively affected by timetabling arrangements. Though it appears in the curriculum for Years 7 to 9, it has no place in Years 10 and 11. This is an impediment to pupils' development in drama for its own sake, but also in speaking and listening – skills particularly emphasised in the school's literacy initiative.
127. The curriculum in English is good. Schemes of work cover the requirements of the National Curriculum and GCSE in clear detail. The introduction of AS English to the top sets in Year 10 is innovative and rightly ambitious. Extra-curricular provision (frequent theatre trips and the creative writing club for example) enhances the curriculum impressively. Literacy development is central to the English curriculum and is embedded in the planning and conduct of lessons. Teaching in other departments contributes valuably to pupils' literacy skills. In music, art, geography and the provision for pupils with special educational needs, for example, very good support was noted for the development of pupils' understanding and practice of subject-specific reading, writing, and discussion. Only in DT was provision for literacy judged to be unsatisfactory.
128. The leadership and management of the department are very good. Since his appointment in 2000, the head of department has overseen very substantial development in the curriculum; the adaptation and effective application of the National Literacy Strategy; a much better use of assessment to encourage progress; satisfactory monitoring of teaching in the department; and a steep rise in attainment at every level. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. The issues identified in the report that remain as matters for attention (provision for drama, and the preponderance of part-time teaching in English) have largely been outside his control.
129. Pupils are very well served by the English teaching they receive. Teachers are expert and enthusiastic. If the features of the very best teaching can be made entirely general pupils' independence and achievement will be even further advanced.

## MATHEMATICS

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils' results in GCSE mathematics are very high.</li><li>• Pupils' test results at the end of Year 9 are high.</li><li>• Pupils make very good progress in mathematics over the GCSE course.</li><li>• Pupils co-operate well with their mathematics teachers and have good skills of independent study.</li><li>• Teaching in mathematics is good, expectations are high and homework is very well planned.</li><li>• Teachers give generously of their time to help pupils outside lessons.</li></ul> <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pupils' progress in Year 7 to 9 is slower than over the period of their GCSE course.</li><li>• The low timetable allocation for mathematics in Years 8 and 9 results in rushed coverage of the programmes of study.</li><li>• Teachers' day-to-day assessment, marking and recording of the students' progress are inconsistent.</li><li>• The co-ordination of numeracy across the curriculum needs improvement.</li></ul>
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131. Generally, pupils' attainment in mathematics when they enter the school is just above average. Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 show standards to be consistently above, or well above, average. Attainment at the expected Level 5 and above in 2002 was above national figures, and above those for similar schools. However, mathematics results did not compare favourably with those in English and science. Pupils did not make as rapid progress as those nationally with a similar starting point at the end of Year 6. Low curriculum time, some staffing changes and the grouping of

pupils in Year 7 negatively influenced the results, particularly for those pupils who are mathematically gifted. Nevertheless, for most pupils, given their starting points, progress was at least good. Pupils with special educational needs also made good progress from Year 7 to Year 9, and there were no significant differences in the achievements of pupils from different ethnic groups.

132. In the 2002 GCSE mathematics results, the proportion of the school's pupils achieving grades A\* to C was well above the national average, for all schools and for girls, and similar to the 2001 results. Mathematically gifted pupils achieved a high proportion of A\* and A grades, treble those recorded nationally. All pupils entered for GCSE mathematics, including those with special educational needs, were successful in achieving a pass grade. Based on their achievements at the end of Year 9, the percentage of pupils gaining A\* to C was well above that found in similar schools, with pupils generally making very good progress. Mathematics results compared very favourably with those of science.
133. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the end of Year 9 in lessons is above average, and similar to that recorded in the national tests. Nevertheless, attainment ranges across the mathematics sets from well above to below average. Higher-group students have very good numerical skills and are confident in using a range of mental methods in their calculations. They achieve well across all aspects of mathematics. In a lesson on probability, able pupils in the group used very efficient methods to complete sample spaces, in contrast to more average pupils, who achieved results systematically, but more laboriously. Middle-group pupils produce very accurate constructions and scale diagrams, drawing on their understanding of aspects of shape and space. However, some find greater difficulty in calculating areas of complex compound shapes, not always recognising how to subdivide the diagram. In Year 9, pupils with special educational needs and those in lower groups make good progress, particularly in their data handling work. They are able, for example, to apply their knowledge of bar graphs to horizontal charts and to estimate half-way points on scales. They have greater difficulty with calculations involving directed numbers and occasionally with time questions involving the 24-hour clock. Notably, pupils in all groups pay close attention to the mathematical syntax of solutions. Pupils' literacy skills are sufficient to support their work in mathematics.
134. In Year 11, the standards pupils achieve in mathematics lessons are well above average overall. Some higher group pupils reach very high standards as in a lesson involving them in sketching trigonometrical functions. Able pupils were generally excited by the consolidation of their skills and thoroughly enjoyed their work with the white boards. These pupils approach tasks systematically and are able to offer algebraic generalisations very competently. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils made fast progress in their work on circle geometry in preparation for a forthcoming GCSE module test. They showed good recall of earlier learning and were enthusiastic in their application of factual knowledge to problems. In a middle group, pupils were tenacious in working their way through manipulative algebra tasks involving above-average skills of factorisation and re-ordering. Many pupils used their notebooks very well for revision. However, some middle-group Year 10 pupils adopted a defeatist attitude to their mathematics, as in a lesson on linear graphs, partly as a result of work pitched at too difficult a level, too early. Some of these pupils had an insecure grasp of basic numerical concepts, confusing numerators and denominators in fractions. Pupils with special educational needs continue to make good progress over Years 10 and 11. They enhance their data-handling skills particularly well, and their number skills are at least sound. Not unexpectedly, however, they have difficulty identifying patterns in numbers, for example, and in making connections between areas of mathematics. Overall, pupils make faster progress in their mathematics in Years 10 and 11 than in earlier years, helped by the very good study skills they have acquired.
135. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good. There is some very good teaching, and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen, despite some disruption to staffing. Teachers cover the content of the syllabus systematically and have relentlessly high expectations. Homework is used very well to support the pupils' class work and to ensure their understanding. The National Numeracy Strategy is beginning to influence classroom practice positively, but is not yet fully incorporated in the work of the department.
136. In the best lessons, thorough planning ensures the work is well matched to the pupils' needs and what they have previously learnt. The pace of lessons is brisk, so that the pupils make the best use of their time, as in a Year 9 lesson on data handling, a Year 10 lesson on shape and space, and a Year 11 lesson on the efficient use of the calculator. Oral work is well used to challenge pupils' understanding and there is a considered balance between consolidating previous work and acquiring new skills. In all lessons, pupils apply themselves well because of the collaborative effort between teachers and pupils to ensure effective learning. In the less effective lessons, teachers mostly plan the content of their lessons satisfactorily, secure in their knowledge of mathematics. However, in some lessons, pupils

spend too long on written activities and do not benefit sufficiently from speaking about mathematics. In the Year 7 mixed-attainment groups, for example, the carefully targeted booklet tasks are not always sufficient to extend the more mathematically gifted. In other lessons, there are missed opportunities to assess and record the pupils' strengths and weaknesses, sometimes the result of imprecise learning objectives which are not always shared with the pupils. Individual pupils regularly receive good and immediate feedback on their work in lessons, but there is some over-reliance on additional help outside class time to support pupils who lack confidence or who are experiencing difficulties. Marking across the department is generally diagnostic, regular and frequent, but there is some inconsistency in practice with regard to grading and comments.

137. Since the last inspection, progress within the mathematics department has been good. The leadership of the department is strong and the day-to-day management is smooth. The department has a clear and shared commitment to improve its provision for the pupils and has the capacity to do so. The pupils' standards of attainment in mathematics are improving year on year, and teaching is more consistently good. There is now an able second in the department. Departmental leadership has developed to include the performance management of all teachers in the department. Good financial management is carefully related to departmental priorities, and the department takes responsibility for its training needs in mathematics. Nevertheless, the development of teaching across the department through regular monitoring has been limited, partly as a result of time constraints, and the co-ordination of numeracy across the curriculum is at an early stage. The department is now in a strong position to develop both aspects more fully. The issue of low curriculum time for mathematics indicated in the last inspection report remains a problem.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- The leadership of the department is good.
- Teaching is good, sometimes very good.
- Teachers work well together and are committed to raising standards.
- Relationships with pupils are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of, and access to, ICT needs improvement.
- Teachers need to complete the writing of schemes of work.

138. In the 2002 national tests at the end of Year 9, the school's performance in science was well above the national average. The percentage attaining Level 6 exceeded the national average by a significant margin. Performance was similar to that of the previous year, and there has been a steady improvement over the past four years. Attainment was above average in comparison with similar schools, indicating that the department has improved the value of pupils' results more than might be expected. In recent years, performance in these tests in science has been better than in mathematics but lower than in English.
139. In the 2002 GCSE examination in double award science the proportion of pupils obtaining grades A\* to C was above the national average, for all schools and for girls, but slightly below that of the previous year. Almost all pupils were awarded a grade. Performance was low in comparison with mathematics and English and with many other subjects, though again the department improved the value of pupils' results more than might be expected by their previous performance.
140. Inspection evidence shows that standards towards the end of Year 9 are well above the nationally expected level. Pupils enter the school with slightly above average levels of attainment and make very good progress during years 7 to 9. Most have a good knowledge and understanding of topics in all four areas of the science curriculum. In a lesson about pressure, for example, they displayed a good knowledge of different forces and most could distinguish clearly between mass and weight. They have a sound understanding of basic biological processes such as digestion and respiration.
141. In Year 11, most pupils are developing a good understanding of the examination syllabus. Most now in Year 11 are achieving well and are working at standards that their attainment in previous years suggests they should reach. For example, they have a good grasp of the principles of genetics and

understand the significance of the periodic table in comparing and contrasting the properties of elements.

142. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. They make particularly good progress when they receive additional support. Teachers often adapt their questions and vocabulary to ensure that they are fully included in the lesson. However, not enough use is made of resources such as modified worksheets, or of extended material adapted to support those with special educational needs and challenge higher-attaining pupils.
143. The written work of most pupils is at least satisfactory and is frequently good or very good although at times the drawing of diagrams and tables require more attention. Numerical skills are at least sound and often good. Higher-attaining pupils in all years use their mathematical skills competently. They can manipulate formulae and use them to solve problems. The use of ICT within the classroom is limited. Pupils are encouraged to use the Internet at home and other resources in school but the lack of sufficient suitable hardware inhibits progress in several areas of the science curriculum.
144. Teaching in all years is never less than satisfactory and in over three-quarters of lessons seen it was good or very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject. Relationships with pupils are very good and good humour helps many lessons. Praise is used effectively to reinforce knowledge and raise self-esteem. The impact of national strategy to raise achievement is evident. Lessons are well planned, with clear objectives. These are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and usually displayed on the blackboard. Teachers employ an increasing range of methods to maintain interest and provide constant challenge. Pupils are beginning to use more creative ways to record information in their books.
145. Pupils are articulate and respond well when given the opportunity to discuss scientific issues in class. In one well-planned lesson, for example, pupils studied the inheritance of characteristics in plants and animals. Issues such as genetic engineering and cloning were discussed. Pupils at all levels of attainment were stimulated by this activity, resulting in gains in their knowledge of genetics as well as their understanding of some of the associated social and moral issues. In another lesson, a Year 11 group was observed studying the relative reactivity of elements in different groups in the periodic table. The lesson was very well organised and featured a range of activities including an experiment on the displacement of the halogens. The practical work was carried out confidently and competently. Expectations were high and good progress was made as a result. Marking of work is regular and, at its best, informs pupils what they have got wrong and what they need to do to improve. The department is now using assessment data well to monitor progress and set targets.
146. Where lessons had shortcomings these were due largely to inappropriate class management. Pupils were not kept working, and activities were too long and too centred on the teacher. This at times led to disaffection on the part of some pupils, and progress was hindered.
147. A strength of the department is the way in which staff, under the strong leadership of the head of department, work together and are committed to raising attainment. Monitoring of teaching has been introduced in the last six months, and, though recent, is now secure. Teaching is well supported by two laboratory technicians. Some of the laboratories are in poor decorative order. Despite the efforts of teachers to create an attractive environment, they are hampered by a lack of display space. Two of the laboratories are very small, making practical work difficult. This has a detrimental effect on standards. The department's complement of schemes of work is incomplete, but revision and rewriting are being undertaken.
148. The department has responded positively to the last report. Standards have improved considerably and the quality of teaching is now almost universally good.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching is good.
- Standards achieved by pupils at 14 years are above expected levels.
- The department's contribution made to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is

very good.

Areas for improvement

- Procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress need improvement, in particular so that GCSE results can be raised.
- The use made of assessment information to guide curricular planning is also in need of development.
- Pupils' use of ICT is underdeveloped and the requirements of the National Curriculum are not met in this area.

149. In the teacher assessments for 2002 at the end of Year 9, standards were judged to be well above average, though evidence from the inspection confirms them to be above average. In the 2002 GCSE, the proportion of pupils gaining A\*-C grades was well below the national average and pupils did less well in art than in other subjects. There has been a decline in examination standards since the previous inspection. It is likely that changed assessment criteria have been incorrectly applied and that the art course does not currently support the progress of lower-attaining pupils well enough. Assessment is not used well enough to identify under-achieving pupils.
150. The standard of pupils' work on entering the school is at the expected level, on the basis of work seen. Pupils' achievement is good, so that by the end of Year 9 they exceed nationally expected levels. Pupils follow a structured, well-planned course in which they are taught the necessary basic skills and formal elements of art. There are opportunities for pupils to work in other materials such as printmaking and ceramics, but the focus remains on painting and drawing. Pupils use sketchbooks well to collect images from primary and secondary sources and to write commentaries and responses, which are often thoughtful and reflective, to their own work and the work of artists.
151. Work from Year 11 pupils, seen during inspection, indicates that standards are higher than recent examination results suggest and exceed national average expectations. Achievement is good. Following a directed first piece of work in Year 10, pupils learn with increasing independence as they develop work that reflects their own interests, values and experiences. Sketchbooks are well used to present results of research, to develop ideas, experiment with techniques and materials and to record written responses to artists' work. Final pieces are often produced in two-dimensional media, but also as relief panels and constructions in card, plaster and found materials. Well-executed screen printed fabrics are produced.
152. In all years, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to that of other pupils because teachers support them individually very well and adapt work where necessary. Where additional support is made available, it is well utilised. Pupils from all years benefit from visits to London galleries, visits that make an important contribution to their work. For example, all Year 8 pupils visit the National Gallery and develop paintings from their studies of the Renaissance.
153. Standards of literacy are good in written evaluations, annotated drawings and notes about the life and work of artists. Standards of numeracy are sufficient for pupils in all year groups to use scale and proportion, for example when drawing a face or changing the scale of their work. Standards in the use of ICT are below expected levels because pupils do not generally have the opportunity to develop their work using ICT until Year 10 and in this regard National Curriculum requirements are not being met in Years 7 – 9.
154. The quality of teaching is good and occasionally very good. Of lessons seen in Years 7 to 9, all were at least good and one was very good. In Year 10 and 11, all teaching seen was at least good and in one lesson was very good. Strengths of the teaching are the quality of individual support that teachers give to all pupils, including those with special educational needs, and teachers' very good subject knowledge. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, of their behaviour and their work. Appropriate homework is set regularly, which contributes to the development of pupils' work in class. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. Good relationships between pupils and teachers lead to a productive working atmosphere. However, the opportunities to use alternative teaching approaches are sometimes missed, and assessment is not well used to help raise standards. Units of work can be over-long, sometimes lasting for two terms. Opportunities are missed to inject excitement and pace with shorter units.
155. Overall, the leadership and management of the subject are good. The department has responded to the fall in GCSE standards with steps that should deliver improvements this year. Teachers are well

qualified and experienced and the subject is well resourced. The studios are large and well equipped, though the use of the sports hall viewing gallery as an ICT suite is not wholly appropriate without some protection from the games underway below. The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, for example in the many very stimulating visits to galleries, in London and abroad. However, this is not recognised in a formal policy or opportunities identified in schemes of work.

156. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved and more time is now allocated to lessons for Years 7-9. However, the varied allocation of time over the three years does not enhance pupils' continuity of learning or progress. Progress has been made in acquiring resources for the study of non-Western art and teaching remains good. Despite continued shortcomings, provision for ICT has been greatly improved and its use is now established in Years 10 and 11.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- The school's pre-existing commitment to developing social responsibility and community involvement has been well extended in this new course.
- The range and quality of community links give interest and relevance to the course.
- The quality of new units of work introduced into tutorial work and PSHE courses is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Arrangements for assessing attainment in citizenship and reporting to parents need to be developed.

157. Citizenship is taught by form tutors in the PSHE programme. In addition, the school has carefully investigated the contributions already made to citizenship by the subjects of the curriculum, and by other aspects of school life. These contributions have been supplemented by units of work that ensure full coverage of the necessary content, and so fulfil the National Curriculum citizenship requirements.
158. Because of these arrangements, it was not possible to see a specific lesson on citizenship during the inspection. However, assemblies seen and aspects of morning tutorial time confirmed that education in citizenship is an effective, daily reality for these pupils. This is a school with a long tradition of community service and charitable giving, where the development of social responsibility is a key aim of the school. Because of this the concepts of citizenship are very well embedded in the school's daily life and pupils' knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens are well developed throughout the school. For example, during a lower school assembly, a group of pupils, who had recently participated in a citizenship initiative involving pupils from a cluster of neighbouring boroughs, spoke of their visits to the Houses of Parliament and to Guy's Hospital. In a Year 11 assembly, senior prefects and three Year 11 pupils made a well-informed presentation on collecting for charity, and pupils who had raised money were named and thanked. Though no direct teaching of citizenship was seen during the inspection, it is clear that teachers convey its concepts, far more effectively than a class lesson could, by the first-rate encouragement they give pupils to present and discuss issues. For example, in a Year 13 tutorial session, students spoke persuasively of the ethical and religious issues raised by the crisis in Iraq.
159. There is ongoing liaison with the police, who do sessions for pupils on topics like personal safety and the criminal justice system. Visitors from the Red Cross talk to pupils about being a responsible baby-sitter, and also give first aid instruction. Recently, the mother of a drug addict came into school to talk with pupils about the effects on families of addiction. In Year 9, pupils have received information about electoral politics in the UK and have had a visitor from the Samaritans, talking about the work of that organisation. In Year 10, pupils now have a unit of work on local politics, while Year 11 pupils cover units on both consumer rights and human rights.
160. Good examples of pupils developing skills of enquiry and communication were seen. In a Year 11 lesson on human rights, pupils used the Amnesty International website to do research on a case of a woman facing death by stoning in Nigeria.
161. Pupils' skills of participation and responsible action are developed through many aspects of school life. Regular school fetes involve planning and participation by almost all members of the school community. Tutor groups decide which charities they will support after careful discussion of the work of different charities. The school council discusses matters raised initially within tutor groups and is sometimes able to get action taken on matters of concern to pupils, for example the establishment of a breakfast club. The institution of junior prefects in Year 11, and the encouragement of both formal and informal mentoring of younger pupils by older ones, offer many pupils opportunity for participation and responsible action.
162. A rich and varied programme of school visits and extra-curricular activities makes a considerable contribution to pupils' education in citizenship.
163. The school has not yet devised a scheme for assessing pupils' work overall in citizenship, although individual units of work provide teachers with good opportunities for assessment. The current Year 9 reports to parents detail coverage of subject material, and have comments written by pupils on what they have learned and how useful it has been to them. It is the school's intention to evaluate the

164. success of the first year's citizenship programme and to make revisions. It will need to put in place appropriate assessment and reporting arrangements, and may wish to consider appointing a single person to co-ordinate the citizenship programme throughout the school.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Standards of work are above average in all areas of the subject in Year 9, and are maintained into Year 11.
- Teaching is good for classes in Years 7 – 9. Pupils in these years make good progress.
- Systems for the assessment of the pupils' learning, and pupils' awareness of the National Curriculum levels they have reached, are good.
- There is good leadership of an able team.

### Areas for improvement

- The application of design and technology principles throughout the department, including a common approach to schemes, lessons, learning materials and supporting aspects, requires improvement.
- Further improvement is needed in aspects of resourcing, including technical support, accommodation, computers and the allocation of time to the subject.

165. In the teacher assessments of pupils' performance at the end of Year 9 in 2002, over three-quarters of pupils reached the target Level 5. This was a very good achievement compared with the national average of below two-thirds. Pupils make good progress during Years 7 to 9, because many pupils join the school in Year 7 with little knowledge of the subject.
166. The department is particularly successful in developing pupils' skills in a wide range of aspects of the subject to an unusually high standard. Thus, in a food technology class in Year 9, every pupil produced a different dish - from a wide range of cultures - and almost all were designed, prepared, cooked and presented to a very high standard. In a Year 9 resistant materials lesson, the pupils were finishing off candle-holders: no two designs were the same and there was a great range of materials competently used - different woods, different metals, fibreboard, plastics, clay. However, despite the high standards of skills in those areas and in textiles, in Year 9 the girls are not generally clear about the nature and purpose of the stages of the design and making process. Many, for instance, cannot sensibly explain what evaluation is and why people evaluate products. They have even less knowledge and understanding of the scientific and numerical skills that underlie such evaluations, and little experience in the use of computers.
167. At the end of Year 11 last year, more than three-quarters of pupils passed GCSE at grade C and above, a result higher than for girls nationally. The proportion reaching grade C has increased in recent years. Over the GCSE years, pupils have generally maintained their above-average skills from Year 9, making satisfactory progress over the course and gaining a good grasp of the nature of problem-solving. Thus, in a Year 11 textiles lesson, girls were finishing off their products - again of a very wide range and with designs relating to various cultures. Most could speak fluently about how they were working and why, including how their design related to the kind of people who would wear their products. However, few still had much relevant knowledge about underlying science, and their use of ICT was rarely of the expected quality. It is clear the pupils find DT interesting, even attractive and, particularly in Years 7-9, are motivated to work hard. Pupils with special educational needs learn well. On the other hand, the more able who find learning easy are not always stretched sufficiently.
168. One main cause of high standards is the quality of teaching. In Years 7-9, where the teachers have to work especially hard to cover the ground required, teaching is good. Particular strengths (also often shown in lessons with Years 10-11, where teaching is satisfactory overall) are: the teachers' good knowledge of their specialist areas and of "real life" applications and practices; the way they expect pupils to do well; their management of large, practical classes in cramped and potentially hazardous rooms; and the thoughtful and thorough homework tasks they regularly set.

169. The other main cause of the high standards seen is the good leadership of a good team of teachers. They work closely together, and there are good communications, consultation and delegation. The department has developed very good assessment systems, again particularly for Years 7-9, and these are soon to be computerised. The staff use the results of assessment to amend their teaching and help pupils see how to improve. For further development are common systems of topic and lesson design, including worksheets, word lists and display materials; and a common approach to helping younger pupils increase their grasp of the overall nature of DT, as the timetable makes their experience of it unusually fragmented.
170. This fragmentation partly follows the low allocation of time to DT and partly the rotation of subjects within the time allocated in Years 7-8, which means that each pupil each year has only a seven-week block in each area of DT. Time allocation in Years 10-11 is somewhat better (but still low compared with most schools). However, not all pupils choose to study DT - some never have a chance to develop their technological thinking and experience after Year 9. The National Curriculum entitles every pupil to receive DT until the end of Year 11, though the school has ensured that pupils' other experiences in the curriculum satisfy current requirements for this area.
171. Short supply of other resources causes problems too. The main concern with staffing is that technical support is for only twelve hours a week. The resistant materials workshop suffers particularly; the teacher has to spend much time on technician tasks, but still cannot keep the room clean, tidy, well decorated, attractive and safe enough - a major reason for girls not to choose this subject. The main shortage on the physical resources side is of computers - so the teachers do not make frequent use of IT to prepare and teach lessons and the girls do not work with IT much until Year 11. Teaching and learning are not therefore as good as they could be.
172. Accommodation is short as well: three rooms for the four full-time teachers, in two buildings a minute or so apart, and none is large enough or well enough laid out for effective and safe use by all the classes that use them.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Standards at least above average overall, and very high in GCSE examinations.
- Pupils' achievement is very good overall. Achievement is often excellent in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching is consistently very good, reflected in pupils' very good learning throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Relationships and the learning ethos are excellent, with very good attitudes and behaviour.
- Very good leadership and very competent management create the high standards seen.

### Areas for improvement

- The further development of fieldwork and ICT are needed, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Greater consistency is needed in assessment practice and developing pupils' self-assessment.
- Some shortfalls in learning resources need to be remedied.

173. Standards of work in Year 9 are above average. Pupils' achievement over Years 7 to 9, in relation to their average entry standards in Year 7, is very good. This is due to very good teaching and pupils who are very well motivated and enthusiastic learners. By Year 9, pupils have received a very good grounding in geographical skills. Most use and interpret Ordnance Survey maps well, but there is too much variation in the accurate graphical presentation of statistical data. Pupils of all attainment levels have a sound understanding of spatial patterns. Their knowledge of location such as the main mountains, rivers and cities of the United Kingdom is good, although lower attainers find this difficult. Gifted and talented pupils and higher attainers are generally well catered for, while average attainers are suitably stretched and produce work of an appropriate standard or above. Lower attainers progress well, as they are well supported by teachers. Pupils with special educational needs when provided with specialist support usually make good progress.
174. By Year 11, standards are very high and confirm recent GCSE examination results. This shows very significant and often excellent achievement by pupils of all attainment levels over Years 10 and 11. This is due to consistently high quality teaching by subject specialists and able pupils who work with real commitment and enjoyment towards clear goals. In Year 11 pupils have a very thorough

knowledge and understanding of the main physical and human processes studied. The best independent study projects for GCSE, based on fieldwork in Lewisham, are of excellent quality and show very good skills of enquiry. Average and lower attainers produce work of a standard above that normally expected for their prior level of attainment. The rigorous monitoring of course work and regular testing of pupils' learning are very effective in sustaining high standards.

175. Recent GCSE examination results at grades A\*-C have shown very significant improvement and in 2002 were very high against the national average for girls. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades is very high indeed with one pupil in every two attaining these standards. The subject is very popular as a GCSE option and much more popular than nationally. When compared with other GCSE subjects within the school, geography results have improved rapidly.
176. Pupils' attitude to learning is very positive and many display real interest in and enjoyment of their work. Pupils work very conscientiously and are keen to learn. Most take a real pride in the presentation of their work. Behaviour is very good. Relationships with teachers are excellent, with a rapport evident that contributes significantly to pupils' very good progress. Pupils work extremely well together in pairs and groups and the use of group work has a strong impact on learning. Relationships across ethnic groupings are extremely harmonious. Pupils participate much more in discussions than they do in most schools, and oral skills are well developed.
177. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Staff are very committed, caring and supportive of their pupils. The management and control in lessons are excellent. Learning is effective as lessons are imaginatively planned and underpinned by the teachers' very detailed knowledge of the topic taught. Questioning is skilful as it extends pupils' knowledge and understanding significantly. A great strength of teaching is the emphasis placed on developing geographical enquiry and investigatory skills. Teaching is supported in most lessons with a wide range of visual aids including film, photographs, maps and diagrams. Resources are of very high quality and have a very positive effect on how well pupils learn. Tasks set are appropriate to pupils' needs. Most impressive, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is the regular monitoring and testing of pupils' knowledge. This results in very productive learning. Teachers' presentation at its best is lively, stimulating and inspiring. Learning benefits from teachers' very high expectations and brisk pace, so that lessons are impressively productive.
178. Learning in Years 7 to 9 is limited by insufficient use of local Ordnance Survey maps, local examples and atlases to help pupils' understanding of spatial patterns and processes. Class learning would be improved with more regular reinforcement of teaching points visually on the board. Literacy skills are well used in teaching; numeracy skills, although variably applied, are good overall. The development of ICT has been seriously limited by difficulties in access to computers. A coherent programme of ICT skills, linked to curricular themes, is needed.
179. Leadership of the subject is very good. The department is very effectively run and managed, with curricular planning of very good quality. The work of the department is suitably monitored through classroom observation, but a more detailed analysis of pupils' work is needed. The quality of teaching staff is a real strength; teachers are highly professional and all work together very collaboratively as a team. The assessment policy is good overall; it is understood by pupils so that they know the progress they are making. Day-to-day marking is variable and there is need for greater consistency of approach, with pupils informed regularly of their grades against National Curriculum Levels, especially in Years 10 and 11. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, but one of the specialist teaching rooms is very cramped and this limits independent resource-based learning. There are wall displays of good quality in rooms and corridors. Resources are good, but a fieldwork budget is needed, as are access to computers and a television monitor in each specialist room. The fieldwork undertaken in Year 7 locally and in Year 10 in Lewisham provides most effective learning and greatly stimulates pupils' interest in the subject. However, provision for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9 is inadequate. There has been very good progress since the last inspection, and there is very good capacity to implement the points raised in this report.

## HISTORY

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

- Strengths
- Teaching is good, so that pupils achieve well.
- Leadership is good and the department works successfully as a team.
- The department has a clear commitment to maintain high standards by improving the quality of teaching.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards the subject.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Better use of marking and assessment is needed, to further increase pupils' understanding of their progress.
- The development of teaching and learning through better use the use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy is needed.
- The use of ICT in the classroom needs improvement.

180. In the past two years, attainment for pupils in Years 7-9 has been above nationally expected levels. Pupils in Year 9 are working at above expected levels; they understand the progress they have made and how they can improve. From entry in Year 7, teachers' expectations are high and pupils learn well, gaining knowledge of events quickly and with depth. They learn about key changes in the past and, with increasing skill, discuss what caused historical events. By Year 9 all, including the less able, work successfully with sources. The more able learn to question and challenge interpretations with a skill that takes them smoothly into GCSE work. Most pupils have good listening and oral skills. For example, in a Year 9 class, a less able pupil was able to give a good explanation of complex views and feelings about slavery. Writing is of a high standard overall.
181. By Year 11, pupils have progressed further and, overall, attainment is very high. This is reflected in recent GCSE results, which have been well above the national average for girls. Pupils learn very well, organising historical information confidently and using evidence selectively and critically to construct arguments, explanations of cause and effect and comparisons between similar events in different contexts. For example, a Year 11 discussion of the impact of propaganda on education in South Africa under apartheid led to fruitful comparisons with Nazi Germany. Less able pupils benefit from the regular sharing of ideas and they work at higher levels than expected. They are able to analyse information, select evidence from sources and begin to question motives and ideas.
182. History is a popular subject and pupils respond positively to the range of opportunities provided. The take-up at GCSE is good and numbers for the sixth form are increasing. Pupils are highly motivated and respect the teachers and each other. At all stages, they regularly initiate discussions and most express themselves well. Ideas are challenged and the coverage of important issues ensures that learning is not complacent. Group presentations are well informed and passionate, such as the debate in one class over who was the "nastier nazi", Goebbels or Himmler.
183. The quality of teaching ranges from good to excellent. Without exception, lessons are well planned and tasks are creative and appropriate. Lesson and task objectives, with expected outcomes, are regularly shared with pupils. The work is planned to suit a range of ability and teachers provide work flexibly for pupils of differing levels of ability. There is plenty of extension work and the department contributes to the enrichment programme for the gifted and talented. Teachers focus on literacy skills, using a wide range of approaches to promote them, including role-play, debate and research-based enquiry. For example, pupils in Year 7 do an enquiry into the murder of Julius Caesar that goes beyond deciding who did it by exploring the motives of the conspirators and the benefits and disadvantages of the act to various groups in the Empire.
184. All teachers are confident in their subject knowledge. By challenging pupils, for example through skilful questioning, they extend their critical use of historical information. Working relationships are good and pupils' opinions are highly valued. The department contributes successfully to the school's programme for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Topics and courses are carefully chosen to reflect the diverse backgrounds of pupils and to help them understand their role as citizens in a multi-cultural society. The history department adds considerable value to the quality of pupils' learning.
185. The department is well led and teachers have a clear view of how best to manage lessons. Decisions on development are taken together; the contribution and initiative of each teacher are used well to design and produce teaching resources of high quality. Good teamwork means that there is a consistency of approach in all aspects of teachers' work. Schemes of work direct the teaching to cover all necessary skills. The department is aware of its development needs and focuses them well on pupils' learning. Marking and feedback are positive, and effective assessment processes are developing. These need to be taken further with younger pupils, to increase their understanding of how to improve their work. The team regularly discusses how to improve teaching. The national strategy for the improvement of teaching and learning should now help the department to focus on the use of starter activities, reflective plenaries and the development of thinking skills. Teachers have completed their training for ICT and now need to introduce new ways of using it in the classroom. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils make very good progress over the GCSE course. Attainment in the GCSE examination is very high.
- Extra-curricular provision is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching, though generally good, varies considerably between individual teachers.
- The monitoring of teaching requires greater emphasis.
- Further development of the use and monitoring of ICT in subjects is needed.

186. The GCSE course begins in Year 9; it is taught in curriculum and extra-curricular time in Years 9 and 10. When pupils join the school, their attainment is generally in line with expected levels. During their first two years, they make good progress, already achieving the expected levels for Year 9 pupils by the end of Year 8. Evidence from the inspection supports this. Year 7 pupils, seen starting a new topic on data handling, were considering the accuracy, validity and bias of data, and were working at a level in line with expected levels. Other Year 7 pupils, seen several weeks into a study using control technology, had made rapid progress and were working above expectations in making a series of instructions to control events; the more capable were developing and refining these instructions. By Year 9, pupils are working on GCSE and were seen organising data for presentation and preparing data capture forms for their coursework. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, with teachers paying due attention to individual educational plans and providing different work for pupils, in line with these plans.
187. All pupils follow an ICT course in Years 9 and 10. Of these, over 65 per cent attend the extra lessons out of school time to sit the short course GCSE examination at the end of Year 10. In 2002, all passed in the range A\*-G. Almost nine in ten pupils passed with a Grade C or above and well over half passed at either grade A\* or A, indicating the successful provision for, and extension of, pupils identified as gifted and talented. This attainment is well above national standards for pupils who are a year older and represents very good progress. It also represents a significant increase over the results achieved in the previous year. Evidence from the inspection confirms these high standards. The pupils' good attitudes and willingness to continue their studies after normal school hours help them to make very good progress. A programme of study for pupils who are not following the GCSE course ensures they develop the skills required and receive their entitlement to an ICT education.
188. Teaching is good overall, in all years. Some teaching is excellent, though some is unsatisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and of the requirements of the National Curriculum and of public examinations. Their good knowledge is seen, for example, in the good use of a projector linked to a computer to demonstrate the manipulation of software. As a result of clear demonstrations such as this, pupils quickly learn the techniques involved and how to apply them. Teachers provide a good range of tasks in lessons and encourage pupils to apply their ICT capability successfully and to consider its impact. Pupils' work is marked regularly and compared with National Curriculum levels; assessment results are shared with pupils. Pupils are given valuable, detailed feedback, both verbally and in writing at the end of units of work, to help them improve their performance.
189. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in one Year 8 lesson. As a result, some pupils displayed an unsatisfactory attitude, ignored the teacher and concentrate on unrelated Internet activities which were unnoticed by the teacher during a complicated and overlong demonstration.
190. In one Year 10 lesson, teaching was excellent. The teacher maintained good pace and productivity in a very well planned and managed lesson for a class that included pupils producing examination coursework and others who were not following the examination course. The teacher set clear objectives and targets for all pupils, and involved them well. For example, one pupil demonstrated to others how to create a relational database. The teacher maintained oversight of this, while helping pupils not following the examination course to produce multimedia presentations. They demonstrated

these to their peers, using projection to support their presentation, so further developing their literacy skills.

191. The management of ICT is satisfactory overall. There are difficulties in organising meetings for teachers of ICT, as all teachers of the subject, including the head of department, contribute to the teaching of other subjects. For this reason, it has proved difficult to monitor the work of colleagues, and the head of department has monitored the teaching of one only other teacher this year. Accommodation for teaching ICT lessons is good. Resources are good, and the provision of PC stations matches the recommended ratio.
192. ICT is used within subjects, for example in mathematics in Year 7, art and music in Years 10 and 11, and in English where the ICT suite is booked to allow access for whole classes. In these subjects, ICT is clearly stated in schemes of work. In other subjects, the use of ICT varies between classes and is limited by access to computer suites. All teachers either have completed, or are completing, their nationally funded ICT training. As they do so, two or three PC stations, linked to the school network, are placed in their classes. Further training is needed to enable these to be used effectively, as ICT suites cannot always be made available.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers' emphasis on using French and Spanish in lessons gives pupils very good skills of listening and speaking.
- Homework consolidates learning very effectively.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is under-used.
- Teachers lack recent training.

193. In 2002, teachers' assessments of pupils' performance in French at the end of Year 9 were above average. In GCSE French, 76 per cent of pupils attained grades A\*-C, well above the national average for girls. Forty-eight per cent attained grade A\*, greatly above the national average. All pupils entered attained grades A\*-G, in line with the national average. In relation to other subjects in the school, GCSE performance in French is good.
194. In lessons seen, pupils' achievement in French is good, and in Year 9, their attainment is above the expected level overall. Many Year 7 pupils could accurately describe school routines. In Year 8, many could discuss ailments, mostly from memory. Year 9 pupils could note the main points from a text about French schools. Overall standards of attainment in French by the end of Year 11 are well above the expected level, and pupils' achievement very good. For example, Year 10 pupils demonstrated good knowledge of verbs, and confidence in manipulating present, perfect and imperfect tenses to talk about families. In Year 11, pupils could give a written summary of a recorded passage about stolen property. Homework provides appropriate consolidation. Pupils with learning difficulties, the gifted and talented, and those who speak English as an additional language achieve similarly to others.
195. In 2002, attainment in GCSE Spanish at grades A\*-C was well above the national average for girls. The proportion of pupils attaining grade A\* was also well above the girls' national average. All pupils attained grades A\*-G, in line with the national average. GCSE performance in Spanish is very good in relation to other subjects in the school.
196. Pupils' achievement in Spanish is good and in Year 9 their attainment is above average. For example, most pupils participating in a dialogue in a gift shop could speak with accurate grammar and pronunciation. Year 9 pupils were able to express food preferences, with full sentences and appropriate verb endings. In Year 10, pupils were able to discuss the weather in Spain and suggest places for holidays. Year 11 pupils could write an account of an accident in Spanish, using a range of appropriate vocabulary. Pupils' overall attainment in Spanish by the end of Year 11 is well above average and their achievement is very good. Pupils with learning difficulties, the gifted and talented, and those who speak English as an additional language achieve similarly to others.

197. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good and in Years 10 and 11, very good. Teachers are confident in their use of foreign languages. Such excellent models result in pupils with very good listening and speaking skills. A good start to lessons, clearly linked to previous learning, increases understanding. A Year 9 French lesson began by pupils answering quick questions about a school timetable, to consolidate vocabulary. In the most effective lessons, expectations are high and pupils acquire new knowledge through dynamic teaching. For example, Year 7 pupils learned school routines in French through mime and guesswork. Teachers and pupils work at very good pace, and lessons are purposeful. Two less effective lessons in French were seen, in Years 9 and 11. Though these lessons were still satisfactory overall, their pace was slower, with objectives and instructions lacking the clarity seen in all others. Pupils' social and cultural development is very well fostered through the subject.
198. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards are improving, and statutory requirements are met. Pupils' spoken skills have developed well and with more spontaneous use of language, should improve still further. Leadership is good and in-house training will further enhance this. Members of the department are committed to improvement and welcome the direction offered by the team leader. There are appropriate assessment procedures. Good display helps pupils learn and classrooms are well equipped, with access to the Internet. However, the use of ICT is limited. The monitoring of teaching and learning needs further development and schemes of work need review.

## Latin

199. Latin is offered to pupils in Years 9 to 11, following an after-school trial period at the end of Year 8. Pupils who wish to continue are taught by a specialist teacher three times a week, in a mixture of timetabled, lunch time and after-school lessons. Numbers taking up the subject are high, with an average of 15 pupils in each year. Ninety per cent of pupils who took GCSE Latin in 2002 attained grades A\*-C, with half of those entered gaining A\* grades. This is a very good result, above the national average, and reflects good progress over the course.
200. Teaching in the one Year 11 lesson seen was satisfactory. The teacher's good subject knowledge gave pupils a secure basis for their study of the story of Pygmalion in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Pupils concentrated well, making good progress in translating the text. Though the lesson was devoted to notetaking, teaching was methodical and careful, so that pupils consolidated their grasp of grammatical terms, and could talk fluently and economically about the language. They had very positive attitudes towards the subject and were clearly benefiting from it. The study of Latin enriches the school's curriculum, and makes a good contribution to the cultural development of these pupils. Though it has proved hard to find a place for Latin within lesson times, the school does very well to offer it, and should continue its efforts to provide it in its normal curricular time.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The very good quality of teaching and learning promotes well above average standards of attainment, good achievement and outstanding GCSE results.
- Pupils' exemplary behaviour, positive attitudes and excellent relationships contribute strongly to their high standards.
- Very good extra-curricular opportunities enhance pupils' musical experience and their personal development.
- Very good leadership and management have ensured good improvement since the previous inspection and a high profile for the subject in the school.

### Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

201. On entry, pupils' standards of attainment are close to the national average. In Year 9 attainment is well above the national average. School assessments of pupils in Year 9 in 2002 were well above the national average. Over 80 per cent of pupils gained National Curriculum Level 5 or above. Achievement of pupils from entry to the end of Year 9 is good.

202. Standards of attainment in Year 11 are also well above the national average. GCSE results have improved significantly over the last three years. In 2002 over 90 per cent of pupils gained passes at A\* - C grade, a result well above the national average for girls. As over 60 per cent of these gained A\* and A grades, achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good.
203. During Year 7 pupils gain the basic elements of good working practice. These include good performing and composing skills, how to work together and how to evaluate their own and others' work. The very good systematic training of analytical listening and singing in Year 7 provides pupils with their most important assets in meeting the demands of music in subsequent years.
204. Pupils in Year 8 build positively on this good foundation. Their composing skills are developing well and they understand how to realise their creative ideas in convincing musical structures, with varied textures and colours, dynamics and speed. They can perform well either individually or together on electronic keyboards and tuned and untuned percussion instruments. Pupils in Year 9 successfully apply their developing critical awareness to their accumulated practical skills in performing and composing to meet the challenging expectations set by their teachers. The high proportion of pupils who have instrumental or singing lessons increases the musical resources available to all pupils. At the present time, subject-specific computer technology is not available to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, although its extension to them is a priority in the subject development plan.
205. All pupils taking GCSE in Years 10 and 11 play instruments or sing well. Most perform at a high standard and have considerable performing experience. They are developing computer skills for composing and arranging. They are competent in audio recording and editing. Their very good analytical listening and evaluative skills means that they can assimilate ideas for their own compositions from music they hear or perform. Their written work shows accurate knowledge, good technical language and focussed expression.
206. Pupils' very good achievement is the result of consistently very good teaching and learning and their own very good attitudes and behaviour. Teachers challenge and stimulate pupils, and encourage independence and collaboration. Effective differentiation combined with strong support means that pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as other pupils. Talented pupils often make better progress because they have very good opportunities to extend their abilities in the classroom and take responsibility during extra-curricular activities.
207. Pupils show impressive levels of concentration, attention and co-operation. They are enthusiastic and committed to improving and refining their work. Their relationships with each other and their teachers are excellent. They are mutually supportive and give generously of their abilities to help each other. Their experiences in music contribute strongly to their very good personal moral and social development.
208. Through very good schemes of work pupils are aware of the characteristics and value of music from many cultures. They were observed working with Indian, African and American source material. Music offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities that extend pupils' experiences well. Thirty five per cent of pupils have instrumental or singing lessons of high quality in the school. Pupils' good attendance and regular practice promote good progress. Professionally coached choral and instrumental ensembles are well attended and concerts are performed in school, in the local community and on tours abroad.
209. The previous inspection report identified several key subject aspects that required improvement. These included guidance and support for pupils with special educational needs, pace of learning, continuity and progression in the curriculum, assessment and access to ethnic music. It is indicative of the very good leadership of the head of department that these same aspects are now subject strengths. Thus, improvement since the previous inspection is good. Management and co-ordination are also very good and careful lesson and curricular planning minimises the adverse effects of limited accommodation. As a result music has a high profile and is a strong cultural force in the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths
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- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons with a range of activities that allow all groups of pupils to learn well.
- There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils, who have very positive attitudes to their work.
- The very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning.
- Staff are committed to improvement and success.

#### Areas for improvement

- The allocation of time to the subject in Years 10 and 11 does not allow the curriculum to be taught in sufficient depth.
- Results in GCSE sports studies need to be improved.
- Curricular links with partner primary schools are not developed sufficiently.

210. In the 2002 GCSE sports studies examination, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C was below the national average; however, all eighteen pupils achieved a pass grade. Pupils performed less well in physical education than in their other examination subjects. However, high-attaining pupils, including the talented, achieve very well in a range of sports at borough, city and sometimes national levels. Individuals and teams achieve particularly well in athletics, cross-country and dance.
211. Standards in lessons for and work seen by Year 9 pupils are above average. They achieve well, given their average attainment on entry in Year 7. Most understand basic fitness principles and use individual and team skills well in games. Their performance in dance shows good creativity and technical competence. High-attaining pupils demonstrate very good tactical awareness; they effectively plan and adjust team tactics. The few lower-attaining pupils show limited spatial awareness in games and their choreographic skills are below average in dance. Most pupils, across all years, show good numerical skills, for example in scoring and measuring performance. Pupils listen well, speak confidently and often use appropriate technical vocabulary. In all years, pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress.
212. Standards in work seen by Year 11 pupils are above average. They achieve well, because of good teaching, specialist facilities and positive attitudes. Pupils consolidate previous work and achieve beyond expectations, if one takes account of the inadequate time allocation in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils understand training principles, evaluate performance well and show good skills. They demonstrate very good choreographic and performance skills in dance. Higher-attaining pupils, including the talented, use a variety of tactics and skills to outmanoeuvre opponents. They are successful in extra-curricular sport, a few reaching national level. A small minority lacks body management in dance; their poor hand-eye co-ordination and spatial awareness affect performance in racket sports. Most GCSE pupils are on course to achieve beyond the national average at the end of Year 11. They have a good understanding of the theoretical aspects, and research and present written assignments well. A few pupils lack extended writing skills and their retention of facts is limited.
213. The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Teachers are knowledgeable and manage pupils well. Work is planned to suit all pupils and those with special educational needs and English as an additional language make good progress. For example, in a Year 8 hockey lesson, lower-attaining pupils made good progress because the teacher simplified instructions, modified tasks and used demonstrations. The learning of higher-attaining pupils, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and extra-curricular sport. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn independently in most lessons. In a Year 9 dance lesson, pupils planned and performed work, evaluated peer performance and recorded judgements. Learning is less effective in the small proportion of lessons where teaching is more prescriptive and pupils are given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas.
214. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes. They are co-operative, maintain good relationships with their teachers and work at a productive pace. Small numbers underachieve because of poor concentration. Most pupils, across all years, improve their numerical skills through opportunities to score, measure and record performance. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These approaches improve the technical vocabulary, speaking skills and listening ability of pupils across the attainment levels, including those learning to speak English. The subject makes good provision for pupils to develop their ICT skills. Video camcorders are used to analyse performance, heart rate monitors feature in fitness work and GCSE pupils' learning is enhanced through using the Internet and computer software.
215. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed head of department has a strong commitment to improvement and success and is ably supported by an experienced team of specialists. Good procedures exist to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' standards. Assessment systems are good and are used well to monitor pupils' progress and set

targets. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

216. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The good quality of teaching has improved further, standards in Years 7 to 9 have risen, and are now good. The GCSE examination was introduced in 2001. Facilities have improved, particularly in ICT and fitness aspects. To improve further, the department needs an increase in the time allocation in Years 10 and 11, and to develop curricular links with partner primary schools, and raise standards in GCSE sports.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Excellent results have been achieved in the GCSE short course examination.
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour result in a positive classroom atmosphere.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment and target-setting procedures need further development for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- Professional development is needed for subject teachers, to strengthen their knowledge of the subject.
- The RE curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 should be reviewed to ensure it fully meets the requirements of the local agreed syllabus. A way should be found to ensure that pupils taking Latin in Years 9 to 11 are not denied RE.

217. Pupils being prepared for the short course GCSE examination attain very high standards. Results, since the course was introduced two years ago, have been outstanding. In 2001 the school entered 29 pupils for the examination and all of these pupils passed with just one failing to get an A\*-C grade. In 2002 the school entered 96 pupils for the examination with 89 per cent obtaining A\* to C passes and 21 pupils attaining an A\* grade. In lessons seen, pupils following the short course GCSE examination achieve very well and there are examples of outstanding achievement. This was seen, for example, in one pupil's achievement in the 2002 examination; she gained an A grade when her attainment in core subjects at the end of Year 9 would have indicated an E as her most likely result. Another pupil attained an A\* when her Year 9 work suggested a D.
218. Achievement is satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 with examples of very good achievement found in individual pieces of work.
219. Standards in Year 9 are satisfactory. Work in folders is often neatly presented, sometimes word processed and attractively illustrated, but a number of uncorrected factual errors and misunderstandings are evident.
220. Pupils' behaviour and attitude in class are typically good, often very good, and sometimes excellent. Pupils respond well to the tasks set and work productively and co-operatively.
221. The quality of teaching is good overall – satisfactory for pupils in Years 7-9 and very good for those in Years 10 and 11. The department has a specialist head of department, and five other teachers doing some RE teaching. One part-time teacher has taught the subject successfully to A level, and among the non-specialist staff are those who bring considerable knowledge and expertise of the subject to their teaching. Others need professional development to add subject knowledge to their undoubted teaching skills. In two excellent lessons seen, one in Year 10 and the other in Year 11, not a minute was wasted; the teachers demonstrated high levels of knowledge and exemplary classroom management combined with sensitivity to the needs of individual pupils, and the ability to create an atmosphere of good humoured diligence. Pupils responded by participating eagerly and attentively and being willing to express their thoughts on quite sensitive matters, confident that their classmates and the teacher would give them necessary time and support. In less good lessons with younger pupils, the teacher lacked knowledge of the subject, and a narrow range of resources and teaching methods was being used. In such lessons, pupils need the freedom to learn more actively, for example by reading and noting for themselves, deciding on the materials they will use.
222. The school's scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 has been well revised recently, but still includes much Biblical material, taught in a largely uncritical way. Some material on world religions that has been

introduced would benefit from being revised to give more prominence to contemporary faith communities, rather than to the history of the religions. Closer adherence to the local agreed syllabus would ensure that the school builds on work done by these pupils in their primary schools.

223. The subject is led by a long-serving teacher with good subject knowledge. In recent years, she has overseen necessary curriculum development, though this still has some way to go. Development is needed in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the department and in subject training for teachers.
224. The last inspection report detailed insufficient time given to RE in Years 10 and 11, and variable standards in non-examination classes. These issues have been met. The report also drew attention to the lack of teaching about non-Christian religions before Year 9. This has been addressed, though there is more to do. The problem of pupils who study Latin not receiving any RE in Years 9, 10 and 11 persists, and so the school fails to meet a statutory requirement in relation to these pupils.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

### ***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	13	85	74	39	31	3.0	2.3
Chemistry	13	100	88	46	43	3.1	2.9
Biology	11	91	85	45	36	2.6	2.7
Physics	4	100	89	50	45	4.5	3.0
Design and technology (product design)	5	100	90	20	35	2.6	2.8
Business studies	25	96	89	16	32	2.6	2.7
Art	18	100	89	67	49	3.7	3.0
Music	2	100	95	100	45	4.5	3.2
Geography	20	100	92	20	43	2.6	3.0
History	14	100	93	21	42	2.6	3.0
Sociology	10	70	87	20	37	2.0	2.7
English literature	32	100	96	15	39	2.7	3.0
French	2	100	89	100	25	5.0	2.9

### ***GCE A level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	7	100	89	71	44	8.2	6.0
Chemistry	4	100	92	25	46	6.5	6.1
Biology	4	75	93	50	34	5	5.6
Physics	1	0	91	0	45	0	6.1
Design and technology (product design)	5	100	94	20	37	6.0	6.0
Business studies	13	100	93	38	34	7.0	5.6
Art	13	100	98	38	49	6.0	6.8
Music	2	100	94	0	36	8	5.9
Geography	16	93	91	25	33	4.0	6.2
History	4	100	87	25	36	4	5.5
Sociology	15	100	88	53	38	7	5.5
English literature	21	95	96	33	36	5.7	5.9

French	6	100	37	100	87	8.7	5.5
Spanish	3	100	88	100	38	10.0	5.5
VCE advanced health and social care	4	100	65	0	44	15.0	10.8

### ***Intermediate vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		Average point distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
NVQ business administration				100			
GNVQ health and social care	4	4	-	0	-	-	-

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS**

### **MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

225. In mathematics, the inspection covered the A2-level and the AS-level courses offered by the school. Students cover modules in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. There are sufficient opportunities for post-16 students to re-take GCSE mathematics, but this aspect of the provision was not inspected. Currently, there is no provision to enhance the key skill of application of number, outside specialist mathematics courses and a vocational course.

226. In science, the focus of the inspection was on biology, but physics and chemistry were also sampled. In the physics examination last summer, the sole candidate obtained one of the higher grades. Results in chemistry were lower than expected from students' GCSE performance. One lesson in each subject was observed and in both the quality of teaching was good. Students in chemistry demonstrated good practical skills whilst investigating the preparation of compounds used in the dyeing industry. Physics students studied luminosity, very effectively using laboratory apparatus and the Internet.

### **Mathematics**

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

#### **Strengths**

- The students' achievement in mathematics is very good given their starting points.
- Students achieve equally successfully in all areas of mathematics.
- The department provides well for the needs of individual students. It offers further mathematics for a small number of students.
- The relationships between teachers and students are good. Students have confidence in their teachers.
- Teachers give generously of their time to help students outside class time.
- An increasing number of students is opting to study mathematics.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- There is insufficient curricular time for post-16 mathematics classes.

227. In 2001, overall standards achieved in A2-level and AS-level examinations were very high compared to the national average. Results in the 2002 A2 and AS examinations improved further. A very high proportion of the students obtained A and B grades and no student was ungraded. In the AS-level examinations, the higher A and B grades were obtained by over 80 per cent of the cohort, and no student obtained less than a grade C. Students achieved similar very good results in the A2-level examinations. Two-thirds of the students obtained grades A and B, and no student achieved less than a D grade. There was no significant difference in students' results in the various mathematics modules studied. Given the students' starting points, these results represent very good progress throughout their time in the sixth form. Two students at the early stages of learning English also achieved very

well in their module tests, in spite of some language difficulties encountered, particularly in the statistics units.

228. Most students re-sitting GCSE mathematics in 2002 improved their results by at least a grade. Those beginning the course with grade D successfully achieved grade C. However, for a few students, attendance at these classes is erratic, mainly because of the demands of vocational courses. As a result they make less than expected progress.
229. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' notebooks in the current Years 12 and 13 confirms a range of attainment that is overall well above average. In the pure mathematics modules, students in Year 13 had very strong manipulative algebra skills and good recall of trigonometrical identities. As a result, they applied their prior knowledge and skills successfully to their taxing work on forming Cartesian equations from given parameters. A similar Year 12 group built systematically on their GCSE work to deepen significantly their understanding of radians and trigonometry functions. Surprisingly, some of these able students stumbled over calculations involving ratios and the simplification of fractions. Year 12 students following a statistics module understood rapidly how to apply problem solving to their understanding of the normal distribution. In a Year 13 mechanics lesson, students made good use of their knowledge of bearings to work with questions on relative velocity related to their coursework. Generally, students develop good independent study skills that reinforce the positive support they receive from their teachers. As a result, the majority of students who begin the study of mathematics complete the course very successfully. Students report a high degree of satisfaction with their progress.
230. Teaching is good overall. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and understand clearly the requirements of the examination specifications. The best lessons are carefully structured conceptually and give thought to the development of the students' thinking skills, as for example, in a lesson on trigonometrical functions and in lessons on relative velocity. Teachers use questioning very robustly to ascertain students' understanding. The marking of students' work is regular and helpful and teachers monitor students' progress very well. Generally, in the lessons seen, students would benefit from more opportunities to engage in activities to present their work to their peers. However, the lower than average time available to mathematics restricts the methods teachers can adopt.
231. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The department has significantly raised attainment in examinations. Teaching remains good and the students benefit from very thorough individual guidance. Within the constraints of the current timetable, the mathematics department's provision for post-16 mathematics is very well managed. However, the limited time available for Year 12 mathematics relies on the generosity and commitment, of both teachers and students, to their mathematics. This issue remains to be addressed. Through its post-16 provision, the mathematics department makes a very valuable contribution to raising the aspirations of individual students, including those who are at the early stages of learning English.

## Biology

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

### Strengths

- Students achieve well in their lessons because the quality of teaching is good and they have a positive attitude to learning.
- Teachers have a very good command of the subject and are committed to raising standards.
- Relationships with students are very good.
- Students need more confidence in their practical skills.

### Areas for improvement

- The provision for and use of ICT need improving.
- Teaching methods need some modification to encourage students to participate more in lessons.
- Some students lack confidence in their practical skills.

232. In the 2002 A2 examination, the proportion of students attaining the higher grades was in line with the last confirmed national average, that of 2001. A minority of students failed to achieve a pass grade. Results were similar to those of the previous two years and were in line with or higher than those predicted by their previous attainment. Satisfactory value was therefore added to the majority of students' achievement. The performance of students in the 2002 AS-level examination was in line with

that predicted by their GCSE results. All students were graded and almost a third were awarded the higher grades.

233. Inspection evidence shows that in Year 13 standards are above average and students are achieving well. Written work on the topics of homeostasis and the structure of the kidney was comprehensive and well presented. In one lesson observed, students demonstrated a sound understanding of nervous conduction and were later able to relate this to the physiology of vision.

234. Students in Year 12 are performing as expected in the modules which they have so far studied. Written work indicates, for example, that they have a sound understanding of the core principles related to biological molecules and cell structure. In one lesson observed, however, their recall of GCSE work was poor. They were unable to recall the names of simple enzymes, and in the associated practical work their knowledge of basic techniques was limited. Some students lacked confidence in their own practical skills.
235. Students in both years work hard and have a desire to succeed. Year 13 students show some degree of confidence in answering questions when asked but many are reluctant to initiate discussion or challenge concepts. Students' files contain copious notes, many compiled by themselves, but there is a large quantity of printed material and worksheets. Some of this is intended to replace notes but students do not always use it to best advantage. Work is usually marked, often effectively, with valuable, informative comments, telling students what they need to do to improve. Students use the Internet for research, but the use of ICT in the classroom is limited, due to the lack of access to sufficient suitable hardware. This inhibits progress. There are instances, however, where it is used effectively. For example, students used a photocell to collect and display data when investigating the turbidity of a yeast culture fermenting under different conditions. Year 13 students recently attended a residential field course, so enhancing their skills of investigation.
236. The quality of teaching is good overall and students make good gains in knowledge as a result of the teachers' enthusiasm to share their knowledge with them. Teachers' relationships with students are very good, and teachers have an excellent command of the subject. Lessons are carefully prepared, with clear objectives. For example, in a well-planned lesson on the function of rods and cones, Year 13 students carried out an investigation to determine their field of vision. They were encouraged to present and challenge hypotheses. Expectation was high and progress was good as a result. In the Year 12 group, the teacher skilfully encouraged students to use their knowledge to carry out an investigation into the factors affecting the action of several enzymes. However, although eager to learn and despite the teachers' efforts, they were reluctant to participate in discussion and their recall of GCSE work was poor. Many lacked confidence in their own practical skills, but with perseverance all made satisfactory progress.
237. The subject is well managed. Teachers work well together and share the teaching in both years. They are skilful in assessing what students do not know and targeting activities to promote their progress. A formal system for regular progress review and target setting allows students to monitor their progress.
238. The department has responded well to the observations in the last report about sixth form provision. Standards are now much higher and the number of students electing to take biology has increased dramatically. The quality of teaching now ensures that students enjoy the subject and share the teacher's enthusiasm.

## ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

238. The focus of the inspection was on design and technology (DT). All aspects of the subject were considered as part of the inspection.

### Design and technology

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of designing and making fashion products is good.
- Staff are committed to the improvement of the provision for DT in the sixth form.

#### Areas for improvement

- The facilities for working with resistant materials do not suitably promote the product design course.
- The shortage of computers for use in designing and making limits students' attainment.

239. Students generally enter the courses in the sixth form from Year 11 in the school. Few come from other schools. A surprising number start the AS-level courses without having studied a GCSE in the subject; five of the nine who completed the AS course in fashion design in 2002 had not completed a GCSE course in the subject.

240. Standards in DT in the AS and A2 examinations in 2001 were generally in line with national average levels, and rose in 2002. In work seen during the inspection, standards varied between courses. Students' achievement varies also; it is never less than satisfactory, and sometimes good. Of the nine students entered for AS level fashion design in 2002, all passed the exam and eight succeeded in gaining a grade between A and C. This is a creditable result for a recently developed course within the school. Standards are improving as the staff becomes more familiar with the requirements. The students seen working in product design showed average skills when working with resistant materials, such as timber and metal. There were no examples of practical work of high quality, but the folders showed a better standard of work using graphics and design methods than the practical 3D work. Some very good work of high attainment was being produced in fashion design, where both hand and machine work were being completed to a good standard. As the courses are recent innovations, there can be no comparison with standards seen in the previous inspection.
241. Of the limited amount of teaching seen, all was satisfactory or better. In a well-taught fashion design lesson, the teacher motivated the students powerfully, and the room was a positive and welcoming place. Students were purposeful in their work and remained focussed throughout the lesson. The level of challenge set for students of fashion design is good and the photographs and displays of previously completed work gives them some stimulating ideas to follow. The level of expectation is high in this area. The teaching of product design is satisfactory, the teacher demonstrating suitable subject knowledge and good design ideas. Wide opportunities are given for project work, but the room size restrains students from choosing large projects, such as furniture construction. The practical room used for product design is cluttered and untidy and this does not present a suitable design-led image for the course.
242. The students who have followed the fashion design courses have been very successful in gaining places on courses at degree level within the subject. Students have been accepted on courses of considerable repute within the London area and their achievement is shown clearly to others who are currently studying for either AS or A2 examinations. This is very motivating for them.
243. Although part of its development plan for the future, the department currently has insufficient ICT equipment for the needs of these courses. The use of ICT is not yet planned for enough in the normal routines of designing and making, and this is having a detrimental effect on the standards of work being produced. The teachers have attended courses on current design software programmes; there is some evidence of their use, but it is at too low a level for it yet to have a major impact on standards of work.
244. A teacher who currently does not have the opportunity to teach sixth form students ably leads the department. She shows very good leadership and the development of the subject is going very well. Day-to-day management is less secure, but is satisfactory. The difficulties presented by not having the department's rooms together are unhelpful in this context. The head of department works some distance away from the sixth form work areas.

## BUSINESS

245. The focus for inspection was the AS and A-level business studies and the NVQ business administration course.

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

### Strengths

- Standards are improving, as shown in AS and A-level examination results.
- Very good teaching and learning produce good, and often very good, achievement.
- Very good relationships between students and teachers result in productive learning.
- Leadership and management are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The curriculum should be further enhanced by links with local business and industry.
- Assessment procedures need greater consistency and closer relation to expected AS and A-level examination grades.

246. The AS and A2-level business studies and the NVQ business administration courses were inspected. The subjects are increasingly popular in the sixth form. Recent A2 level results have been above the

national average. The proportion of students achieving the higher A and B grades has also been above the average. In 2001, almost one in every two students achieved these higher grades and results for 2002 sustained this position. These results are consistently above those in other subjects within the school. The results in 2001 of the first cohort to take the AS-level course were below the national average with few students attaining the higher grades. The 2002 results showed significant improvement with two students in every three achieving the higher grades. At AS and A level most students perform above expectations based on entry qualifications, which are below average. A high proportion continues the course into Year 13 and completes the course. The NVQ course results have been above the national average, with all students attaining the competency pass level.

247. Standards are above the national average overall, although many students are working at higher levels. Achievement in relation to the previous results for these students is very good for most students, as over half had not previously studied business studies. Students have a good introduction to the Year 12 course in both subject content and relevant study skills. Students' work develops well over Year 12 and shows good knowledge and understanding of the business theory and practice covered. With the more advanced work in Year 13, most students continue to progress well, but the understanding of theoretical concepts by some is less secure. Course materials used are usually of high quality, but at times not sufficiently refined by students to gain greatest value for them. The detailed and thorough coverage of the course units would benefit from a summary review at the end of each unit. Very good case studies and progress tests are effective, and significantly develop understanding of topics taught. Critical analysis is being progressively and well developed throughout the course, but only higher attainers make use of reading outside the course. Students' work shows good planning and sound judgements, but few make links between topics studied. Project work is of good quality, with many students achieving standards of work greater than would be expected from their ability level, particularly on the practically based NVQ course.
248. Most students have a good attitude, show real interest and work conscientiously and well. Some, with limited background in the subject, persevere well to understand quite challenging concepts at the beginning of the Year 12 course. Students are generally well motivated and enjoy their work, but a few students do not always prepare themselves sufficiently for lessons and therefore assignments are not always completed to meet course deadlines. Relationships are very good and relaxed between students and teachers. Students find the course very satisfying and greatly appreciate the commitment given by staff.
249. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. In lessons, the teachers' very good subject knowledge underpins presentation and discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. Work is very well planned so that students of different attainment levels make good progress in lessons. Students learn effectively because lessons have a clear purpose, a suitable mixture of activities and involve the use of materials of high quality. Teachers have realistic expectations, and students work productively, at good pace. On the NVQ course, students do very well as they receive excellent support and advice when undertaking independent study. Employable skills, a major aspect of the course, are developing very well for most students and include two short blocks of work experience. The AS and A2-level courses need more links with local business and the inclusion of an element of work-related learning.
250. Leadership and management are very good. The subject has a very good sense of direction and purpose, shown in the well-planned curriculum for each course. The work of the department within the sixth form is continually being reviewed to seek improvements. Teaching methods need extending, so that students are less reliant on their teachers. Resources generally are good, and ICT facilities to support the course very good. The assessment of students' day-to-day work is good and their progress is well monitored. However, students' work needs more regular and consistent grading, and targeting in line with AS and A2-level grades.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

251. ICT was not a main focus of this inspection. It was, however, sampled. There is currently only one course offered, a key skills Level 3 course. The results are in line with expectations. The number of students is low. Teaching and learning are good. The quality of work seen indicates that students will continue to achieve success.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

252. No subject in this area was a main focus for inspection. However, three lessons of PE were inspected, two in Year 12 and one in Year 13. In all, teaching was good and students learnt well, making good progress in skills and knowledge. Their attainment was at least in line with the expected level, and often above.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

253. The focus was on health and social care. The examination courses are the advanced vocational certificate in education (AVCE) and the intermediate GNVQ. GNVQ students were taking part in work experience and only their coursework was inspected.

### Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is very good, stimulates interest and provides a firm foundation for students to gain in knowledge.
- The procedures for reviewing and assessing students' work are very good.
- The positive attitudes and enthusiasm of students for their work are helping to raise achievement.
- Provision of work experience enables students to use real contexts in which to apply their knowledge and gain wider understanding.

#### Areas for improvement

- More regular monitoring of teaching and learning are needed, to raise standards further.
- Ways need to be found to moderate the heavy workload of students, especially in AVCE course.

254. Standards are good. In 2001, there was a small number of students taking the new AVCE course and comparison with national results is therefore unreliable. The majority of students start the courses with lower than average grades at GCSE than is normally expected for sixth form courses. Attainment by the majority of students is at or above predicted levels. All AVCE students attained a D or E grade.

255. In the intermediate GNVQ course, one student gained a distinction but another did not complete the course. Two-thirds of the GNVQ course students attained a pass grade; the others, who found the work too challenging, concentrated on a smaller number of units and gained certificates. In 2002, there was a small but significant rise in attainment in both GNVQ and AVCE courses. However, there is still a minority of students who do not complete their courses due to poor attendance, or who struggle to meet the standards required. The subject is gaining popularity and more able students are now taking both courses.

256. Standards of work seen in GNVQ and AVCE are above expected levels, and students make good progress. Students are enthusiastic and take pride in their work, with well-organised files and assignments enhanced by word processing and photographs. In AVCE coursework there is a perceptive child study with detailed analysis of the child's growth and development. Students have designed and implemented educational toys and their evaluative judgements, based on real experiences, are reaching high standards. GNVQ and AVCE students benefit from regular work placements during Year 12 in nurseries and residential care homes, and have a variety of opportunities to listen to visiting health and social care professionals. These experiences provide valuable contexts for students to link theory and good practice in coursework. GNVQ students achieve high pass rates in a first aid course, which then benefits one of their coursework units. Overall, their work is achieving higher standards than previously. Throughout the AVCE course, students have a heavy workload from studying a range of different units in parallel. As a result, they tend to concentrate on fulfilling the criteria for C to E grade achievement, at the expense of the higher grades, in order to meet unit deadlines. For some students, this leads to disappointing results. Standards improve in Year 13. Students benefit from the experience of presenting assignments, and use the assessment criteria well to become good independent learners. Results in coursework are better than in examinations.

257. Overall, standards of teaching are very good. A large number of teachers are responsible for teaching different units. Although they are not all health and social care specialists, they have very good or excellent understanding of their different subject areas and this lends breadth to the course. Teachers provide individual support for students in lessons and tutorials, which often results in very good progress for individual students. A firm foundation of knowledge is built up through a range of

stimulating and practical activities. For example, a science specialist helped Year 13 students to measure breathing rates and develop skills of data analysis; in a psychology unit, Year 12 students were encouraged to consider their own life experiences and so to consolidate their understanding of behaviourist theories. Work is marked regularly, with very good reviews of coursework for both GNVQ and AVCE. Students know where they have been successful and how work can be improved. Assessment at the end of assignments shows clearly how well students have met the criteria.

258. Leadership and management of health and social care are good. All aspects within the teacher in charge's control are all managed to high standards. She has responsibility for assessment and standardisation of work and holds useful meetings with the large number of teaching staff. In addition, the management of the work experience programme is very good, and attention to detail ensures the welfare and safety of students whilst on placements. There is good support from the head of sixth form who has responsibility for recruiting students and monitoring results. Individual teachers take responsibility for monitoring the progress of students in their own units. At present, because there is a large number of teachers who volunteer to teach elements of the course, the teacher in charge does not have responsibility for the overall evaluation of results, and for monitoring teaching and learning to improve standards further. The subject has continued to make good progress since the last inspection.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

259. The focus of the inspection was art and design, in which there are 37 students in Years 12 and 13. Work was also sampled in music, in which four lessons were observed and a range of students' performing, composing and analytical listening was assessed. Recent AS and A2 results in music are above the national average overall, although entry numbers are very small. Very good teaching and learning and positive student attitudes promote just above average national standards of attainment in both years. Achievement in relation to prior learning is satisfactory.

### Art and design

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

#### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.
- Students make good progress over the course.
- Good support and guidance are given to students.
- The enrichment of students' learning, through gallery and museum visits and school journeys, is a strength of the art curriculum.

#### Areas for improvement

- Procedures for the regular assessment of attainment and progress need further improvement.
- There is no system for the recording of informal, ongoing assessment and discussion.

260. In 2001, the results attained in the GCE AS-level examination were above the national average, and those in the A2 examination were somewhat below. Standards have been steadily rising over the last four years. Results in 2002 were higher again, so that the proportion of students gaining the top two grades exceeded the 2001 national average. In both 2001 and 2002, almost all gained at least a grade E.
261. The standards of work seen in Year 12 and in Year 13 are in line with expected levels nationally. Students produce substantial bodies of work around broad themes. They make good progress over the two year course. Sketchbooks are well used to collect images and to develop ideas, often through language. Students make insightful written commentaries and evaluations of artists' work and their own. They relate their work closely to that of other artists. Having regular access to the Tate Modern gallery and other London galleries, students have a particular knowledge and understanding of contemporary art. Students are able to use a good range of media in combination, together with printmaking and fluent drawing. Outcomes are produced in a range of materials and scales, with particular strengths in painting and mixed media constructions. Students are able to use ICT to modify images in the development of their work. Students talk well about their work; they are able to describe its development and their intentions for its realisation.
262. The quality of teaching and learning are consistently good. In one quarter of lessons seen they were very good. Teachers support individual students very well. Regular discussions about their progress

ensure students are clear about their achievements and what they must do to improve. However, no formal assessments and no written evaluations are made. Students keep no record of their valuable discussions with teachers. Work is well matched to students' needs, including those who have not studied art and design to GCSE level. Students are able to plan effectively and work with increasing independence. In this way students are suitably challenged, including higher-attaining ones. Students show commitment to their studies and are very positive about the quality of the course, the support of their teachers and the resources made available to them. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, both technically and of the wider field of art. They are able to help students to solve technical problems and to develop their work in historical and contemporary contexts. For example, a teacher demonstrated how to use a digital camera, with due regard for conventions of subject lighting. The student was then able to load her picture into the computer and begin to modify the images. Students are able to make good use of London galleries and museums and of the courses and workshops that they organise. For example, during the inspection a Year 13 group spent a morning studying in the Tate Modern with their teacher. Their gallery work informs their contextual and critical studies. Students have access to very good information and guidance about studies beyond the sixth form.

263. The subject is well led and managed. Through its documentation and its philosophy, a clear educational lead is provided. The subject makes a very good contribution to students' personal development. For example, they benefit from the opportunity to travel to Paris and to New York during their two-year course and to study major art collections. Teachers are well qualified and have regular access to professional training and development. The management of resources is good, including the development of ICT provision. However, the monitoring of the work of the department, including teaching, is under-developed. Students lack access to a dedicated working space, which limits their opportunities for private study, as the studios are heavily timetabled.
264. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Results, which were previously described as poor, have been rising for the past four years and now are at least in line with national averages. The subject now attracts much larger numbers.

## HUMANITIES

265. The focus of the inspection was on geography, but other subjects were sampled. These were history, government and politics, philosophy, religious education and sociology.
266. In history, results have been below expected levels and the retention of students into the A2 course has been disappointing in the last two years. However, the quality of work seen in the inspection shows improvement from this position and the number of students in teaching groups is rising. In the lesson sampled, teaching was good and students' commitment and the use of assessment and feedback to students are strengths.
267. In government and politics, results are in line with expected levels. Pupils are committed to the subject and produce work of a good standard. Teaching was effective in the lesson sampled. The subject has been offered to students for the last two years, but its development is limited by timetable and room constraints.
268. In philosophy, results at AS level are below expected levels, but show improvement on the previous year. Teaching was good in the lesson seen. Teaching expertise is a strength.
269. Religious education is not offered as an examination subject. Year 13 students benefit from a short course which introduces a religious perspective to current events.
270. In sociology, where standards are above expected levels, teaching and learning in the lesson sampled were good. The standards of work seen were above average and the students' attitude was positive.

## Geography

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

### Strengths

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good.
- Teachers are very enthusiastic about their subject.

- Leadership of the department is good.
- Recruitment to and retention in sixth form courses are high.

Areas for improvement

- Resources to support learning in the school library need improvement.

271. The number of students following the courses in Years 12 and 13 has risen significantly in recent years, as has the attainment of students on entry to the course. In 2001, results at A2 level were broadly in line with the national average with 28 per cent achieving grades A or B and 93 per cent achieving grades A-E. In 2002 the proportion achieving A or B fell to 12 per cent, but all students passed in the range A-E.
272. Overall, students make good progress. Evidence from the tracking of students' performance in A2 examinations shows that, overall, these students have made to good progress to achieve these grades. Variations in the grades achieved each year can be related to the levels of students' prior attainment. The results of the AS examination in 2002, and associated tracking data, show that the subject is recruiting higher-attaining students and that they are continuing to make good progress.
273. Evidence from the inspection confirms that standards are rising. Year 12 students demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the structure of the earth and how this leads to plate tectonics and plate movement. Their research on weathering shows a good understanding of physical processes and an ability to assimilate and process information. They have made good progress from GCSE and the retention of students from the AS course to the A2 course is now good. Year 13 students made good use of their existing knowledge of housing in the developing world in identifying the advantages and disadvantages of strategies to help improve this housing. Again, students have made good progress. The curriculum offered is broad and balanced, with students gaining in knowledge of human and physical systems and using their understanding of these processes in geographical enquiry.
274. Overall, teaching is good. Some is very good and some is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and impart this well to their students. They also explain the requirements of the examination system, so that students can understand what is expected of them and respond well. Students' work is marked regularly, to examination criteria, and the interpretation of mark schemes is shared with them. Students are given valuable, detailed feedback, both verbally and in writing, to help them improve their work. Students' performance in the subject is monitored, based on previous examination results and work marked recently. Students have a very good attitude in lessons, and relationships between teacher and students, and among students themselves, are also very good. These factors combine to create good learning, and ensure that students make good progress. Teaching incorporates a variety of learning styles. Students enjoy participating in the activities presented and respond with enthusiasm. Group work is well used in lessons to develop research and presentation skills. Where teaching is very good, lessons are particularly well planned, with a good variety of activities and presented enthusiastically. Literacy and numeracy are developed in lessons, with students' speaking and listening being well developed in lessons where they are asked to make presentations and take questions subsequently. Fieldwork is an important part of the course and also helps develop numeracy skills in presentation of data. Students use ICT to present their field and course work. Where teaching is less good a didactic approach is used; this does not encourage an enthusiastic response from students and it is only the good attitude of the students and their sustained concentration that ensure their learning continues.
275. The department is well led. There is a clear vision of what needs to be done to improve. There has been an improvement in standards and an increase in numbers of students on the courses. Students' performance is monitored and tracked, to ensure students make the expected progress. The head of department monitors teaching, which is evaluated and used to make decisions as to the relative contribution of different teachers. There are regular meetings of teachers. Accommodation is satisfactory; one room is large and inviting, while the second room is much smaller, and has to provide accommodation for classes in the main school. Resources are suitable, although texts in the school library are not suitable for the courses provided.
276. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in the standards of attainment. The most recent AS results and the good retention of students into the A2 course show this is likely to continue.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

277. The focus was on AS and A2-level courses in English and modern foreign languages. No other subjects were sampled. There are some 70 students following English literature courses at AS and A2 level.

### English

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

#### Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to students' clear progress in lessons.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is outstanding.
- Students are challenged to reach their potential through teachers' high expectations.
- Careful marking and target setting encourage progress and high achievement.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students would benefit from a wider range of English courses in the sixth form curriculum.
- The department should make it easier for students to be more actively involved in lessons.

278. Standards achieved in the 2002 AS and A2-level examinations were well below the national average for 2001. In A2 examinations in 2001, 23 per cent of students achieved A-B grades compared to 36 per cent nationally; all students achieved grades A-E, a result above the national figure. However, students' progress and achievement seen during the inspection were good when compared to their earlier performance in GCSE. Students consistently do better than expected.

279. The work seen during the inspection confirmed this picture of secure progress and achievement. Standards were at least in line with nationally expected levels. Students of all abilities write extended and well-organised essays. Most have a good grasp of technical terminology and apply it accurately. The best writing is insightful and assured. High standards are achieved in reading. All students interpret texts (visual and written) at least competently. Many, as in a lesson on *The Glass Menagerie*, are brought, through expert teaching, to readings of imaginative depth. Through a beautifully judged mixture of individual, paired and group work (supported by materials which helped shape and direct responses) students gained real insight into matters of character, plot, and theatrical technique. They were unquestionably challenged by what was required, but given exactly the right degree of support to make it manageable. When given the opportunity (as in the lesson just described) students are confident speakers. On occasions, because proceedings are too directly led by the teacher, students do not get sufficient opportunity to share and develop their perceptions through discussion.

280. Standards of teaching were very good overall. Of four lessons observed, two were outstanding, one good, and one satisfactory. All teachers have excellent subject knowledge. At best, that knowledge is accompanied by a clear understanding of how most effectively to use it to underpin students' own learning. For example, a Year 13 class studying *Lamia* were given a selection of possible sources for the poem. In carefully chosen groups (so that students of all abilities could be co-operatively supported) sections of the poem were explored to see how Keats develops the story to convey particular moods and effects. The careful staging of the tasks enabled students to make significant strides in understanding through discovery rather than by simply being told. It was teaching and learning of a high order. Not surprisingly, in such lessons, students' attitudes are excellent. They become keen, and progressively independent, learners. Students are always co-operative, but where the teaching was only satisfactory they were attentive rather than actively engaged.

281. Teachers' marking is an important feature of good teaching. Comments are consistently full and help students develop. Students' writing clearly improves through the close attention given to it, and through the procedures for drafting and regular review. Students are well supported academically and personally by their English teachers; they appreciate the careful attention they receive.

282. The leadership and management of sixth form English are very good. The standard of teaching and assessment has substantially improved since the last inspection. The head of department has clear and appropriate priorities for the subject's development, which match those elements identified during the inspection as areas for improvement. The first is to share the very best practice and to make it general. The second is to extend the range of choices open to students to include language as well as

literature (and eventually perhaps theatre studies) and by that means better match the interests and aptitudes of a greater range of students.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### French and Spanish

Overall, the quality of provision in French and Spanish is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Attainment in Years 12 and 13 is well above average and students make very good progress.
- The highest-attaining students have a very good knowledge of grammar and apply this well in class and homework.
- Teaching is very good, with well-structured lessons, which challenge students to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Individual lessons with French and Spanish language assistants result in very high standards of listening comprehension and speaking.

#### Areas for improvement

- The range of opportunities for students to pursue individual areas of interest and personal research could be expanded.

283. A2 level French and Spanish results have been consistently well above average in recent years, although with a low number of entries. In 2001, all six candidates obtained A-B grades in French. This was well above the national average of 38 per cent. The two students entered in 2002 attained similar results. Of the four students who took A2 level Spanish in 2001, 75 per cent obtained grade A. This was well above the national average of 39 per cent at grades A-B. The remaining student obtained grade C. In 2002, the two students entered gained grades B and C. In relation to performance in GCSE French and Spanish, results are consistently very good.

284. The evidence of work seen in lessons and students' files during the inspection shows that achievement in both foreign languages is very good. In Year 13, attainment in French and Spanish is well above average. In Year 12, students of French are able to speak confidently and convey their views and opinions effectively, employing a range of vocabulary and tenses. Their ability to deal with unpredictable language is developing. In Spanish, Year 12 students can translate a series of sentences, at speed. They are able to apply their understanding of grammar when they give talks on aspects of Spanish culture to the group. In both languages, highest-attaining students can write with accuracy on a range of topics, and this is consolidated by appropriate homework. In Year 13, students of French achieve very high standards of listening comprehension and speaking. They were able to take good notes during a lesson on film studies and contribute thoughtful responses to group discussions. In Spanish, Year 13 students demonstrate that they can interpret and critically appraise a film, answering almost entirely in the foreign language. Students have good research and study skills and use these to prepare talks and essays on aspects of French and Spanish literature and film.

285. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 12 and 13 is very good. High expectations encourage students to achieve of their best and to strive for accuracy. Teachers plan a well-structured, rich and challenging range of activities in French and Spanish. This enables students to acquire and practise language skills and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the foreign culture. Good use is made of the French and Spanish language assistants to develop listening comprehension and speaking skills. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and are well-informed about contemporary society in French and Spanish-speaking countries.

286. Students of French and Spanish approach their work with maturity, are attentive and show interest in the subject. They have been helped to develop strategies for understanding complex texts and spoken passages and can use these skills well. Most are keen to participate in discussions and by the end of Year 13 can sustain and develop their views well. They have good research skills and can use dictionaries and other reference works appropriately. Increased use of ICT requires development and would help students to pursue areas of personal research even further. Students' social and cultural skills are well fostered through their foreign language studies. They have opportunities to follow courses in France and Spain, and participate in specialist sixth form conferences in London.

287. Leadership and management of the department are good. Schemes of work meet the demands of the AS and A2-level examinations and teachers are encouraged to attend courses in order to keep up to date. Resources are appropriately deployed, although the use of the foreign language assistants almost exclusively with the sixth form has an impact on main school provision. Appropriate assessment procedures and monitoring of students' progress are in place. Take up of modern foreign languages is improving. Retention of students between Years 12 and 13 is excellent.