

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CENTRAL FOUNDATION BOYS' SCHOOL**

Islington

LEA area: Islington

Unique reference number: 100458

Headteacher: Ms Judith Fortune

Reporting inspector: Mrs Helen Hutchings  
7541

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> March 2003

Inspection number: 249622

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

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11 - 18

Gender of pupils: Male

School address: Cowper Street  
City Road  
London

Postcode: EC2A 4SH

Telephone number: 020 7253 3741

Fax number: 020 7336 7295

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Margaret Lally

Date of previous inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
7541	Helen Hutchings	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements.</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9537	Caroline Marden	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
12226	Caroline Clarke	Team inspector	English and drama	
17237	Andrew Lovett	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3242	Mike Newman	Team inspector	Science	
2495	Brian Munden	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design	
17808	Sue Orpin	Team inspector	Geography Citizenship	
10761	Pat Willan	Team inspector	History Special educational needs	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
32208	Derek Aitken	Team inspector	Modern languages	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the pupils?
11746	Robin Coulthard	Team inspector	Music Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?
3726	Maureen Bean	Team inspector	Physical education	
32231	Adrian Lyons	Team inspector	Business studies	
2496	Tony O'Sullivan	Team inspector	Core skills English as an additional language	
30973	Geoff Hancock	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

The inspection contractor was:

**e-Qualitas Ltd**, Langshaw, Pastens Road, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0RE.

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager, Inspection Quality Division, The Office for Standards in Education, Alexandra House, 33 Kingsway, London WC2B 6SE.

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 <b>ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>15</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	<b>63</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Central Foundation Boys' School is a smaller than average-sized, 11 -18 comprehensive school, with 743 boys on roll, including 41 students in the sixth form. It is popular and over-subscribed. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The school has a wide ethnic mix and the proportion speaking English as an additional language is very high. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of attainment which overall, is below national averages. A higher than average proportion of boys has special educational needs, mainly with specific learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural needs. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is well above the national average. The school has an internal inclusion centre which provides additional learning and pastoral support for pupils with challenging behaviour. The numbers who join or leave the school at times other than the normal time of entry are high, relative to other schools nationally. About a quarter of teachers have joined the school within the last two years and a small number of teaching posts are filled by temporary teachers.

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

Central Foundation Boys' School is a good and improving school. The standards achieved by pupils have improved considerably in recent years and, although their standards in GCSE are still below national averages, pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well in relation to their starting point when they enter the school. Teaching is good overall. Pupils are cared for well and there are very good arrangements for pupils' personal development. The headteacher provides very strong leadership and others fulfil their management responsibilities well. Given the good teaching, improvements in national tests and examinations, the good achievements of pupils and the quality of leadership, the school provides good value for money and the sixth form is cost effective.

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

- Pupils achieve well compared with their earlier levels as a result of much good teaching.
- Pupils form very good relationships with one another and with adults; racial harmony is very good.
- The curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of the boys; citizenship and personal, social and health education make a very valuable contribution to their personal development.
- Pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language receive good support so that they make good progress.
- Leadership is very good; a very strong sense of teamwork and a strong commitment to raising pupils' aspirations ensure that pupils benefit as fully as possible from their education.
- Pupils' progress is monitored closely and action taken when performance falls below target levels.

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

- The consistency of teaching across the school.
- Difficulty in recruiting staff has led to underachievement in French.

- Statutory requirements with respect to religious education and the requirement for a daily act of collective worship are not met fully.
- The nature of the accommodation does not lend itself readily to conversion to meet the emerging needs of the curriculum.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in April 1997, improvement has been good and the school is very well placed to improve further. Attainment has improved significantly over the last three years. Results in the national tests, in Year 9, are increasing at a faster rate than they are nationally. A programme to improve literacy levels has been introduced and pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills support their learning effectively in most other subjects. The curriculum and the timing of the school day have been reviewed and changed so that the impact of movement within a complex building has been minimised. Teaching has improved. Time is used well in lessons and procedures assessing pupils' work and monitoring their progress are now good. Opportunities for spiritual development are now good, although the school does not meet statutory requirements fully for collective worship and religious education.

## STANDARDS

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

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

These comparisons are made with the attainment of all pupils. Nationally, boys do not achieve as well as girls. Hence, these comparisons do not adequately reflect the performance of the boys. When compared with pupils, nationally, with similar levels of attainment at the start of GCSE courses, pupils achieved well. The rising trend in results has, over the last five years, been less than the national trend but, in the last three years, has been above the national trend. The school significantly exceeded its targets agreed with the local education authority for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A\*-C in GCSE. Standards are currently below national expectations but higher than those shown in the previous year's results and pupils are achieving well. Pupils are working at higher than national expectations in citizenship, geography and history. In French, standards are lower than they should be, partly because there has been disruption in teaching.

Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9, in 2002, were in line with the national average in mathematics and science, and above average in English. Pupils achieved well and their attainment is above average for pupils, nationally, with similar starting points and for boys nationally. The school's results have improved at faster rate than nationally over



the last five years. Pupils in the current Year 9 are working at similar levels in English, mathematics and science and in line with national expectations in most other subjects. These levels of attainment represent good achievement overall from pupils' attainment at the beginning of Year 7. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment which are below national averages for all pupils. Standards remain below nationally expected levels in geography and information and communication technology, but progress is at least satisfactory. In French, pupils have not made sufficient progress and their attainment is well below national expectations.

The nature of the sixth form has changed significantly since the last inspection so that comparisons with A-level are inappropriate as the courses now offered are new to the school. Students currently in the sixth form are achieving very well and attaining standards in line with expectations for the courses they are following.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Some pupils join the school in Year 7 with unsatisfactory attitudes to learning. Attitudes in lessons improve steadily as pupils progress through the school and are good by the time pupils reach Year 9.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Pupils behave well around the school and in the local area. In lessons, pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall but is often good or very good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils make very good progress and by the time they leave school they are responsible citizens. Relationships within the school community are very good, with an exemplary degree of racial harmony.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance and unauthorised absence are in line with the national average. A number of pupils are late for morning registration.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10 – 11</b>	<b>Years 12 – 13</b>
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Good	Very good

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

Almost two-thirds of lessons in Years 7 to 9 are good or better and over a quarter are very good or excellent. In the sixth form, teaching is very good. Learning improves as pupils' attitudes to learning improve through the school. Teaching in English is good and it is satisfactory in science. In mathematics, teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good, across the school, in art, history and information and communication technology and very good in citizenship, physical education and in GCSE music.

The school has made improving teaching and learning a key priority and has successfully improved teaching since the last inspection. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively to plan well-structured lessons. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils respond well to the strong emphasis on developing their learning skills and most work hard in lessons. Teaching meets the needs of most groups well, so that pupils with special educational needs or English as an additional language learn well. There could be more challenging work, in some lessons, for higher-attaining pupils. There are good strategies in use to develop literacy skills and the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. In a small number of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory. This is usually because of unsatisfactory management of challenging behaviour or when work is not matched sufficiently to the needs of all pupils in the group. In some subjects, insufficient opportunities are taken to use information and communication technology.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum is well planned to suit the aptitudes of pupils and raise their aspirations.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils benefit from a range of strategies and provision, in line with the school's commitment to meet the needs of individuals. Overall, they make good progress in the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils who are at the early stages of speaking English receive structured support; they and those who are fairly fluent in English make good progress. Subject teachers have a good awareness of how to develop pupils' language skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Opportunities are planned in most subjects. Citizenship and personal, health and social education lessons make a valuable contribution.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well. Teachers know their pupils very well and there are very good procedures to promote good behaviour. Child protection procedures are securely in place but there has been no recent staff training on their use.

The school works well with parents and values their support. Parents are given a good range of information about their sons' progress and about the curriculum choices at the end of Years 9 and 11. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good. A continuous cycle of review is used effectively to ensure that pupils, parents and teachers are aware of current working levels.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The school is very ably led by the headteacher and senior team. Subject leadership is good and the pastoral system is very well organised. Planning for strategic development is of a high standard.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactorily. Governors have a satisfactory knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Changes within the governing body means that the group is not yet taking full strategic responsibility for planning. Statutory duties are carried out satisfactorily.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. All aspects of provision are subject to regular review. Systems for improving teaching and learning are good and reviews lead to valid priorities.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school's finances are very well organised. Spending is judicious and relates clearly to priorities. Value for money is sought constantly and the school applies the principles

	of best value well.
--	---------------------

The school has faced problems over the recruitment and retention of staff very constructively so that the number and qualifications of staff are adequate for the subjects they teach and for maintaining suitable curriculum provision. Accommodation and levels of resources are adequate. However, not all subjects have sufficient access to computers to use them regularly within lessons. Although care has been taken to ensure that the school is well-decorated and pleasant, the age and nature of the Victorian buildings make it difficult to make the changes necessary for the future.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The high expectations that teachers have of their pupils and that leads to them making good progress</li> <li>• Friendly, approachable staff</li> <li>• Their sons are happy at school</li> <li>• Boys are helped to become mature and responsible</li> <li>• Good teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework</li> <li>• Information about pupils' progress</li> <li>• Range of extra-curricular activities</li> <li>• Closer working with parents</li> </ul>

These views take into account a school survey of Year 8 parents, since the number attending the parents' meeting or returning a questionnaire was small. They may not, therefore, be representative of all parents. The inspection team agrees with the parents positive views but considers that pupils are given sufficient homework, that the school makes every effort to work closely with parents and provide frequent and good information about pupils' progress. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular activities.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form is small, at present catering for 41 male students. It serves an area of some deprivation in inner London, on the fringes of the City. Students with the usual sixth form qualifications move to the wide range of colleges and school consortia that are available in the locality. Central Foundation Boys' sixth form serves as an access route to further studies for a group of low attaining students who would otherwise leave education at 16. A high proportion of students have English as an additional language. In Year 12, an intermediate GNVQ in business provides the grounding necessary to begin A-level studies. Most students then go on to study AVCE in business, combined with A-level information and communication technology.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is very effective in what it does. The role of the sixth form, as an access route to education for non-traditional sixth form students, is excellent. This is very good achievement, with all the current Year 13 students having received university offers. Staying-on rates after GNVQ are high. Expectations are very high. Standards reached in the A-level courses meet national expectations. These results are underpinned by very high levels of teacher expertise, good links with industry and the community and very high level of knowledge of and care for the students. Students' personal development is aided by the close-knit community ethos in the sixth form. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. One of the greatest strengths of the sixth form has been its re-organisation to meet the school and local circumstances. All the classes are financially self-supporting and the outcomes are very well matched to the job opportunities on the fringes of the City. Value for money is very good.

**Strengths**

- The sixth form provides a life-changing experience for students who would not be eligible for entry to standard A-level courses. Students enter the sixth form with very low attainment. They make good progress in core skills and this contributes to very good achievement.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Students' attitudes to the sixth form are very positive.

**What could be improved**

- The sixth form is reliant on the close working relationships possible in a small community, but this has not encouraged students to develop their independent learning skills sufficiently and their core skills have not been audited and planned for in a systematic way.
- Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and religious education.

*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. All subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Good teaching leads to good learning in numeracy. Students enter the course with low attainment and, although standards are below national expectations, students are achieving well. The subject is managed well.
Business	<b>Very good.</b> Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching is very good. Relationships between the teachers and students are very productive. Very good individual guidance and feedback are given on students' coursework, and very good links to grading criteria lead to very good learning. The subject is very well led and managed.
Information and communication technology	<b>Very good.</b> Students achieve very well because teaching is very good. The subject is led well and the new A-level course has been introduced successfully. Students' independent learning skills need further development.
English	<b>Good.</b> Teaching is very carefully structured and managed and as a result good learning, both orally and in writing, takes place. Attitudes are mature and relationships are good.
Core skills	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Students make good progress in a range of core skills, which are well taught in the mainstream curriculum. However, there is no overall co-ordination of provision and students do not have individual programmes or targets based on a clear diagnosis of their needs. The school has plans to address this.

A lesson was also observed in personal, social and health education and an assembly attended. In this lesson, teaching was good. All subjects contribute well to the good progress of the students in literacy and numeracy, which in turn contributes to the very good progress made in the post-16 subjects.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Support and guidance is very good. There is very clear and focused guidance within the A-level courses. This is aided by very good personal knowledge of the students and much appreciated one-to-one tuition. Information provided on careers and guidance for the A-level groups is very good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	There is very good teamwork and subject management. The re-organisation of the sixth form has transformed it into a self-supporting unit, with very good financial management and a clear rationale and mission, which makes an excellent contribution to the aims of the school. Religious education provision is inadequate.



## 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>• Help in settling in to the sixth form</li><li>• Taught well and challenged to do my best</li><li>• Choice of courses suitable to talents and aspirations</li><li>• Helpful and constructive advice</li><li>• Thorough assessment and pointers to improvement</li><li>• Enjoy the sixth form and would advise others to join</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advice on future careers</li><li>• More enrichment courses</li><li>• More independent research</li></ul>

Students' views overall are very positive and the evidence of the inspection supports these views. The small number of students who felt that extra-curricular provision could be improved has some justification when this sixth form is compared with larger ones, but given the circumstances, provision is good. Advice and support are very good for the majority who achieve success in the GNVQ course, but less strong for those who do less well. The school uses its links with the Connexions service to promote supported work experience for those students who choose to take it up. More opportunities could be provided in some subjects for independent research.

## 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. The results of national tests taken at the end of Year 6 in primary schools, show that pupils' attainment, when they enter the school, is below the national averages for all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Attainment in English and science is lower than in mathematics. Their attainment in many other subjects is also lower than national expectations. Over the last few years there has been a gradual change in the entry profile, with an increasing number of pupils with above-average attainment. However, the proportion with low attainment levels when they arrive has changed little and remains high. About an eighth of pupils enter or leave the school at times other than the normal time of entry, with a higher proportion of higher-attaining pupils leaving than joining the school. This presents an additional challenge for the school to ensure that pupils' learning is disrupted as little as possible.
2. Test results at the end of Year 9, in 2002, were in line with the national average in mathematics and science. English results were above the national average and in the top five per cent of similar schools; in this context, similar schools means those schools in which between 35 per cent and 50 per cent are known to be eligible for a free school meal. These results were above the national average for boys and above the average for pupils, nationally, with similar attainment at the end of Year 6. Pupils achieved well overall. Over the last five years, the school's results have been rising more rapidly than they are nationally. The standards observed during the inspection in the current Year 9 are similar to those indicated by the previous test results for all three core subjects. Pupils are achieving well in mathematics and science and very well in English.
3. In other subjects, standards observed during the inspection are generally in line with national expectations. These standards represent good achievement overall from pupils' attainment at the beginning of Year 7. Pupils are working at above expected levels in citizenship and drama, but standards in geography and information and communication technology are below expectations. In French, standards are well below expectations and pupils have not made enough progress, mainly because their learning has been disrupted by frequent changes of teachers. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils develop confidence in their learning. Their developing literacy skills support the good progress they make in most subjects.
4. In 2002, the proportion of pupils who gained five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades A\*-C or the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) equivalent, was below the national average for all schools. These comparisons are made with the attainment of all pupils. Nationally, boys do not achieve as well as girls. Hence, these comparisons do not adequately reflect the performance of the boys. This proportion was well above the average for pupils with similar levels of attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9, indicating that pupils achieved well. The rising trend in results has, over the last five years, been less than the national trend but, in the last three years, has been above the national trend. The school significantly exceeded its targets agreed with the local education authority for the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A\* - C in GCSE.

5. In most subjects, GCSE results in 2002 were generally below national averages. They were in line with national averages in geography and music. In history and French, results were significantly below the averages for boys. Pupils made significantly greater progress in English, art, business studies, drama and design and technology than in the other subjects they took. The attainment of pupils currently in Year 11 is generally higher than the previous year's examination results. Pupils are working at levels, overall, which are close to national expectations and are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 10. They are working at higher than nationally expected levels in citizenship, drama, geography, history and media studies. Standards in French and information and communication technology remain below national expectations but pupils are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their starting point at the beginning of Year 10. In art and design and design and technology, whilst attainment is still below nationally expected levels for all pupils, pupils are achieving well and achieving standards in line with expectations for boys nationally.
6. The school analyses its performance as a means of identifying strengths and weaknesses within subjects and specific groups of pupils. Pupils from white, black Caribbean and mixed backgrounds do less well than those from other ethnic backgrounds. The school is aware of these patterns of performance and has a range of strategies, including the use of learning mentors, to reduce these differences. Black Caribbean pupils improve their rate of progress between the end of Key Stage 3 and GCSE but those from white and mixed backgrounds still make less progress than other groups of pupils.
7. Standards in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are below average overall when pupils enter the school. For a significant proportion of pupils, literacy levels are well below expectations. The school has a number of effective approaches in place to improve these levels, including a policy of how literacy is to be developed in other subjects. For example, in history, there is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' writing skills. In information and communication technology, there are good opportunities to carry out research and make notes. There is no whole-school approach to developing levels of numeracy, although pupils are generally effective in using their numeracy skills within other subjects. Pupils' information and communication technology skills adequately meet the demands of other subjects, but pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use and develop these in all subjects across the school.
8. Pupils with English as an additional language are well represented across ability groupings. The school's own analysis of their results, in national tests and GCSE, shows that two-thirds exceed their targets and achieve well. During the inspection, pupils with English as an additional language were observed performing in line with the general level of attainment in science, English and history. This was further borne out by analysis of a sample of pupils' work. Encouraging pupils to take GCSE accreditation in their heritage languages has met with a high level of success, with 75 per cent of pupils achieving grades A\* - C.
9. Pupils with identified special educational needs make good progress. The school's data, which tracks pupils' attainment, shows good progress in English and science throughout the school. In art, geography, history, music and physical education, pupils were making good progress during the inspection. Progress in citizenship is very good. Progress is satisfactory in other subjects, for example mathematics and French, where teachers' planning did not always take account of pupils' identified needs. Occasions were noted when teachers missed opportunities to adapt their

materials for the wide range of attainment in the class. In the small withdrawal groups, taken by the specialist teachers for special needs, students were seen to make good progress overall.

10. The school has identified pupils who are gifted and talented and makes special provision for them. An enrichment programme includes business studies, Japanese, philosophy and thinking skills, video-editing and opportunities, for pupils where there has not been a family tradition of higher education, to visit universities. In line with other groups of pupils, these pupils make good progress overall.

### **Sixth form**

11. In 2001, the A-level results and the results for advanced GNVQ were below the national average for boys and well below the overall national average. These results represented the last year before sixth form re-organisation and included a range of subjects that are not now offered. The most successful course was A-level business studies, where the point score met the national average. This course became the nucleus of the new sixth form. In 2002, no students entered for an A-level examination but a newly instituted intermediate GNVQ business course provided a successful base for advanced studies, with a 92 per cent pass rate and 69 per cent with merit or distinction. Eighty-five per cent of these students went on to A-level courses as a third year in the sixth form. Students on the current AVCE business and A-level information and communication technology courses have not yet sat their examinations but module test results indicate that their standards are meeting national expectations. The attainment of these students, at the beginning of their course, was very low. Only a small proportion had achieved five grades at A\* - C levels in GCSE. Given this baseline, the current achievement in the sixth form is very good. Students also make good progress in the newly instituted GCSE re-sit courses in mathematics and English. Students are making good progress from their starting point at the end of Year 11. Standards remain below nationally expected levels in mathematics but students are attaining above average levels in English.

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

12. Pupils' attitudes to school and their lessons are satisfactory overall. Most pupils enjoy school and want to do well. As pupils move through the school, their attitudes and behaviour in lessons steadily improve. In Year 7, there are a few pupils who do not feel part of the school community and have difficulty concentrating in lessons. They disrupt the learning of themselves and others in almost three out of every ten lessons. Those teachers with good behaviour management skills successfully maintain discipline and ensure all pupils work in the lessons but they have to work hard to do so. The school has a range of strategies to integrate pupils into the school community and, as they become more secure, they respond to teachers' high expectations for both behaviour and academic achievement, and become much more positive. By Year 9, pupils' attitudes are good or better in nearly two out of three lessons, with virtually no unsatisfactory attitudes. Most pupils are keen to take part in lessons, answering teachers' questions thoughtfully and presenting their work well. Pupils appreciate the extra-curricular activities and many take advantage of these opportunities.
13. The behaviour of pupils follows a similar pattern to their attitudes to school and is satisfactory overall. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons but there is a minority, especially in Year 7, who can be disruptive. Behaviour around the school and in whole-school events, such as assemblies, is good. Pupils cheerfully help visitors find their way round school. Pupils from Year 9 upwards are allowed out of school at lunch-time and they behave sensibly while off site. In the playground and

basketball courts during break, pupils' behaviour is good. Most pupils do not think that bullying is an issue and when it does occur, staff deal with it effectively. However, a very small number of Year 7 boys were concerned about it and were reluctant to tell a member of staff. Last year there was one permanent exclusion, which is below the national average. Sixty seven boys were temporarily excluded on a total of 90 occasions, in line with national rates. Staff and governors report a considerable improvement in pupils' attitudes and behaviour over the last two years.

14. Attendance is satisfactory and is slightly above the national average. Unauthorised absence is slightly below the national average. There has been a steadily improving trend in attendance and the school's data show that it is likely that there will be significantly fewer pupils with unauthorised absence this year compared with last year. There are a significant number of boys who are late for morning registration.
15. Relationships within the school community are very good. Pupils respect their teachers and are polite to visitors. Pupils work well together. This is particularly evident in physical education and drama but happens in all subjects. Pupils from all ethnic groups get on well and are happy to help each other if they have a problem. There is an exemplary degree of racial harmony.
16. A strength of the school is the personal development of pupils. The very strong provision in this area successfully promotes pupils' social and personal skills. By the time they leave school, pupils are responsible young adults who behave well and take the needs of others into account. They are able to understand how world events affect the lives of people in different parts of the world and have a good understanding of moral issues. Overall, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to take responsibility, but when they are given the opportunity, pupils are keen, skilled and dependable, for example as school councillors.
17. Pupils with English as an additional language or special educational needs have good, sometimes very good, attitudes and behave very well. They accept support willingly and show motivation to work. They contribute to lessons and work with concentration and sustained effort.

### **Sixth form**

18. Students' attitudes to work in business and information and communication technology are very good, and attitudes in mathematics and English are good. Students have high expectations of their own ability to achieve well and greatly appreciate the support they are given in their work, particularly the one-to-one tuition. Their personal development is supported by many aspects of sixth form provision, including the responsibilities taken by the sixth form council, for example in the development of information and communication technology provision for the sixth form block, and in the field of sport where some students coach in primary schools. Attendance is very good, although sometimes lateness is a problem. Although a small number of students would like more extra-curricular activities and guidance on career paths, the overwhelming majority are very satisfied with the sixth form provision and their attitudes to the school are very warm. Overall provision of extra-curricular activities and guidance is good.

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

19. The school sees good teaching as a pre-requisite for raising the attainment and the aspirations of pupils. A key priority for the school over the last year has been the improvement of teaching and learning. A working group of teachers has raised the professional debate about learning and provided training for their colleagues in

teaching and learning techniques, to increase the range of strategies in use and improve learning opportunities for pupils. This has proved successful and teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced and there is now a higher proportion of good teaching. However, there has not been sufficient time to induct all teachers into using a broad range of approaches and there are some inconsistencies across the school.

20. Teaching is good overall. Many pupils enter the school with poor learning skills and teachers work hard to set clear expectations for learning and behaviour so that learning improves as pupils' attitudes to learning improve through the school. Whilst a small proportion of teaching, six per cent, is unsatisfactory, much teaching is good, very good or excellent. Almost two-thirds of lessons are good or better and over a quarter are very good or excellent. Teaching in the core subject of English is good; in mathematics it is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11; it is satisfactory in science throughout the school. Teaching is good across the school in art, history, and information and communication technology and very good in citizenship and physical education. In music, it is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in the GCSE course. It is satisfactory in geography and French and in design and technology, teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.
21. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this effectively to plan well-structured lessons. Teachers generally identify clear learning objectives and share these with pupils at the start of the lesson. Most use the format, recommended by the national strategies, of providing a good introduction, often recapping on previous learning, followed by the main learning activity and finishing the lesson well by reviewing the learning which has taken place in the lesson. This structure sets a clear expectation for pupils of what is expected of them and is helping teachers to manage, better, the behaviour of those who have poor learning skills. Generally, teachers use a range of learning activities which interest and provide relevance for pupils. For example, in a Year 7 art lesson, pupils' learning was very good because the context of the task on mythical beasts appealed to them, and the opportunity to engage in discussion with one another resulted in imaginative names for the beasts they had created. During a visit from a nearby college theatre group, as part of the personal, social and health education programme, Year 10 pupils were provided with an excellent learning experience about gun culture. Pupils were spellbound for the whole lesson and were sufficiently confident to ask questions and comment on what they had seen. The quality of their questions showed that they had learned a lot from the experience.
22. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and share this well with pupils. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' learning skills and there is good use of strategies to reinforce pupils' basic subject specific skills alongside the development of these other skills. However, the reinforcement of numeracy skills is not planned sufficiently, and information and communication technology is not used fully in all subjects. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, there was an atmosphere of teamwork where pupils focused on the skills required to complete an examination question successfully. The good use of questions helped pupils to draw out the skills required themselves, and the approach motivated pupils well. Pupils respond well to teachers' enthusiasm and are secure because teachers know them well and recognise their successes and share what remains to be achieved. The good relationships between pupils enable discussion to be productive and allow pupils to articulate and test out their thinking within an environment where they know their contributions will be valued.

23. Teachers are developing a confidence in analysing the impact of their teaching on the learning of the group and adjusting it accordingly, both in their planning of units of work and within individual lessons. Teachers make effective use of time and maximise learning through the use of a variety of different approaches, such as short games, discussion and group work. Teachers quickly recognise if pupils begin to experience too much challenge or lose concentration levels, and change activities to ensure that learning continues at a brisk pace.
24. Weaknesses in teaching were in occasional lessons and not confined to any particular subjects or groups of teachers. There are two main reasons for unsatisfactory teaching, and teaching which, although satisfactory overall, still has weaknesses. In some lessons, teachers lacked the behaviour management skills to deal effectively with challenging behaviour, mostly of younger pupils. In some cases, teachers had only recently begun to teach the class and pupils, who had not yet developed their learning skills, responded poorly to the disruption to their learning. In other weaker lessons, teachers had not planned sufficiently for the differing learning needs of individual or groups of pupils. Generally, this led to insufficient challenge for higher-attaining pupils, but there were also occasions where tasks were not well matched to the needs of middle-attaining groups in the class.
25. Pupils with special educational needs are usually taught in mainstream classes, in line with the school's aim and policy of inclusion. Overall, teachers provide appropriately planned materials and activities to meet the pupils' range of need, for example in English, physical education and art. As a result, pupils learn well. Similarly, when the school's learning assistants work with the teachers in planning and supporting the lessons, pupils have successful outcomes. However, in a few lessons when teachers failed to respond to the identified needs of pupils on the special educational needs register, outcomes were less successful and, on occasion, unsatisfactory.
26. An experienced team of teachers works with small withdrawal groups of children in Years 7 and 8, to improve their reading ages. Withdrawal support is provided for those diagnosed with dyslexia and other language difficulties. Pupils in the withdrawal groups have their needs precisely identified, and strategies are entirely appropriate and effective. Regular reinforcement for these pupils leads to clear progress in their work. The school has created two additional small groups, named nurture groups, in Years 7 and 8, in which pupils are given greater continuity by staying with the same teacher for a number of their subjects. Although these groups provide satisfactory, and sometimes good learning experiences, teachers do not focus closely enough on the known needs of the pupils in these groups. The inclusion centre caters for pupils with particularly challenging behaviour. Centre staff ensure that there is sufficient targeted work and materials for them to continue effectively with their planned curriculum subjects.
27. The specialist team of support teachers provide very good teaching for pupils with English as an additional language. For example, very good bilingual support was given, in mathematics, to a Bengali pupil at an early stage of English. Support teachers have very good knowledge of pupils' needs, based on good assessment and recording, and have well-developed strategies to meet those needs and ensure that pupils progress well. There is close collaboration between class teachers and support teachers in planning work to match pupils' capabilities. Support teachers work hard in lessons, dividing their time between pupils at an early stage of English and those who, though progressing, require ongoing support. By careful targeting of teaching groups, the small team of support teachers is able to support more than half of the 252 pupils with English as an additional language. The effectiveness of

the training and dissemination of ideas, undertaken by the specialist team leader is reflected in the good awareness of need and the support seen in most subject areas, including English, mathematics and science. In response to good teaching, pupils learn well. Focusing on key words, working well in pairs with fluent English speakers and working with materials prepared with their abilities in mind, pupils make good progress as seen, for example, in Year 8 design and technology and Year 9 history. In a minority of lessons, information on pupils was not used sufficiently well to plan for pupils' needs.

28. Homework is used satisfactorily for pupils to consolidate what they have learned. It is particularly effective when it is used to develop pupils' independent learning skills by setting appropriate research for pupils to carry out before the next lesson. Marking is regular and provides pupils with useful information on how their work could be improved. Where teachers have changed, pupils have not always been given such support in understanding how well they are doing, and their learning is disrupted as a result.
29. The emphasis on providing training for teachers, combined with classroom observations at departmental levels, is beginning to have a very positive impact on the consistency of teaching. This provides secure learning opportunities for pupils and is a good improvement on the situation reported in the previous inspection report.

## **Sixth form**

30. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, very high expectations and know the students very well. The subjects complement each other, so that there is a very good use of information and communication technology in business, which contributes to students' confident use in information and communication technology itself. Feedback to students, both personal and through marking, is focused and helpful and relationships are very good. There is good teaching and learning in mathematics, English and personal, social and health education. Students make good progress in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, which are effectively integrated within subject teaching. Overall, the development of learning skills is good. The school recognises the need to develop confidence further in independent learning, given that some students are somewhat over-dependent on the teachers who have helped them to do so well.

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

31. The curriculum is good provides pupils with a range of courses to suit their aptitudes and attainments. Curriculum development has been a key feature in supporting the school's successful drive to raise standards of attainment and the aspirations of its pupils. Some of the recent innovations are directly linked to its bid to secure specialist school status in business and enterprise. A concerted effort has been made to identify and provide for the different needs of pupils, including wider use of setting arrangements. Senior managers regularly review and evaluate all aspects of curriculum provision.
32. Compliance with statutory requirements and other recommendations has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The school now operates a recommended 25 hour week. Information and communication technology is now taught as a discrete subject in Years 7 to 10, and pupils have the opportunity to enter for the short course GCSE examination in the subject. In Year 11, coverage of the subject is achieved by developing opportunities in other subjects. This arrangement provides pupils with adequate opportunities to develop their skills. The time provided for religious education is not enough to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus. The school does not meet the statutory requirement a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
33. A major review of the curriculum, identifying the improvement of literacy skills as a priority, resulted in a high proportion of curricular time being assigned to English, within a re-designed curriculum. This has contributed successfully to a marked rise in results in English in national tests in Year 9. The development of literacy is also promoted by the breakfast and reading clubs. The range of courses in Key Stage 4 meets the needs and interests of its pupils well. A key feature is the inclusion of drama and media studies. A general studies course in Year 11, taught by senior teachers, emphasises the importance the school attaches to the development of study skills. This has helped pupils to improve their examination results through managing their coursework and planning their revision schedule better. Offering both GCSE and GNVQ business studies prepares pupils of all attainments for future post-16 courses. A small number of pupils in Year 11 profit from off-site provision; each boy follows an individual programme concentrating on core skills and many of these boys have been successful in securing employment through the work-related curriculum. The school monitors its curriculum provision very carefully to ensure that it provides appropriate opportunities and value for money.





34. The school makes good use of additional sources of funding to broaden curriculum opportunities. As part of the Excellence in Cities programme, two learning mentors provide very effective additional support for pupils across the school, through Circle Time for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and more directly with individuals in Years 10 and 11. Co-ordinators for the Excellence Challenge Initiative and for gifted and talented pupils have arranged a number of valuable enrichment activities, such as a special Easter programme focused on improving the GCSE grades of pupils working at the C-D borderline in their GCSE studies but also including broader opportunities of team-building. Identified gifted and talented pupils have gained experience in a diversity of areas, ranging from familiarity with university education to philosophy and thinking skills.
35. Although the school has few links with other secondary schools, it maintains extensive links with its very large number of feeder primary schools. Four of them are participating in its bid to achieve specialist school status. Joint activities are provided within the gifted and talented programme including, for example, a literacy summer school and some sports activities, all of which contribute well to the school's induction programme for new pupils.
36. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils. Facilities for extra-curricular sport are limited within the inner-city site but are well used and include football coaching sessions, basketball and work on fitness machines. Pupils have opportunities to participate in a range of musical and artistic activities. There are also homework catch-up clubs designed primarily for lower-attaining pupils. The school is, rightly, seeking to develop parental involvement in these activities.
37. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is a particular strength, both in the inclusion of particular activities for pupils and in staff training and development. Teaching strategies, use of key words, appropriate grouping of pupils and individual support are integral parts of the planning of many lessons. Although staffing is restricted, pupils with English as an additional language receive good support as teachers have spent time and effort to develop resources in different curriculum areas. The overall curriculum has been enhanced by the introduction of opportunities for pupils to achieve accreditation in five community languages.
38. In Years 7 and 8, the nurture groups smooth the transition of the lowest-attaining boys into secondary education by limiting the number of teachers they meet within their programmes. Since most teaching for students with special educational needs occurs within timetabled lessons, their curricular opportunities are similar to their peers. For the most part, teachers ensure appropriate planned activities that enable pupils to make good progress. Where pupils are withdrawn from lessons because, for example, their statements identify the need for additional opportunities, the specialist teachers provide good, well-planned activities.
39. The inclusion centre provides additional support for pupils experiencing difficulty with behaviour. It is well planned and resourced to provide the pupils with materials and work precisely tailored to what they have been doing in their mainstream classes. This enables pupils to remain in touch with the work of the class and to keep up with course work requirements.
40. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, and includes careers education. The programme is managed very well, with clear strategic planning and well-identified priorities and enables pupils to develop very high levels of communication, problem solving and interpersonal skills. For example, in a role play exercise about alcohol, Year 9 pupils learnt to think about

- the consequences of drinking too much alcohol and to represent these to other people in a way that did not make anyone appear foolish.
41. The teaching of careers is very effective. The school has long-standing business partnerships, including a wide range of companies from the City, many of which have been developed through contacts with previous pupils. A well-resourced careers base provides a wide range of up-to-date material, incorporating information and communication technology and video material. The base is open for pupils' use before and after school, at breaks and at lunchtime. The local careers adviser visits regularly and pupils are given help with completing application forms and with interview and presentation skills. There are several visits to potential employers and a planned programme of visitors to the school. Work experience is provided for boys in Year 10. The effect of careers education in the school is that many pupils have suitably raised aspirations and a clear understanding of what they need to achieve. Those who are less clear about their future know how to get assistance. There has been training for all staff in careers, including some with an input from current Year 11 students.
  42. There are good opportunities for spiritual development largely because these are explicitly planned for in most subjects. For example, pupils reflected on different people's attitudes to revenge in a whole school assembly. Pupils empathised with how war affects people both currently and historically. The religious education programme provides pupils with good opportunities to explore the meaning of faith to different religious groups.
  43. The provision for social and moral development is very good, with the school ethos strongly supporting it. Staff are good role models for pupils and deal with them sensitively and fairly. Pupils have many opportunities to work together in different groupings. In physical education, they learn to be team players and to respect the rules, while in drama, pupils work together to express their emotions. Teachers specifically teach social skills in personal, social and health education lessons. For pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, there is a range of support, including circle time and individual support from learning mentors. The school code of conduct provides a clear moral code that pupils understand. Pupils explore moral issues in a range of subjects. During the inspection, Year 10 studied the implication of acid rain in a geography lesson, while in an English lesson in Year 8, pupils explored people's cruelty to animals.
  44. Cultural provision is very good. Pupils have opportunities to visit theatres, places of worship and travel abroad. In addition, visitors to the school contribute strongly to the provision. A sculptor from the Barbican was well-received by pupils in Year 10 when she shared her work with them, and their own experience was enhanced considerably when the visiting artists supported their own efforts. Pupils learn about other cultures through a range of subjects. The religious education weeks, for example, provide pupils with the opportunity to learn about different faiths and cultures. Pupils can also develop their cultural experiences through a good range of extra-curricular activities including dance, photography and music.

### **Sixth form**

45. The curriculum in the sixth form is good although only a few courses are offered. These complement courses run by other local providers and look to build sharply defined routes into further study, training or employment. Courses are well-matched to the prior attainment and interests of students. An information and communication technology course was introduced in September 2001 at AS-level, and is proving popular. Business comprises Intermediate GNVQ and AVCE courses. Within

business, the delivery of information and communication technology is carefully planned to complement the other skills students are acquiring. Students have comprehensive information and communication technology based folders for each unit. They have the opportunity to submit work and have it assessed electronically, to enable them to improve the standard of their work. Personal development within the subjects is very good, as is the general contribution to citizenship within business. The school does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship or for the provision for religious education for students in the sixth form.

46. The school cultivates external links, such as with the Stationers' Company, to support its vocational provision. A three-week block of work experience is provided, in Year 12, for students not continuing into Year 13. The teaching of core skills contributes to the good progress the students make. There is, however, no co-ordination or overall management of core skills teaching and no structured scheme, based on a curriculum audit. The re-take courses in English and mathematics give students another opportunity to gain essential qualifications. Within them, students are provided with a series of short-term targets to sustain motivation. The small size of the sixth form permits students to have a voice in the extra-curricular sports programme, which is structured according to their interests.

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

47. The school has maintained the good care reported in the last inspection. Teachers and heads of year know their pupils very well. There are very good procedures and practices for promoting good behaviour. Heads of year closely monitor pupils' behaviour and seek parental support when boys are having problems. Circle time and the inclusion unit are effective in helping boys who are having difficulties in controlling their behaviour, and help to limit the number of permanent exclusions. The staff of the school are very committed to the boys' welfare, and exclusions are carried out only as a last resort. Most boys feel safe at school and are sure that staff would deal with any incidents of bullying effectively. Staff support this view, acknowledging that although some bullying does occur it is not tolerated and they investigate all reported incidents. Pupils particularly value the 'bully box' in which they can alert staff to any concerns they have. Learning mentors log and investigate all reports of bullying effectively.
48. Arrangements for improving attendance are good. Heads of year monitor attendance and investigate any unexplained absences or persistent lateness. The school has introduced an electronic registration system for each lesson. This gives heads of year and form tutors very good information to spot absence patterns on a weekly basis. At present, the system is not being used fully to check on internal truancy, although this is not a major problem. The school involves outside agencies appropriately in providing additional support for boys when they need it. The educational welfare officer is in school twice a week and works closely with the school and families to improve attendance. This work is effectively improving attendance faster than the national trend. In addition, counselling is available to those boys who would benefit from it.
49. Child protection procedures are in place and are satisfactory overall. Although the staff handbook gives clear advice on the signs of child abuse, there are no procedures in place to ensure that all staff new to the school understand the procedures or would know what to do if a child disclosed information of this nature to them. There has been no whole staff training on this subject for over two years.

50. The school, including the governors, take health and safety very seriously. There are regular site inspections and the school does its best to minimise the problems caused by an old building that has some areas in need of repair. The fire escapes are due to be replaced this year. The provision for first aid is very good with a highly qualified first-aider leading the team.
51. The school's assessment policy is clear and comprehensive. It provides for a continuous cycle of review which gives clear and positive feedback to pupils to recognise progress and to help them take responsibility for their work. The systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress are good and all data is up-dated termly and shared well with heads of departments. Pupils who are under-achieving can therefore be identified at an early stage and strategies, such as the use of 'achievement reports', are used to help raise their achievement.
52. Formal monitoring of progress takes place three times a year through progress check days and parents' consultation evenings. These work well in giving parents and pupils the opportunity to become aware of how well pupils are doing and how well they have progressed since the last consultation. This system ensures that almost all pupils are very aware of their present working levels. Targets are clearly set in most subjects related to National Curriculum levels in Key Stage 3 and GCSE grades in Key Stage 4.
53. Assessment is good in many subjects, including design and technology, history, information and communication technology, music, physical education and English, where detailed comments on pieces of written work indicate very clearly to pupils how they can improve their next piece of work. In Years 7 to 9, art is developing the knowledge and understanding of National Curriculum levels with pupils so that they can conduct a 'running dialogue' on how to improve. Assessment in geography is unsatisfactory, mainly as marking in Years 7 to 9 does not give sufficient information to pupils to tell them how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
54. Provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is good. The annual review process is fully in place and the teacher responsible has full records of these. The special needs department ensures that pupils, parents and outside agencies are all fully involved in decisions. The individual education plans that emerge are detailed and helpful to staff. The school has a policy of not providing individual education plans for pupils who are identified on the school register as school action or school action plus. In the case of the small withdrawal groups for literacy in Years 7 and 8, there is a group plan. Although there are many ways in which information is conveyed to staff, including regular briefings, these are not always effective and there were occasions during the inspection when some teachers did not adopt sufficiently targeted strategies to meet the needs of individual pupils identified on the register. The pastoral support board identifies boys whose behaviour is becoming challenging and draw up pastoral support programmes in collaboration with parents, pupils and outside agencies.
55. The procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils with special educational needs are good. On entry to the school, information from pupils' primary schools is used well to identify pupils requiring inclusion on the school's register of special educational needs. Their progress is closely monitored through regular testing. Clear records are kept and used directly to plan for pupils' future learning. Support teachers plan the use of their specialised schemes and methods on the basis of the information provided by their precise assessment of pupils' progress.

56. The provision for monitoring the progress of pupils for whom English is an additional language is very good. The analysis of results is detailed and thorough, and there is very good monitoring of ethnic groups and identification of pertinent issues. The arrangements to induct new pupils are good and good assessment, recording and review of progress, mean that the progress of this group of pupils is monitored closely and any potential underachievement addressed at an early stage. Very good work by the Turkish and Bengali liaison teachers include: involvement of parents, interpretation, building links, welfare work as well as good in-class support.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment**

57. Assessment is very good in business and information and communication technology, and very clearly linked to the demands of the examination syllabus. This is aided by the very close and personal knowledge of the students and very good knowledge of their progress, by both teachers and students. Assessment of the core skills is dealt with within other subjects, but this does not provide students who are not taking the GCSE re-sits with the opportunity to assess the development of their skills of literacy and numeracy.

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

58. There is very clear and focused guidance in both business and information and communication technology. Students are very appreciative of the one-to-one support and guidance that is available to them. Information on careers for the A-level groups is very good, aided by the very good links with business and the community. Those students doing less well on the intermediate GNVQ course feel the need for some careers guidance beyond that related to following an A-level route. Advice and support are very good for the majority who achieve success in the GNVQ course, but less strong for those who do less well.

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

59. Due to the low response rate to the questionnaire and the small number of parents who attended the meeting, it is difficult to gauge the views of parents as a whole. The views expressed by these parents indicate they feel the school provides their boys with a satisfactory education. In particular they appreciate the high expectations teachers have, the approachability of the staff and that their sons are happy at school. They would like to see homework improved and better information about their sons' progress. The inspection team agrees with the parents positive views and found that homework was satisfactory. There is good information about the boys' progress. The results of a school survey of Year 8 pupils, and the high number of parents wanting to send their boys to the school, suggests that most parents are supportive of the school.
60. The school has developed effective links with parents. It encourages parents to take an active role in supporting their sons' education. It provides good information about the boys' progress. The annual reports are satisfactory and provide parents with a clear idea of what their sons can do and what National Curriculum level or GCSE grade they are working at. Some of the targets in the reports are rather vague and do not help the boys or their parents sufficiently to know specifically what they need to do to improve their grades, for example, 'Aim for an A grade at GCSE' or 'maintain the current effort'. In other cases, the advice is very helpful, 'To plan making time more effectively'. Parents are given frequent opportunities to attend progress check days and a subject teacher consultation each year. Taken together, this provides parents with good opportunities to review their son's progress with the school on a very regular basis. The school also provides parents with clear information about the curriculum and choices that boys have when they move from Year 9 to 10 and into the sixth form.
61. Other information for parents, such as the prospectus, is of a good quality and provides them with useful information. However, the school website provides information that is now out-of-date. The school introduced direct telephone lines to heads of year so that parents can contact them directly and, when they are not

available, parents leave messages on their answer phones. Although some parents do not like this, feeling that the school does not respond quickly enough to concerns, it was introduced to make a more efficient system so that messages did not get lost. The school has reviewed and amended its procedures to meet these criticisms. The heads of year value the support they receive from parents and will contact parents if there are problems or if pupils have done something particularly praiseworthy.

62. The special educational needs department ensures parental involvement in its statutory annual reviews of boys' statements, including their individual education plans. Parents of boys without statements, but on the school register, are informed of any changes in their child's situation. They are invited to contact the school if they wish to discuss matters with the special educational needs staff. Parents are kept informed of boys' progress through the whole-school process of reporting on progress. Parents are actively involved with the setting of targets for pupils with pastoral support programmes, attending the meeting and helping to set the targets.
63. The involvement of parents in the work of the school is satisfactory. There is a full complement of parent governors who take an active role in the governance of the school. The school has surveyed parents of Year 8 boys and is beginning to take their views into account when they are planning strategically.

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

64. The headteacher is a very good leader and is enabling the school to develop well. She has a very thorough knowledge of the school and its strengths. She is very approachable to staff and to pupils. She and the senior management team maintain a high profile around the school, ensuring good order and promoting the school's values. All members of the senior management team have up-to-date and detailed job descriptions. Responsibilities and accountability are clear and carried out well. As a result, the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Communications amongst the management team are very good.
65. Staff share the school's aims and philosophy. The open style of management means that all teachers have an opportunity to contribute to the school's plans for development, in the first instance at departmental level. In reviewing its provision, the school receives useful feedback from parents and governors. The academic potential of each year group varies and the headteacher and senior managers are aware of this and the need to organise suitable provision for each. Reviewing and extending the school development plan is a fundamental priority. Staff with middle management responsibilities spent a residential weekend compiling a development plan that incorporates departmental issues, before being presented to the governing body for further discussion. The current development plan is wide ranging and directly focused on raising pupils' attainment, by improving provision, organisation and teaching. Overall, the identification of priorities, the action taken to meet them and the standard of planning are very good.
66. Subject management is good overall and there are no areas where it is less than satisfactory. The management of the introduction of citizenship is very good, as is the management of procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare. The management of English as an additional language is very good. An experienced and skilled head of department leads a small but dedicated team. Documentation for the programme is comprehensive and of very good quality. Funding only supports limited levels of staffing and this is used very efficiently. A particular strength is the amount of in-service training and development for mainstream staff that has either been done in school or organised through the local education authority. The head of department



has identified a need for additional liaison support work for black African pupils and additional support in the sixth form, but this can only be addressed as resourcing permits.

67. At the time of the inspection the school was recruiting for a co-ordinator of special educational needs. The department is managed by an assistant headteacher and the member of staff second in the department. They are successfully maintaining the day-to-day running of the work of the department, with the support of an experienced team of learning support assistants and specialist teachers.
68. Governors take a keen interest in the welfare and development of the school and fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. The chair of governors is new in that role but has been a governor for several years. She has a very thorough knowledge of school procedures and priorities. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well, although provision of collective worship does not meet statutory requirements and not all pupils receive their full entitlement to religious education. Governors have a satisfactory knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and make an input into the plans for school development. Governors do not have direct links with specific aspects of the school to give them an in-depth understanding, and recent changes in personnel amongst the governors have prevented this developing. Firm plans exist to develop further their direct involvement. Individual governors, through their professional lives and contacts, are well placed to bring the school substantial benefits.
69. The monitoring of teaching is developed well in the school. Heads of department regularly observe members of their department in the classroom and line managers observe the work of all teachers within their areas of responsibility. Further lesson observations take place as part of a rolling programme of subject reviews carried out by senior staff. These procedures provide suitable opportunities for developing and sharing good classroom practice, generally leading to appropriate target setting but have not yet been fully effective in ensuring that there is consistency of practice in all lessons. Performance management is effective and well established in the routine of the school.
70. The school's control of finance is very strong and the planned appointment of a strategic finance officer has the potential to strengthen this and make management even more efficient. Expenditure is very carefully linked with existing priorities. All money is scrupulously spent for its intended purpose and the school constantly seeks to secure the best value for the money it spends. Appointments are made on the basis of quality not expediency. Day-to-day financial management is very good. Regular budget updates are provided so that monitoring of expenditure can be easily carried out.
71. The school has addressed problems over the recruitment and retention of staff very constructively so that the number and qualifications of staff are adequate for the subjects they teach and for maintaining suitable curriculum provision. The staff includes teachers who originally qualified overseas. An important priority is the supporting of newly qualified staff and other new teachers; they are given priority in training. Newly qualified teachers benefit from additional support provided by the local education authority. Professional development is very well organised, and carefully linked to the individuals' expressed needs and to the priorities of the school development plan. The school encourages staff to acquire additional qualifications and is very supportive to individuals engaged in these programmes.
72. Accommodation is just satisfactory overall. Many rooms are attractively decorated to provide a good learning environment but the overall fabric of the buildings presents a gaunt appearance. The building has significant disadvantages; its upkeep is expensive; crumbling exterior masonry and decaying iron work has led to the closure

of one fire escape until these can be repaired; much of the building is on a split levels, occupying several floors and making it difficult to adapt for disabled access; noise from the games hall impinges negatively on many mathematics lessons and some rooms have no natural light; other rooms, such as the music accommodation and dining hall have restricted daylight. Many of the staircases are narrow and dark, making movement difficult, but the good sense of pupils and the careful supervision of staff ensure safe and brisk transfer between lessons. Laboratories are dispersed, which makes communication and the sharing of resources difficult. The large size of one of the rooms used for design and technology means that close supervision of pupils is difficult and particular vigilance is needed to avoid a health and safety issue. One information and communication classroom is too small for enough computers for a whole class and the outdated electrical system has hampered the school's attempts to develop this aspect widely across the site. The school has made some improvements; for example, an area has been refurbished as a learning resource centre, but the school has already identified the need to extend this provision further to meet current needs. However, opportunities are limited and the school is careful to ensure that such investment is planned well. The lack of flexibility in internal layout is impacting on the school's capacity to plan ahead and develop teaching further; for example, the restricted size of classrooms makes it difficult to develop small group support within teaching; and many other classrooms are too small to house computers to enhance learning on a regular basis.

73. Resources are satisfactory. Almost all subjects have enough suitable equipment for the courses they teach. The ratio of computers to pupils is in line with the national average, although not all departments have sufficient access to information and communication technology facilities. In design and technology, however, the amount of machinery is limited; computer-aided work is restricted by the lack of a CAD-CAM. Practical equipment is restricted in mathematics. The learning resource centre is managed well and provides a good resource for pupils to develop independent learning and research. There is a good collection of reading books in the department base for pupils with English as an additional language, but this does not extend to the main school library.

## **Sixth form**

### **Leadership and management**

74. Leadership and management overall is very good, with very good subject management in business and information and communication technology. Line management is very good, as is day-to-day administration. Audit and renewal of the sixth form, since the last inspection, has transformed it from a fragmented and uneconomic entity to a viable and self-supporting institution. Governors have a very clear rationale for the sixth form, which makes an excellent contribution to the aims of the school. It is very responsive to local needs, through very good business links. Work experience is a very important contributor to students' achievements and there are plans to develop this further. At this early stage of re-organisation, the sixth form relies on being a small close-knit community. There is a need for a more systematic approach to areas such as core skills, personal, social and health education and religious education, if the sixth form is to fully meet its statutory obligations and develop further.
75. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding for the subjects they teach and are given appropriate opportunities for professional development. The sixth form has been set

on firm economic grounds, based firmly on the principles of best value. Achievement is very good and access is excellent. This is a very effective sixth form.

## Resources

76. Staffing is very good, there is a high level of business experience and a very co-operative team spirit. Resources are good. There has been a recent expansion of information and communication technology facilities, led by student initiative and responsibility, and supported by local business, The Stationers' Company. Accommodation is only sound. The sixth form block is crowded, even with present numbers, and business lacks a permanent base in which resources could be more accessible.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

77. In order to improve and build on the good quality of education that pupils receive, the governors and senior managers of the school should:

- (1) **Make teaching more consistent across the school by:**
  - continuing to disseminate identified good practice more widely across the school (*paragraphs 24, 29, 69 and 107*);
  - providing additional training and support for some teachers to manage pupils' behaviour, particularly that of younger pupils (*paragraphs 12 and 24*);
  - providing more work to challenge higher-attaining pupils in some subjects (*paragraphs 116, 134 and 143*); and
  - making more consistent use of assessment data (*paragraphs 53, 122 and 137*).
- (2) **Improve attainment in French by:**
  - continuing to implement the departmental plan to improve teaching and learning (*paragraphs 5, 69, 156 and 157*).
- (3) **Meet statutory requirements by:**
  - providing more frequent opportunities for pupils to take part in religious education programmes and extend provision to Year 11 (*paragraphs 32, 172 and 175*); and
  - providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils (*paragraph 32*).
- (4) **Develop a long-term strategy for the management of improvements in accommodation** (*paragraphs 130 and 182*).

## Sixth form

- (1) **Seek to improve independent learning skills by:**
  - diagnosing and planning specific programmes for the development of students' core skills (*paragraphs 30, 177, 186 and 194*); and
- (2) **Meet statutory requirements by:**
  - making adequate provision for collective worship and religious education (*paragraph 45*).

In addition, the governors and senior managers should consider addressing the following minor issues within their action plan:

- Increasing the governors' role in monitoring the work of the school (*paragraph 68*);
- Ensure that all staff receive additional training on child protection as soon as they join the school (*paragraph 49*); and
- Improve levels of resourcing to meet identified shortages in mathematics, design and technology and seek ways to ensure adequate access to information and communication technology for all subjects (*paragraphs 73, 102, 130, 148 and 158*).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	113
	Sixth form	15
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		63

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	5	25	39	37	7	0	0
Percentage	4	23	34	33	6	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	1	5	8	1	0	0	0
Percentage	7	33	53	7	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	702	41
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	265	16

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	35	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	191	1

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	252

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	53

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	7.8

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7
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	136	0	136

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	105	95	99
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	105	95	99
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	77 (52)	70 (63)	73 (62)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	42 (28)	47 (33)	30 (31)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	92	99	94
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	92	99	94
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (52)	72 (58)	69 (54)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	25 (15)	58 (29)	29 (27)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	134	134	0	134

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	48	118	126
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	48	118	126
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	36 (26)	88 (80)	94 (87)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	31.2
	National	39.8

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	34	76
	National		n/a

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 12)

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	13	92
	National		n/a



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

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

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

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
309	33	1
9	0	0
49	0	0
14	0	0
13	0	0
0	0	0
34	12	0
12	0	0
4	0	0
62	6	0
12	1	0
86	15	1
88	15	0
11	13	0
13	0	0
25	9	0
2	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	48.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.3

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	444

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	62.0
---	------

#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	25.2
Key Stage 4	23.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001-2002
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	3,056,078
Total expenditure	3,405,018
Expenditure per pupil	4354
Balance brought forward from previous year	455,394
Balance carried forward to next year	106,454

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

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years (FTE)	14.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years (FTE)	14.8
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	5.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2.0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	743
Number of questionnaires returned	31

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	36	10	6	3
My child is making good progress in school.	39	39	13	0	10
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	45	16	0	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	48	23	3	0
The teaching is good.	26	52	6	0	16
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	42	32	20	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	49	3	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	32	0	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	26	45	19	3	6
The school is well led and managed.	36	36	6	3	19
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	39	6	0	10
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	29	23	0	13

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

### ENGLISH

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

#### Strengths

- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan well-structured lessons to promote listening, reading and writing skills effectively.
- Good techniques to develop literacy mean that pupils make good progress in spoken and written standard English, including spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Good assessment enables pupils to understand how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.
- English, drama and literacy are well managed and led.
- Very good teaching in drama means that pupils have positive attitudes and learning is very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Weak behaviour management in a few lessons means that learning is less effective than it should be.

78. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment which are below and, for many pupils, well below national averages. In 2002, for the first time, pupils' performance in the national tests at the end of Year 9 was above the averages for all pupils and for boys nationally. The school's improvement trend over the last three years is above the national trend, with a significant improvement in 2002. Attainment in English was better than in mathematics and science in 2002. These results were well above the average for pupils, nationally, with similar end of Year 6 standards and so these pupils achieved very well.
79. The standards of pupils currently in Year 9 are above national expectations. In relation to their standards at the beginning of the course, pupils are achieving very well. The majority of pupils understand the meaning of verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Whilst higher-attaining pupils approach their work with confidence and can both identify powerful verbs and emotive language and analyse their effectiveness, middle and lower-attaining pupils are limited to identification. In their own writing, most pupils write descriptively using emotive language. In oral activities, which are carefully structured and given due importance by the teachers, most pupils are articulate and respond with confidence even if they are not always able to sustain their thoughts. For the most part, they listen respectfully to others. A group of lower-attaining pupils in Year 7 with special educational needs spoke effectively about the work that they had been doing. This was respected by the rest of the class who applauded their efforts. Pupils are familiar with grammatical terminology, such as connectives, and are beginning to apply this knowledge to their own work. Opportunities to read out loud and to develop their reading skills start in Year 7, and pupils in Year 8 read confidently and competently from 'King of Shadows'. 'War of the Worlds' by H. G. Wells proved a more challenging text to read for Year 9 pupils but, with the supportive help of the teacher, they persisted.
80. Results in GCSE show an improving profile over the last three years, with a few pupils achieving the highest A\* grades in both English and English Literature in 2002. However, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\* to C was below the

national performance for boys and for all pupils nationally. There is little difference between attainment in English and English Literature.

81. The standard attained by pupils, now in Year 11, is close to national expectations overall, in both English and English literature. The standard of oral work is good, with the majority of pupils able to state and develop their thoughts with a degree of fluency, even if not all pupils can sustain this. Pupils are generally confident in both formal and informal speaking situations. Higher-attaining pupils read well and are enthusiastic to contribute. With good teacher guidance, pupils in Years 10 and 11 show a mature grasp of texts ranging from 'Animal Farm' to poetry such as 'Unrelated Incidents'. Lower-attaining pupils make effective oral responses, with teacher guidance, on tone in poetry but they do not find written exercises as accessible. They are confident when discussing themes and their contemporary relevance but find phonetic language and structures more difficult to grasp. All groups of pupils, including those with English as an additional language and special educational needs, achieve well overall and make good progress from their earlier levels of attainment.
82. Teaching is good, overall. The majority of teaching is well-managed and structured, and enables pupils to make good progress from the level at which they enter the school. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and have appropriate expectations of pupils. In Years 10 and 11, they use a range of poetry, prose and drama texts well to cover GCSE specifications. They use a range of different teaching strategies, many of them imaginative, to engage learners. These strategies include the use of starter activities, plenary sessions, group, individual and pair work. For example, in a mixed ability Year 7 group, pupils were given a well-planned starter activity on connectives and their function in joining paragraphs. This was followed by a group card-matching exercise where pupils matched the connectives on the cards with those on the board. Subsequently, the starter activity was effectively integrated with the main part of the lesson when pupils used their knowledge to write the opening paragraphs for a discursive essay on the advantages and disadvantages of watching too much television. In a Year 8 group, after a good, well-paced brainstorming starter activity on bear baiting, pupils read confidently and made good, sustained responses about the writer's use of figurative language.
83. Teachers make good use of time and resources, including, in many classes, differentiated work sheets to support pupils at all levels of attainment so that pupils' learning is good. Learning support assistants work with targeted groups of pupils in English, although the educational value of some of the exercises is not sufficiently clearly focused on developing pupils' literacy skills and is not challenging enough. Homework is used effectively to extend and expand on work in lessons. For instance, after a Year 7 lesson to engage the reader in H.G. Wells' 'War of the Worlds', pupils were asked to use four of Wells' techniques to write about a Martian space craft that lands in the playground one lunchtime. Teachers are keen to give praise and support pupils but sometimes give effusive praise when the pupils' work does not deserve it. As a result of the generally good classroom management, a majority of pupils take an active part in group or class discussion. On occasion, however, particularly in Year 7, the pace of lessons is too fast, some time is wasted managing the behaviour of a minority of pupils and learning is only satisfactory.
84. Most pupils have positive attitudes and speak warmly of their enjoyment of the subject. Pupils do as they are asked willingly and quickly, because this is what their teachers expect. They work well together in pairs and groups and are supportive of

pupils with learning difficulties, listening attentively when these pupils explain their work to the rest of the class. They are pleased when their work is part of the good displays evident in all English classrooms, and they respond well to praise. They generally look after books and treat their own and others' work with respect.

85. Pupils use the learning resource centre well, particularly during booked sessions. The manager offers positive encouragement and there is a wide range of fiction, including the work of contemporary writers such as Joan Lingard and Terry Pratchett, as well as classics by Dickens and Jane Austen, amongst others. This year, the focus on getting the boys to read more fiction, to develop borrowing and reading skills further, is proving effective in increasing borrowing rates. There is considerable encouragement for pupils to use information and communication technology and teachers have identified a significant number of opportunities in English assignments. Teachers have used opportunities for display to good effect, and examples include pupils' work, subject specific terminology and word games.
86. The department is managed well. Departmental documentation and planning are very good. They make clear the priorities and direction of the department and include essential information, examination evaluation and departmental plans. Schemes of work include cross-curricular mapping, so that work undertaken makes a very good contribution to citizenship, information and communication technology and pupils' moral, cultural and spiritual development. Cross-curricular links address important issues such as prejudice, bullying and abuse of power. In addition, planning takes into account the needs of pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language and higher-attaining pupils. Planning is supported by a good range of teaching materials, for example, for improving spelling. Assessment and monitoring of assessment are good. Marking is positive, placing emphasis on correcting mechanical errors, identifying what is good about pupils' work and giving them a specific short-term target to improve. There is a clear monitoring of all homework. Staff are very conscientious and work well as a team, supporting each other effectively in moderation sessions to ensure consistency of standards. Theatre visits, residential courses, coursework catch-up sessions, Year 9 booster classes, breakfast and reading clubs are some of the high quality activities organised by the department. They offer good social and cultural experiences by their enrichment of the curriculum. Since the last inspection, new national initiatives to teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 have been introduced well, standards have improved significantly and improvement, overall, has been good.

## **Literacy**

87. The provision for literacy is good and has improved since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has carried out a literacy audit, there is a clear literacy strategy and there has been staff-awareness training. There has been a focus on reading and the intention is for writing to be the target of the next phase. A two-week literacy summer school, designed to improve and enhance the literacy skills of pupils who are already fluent readers, provides an effective transitional stage for new pupils and enables staff to determine targets for those taking part at an early stage. Additional curriculum time has been given to literacy within English and appropriate strategies identified in the schemes of work.
88. The school is taking a controlled approach to the embedding of literacy across the curriculum, with the current focus in history and geography. In history, this is effectively improving pupils' written work. For example, Year 10 work shows evidence of research, structured writing, writing frames and correction of spellings. Year 7 pupils have written letters asking for help in resolving their grievances to King William. In geography, the embedding of literacy is supported by the display of subject specific terminology in classrooms. In information and communication technology, good opportunities are provided with research activities, note taking, the annotation of writing, the analysis of data, the use of anagrams for technical words, enquiry work, essays and writing frames. In other subjects, such as art, the use of

writing frames and word banks reinforce literacy skills. In science, the use of class reading, which is listened to attentively, and some use of matching techniques to build concept vocabulary and paired discussion, are effective strategies. In drama, there is very good enquiry work, discussion, extended written assignments and the display of specialist vocabulary. Similarly in physical education, there is evidence of good practice with the precise definition of words and the use of subject technical language in the naming of muscle groups.

## **Drama**

89. Drama is taught as a discrete subject but it also meets the requirements of the National Curriculum for English. All pupils study drama in Years 7 to 9 and it is an optional subject in Years 10 and 11. Attainment in drama is good across the school and GCSE results in 2002 were above national averages and well above the averages for boys nationally. The course is popular and results are consistently amongst the best in the school.
90. Teaching is very good. Pupils respond in a mature way to the tasks required of them, as a result of the knowledgeable and pacy session that began with a teacher demonstration related to the text 'Frankenstein'. This was followed by a discussion of synonyms for 'trust' and, as a result of the teacher's very good control and the confidence he inspired in his pupils, they were able to give several alternatives such as 'faith', 'belief' and 'reliability'. In drama, pupils work hard to prepare dramatised activities in response not just to texts but to cross-curricular themes such as citizenship. As a result of positive teaching, absolute control and clear learning objectives, pupils are very good at feeling empathy and expressing their feelings. They are taught to use a variety of dramatic techniques to explore ideas, issues, texts and meanings. Pupils are confident in using different ways to convey action, character, atmosphere and tension when they are scripting and performing plays, for example, through dialogue, movement and pace. The well-structured lessons, for instance on identity, encourage a good depth of thought and result in some very perceptive comments. The frozen images all the pupils produce are related to the high expectations of the teacher.
91. Homework has been identified as a difficult area for pupils who are primarily interested in acting. However, the department has resolved this by devising homework research projects for Years 7 to 9. These are set at the start of each half-term and include appropriate research. The projects are also effective as preparation for Key Stage 4. The imaginative nature of the topics and the opportunities they provide, encourage pupils to develop their literacy skills and foster a love of drama.
92. Leadership and management of drama are good. A clear scheme identifies opportunities for different groups of pupils. Marking, with target setting, is good. The head of department has created a common approach in which an ethos of high expectation is established. Informal links with English are developed as a result of shared staff, and a collaborative approach to the study of some productions. Drama makes an important contribution to the National Curriculum requirements for English, but this is not developed formally enough to take full advantage of opportunities provided in each subject.
93. Although housed in a basement, the drama centre has been made into a rich learning environment and considerable effort has gone into making it inviting. Set out as a studio, there is a limited but adequate acting space and small stage. The walls have useful displays of pupil work, such as masks and board games,



photographs of visits and subject specific terminology. Pupils are encouraged to use the base after school.

94. A significant number of enrichment activities add to the richness of pupils' experiences and contribute positively to their appreciation of drama. In particular, the department tries to ensure a theatre experience for each year group. In 2002, the school also took part in the Shakespeare in Schools Project, presenting a shortened version of 'Othello' at Stratford Circus, while the end of year production was 'An Evening with Shakespeare'. There have been workshop visits to primary schools and the drama pupils took part in last year's Lord Mayor's show, choreographing their own dance. The subject is important within the overall curriculum and makes a very valuable contribution to pupils' personal development.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good at Key Stage 4.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievements.
- Performance data is used well to maximise achievement, particularly in Key Stage 4.
- The department is led well.

### Areas for improvement

- The limited range of teaching styles employed restricts pupils' progress.
- The curriculum allows too few opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematics.
- Marking is not always sufficiently diagnostic to be helpful to pupils.

95. The knowledge, skills and understanding that pupils have, when they come to the school, varies considerably from year to year but, overall, is a little below average. Results, at the end of Year 9, have risen significantly over the last three years, and are now in line with the national averages for all pupils and for boys. They were similar to those of pupils, nationally, with similar end of year 6 attainment. This indicates that pupils made satisfactory achievement in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7. Higher-attaining pupils have achieved well and records show that pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language have made satisfactory progress.
96. On the evidence of pupils' recorded work and the lessons observed, standards in Year 9 show a further improvement on previous years' but are still in line with national expectations. Pupils currently in Year 9, for example, can solve linear algebraic equations, whilst higher-attaining pupils are able to expand brackets and solve the consequent equation. Standards of numeracy are in line with national expectations. However, pupils' skills in using and applying their mathematics to work independently and solve extended problems are not developed as well as their basic numeracy skills. Overall, pupils are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7.
97. In the 2002 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining A\* to C grades was below the national average and the average for boys. There has been a significant improvement in the numbers achieving an A\* to C grade, from a very low figure three years ago. In 2002, the number of pupils gaining very high grades was substantially higher than previous years. Pupils made less progress in mathematics than in the other subjects they studied. One in eight pupils left Year 11 without mathematics

GCSE. Analysis of performance data shows that pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress. Pupils' results were similar to those of pupils, nationally, with similar end of Year 9 test results indicating that they made satisfactory achievement.

98. The standard of work seen in lessons, pupils' exercise books and coursework in Year 11 is now at nationally expected levels. For example, average-attaining pupils solve problems using standard form and discuss a variety of examination topics confidently. Higher-attaining pupils can analyse the properties of quadratic equations and solve complex problems involving the surface area of cylinders. The programme of study covers the broad range of the curriculum, although pupils are given relatively few opportunities to use and apply their mathematics. As a consequence, their ability to solve extended problems is less well developed. Overall, the achievement of pupils currently in Year 11 is good taking account of their levels of attainment when they started their GCSE courses.
99. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall, but considerably stronger in Key Stage 4. In Key Stage 3, subject specialists set high expectations and plan structured lessons which are tightly focused on learning objectives. In Year 9, the classes are set by attainment levels and pupils respond positively to the challenge provided, as teachers match the work closely to pupils' previous attainment. However, in the mixed ability classes in Years 7 and 8, teachers give insufficient regard to the differing needs within each group. As a consequence, a minority of pupils fail to understand the tasks set and disrupt the learning of others, so that learning is satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 4 is good. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the requirements of examination success and transmit this to pupils, effectively. The support given to higher and average-attaining pupils is particularly noteworthy and is central to the rapidly improving standards in the department. Teachers make good use of GCSE module test data to set appropriate work and maximise achievement by motivating pupils. Marking is consistently positive and motivational, but is insufficiently diagnostic to be helpful for pupils to identify what they have to do to improve.
100. The range of teaching styles employed across both key stages is limited and restricts pupils' progress. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology to meet fully the subject requirements of the National Curriculum. The vast majority of lessons follow a didactic pattern, with teacher exposition followed by questions and pupil practice. While this provides clearly structured learning opportunities, there is insufficient practical work to engage the learning style often favoured by boys. The teaching style employed ensures the ability of pupils to solve a problem mechanically, but often fails to improve their understanding of the underlying mathematics. On the occasions when pupils are encouraged to work together and discuss their mathematics, as for example in an excellent Year 11 lesson on compound errors arising from approximations, they respond very positively and progress is rapid. Teachers support the learning of pupils for whom English is an additional language satisfactorily, ensuring they are engaged in discussion and putting an emphasis on key words.
101. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are very positive. They are keen to do well, enjoy interacting with teachers and answering questions, and learn well. Behaviour and attitude are also good in the earlier years wherever teachers successfully engage the whole group in learning.

102. The leadership and management of the subject are good. There is a team ethos within the department, which has been cultivated by a collaborative style of leadership. The head of department monitors the quality of teaching, has a very clear understanding of the issues facing the team and a sound plan for tackling them. The department is developing a range of teaching materials but practical equipment is limited.
103. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Results have improved markedly and the quality of teaching has improved in Key Stage 4. There has been a significant improvement in pupils' attitudes, and provision for numeracy is no longer a key issue for the school. The department has the capacity to build on its strengths and improve standards still further.

### Numeracy

104. Provision for numeracy across the school is satisfactory. Progress in developing a whole-school approach has been limited. Nonetheless, pupils are confident in deploying their skills in a range of subjects. For example, pupils work to a good standard in design and technology, in a project to design and build masks and they use their numeracy skills well in science over a range of tasks involving speeds and forces. Graphical skills are less well-developed.

### SCIENCE

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

#### Strengths

- Results have improved since the last inspection and achievement is now good.
- There is some very good work by above-average attaining pupils, especially in Years 9 and 10. Lower-attaining pupils who are supported well produce good work.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, especially when they are taught well.
- Management is good. There have been good recent improvements in curriculum and assessment. There is good teamwork and potential for further improvement.

#### Areas for improvement

- Raise standards in some classes by disseminating the best practice.
- Further implement the good departmental plans to develop teaching and learning styles and provision for literacy and numeracy.

105. Results in the Year 9 tests, in 2002, were in line with national averages, for boys and for all pupils. They are in line with the average for pupils, nationally, with similar end of Year 6 test results and are well above the average for similar schools. There has been an upward trend since the previous inspection and the proportion of pupils who achieved the higher Level 6 now also meets national averages. Pupils entered the school with below average attainment levels and made satisfactory progress. Standards observed in lessons and in work scrutiny met national expectations in all year groups and pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment at the start of Year 7. There is clear evidence that the new curriculum scheme has improved standards from Years 7 to 9, for example, extended writing on metals and interrogation of data about human genetics. Above-average work was seen in the higher sets, for example, good information research with the use of computers in Year 8 homework.
106. GCSE results, in 2002, were below the national average and the average for boys and there is an improving trend. They are better than at the time of the previous inspection. Now many more pupils gain at least a G grade and a higher proportion

of pupils gain a grade A\* - G than in the other core subjects. Both higher and lower-attaining pupils do slightly better than pupils, nationally, with similar Year 9 results, so that the value added throughout the key stage is good. Pupils, currently in Year 11, are working at levels slightly higher than previous results suggest and are now close to national expectations. The GNVQ classes in Years 10 and 11 have portfolios of work of good standard. Investigatory coursework is well done in all the sets, with well above average analysis and evaluation in the tops sets, and with valid and worthwhile attempts in those lower sets that had been well supported. The good work included high quality work on electricity and ionic half equations. Overall therefore, achievement is good.

107. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but there are variations in teaching methods between teachers so that, while much teaching is good, some is less effective. Each of the following facets of teaching contains both strengths and areas of weakness, although none was so weak as to be unsatisfactory. In some lessons, pupils' independence is encouraged; for example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were given the basic concept on ecology but encouraged to develop their own definitions. In other lessons, pupils' independence is insufficiently developed; for example, when a Year 11 group was working on wave equations, answers were given before they had time to make their own attempts. In many lessons, the approach to literacy teaching is structured well and improves pupils' use of text and information-retrieval skills with which pupils process information. In a few lessons, this approach is less well-developed. Some teachers make good use of a range of techniques, such as concept mapping, to assess and build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, but in other lessons these techniques are used insufficiently. Overall, practical skills are weaker than they should be because pupils have insufficient opportunities to practice these regularly. When practical work is done, it promotes pupils' learning well; for example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils understood pressure as the relationship between force and area more easily because they had the opportunity to make shoe marks and investigate the impact of stiletto heels for themselves. In some lessons, concepts are taught to a certain level of understanding, such as in a Year 11 lesson on relative atomic mass, but insufficiently developed and formulaic rather than leading to deeper understanding. Thus, overall, teaching and learning is only satisfactory, but examples of good practice have been identified within the department and are beginning to be shared, so there is good potential for improvement.
108. Pupils' attitudes to work vary, but the majority have positive attitudes. In the older classes there are co-operative attitudes that facilitate learning even in complex situations, such as in a Year 10 GNVQ class where pupils were busily and safely using soldering irons to produce electronic circuits. Here, the acquisition of social skills combined with the interest of the subject matter to promote very good motivation. On the other hand, some of the younger classes, particularly in Year 7, have not settled down to a good work ethos, although very good teaching is evident in similar groups. In these, assertive discipline is highly developed and leads to good learning, for example, about animal and plant habitats. When teaching is less strong, the atmosphere is less conducive to work. Teachers have not yet shared sufficiently techniques to remain calm, yet firm and assertive. However, overall, teachers manage behaviour well in most lessons and pupils' attitudes to work are good overall, albeit sometimes at the cost of high teacher effort.
109. There have been a number of marked improvements since the last inspection, so that improvement since that time is good. The department has worked hard on the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, introduced a new science scheme for this age group

and identified a wider range of approaches to teaching and learning. Where it is fully implemented, it has improved provision for the higher-attaining pupils, for example through independent learning, based on scientific text and on the Internet. It provides literacy help through key words and structured writing and also helps to enrich numeracy provision. The department has improved specific support for pupils with special educational needs and it provides pupils with a good homework programme and enhances pupils' learning through topic overviews. Provision also benefits pupils' self-knowledge through the system of regular tests, providing information about the actual National Curriculum level a pupil is working at, as against target levels, although some marking only identifies pupils' current levels of achievement and does not identify precisely the steps necessary to improve further. The curriculum has also improved in the GCSE years, although further teaching materials are required to supplement the textbooks. The main improvement in Years 10 and 11 is the introduction of intermediate GNVQ for the middle-attaining pupils, which has increased motivation and standards, particularly through the use of information and communication technology, and promises to improve overall GCSE-equivalent grades.

110. Management in science is good. Strengths and weaknesses have been analysed well and weaknesses indicated in this report have been identified and are being tackled through the development plan. The current head of department has only been in place since September and there has not been time for the changes to fully work through. Staffing has been consolidated, professional development is good, teaching and learning are well monitored and new teachers feel well supported. There is considerable enthusiasm in the team and the potential for further improvement is high. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory and library provision is good. Since the last inspection, the developments in curriculum and assessment and the raising of standards both of results and in the presentation of ongoing work, mean that overall improvement is good. To develop this work further, there is a need to continue the departmental emphasis on developing its approaches to teaching and learning, and thorough and consistent use of the materials available, to raise the overall teaching effectiveness from its present satisfactory level to good or better.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Good teaching builds very effectively on pupils' language skills.
- Pupils' achievement and progress throughout the school is good.
- The leadership and management of the subject are helping to raise standards.

### Areas for improvement

- The planning of extension activities for higher-attaining pupils.

111. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 the majority have little experience of the subject, for example keeping a sketchbook and working with a range of art and design materials. From this very low starting point they make good progress and a significant proportion make very good progress. Teacher assessments, in 2002, judged attainment in Year 9 to be in line with those reported for all pupils and above those reported nationally for boys.
112. The work seen in lessons and in the samples provided by the school, indicate standards in Year 9 are broadly in line with expected levels. Around three quarters

of all Year 9 pupils, including those with English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs, are working towards or are at Level 5, the nationally expected level for their age. This shows good achievement. There are fewer pupils working at the higher levels. Higher-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress but their work does not always show the depth and quality required at the higher levels. Great efforts are being made to develop pupils' language and literacy skills within the subject. As a consequence, pupils are making gains in their knowledge about artists' work and in their ability to recognise and explain the decisions they make in their own work. This helps to consolidate their understanding. Pupils with identified learning needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, benefit from the regular attention teachers give to key words, and to the explanations and questions they ask throughout their demonstrations of different techniques. In one lesson, colour theory was made enjoyable by sharp, quick, questions and answers, and in another, pupils' drawings of mythical beasts were made more real by their written descriptions of the creature. By imagining where it lived, what it ate and what its special powers were, pupils thought more deeply and made more informed decisions about how they would make it. In another Year 9 lesson, the teacher established the way artists' use printing techniques and how this is different to the printing of multiple images, before giving a demonstration of mono printing. Pupils paid close attention, they were able to suggest how different drawing equipment might give a different quality of line and were curious and keen to experiment and try it themselves. As the experimental work got underway, pupils gradually became more discriminating and engrossed in their decision-making. The development of the work and the depth of learning were cut short by the 50 minute lesson. There was insufficient time to review learning and to use what the experiment had revealed in a more demanding piece of work, while it was fresh and clear in the pupils' minds.

113. Results in GCSE examinations in 2002 were below the average for all pupils but in line with boys' attainment nationally. The standards of work of current Year 11 pupils, whilst still below average for all pupils, are slightly higher than 2002. In Year 10, they are significantly higher. Achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, English as an additional language and higher-attaining pupils is good, in relation to pupils' differing starting points. In the last two terms, pupils have benefited from improvements in teaching and a more settled staffing situation.
114. In Years 10 and 11, lessons are taught in double blocks of time and this enables pupils to practice and refine their work to a good standard. The school is making very good use of a partnership arrangement with the Barbican Gallery and a practising artist. In a lesson where pupils in Year 10 were working on a sculpture project, they were able to see and touch the work the artist brought in, listen to her explanations for the choice of subject matter and then question her about it. Through careful questioning, they gained an understanding of what symbolic meant in this context. The artist worked in felt and textiles and pupils made some thoughtful observations, speculating on the reasons why she had chosen a particular colour and what a particular idea 'said' to an observer. Pupils very quickly began to see how art could convey ideas and meanings and they set about sketching out their own initial ideas. The lesson had a big impact on them and they were keen to learn more. They received very good support from the visiting artists themselves and also from teachers, a learning mentor and the visitors from the gallery, and made significant gains in their understanding of how art communicates.
115. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the subject improve as they move through the school. Overall they are good. They enjoy practical activities, and get great

satisfaction from seeing how their work improves and what they have achieved. Teachers work very hard with younger groups to establish appropriate work habits and attitudes.

116. Overall, teaching is good and this enables good learning. In a significant proportion of lessons teaching and learning were very good. Teachers are skilled at using their very good subject specialist knowledge and skills, alongside the skills of teaching literacy. Some imaginative and thoughtful solutions have been devised to get pupils more actively involved and responsible for their own achievement. Central to this are teachers' very high expectations, and the information pupils have been given about the curriculum, how they are progressing and what their targets are. However, teachers are not yet linking this sufficiently to their planning to ensure that higher-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 are set work often enough that fulfils the necessary requirements of the higher levels. Teachers' management of behaviour is very good. This establishes a secure foundation for the development of the routines for practical work and homework. There is a very strong team ethos, where good practice is regularly reviewed and shared and teachers are committed and very focused on raising standards.
117. Leadership and management are good overall. A significant amount has been achieved in a short time, and improvement since the last inspection is good. The scheme of work and the departmental development plan are sharply focused on the right issues, and the plans for realising improvements are secure. Monitoring of teaching and learning, and the steps to address areas where improvements can be made, are closely aligned to whole school priorities. The department makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the work with outside agencies widens pupils' personal horizons and provides information about local museums that some than follow-up in their own time. Leadership, within the department is a key strength.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- Achievement and learning are very good throughout the school, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good; they enjoy what they are doing, are enthusiastic and work well.
- Pupils involved in the school council demonstrate very high levels of maturity and understanding of the democratic process.
- The subject is being managed and developed very well.

### Areas for improvement

- Although some assessment is already taking place, it requires further development to ensure that secure judgements can be made about pupils' attainment and progress.

118. Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding when they join the school are well below national expectations. They are able to talk about moral and social issues and concerns at only a very basic level and their understanding of right, wrong, fairness and tolerance tend to be at a very elementary level. They have difficulty in explaining their views and many find it difficult to listen to others.
119. The attainment of pupils in both Years 9 and 11 are above national expectations. Pupils in Year 9 have a broad knowledge and understanding of social and moral issues, and they can explain rights and responsibilities. They have experienced democracy, through the school council, and have begun to understand about government. Pupils involved in the school council demonstrate very high levels of maturity and understanding of the democratic process. Pupils comprehend the concepts of sustainable development, tolerance and respect, and can justify their personal views and participate in class and group debates. They consider the views of others and express opinions that are not their own. For example, in the Years 7 and 8 school council meeting, pupils were taking full responsibility for the conduct of the meeting. The chair undertook the responsibility ably, confidently and with an excellent understanding of his role; the pupils present participated with confidence and took part in decision making whilst responsibly considering the view of others, including the teachers. Pupils, in Year 9, are also highly skilled in being able to take responsibility and debate in a mature manner. They have a good knowledge of the role of the media and how information can be presented in a range of ways. They can use their imagination to consider the views of others and to empathise with their feelings. Despite the early stages of development, citizenship is already having a substantial impact upon pupils throughout the school, building upon skills and understanding already being developed through the school's very successful personal, social and health education programme.
120. Achievement and learning in the subject are very good throughout the school, particularly in Years 7 to 9, as a result of very good teaching. This has been achieved through careful, well-thought through plans to implement the subject, combined with some very good and excellent teaching. In one Year 9 class, pupils were learning to understand the moral dilemmas in the issue of capital punishment. They were given the opportunity, through a role-play exercise, to imagine how it would feel to be facing execution and were able to express these feelings. They then used the experience to develop their understanding of others, the consequences of serious crimes and reflect upon their opinions about capital punishment. During the course of the lesson, many changed their views. All pupils



were challenged and engaged by this lesson. In another lesson, where pupils were learning about the effects of alcohol, the teacher provided an excellent opportunity for them extend their understanding, as far as they were able, through a role-play activity. Each group of pupils had to produce a clip from a television programme, illustrating different views about alcohol. The teacher carefully linked the work to previous lessons and encouraged pupils to think for themselves. He set clear boundaries for behaviour and learning and had very high expectations. He maintained the pace of work well by setting clear time targets, and ensured that pupils had a clear understanding of the difference between fact and opinion. All pupils were highly challenged and enjoyed what they were doing, so that there was a gasp of disappointment when the lesson had to come to an end. All groups of pupils achieve very well. Citizenship makes a good contribution to literacy, and a satisfactory contribution to numeracy and information and communication technology.

121. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in citizenship are very good. They enjoy what they are doing, are enthusiastic, participate very well and listen to their teacher and each other. Teachers have very high expectations for their behaviour and pupils find the work both interesting and relevant.
122. The citizenship curriculum is good and is well represented within the school's personal, social and health education programme. Those elements that are being delivered across the curriculum are more variable, and in some cases require further improvement and more specific identification and planning. The school council makes a very good contribution to citizenship, and community involvement has begun to be developed. Assessment of the subject is satisfactory and, although it is very early in the development of the subject, the school will be well placed when it has to make statutory assessments. The school has identified the need to develop its policy further to ensure that judgements about pupils' attainment and progress are secure.
123. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and the subject is developing very well. It has been very well-organised and there are clear strategic targets for its further progress. There are clear and appropriate plans for the future. Although it is early in the development of the subject, a good start has been made in monitoring the subject, including a review of pupils' views about citizenship. Citizenship makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Good achievement, including those who have special educational needs and English as an additional language.
- Some very good teaching
- Good leadership and management
- Assessment procedures, which draw on previous information and enable boys to improve their work.

### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation and resources, including information and communication technology, are restricting approaches to teaching.
- Computer-related activities are insufficiently developed in schemes of work.

- Sharing of good practice in planning the detail of lessons to improve teaching further.

124. In 2002, the teachers' assessment of standards at the end of Year 9, were close to those reported nationally. Current work indicates that this position is being maintained and that the standard of work in Year 9 is in line with the nationally expected level, because projects are well structured to support pupils' learning. Pupils are achieving well in relation to their low attainment on entry to the school. Pupils develop knowledge and skills in set tasks. For example, in a desk tidy project, pupils learn about plastics, plan for production and complete three-dimensional drawings. When studying mechanisms, pupils analyse existing products, make good sketches of complex items and in food, they carry out research, conduct surveys about the preferences of different age groups and of foods from other countries and cultures. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge about materials, their properties and use. They are good at following instructions and carrying out guided activities, which enable them to acquire knowledge and skills. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to work to design briefs, carry out some research and investigation, and develop their own ideas. They use a range of recording skills when presenting ideas, make flow charts of their production methods and carry out evaluations of both existing products and their own work. Higher-attaining pupils produce good, well-presented work, but lower-attaining pupils do not always complete the work set. Records of work are generally well organised and this reflects the well structured nature of teachers' planning. Pupils have experiences of working with a range of materials, components and ingredients and, overall, practical work is satisfactory. Well-planned projects ensure that boys of all attainment levels make good progress, with higher-attaining pupils reaching slightly above the national expectation.
125. In 2002, overall GCSE results for A\* to C grades were below the national average for all pupils but were in line with the national average for boys. The proportion gaining A\* to G grades was in line with the national average for all pupils. Within the school, boys made better progress in design and technology than in most of the other GCSE subjects they took. In graphics and resistant materials, a higher than average proportion of pupils gain A\* and A grades.
126. Current work indicates that standards, in all design and technology subjects, continue to be in line with national expectation for boys and higher-attaining pupils are achieving good standards. Pupils benefit from well-planned programmes of work and good teaching, which enable them to structure their work and meet examination requirements effectively. Pupils use a satisfactory range of recording techniques in research, analysis and development of design ideas, and also use good evaluation techniques. Levels of knowledge and understanding are developing well but lower-attaining pupils have difficulty in retaining and recalling technical information. Pupils demonstrate satisfactory practical skills in each of the design and technology subjects. Computers are used in the presentation of coursework, but lack of access to a sufficient range of computer resources is preventing aspects of computer-aided design and manufacturing being developed.
127. Overall, all pupils, including those who have special educational needs and those whose first language is not English, make good progress throughout the school and are achieving well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course.
128. Teaching is satisfactory, overall, in Years 7 to 9. In the majority of lessons it is good, but there is a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is good overall, with all lessons being at least satisfactory and many that are good or very good. Although not all teachers are design and technology

specialists, most have sufficient subject knowledge and teach the skills of the subject well. Planning is effective in most lessons, but in weaker lessons there is insufficient identification of detailed teaching methods and planning of the detail for pupils' learning activities. Good teaching is characterised by work targeted to pupils' individual needs, and good use of demonstration materials to focus pupils' understanding. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and most have suitably high expectations of what they can do. The management of pupils is strong in most lessons and time and resources are generally used well. Insufficient opportunities are taken to share the good teaching and learning practices seen in the best lessons. As a result of teaching, pupils' learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils work at a satisfactory pace and show interest and concentration when carrying out set tasks. Marking and assessment of pupils' work, as part of individual support in lessons, allows effective guidance to be given and provides good opportunities for older pupils to review and improve their coursework. However, within the department, guidance about marking criteria, as a means of helping to raise standards of written work, is not sufficiently detailed and some marking does not provide sufficient guidance for pupils to draw on previous information and enable them to improve their work. In some lessons, teaching strategies contribute well to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and these are supported by the use of information and communication technology in presenting pupils' work. However, planning for these aspects is not sufficiently detailed in all lessons. Homework could be used more effectively to enhance coursework.

129. Overall, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. Pupils are managed well and respond positively. They like design and technology and, because lessons are well planned and managed, pupils concentrate well and show positive attitudes and behaviour. Good working relationships exist in most lessons because teachers know and care about pupils and their work. All pupils benefit from well-organised and structured work, and experiences in design and technology make a positive contribution to boys' personal development.
130. Leadership and management of the department are good. Documentation and development priorities are appropriate. The team of committed teachers work together well. Accommodation is barely satisfactory overall. In food technology and resistant materials, the use of two adjoining rooms, with restricted visual contact between the two, is a potential health and safety hazard and requires additional vigilance from teachers to manage practical work carefully. Limited equipment and lack of access to computer equipment is restricting access to some aspects of the National Curriculum. The need to use non-specialist teachers is limiting some aspects of the practical curriculum. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Results at GCSE have improved considerably and the numbers taking the examination have also increased substantially.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good; they want to learn and work very hard.

### Areas for improvement

- Gifted and talented and higher-attaining pupils are not always given sufficiently challenging work.

- In Years 7 to 9, assessment information is not used sufficiently to identify pupils' precise levels of attainment or to track their progress through the year.

131. Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding when they join the school are well below national expectations. They have very low levels of knowledge about environments beyond their local area, and their ability to ask geographical questions and use technical terms is very limited. The standards in 2002, as measured by teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9 were in line with those reported nationally.
132. The attainment of the current Year 9 is below national expectations, mainly because their attainment when they entered the school was considerably lower than that of pupils in the previous year. Given their low levels of understanding in Year 7, this represents satisfactory achievement for all but the higher-attaining pupils. Pupils have a sound understanding of population growth and are able to recognise the reasons for population distribution. They have learned about Japan and Tokyo in particular. The amount of work completed shows that pupils have been working hard, but the majority of their work is answering questions set by the teacher, rather than writing more extended pieces of work that they have thought about and developed for themselves. They have had few opportunities to develop their skills of questioning, or the chance to select and use a variety of information from a range of sources. In one Year 9 class, when pupils were learning about Ghana as a less economically developed country, pupils had little knowledge about global issues and the need for countries to work together. Their map skills were limited and they were overly dependent upon the teachers.
133. The results at GCSE in 2002 were close to national averages. The results at GCSE have improved considerably over the last two years, and the numbers taking the examination have also increased substantially. The attainment of the current Year 11 is above national expectation, and looks set to continue the trend of improvement in the subject. This represents good achievement from the standards in Year 9, for all except the higher-attaining pupils. Pupils compare and contrast two different urban localities well, and have used their fieldwork experience to do this very effectively. Their work shows careful planning and considerable care and effort. They can explain and account for urban changes in more economically developed countries, and they use both primary and secondary data effectively. They recognise environmental issues and provide extended written answers. In one Year 11 class, the pupils were able to think about, and use, their understanding of 'push/pull' factors in counter urbanisation. They sorted factors, given to them on cards, into the two categories and debated those they were uncertain about. Their work provides them with a very good preparation for the GCSE examination, although the higher-attaining pupils have not fully developed their abilities to think for themselves, which makes it more difficult for them to achieve the highest grades at GCSE.
134. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs, and English as an additional language, is satisfactory up to Year 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are clearly identified and planned for in lessons, and tasks are well suited to their needs. Gifted, talented and higher-attaining pupils achieve less well, as there is insufficient challenging or extended work for them.
135. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is satisfactory. The strengths of teaching are that the planning is detailed and careful, particularly for the middle and lower-attaining pupils. All teachers in the department have effective pupil management skills and use these to good effect. The impact of these strengths is

that the middle and lower-attaining pupils are learning more effectively than the higher-attaining pupils, throughout the school. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is more focused and there are examples of better teaching. For example, in the Year 11 class learning about counter urbanisation, the teacher provided pupils with the opportunity to learn very well through discussion and thinking about the concepts, using their knowledge of another appropriate locality, Thurston. The lesson continued to 'vicious circles' within counter urbanisation, and pupils were learning to understand this new concept by relating to different places they had studied. This contrasts with a less effective lesson in Year 10, where the teacher explained about acid rain and its effects, using questions and answers to encourage the pupils to think, but the questions were mainly closed, so the pupils responded with single word answers. The teaching and learning were limited to more factual knowledge and there was little opportunity for pupils to think for themselves, or for the higher-attaining pupils to consider more advanced ideas about distributions and their implications. Pupils had little opportunity to hear from each other and discuss what they had learned.

136. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in geography are good. They want to learn, work very hard and generally listen to their teacher. Teachers have high expectations for their behaviour and there is mutual respect between teachers and pupils. In Years 10 and 11, pupils feel confident they will do well in geography and they therefore focus on learning with determination. Where the teaching is better, pupils are more enthusiastic.
137. Assessment of the subject is unsatisfactory. The marking of books, in Years 7 to 9, does not give sufficient information to pupils to tell them how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Assessment is better in Years 10 and 11, where pupils are clearer about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Teachers are more confident about the progress of these pupils. In Years 7 to 9, assessment information is not used sufficiently to identify the precise levels of attainment or to track pupils' progress through the year. Although there is clear information at the end of the year, this is too infrequent to enable teachers to plan to support their pupils' progress.
138. The geography curriculum is satisfactory but with some weaknesses. Throughout the school, there is insufficient focus on pupils' learning of geographical skills and their ability to learn independently. This limits the achievement of the higher-attaining pupils. There is a sound programme of fieldwork built into the curriculum for Years 10 and 11, but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Geography makes a satisfactory contribution to the development of pupils' literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills.
139. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The department has improved standards well, since the last inspection, and there has been good progress in pupils' knowledge and understanding. There have been several changes in staff, and this has provided a challenging situation to manage and limited the capacity for overall improvement. The monitoring and development of the subject are unsatisfactory, with insufficient focus on the attainment and progress of pupils, and therefore a lack of information about strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Consequently, the plans for the subject are unclear about priorities for development and how they might be achieved. However, the department has used improving GCSE results as a very successful target and improvement is satisfactory.

## HISTORY

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

### **Strengths**

- Good teaching by specialist teachers is raising pupils' achievements.
- Pupils in Year 11 are achieving well, and working above national expectations.
- A variety of learning strategies and activities employed provide relevant interest for pupils.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Planning in some lessons does not cater fully for prior attainment of all pupils in the group.
- GCSE pupils do not have a core textbook to support their learning.

140. The standards, as measured by teacher assessments in 2002, for pupils at the end of Year 9 were close to those reported nationally. Standards of work of pupils in the current Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations. This represents good achievement, overall, from their below average attainment when they entered the school in Year 7. For example, all pupils seen in a middle set in Year 9 were able to build on their prior learning about the nature of trench warfare in the First World War. They researched and prepared class presentations that described new weaponry used. Higher-attaining pupils in this group were able to identify and explain the impact of these weapons in the context in which they were being used. Work, seen in pupils' exercise books, employed a variety of forms of writing, including letters, reports, and formal essays. In these, higher-attaining pupils demonstrated, for example, an ability to communicate the impact that individual suffragettes made on the struggle for votes for women.
141. The GCSE results in 2002 were well below national averages and pupils made less progress in history than in most of the other GCSE subjects they took. Standards, in the years immediately prior to the inspection, have been severely affected by staffing difficulties in the department, but have now improved. Standards of work observed during the inspection show that pupils in Year 11 are achieving very well, and working above national expectations. For example, higher-attaining pupils, in their study of the war in Vietnam, analysed and compared evidence from the time, building on previous learning to demonstrate a deep understanding of the features that characterised this period. Pupils in this examination group showed a sound grasp of events and major issues, for example, the impact of press and television coverage of the war on the American people.
142. Overall, the teaching and learning observed was good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and of examination requirements for GCSE. In a Year 10 class, there was a very good awareness by the teacher of how to encourage students to reflect on the sources presented to them. The teacher used carefully chosen materials and skilful questioning to engage pupils in issues of reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War. Pupils drew on their previous learning to make sense of various sources, including newspaper and magazine cartoons from the time. With the skilful assistance of the support teacher for pupils with English as an additional language, the teacher ensured that all students could demonstrate some understanding of the contemporary cartoons presented to them. Higher-attaining pupils were able to add to their descriptions and suggest possible messages and motives behind the drawings. In another Year 10 group, the pupils' good achievement in the lesson derived from their enthusiasm for the subject. For example, from their previous lessons they brought a good understanding of Hitler's methods of social and political control. Following their reading of economic policies

in the Third Reich, they suggested how these might form part of a greater overall picture of Hitler's aims and intentions.

143. Classes are set in Years 7 to 9, but within these sets there remains a range of attainment. Teachers have sought opportunities to provide a variety of materials and activities. For example, in a good Year 7 lesson, pupils made good use of the information technology facilities of the learning resource centre. With the assistance of specialist support, the teacher enabled pupils to engage in productive research activities on various aspects of life in medieval England. Pupils extended their understanding of the period, and made good use of the presentation facilities on hand. There remain, however, some lessons where planning is not clear and focused enough to engage and challenge all pupils in their learning. For example, with one Year 8 group considering the impact of the American Civil War on progress for black people, the teacher failed to provide sufficient challenging opportunities for the higher-attaining pupils and overall achievement remained only satisfactory by the end of the lesson.
144. Pupils' learning is clearly supported by a range of assessment strategies. Work is marked with clear comments on how to improve. Learning outcomes are made clear in lessons. Teachers discuss these, and provide effective support in moving pupils forward to meet them. All groups of pupils make good progress. Teachers identify gifted and talented pupils, and often provide opportunities, in class, for higher-attaining students to make further progress. There have been additional opportunities to support learning outside of the classroom, for example the visit to the Royal Munitions Armoury. Since the last inspection, significant improvement has been made in the quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' attitudes are good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory overall in earlier years. Pupils have opportunities to learn in contexts outside of the classroom-based curriculum, for example, in the Year 9 visits to France. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology and the learning resource centre, to support students' learning.
145. The department is emerging well from a time of difficulties in staffing. The head of department provides energetic leadership and manages development well, so that overall improvement since the last inspection is good. There are clear priorities for moving forward, for example, in developing the strategies for teaching and learning, and supporting these through clear assessment procedures. Textbooks are available to resource pupils' learning throughout the course, although the GCSE classes would benefit from the use of a core text. Accommodation in specialist rooms is good. The department handbook, schemes of work and lesson plans make reference to cross curricular requirements, such as literacy, numeracy and citizenship, and in the best lessons teachers' planning took advantage of these opportunities to provide good learning opportunities.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Strengths**

- Good programmes of work for Years 7 to 10 are used as the basis for good teaching and learning.
- Pupils have good attitudes to their work and behave well in lessons.
- Provision of computers and use of the learning resource centre are good.

### Areas for improvement

- The below average standards being achieved.
- The restricted access to computer resources for other subjects.
- There is insufficient use of computers for control, including computer-aided design and manufacturing.

146. In 2002, teacher assessments of standards, at the end of Year 9, were below those reported nationally but were a considerable improvement on the previous year. Current work indicates that standards remain below national expectations. Pupils join the school with limited experience and low attainment in the use of computers but they make good progress during Years 7 to 9. Current work indicates that pupils have access to a good range of activities that cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. Set tasks include processing text and images, graphics, working with databases and spreadsheets, producing web pages and some elements of computer control. All pupils have opportunities to work through set exercises to gain basic knowledge and skills, and faster and higher-attaining pupils use their opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in more individualised work. Well-written evaluations are a feature of higher-quality work, but there is insufficient use of annotation to reinforce pupils' learning. Well-planned programmes of work enable steady progression in the development of knowledge and skills as pupils move through the year groups, although lack of equipment for computer control, computer-aided design and manufacturing is adversely impacting on this aspect of information and communication technology work. The use of computers provides good reinforcement of numeracy and literacy skills. All groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional, make good progress.
147. This is the first year that Year 10 are following a GCSE short course for information and communications technology, and therefore no results are available for comparison. Current work, through well-structured tasks, indicates that standards are below the national expectation. Pupils use word processing, construct databases, use spreadsheets, consider relevant hardware and software for their tasks, design solutions to set problems, make user guides and write regular evaluations of their work. Higher-attaining pupils follow guidance notes, very effectively, to produce a good standard of work with in-depth evaluations of their work. However, the work of lower-attaining and less-committed pupils is often incomplete and lacking in depth and this means that, overall, standards are below the national average and achievement is only satisfactory.
148. The use of computers in other subjects is improving and for some subjects, such as business studies, the use of computers is a central part of the course. Most departments include some elements of computer work in their programmes of work. In some subjects, good opportunities are provided for pupils to enhance their coursework. For example, in history pupils use PowerPoint and publisher software, and in music they use computer technology for composing and performing. Pupils are encouraged to use computers for presentation of work in English, and there is positive impact of use of computers in science and design and technology, although the lack of equipment for computer control, computer-aided design and manufacturing, which is limiting the depth of study across the National Curriculum in the latter subject. Overall, there has been significant progress in the development of the use of computers in other subjects. The learning resource centre has been a significant positive influence on this development, but access to computer rooms of sufficient size and with sufficient computers for whole classes, is limiting the progress being made across the school as a whole.



149. Attitudes and behaviour are good. Most pupils like using computers and show both positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons. Pupils follow instructions well, and most show good levels of concentration in most lessons. Relationships with teachers and fellow pupils are good. As pupils develop their skills and confidence, they become more independent learners and this has a positive effect on the personal development of all pupils.
150. Teaching is good and enables pupils to learn well. Teachers use centrally planned lessons effectively. They have good subject knowledge and this is used well in supporting individual pupils. Pupils and resources are well-managed, with good procedures and practices being developed which are effectively encouraging pupils to become more independent learners. A suitable range of appropriate methods are used to teach the set programmes and because time is used well, most pupils show good levels of concentration and work at a sound pace. Most pupils acquire knowledge quickly, from a low base, and are soon able to apply their skills in a variety of contexts. Higher-attaining pupils can be relatively independent learners. Work is marked regularly and well, with substantial comments and, because pupils are well-informed about the quality of their work, this enables all groups of pupils, including those with special needs, to understand what they have to do to improve their work.
151. The programme of work for Years 7 to 10 provide good coverage of National Curriculum requirements for information and communication technology, although the computer control strand requires further strengthening. The use of computers in other subjects needs further development in order to ensure that pupils are able to apply their computer skills effectively in the context of other subjects and to meet the specific National Curriculum subject-based requirements, for example in mathematics, French and design and technology. Some good activities, related to the effects of the use of computers in society, are already seen in some lessons but these opportunities could be extended to ensure that all pupils have a progression of experiences in order to understand the applications and effects of the use of computers in society. Assessment procedures are good. Records of past performance and current work are used effectively to monitor and improve pupils' work, and also to analyse the achievement of different groups of pupils.
152. Leadership and management are good. Departmental documentation is thorough, but tends to be philosophical rather than practical. There are good schemes of work and developing good practice in the monitoring and support for use of computers in other subjects. More stable staffing has had a positive effect on standards being achieved. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.
153. Significant efforts have been made to improve both the information and communication technology curriculum and the resources for computing within the school. These are having a significant positive effect on the achievement of all groups of pupils, and improvement is therefore good.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- The focus on developing written literacy skills raises attainment in some classes.
- Efforts being made by the senior team and new head of department to address the historic problems of the department.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and does not always challenge pupils sufficiently.
- The development of oral skills to promote greater confidence in using language.
- The use of information and communication technology is insufficiently developed within the subject.

154. Results, in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, were well below those reported nationally in 2002 for all pupils, and for boys alone. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 remain well below average. Most pupils have little or no knowledge of French when they join the school and are, therefore, taught as beginners. There is a considerable variation in the quality and quantity of work produced. Higher-attaining pupils have been less vulnerable to variations in the quality of teaching and staffing instability which has beset the department in the last few years. They are generally well-disposed to work in lessons, although several lack the confidence to communicate orally. Middle and lower-attaining pupils generally make insufficient progress, and work done in class remains unconsolidated as not enough homework is done. The progress they do make is heavily dependent on the quality of the teaching they receive. Pupils make most progress in writing and listening, as the majority of their work is concentrated in developing these skills. There are insufficient opportunities to use language actively to improve oral competence and achievement in this aspect of language development is, therefore, unsatisfactory for significant numbers of pupils.
155. Results, in GCSE examinations, rose from 2001 to 2002, but remain well below the national averages. However, the proportion of boys who take this examination was significantly larger than the national norm and this, in part, accounts for the high number of low grades. Standards of work seen in Year 11 remain below average overall, but with a wide range of attainment. The majority of pupils are working towards grades ranging from C to G. Frequent staff changes have been a factor in the uncertain progress of many pupils in Year 11. Middle and lower-attaining pupils are reluctant to contribute orally in lessons and the teaching has to be forceful to cajole them into participating fully in activities. Higher-attaining pupils are more responsive and engage better with their learning. However, their independent learning skills are not developed well, as most lessons are dominated by the teachers. Achievement overall, in Year 11, is satisfactory, in relation to pupils' earlier attainment levels. The standard of work of the smaller number of pupils in Year 10 is higher, and in line with national expectations, with most pupils are currently working in the grade C to D range.
156. Teaching and learning are currently satisfactory overall. It is not consistent, however, and some unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In the best teaching, there is good attention to developing written literacy skills and a focus on key words. In a Year 7 lesson, lower-attaining pupils were able to identify gender distinctions and apply them consistently. In a Year 8 lesson, higher-attaining pupils identified key words and were able to combine them effectively to write accurate sentences in response to a listening exercise. Pupils learnt well because tasks were explained clearly and they had opportunities to improve and assess their work. Although these lessons were over-dominated by the teacher, there was a high level of expectations and challenge for pupils of all attainments, and work was matched to pupils' needs. In weaker teaching, there are some inadequacies in managing the behaviour of middle and lower-attaining pupils, combined with lower expectations. The slower pace results in boys losing concentration and interest, and showing poorer attitudes to work. Where planning is not focused well on learning objectives, pupils do not

receive enough practice before starting an activity, and exercises are chosen without sufficient thought as to how they are to advance pupils' skills. Consequently, pupils work with less assurance, performance is affected and pupils have unsatisfactory attitudes to learning. Pupils with special educational needs, and English as an additional language, generally progress at a similar rate to their fellows. The department generally uses a setting policy effectively, although teachers do not fully take into account the diverse learning needs of gifted and talented pupils. Common to all teaching, however, is the level of encouragement given to pupils. When this is combined with helpful marking, pupils make greater progress. Some marking gives little information to pupils both about the quality of their work and how they could improve it. There is no systematic system of target-setting in place to help raise aspirations. Homework does not receive sufficient emphasis and is often not completed by pupils. The time allocation for the foreign language assistant is relatively generous and he supports learning in all years. Withdrawal classes are used well to enable GCSE pupils to practise their oral skills, but the assistant's role within the classroom is sometimes too passive to make as full a contribution to learning as possible.

157. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The contribution of the new head of department is starting to bring a sense of greater stability to its work. In the last month there has been an intensive programme of monitoring of teachers, undertaken jointly with an external consultant, and initial preparations made to develop the quality of teaching and learning. This developmental work is at an early a stage and has had little time to impact on the quality of provision.
158. Improvement since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved a little, but standards of attainment have declined. Pupils have had little opportunity to develop their language skills through using computers, and the requirements for the use information and communications technology in learning French are not met in full.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- Teaching challenges all groups of pupils, including those who are gifted and talented.
- Music is a popular GCSE option and pupils are encouraged and helped to develop their individual tastes and aptitudes.
- Pupils derive great enjoyment from their music at all levels in the school.
- The leadership and management of music are very good; high standards of behaviour and work are expected.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not use National Curriculum levels accurately and standards at the end of Year 9 have been over-estimated.
- Some lessons with younger pupils allow too much time for independent work and pupils' efficiency wanes.

159. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are well below average. At the end of Year 9, in 2002, the teacher assessment of standards were above those reported nationally. Standards in lessons and in written work seen during the inspection, were at expected levels, indicating that the teachers' assessment were an over-estimate. Pupils, in Year 9, have a firm understanding of musical literacy which they learn through applying it to practical tasks. They are familiar with stave notation, and compose and read graphic scores. They use programmable keyboards confidently, and higher-attaining pupils use computers confidently for composing. Lower-attaining pupils have some difficulty in maintaining accurate pulse and rhythm when performing, but cope satisfactorily with simpler tasks, such as playing melodies with the right hand only.
160. Music is a popular GCSE option. Results have been in line with national averages for the last two years and similar to those seen in the current Year 11. Performance skills vary. A few pupils are outstanding performers. For example, two pupils composed and performed an extended percussion piece on two drum kits. The segmented piece was given technical and musical interest by the contrasting musical ideas, the imaginative combining of the instruments and the creative use of a wide range of dynamics. The piece was very demanding, and the pupils' concentration and collaboration were intense, resulting in a memorable artistic experience. The use of computers is very assured in Year 11. Pupils notate and layer their compositions with assurance and reflect consistency of style within each piece. Their knowledge of musical eras and the styles of major composers is limited, in comparison with their practical skills.
161. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9, and very well in Years 10 and 11, in relation to their starting points. The tasks they undertake are interesting and often entertaining. A Year 7 class accurately chanted the intricate rhythm of a rondo by Purcell to suitable word patterns, such as tea, coffee, chilli pepper, achieving in a fun way a proficient performance and a good understanding of how beats may be subdivided. By Year 9, pupils create lyrics, with styles ranging from rap to mainstream songs, which they develop into full arrangements using information and communication technology equipment. In Years 10 and 11, pupils develop their own musical strengths and tastes in negotiated assignments that effectively develop their use of harmony, melody, rhythm, bass line and structure.

162. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have excellent communication skills. They are accomplished practical musicians, with highly developed skills in pop music, which appeals very much to the pupils. Teaching demands a high level of response from all pupils in terms of behaviour and work. Very firm ground rules ensure that pupils learn efficiently and are responsible. Learning is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. GCSE pupils work very well independently, for extended periods. They negotiate purposefully amongst themselves when working in groups, and are keen to achieve proficient results. A very high standard of individual support is provided for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils benefit from individual help, and from the essentially practical nature of what they are asked to do. The teachers' advanced musical skills ensure that the gifted and talented pupils are suitably stretched. Enthusiastic but strict teaching in Years 7 to 9 results in good progress. Pupils behave well and treat equipment with respect. They comply readily with instructions and tackle, with enthusiasm, the tasks they are set. Just occasionally, a few cannot sustain their efficiency because too much time is allocated to independent working.
163. Leadership and management of music are very good. The curriculum is organised very well to match the tastes and aptitudes of all pupils. Assessment is very good in Years 10 and 11, and closely related to GCSE requirements. Teaching includes some innovative methods, such as the use of a netball exercise in Year 9 to increase pupils' understanding of the concept of combining rhythms. In Years 7 to 9, too little use is made of National Curriculum levels to gauge pupils' standards of work accurately. Pupils encounter a wide range of music from different cultures. Performances in the classroom lead to very good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was well exemplified by a Year 11 group who performed their instrumental and vocal arrangement of James Brown's 'Sex Machine'.
164. The school finances instrumental tuition on a range of instruments. This tuition is of high quality. Pupils of all levels of accomplishment take advantage of opportunities to use musical equipment at lunch times to further their interest. Ensembles, including all GCSE students, take part in regular musical events in the community, and the school takes full advantage of outside opportunities, such as the educational outreach provision of the London Symphony Orchestra. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. Several practice rooms of good size are available for small groups to practise in, but the amount of natural light is very restricted in the principal rooms, which limits their attractiveness as a learning environment. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching throughout both key stages.
- Very good knowledge of pupils and insight into their needs, which leads to very good relationships.
- Expectations are consistently high across the department.
- Willingness to provide extra opportunities for pupils which compensate for the limited nature of on-site facilities.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils are given insufficient reference points to know what to do to improve their work.

- Further strategies are required to help pupils in the theory aspects of GCSE to enable them to raise standards.

165. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2002, showed that standards were in line with those reported nationally, and work seen during the inspection broadly supports this. Fitness levels, understanding of exercise and gymnastic skills are average and attainment in football, judged from both informal games and more formal sessions after school, is also average. The lack of space in which to move freely during formal lesson times undoubtedly hinders the acquisition of some skills in a team game such as football. However, in a gymnastics lesson, pupils in Year 8 were seen to be inventive and imaginative, and were able to produce worthwhile and competent sequences by the end of the lesson. Many pupils come into the school in Year 7 with some skills which are below average, particularly in terms of vocabulary and understanding of principles. The fact that the majority reach levels in line with national expectations, by the end of Year 9, shows good achievement.
166. The number of pupils who actually took the full GCSE examination in 2002 was too low to make a viable comparison with national figures. Although the original group size compared favourably with previous years, a significant number of pupils did not complete the theory coursework requirements, despite strenuous efforts on the part of the teachers to help and persuade them to do so. The below-average academic attainment of many pupils, together with a reluctance on their part to complete coursework assignments, are considerable factors which hinder the raising of standards in GCSE results.
167. In the practical activities for all pupils in Key Stage 4, however, the standard of attainment overall is at nationally expected levels. For example, pupils in Year 11 were able to adapt a set exercise, within a circuit, to make it specific to a particular sport, in this case, badminton. In a Year 10 lesson, a group of pupils who were being introduced to climbing, showed good co-ordination and skilful use of strength. Achievement in this key stage is also good, overall, since the pupils are able to maintain the rate of skill acquisition in restricted circumstances.
168. Teaching and learning through both key stages is very good, and this is a key factor in enabling the good achievement of pupils. There are consistently high expectations of pupils' participation and behaviour across the whole department, and this is reflected in the few non-participants in the lessons. Teachers have a very good knowledge of progressive practices which enable pupils to learn and achieve success; lessons are well planned with this in mind. In many lessons, from Year 7 onwards, good opportunities are provided for pupils to practise observing, analysing and evaluating performance. Very good attention is paid to increasing the vocabulary of the pupils with regard to the technical language of sport, as well as to the ability to define and understand general language, for example with words such as 'specificity'. Attention to details like this form part of the department's strategy to raise the achievements of pupils as they move towards GCSE examinations. Good use is made of aids to learning such as digital cameras and heart monitors. The playback from camera sequences is used well to increase pupils' skills in observing and evaluating performance. Teachers have an extensive knowledge of pupils and a clear understanding of their needs. They are able to target pupils who may need help with understanding instructions or tasks, whether because of language difficulties or other special educational needs, to ensure that they are able to complete tasks successfully. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, therefore, are enabled to make good progress in line with their peers.

169. Pupils' attitudes to physical education are generally positive, and particularly when their imagination is captured, as with climbing; they willingly give up their own time to take part or to ensure that they get as full a lesson as possible. Although most of the pupils concentrate well and focus on the task in hand when they are in an enclosed environment, many are easily distracted by outside influences, as a result of the school's inner city location, and this sometimes hinders their learning. This was the case with a Year 9 football group, who did not learn as well as they could have done because they constantly allowed themselves to be distracted by people in the street. However, in the main, pupils are lively and very supportive of each other, so that they work well together in pairs and small groups.
170. Both the timetabled curriculum and extra-curricular activities are restricted by the facilities available on site. However, the physical education department makes every possible effort to use other local facilities in order to widen the opportunities for the pupils.
171. Overall, leadership and management of the department are good and have clearly influenced the success of the department and the good improvement since the last inspection. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a very strong and consistent commitment to the work of the school and to enabling pupils to achieve success. The sense of teamwork engendered in the department provides a very good role model for pupils. In terms of managing the development of the department, insufficient attention has been given to ensuring that practice and policy have developed alongside each other. The practice of including teaching related to literacy and citizenship, for example, is good and often very good, but as yet has not been formally adopted within departmental policy. Good use is made of the assessment data provided by the school, particularly in relation to GCSE pupils. Assessment procedures within the department are good. Pupils receive verbal feedback on levels reached but are given insufficient reference points to know what to do to improve their work.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Topics clearly reflect some requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus.
- Topics are very well organised and presented at an appropriate level for each year group.
- Resources, such as visits and guest speakers, make an important contribution to the impact of religious education.
- Pupils have enjoyed the topics they have tackled.

### Areas for improvement

- The allocation of time for religious education is low and the school has been unable to recruit specialist teachers.
- The concentrated provision does not enable pupils to consolidate the skills, knowledge and understanding they encounter sufficiently.
- The school has insufficient religious artefacts to extend pupils' interest and understanding.

172. For several years, the school has been unable to recruit suitable teachers of religious education. In response to this situation, the school held thorough consultation with pupils, parents and governors. As a result, short, intensive courses

have been organised, during the last two academic years, for Years 7 to 10. Last year, three days were allocated to the course and this has been increased to four. The allocation of time is well below that needed to fulfil the full expectations of the Local Agreed Syllabus.

173. No written work exists and it is, therefore, impossible to judge pupils' standards of attainment and the quality of teaching. Discussions with pupils indicate that they found the activities interesting and meaningful and they could remember important areas of their study, for example, that the Bible and the Qur'an are holy books in Christianity and Islam. They acknowledged the positive impact made by talks about different faiths from a range of speakers, and they found the visits to Canterbury and Ely Cathedrals and to the Hindu Temple in Neasden informative and enjoyable.
174. The course was devised in close consultation with the local Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education, and is very carefully managed by the head of personal, social and health education and an assistant headteacher. It has very clear and worthwhile aims, and seeks to encourage pupils to see the relevance of religious education to their own lives by giving them a brief, but significant, experience of major world faiths. The scheme of activities includes topics such as 'holy books' and 'pilgrimage', which closely reflect some of the requirements of the Local Agreed Syllabus. Very strong cross-curricular elements are included, including art, design and technology, drama and English. The course identifies useful links with personal, social and health education and citizenship. Specialist teachers in these areas have readily contributed to the planning and teaching. Documentation is very thorough. Each topic is carefully reviewed to refine subsequent provision and ensure that what is provided matches the needs of each year group. The course covers elements of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism.
175. The school has firm plans to extend provision into Year 11. The agenda for developing religious education further, is appropriate. It includes reviewing what is provided in the light of the new Agreed Syllabus and introducing formal assessment of pupils' attainment. Although the school is not yet providing adequately for the subject, the difficulty facing the school has been dealt with proactively and improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. Current levels of resources are inadequate to meet the developing demands of the curriculum; for example, there are insufficient religious artefacts to extend pupils' interest and understanding.



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

In the inspection, all four subjects and courses offered in the sixth form, together with the school's provision for the development of students' core skills were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other aspects of the curriculum was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

### *Intermediate vocational qualifications*

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Intermediate Business GNVQ	13	92	n/a	54	n/a	15	n/a

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

No science is provided in the sixth form. The only mathematics subject offered, for the first time in 2002/03, is a GCSE re-sit course.

#### GCSE Mathematics

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

#### Strengths

- Good teaching focuses on students' needs.
- High expectations of students' achievements.
- Students have positive attitudes and they achieve well.

#### Areas for improvement

- Opportunities to develop students' confidence and independence are limited.

176. Mathematics in the sixth form is restricted to a GCSE course for those who did not achieve an A\* to C grade in Year 11. The course is being run for the first time in 2002-2003. This means that there are no achievement figures, other than the grades awarded to the students for GCSE mathematics in Year 11. The attainment of students on entry to the course is very low, many students enter the course with a grade in mathematics within the E to G range. On the basis of the work seen and lessons observed during the inspection, standards are below nationally expected levels but show that students are achieving well. For example, many students can solve geometrical problems using Pythagoras' theorem, both at an abstract level and in a variety of contexts. Students are also able and confident in applying their numeracy skills, often contributing to the discussion and willing to talk through their approach to solving mental arithmetic problems.

177. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching plans are focused on specific objectives and lessons are well structured to facilitate progress towards them. The teacher has a good subject knowledge and experience of the examination requirements and is able to direct students to key learning points.

Expectations for students' progress are high. Students' attitudes to mathematics are positive; they are very keen to do well. The teaching style employed, whilst successfully focusing on the skills needed to solve examination questions, is insufficiently varied to stimulate students to use and apply their mathematics in other contexts. The didactic nature of the teaching leads to a level of dependency among students that is unhelpful in building their confidence.

178. Provision for numeracy is satisfactory. Students' achievements are in line with their achievements in other areas of mathematics, and the teacher creates regular opportunities for students to practice their mental and pencil-and-paper arithmetic skills in mathematics lessons. For example, in checking that the solutions to the Pythagoras problems are of the right order of magnitude. At present, little use is made of the opportunity to work in a cross-curricular manner with the business studies and information and communication courses that the students undertake.
179. The leadership and management of the subject in the sixth form are good. The course has been designed to meet the needs of a specific group of students and it is successful in catering for those needs.

## **BUSINESS**

The inspection focused on AVCE business. GNVQ intermediate business, from which the AVCE follows, was also sampled. In the GNVQ intermediate lesson observed, very good teaching established a rapid pace of learning in a supportive environment where relationships were very productive. Whole class teaching was interspersed effectively with a series of well-planned activities involving all students, and leading to very good learning.

### **AVCE Business**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and the quality of teaching is very good.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very productive.
- The course builds sequentially on students' knowledge and skills, making good use of situations from the real world of business.
- Very good guidance and feedback are given on students' course-work, enabling them to make very good progress.
- Very good links to grading criteria and individual guidance on achieving high marks leads to very good learning.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The development of links with the business community to enhance the curriculum.
- The establishment of a business base area to improve sixth form facilities.

180. Standards are at average levels for the course in AVCE business. This represents very good achievement for students who tend to have well below average GCSE point scores for advanced level students. The first course has not yet been completed, but unit assessments, so far recorded for the current Year 13, and analysis of students' work confirm that they are making very good progress. Students' response to the subject is very good. This is not always apparent in lessons, but students are extremely positive about the subject, knowing that they make very good progress and attributing this to the motivation of their teachers. They appreciate the one-to-one help, and value the tutorials where they are given clear and focused guidance on how to achieve higher grades. They believe that the

approach in the subject encourages them to become self-motivated and they believe that the teachers genuinely care about their education and well-being.

181. The quality of teaching is very good, ranging from good to excellent. Each teacher was observed, and in all lessons there was a clear structure and positive working atmosphere throughout. Teachers make excellent use of real-world, relevant examples, which often build on students' past experience. For example, in a lesson on equal opportunities law, a recent visit to the law courts was developed with a case study based on a real business legal case. Students worked co-operatively to consider the costs and benefits to the business of acting unlawfully. The lesson gave opportunities to explore issues of discrimination and legal rights, contributing well to citizenship and fairness. Gender and race issues raised social and moral awareness. Well-planned activities helped to establish a rapid pace from the outset, and there was constant feedback on the level at which students were working and how they could respond at a higher level. The use of information technology often leads to good learning. In one lesson, students presented the fruits of their research into how businesses attempt to ensure quality to the whole class, using PowerPoint presentations. In another, students used a guided worksheet to investigate industrial relations issues. Overall, information technology is used very well to assist students' learning, for example, by the electronic submission of work and feedback. Work is marked regularly and rigorously, and students receive very constructive feedback. A very good feature of all lessons seen was the very focused advice on grading criteria, and targeted coaching on how students could move up to higher grades. Teachers are well qualified and all have very strong subject knowledge, which is communicated clearly and effectively. The very good teaching leads to very good learning, resulting in very good achievement.
182. The subject was not reported on in the last inspection and the subject itself is new. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is a very good role model, being both a very effective teacher and manager. Three well-qualified specialists, who bring the benefits of high-level business experience to their teaching, staff the subject. Staff development and monitoring of teaching and learning are priorities, and are well organised with frequent review and observation. Senior management also offers an effective mix of support and challenge. The subject has good levels of resources, with all students having a course book. Although one of the teaching rooms has twelve computers, in one lesson the effectiveness of Year 13 presentations was limited by the lack of presentational hardware, such as a data projector. The department also suffers from the lack of a base area, which would provide better opportunities for independent learning. The department has a clear and well thought-out development plan, which envisages exciting developments in community education, if the accommodation can be improved. The department is rightly planning to further develop business links.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The only subject offered within this area is A-level information and communication technology.

### **A-level Information and communication technology**

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

#### **Strengths**

- Students achieve very well because they have good attitudes and teaching is very good.
- The subject is led well and the new A-level courses have been introduced successfully.

**Areas for improvement**

- Development of students' independent learning skills.

183. The course is very popular and it is very rare for a student not to complete his course of study. This course was not offered at the time of the last inspection.
184. Students' standards in Year 13 are average and represent a very good level of achievement, given the students' attainment when starting the course. Students manipulate images well and their evaluations of their projects are good. Students have a well-developed knowledge of appropriate technical vocabulary. For example, students accurately describe methods of data verification and validation, and confidently explain issues such as security and integrity. Higher-attaining students create complex databases and use macros to move between different tables and software applications. Students make good use of the Internet; they research topics well and discuss their findings competently.
185. Standards in Year 12 are average and this represents very good achievement. Students following the AS level course have an average knowledge and understanding of computer operating systems and know that different systems are used. They have good practical skills and use these effectively to enhance their coursework. Students have a sound understanding of how information and communication technology impacts on society. They have a good knowledge of spreadsheets and their practical application in society. They collect data and use modelling techniques to analyse and produce charts of an above average standard. A good example of this is the sports day project where students develop a sophisticated spreadsheet model for analysing and recording performance.
186. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject content and draw upon clear examples, from the use of information and communication technology in society, to give relevance to the topic. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, the teacher provided case studies on the school Intranet for teams of students to identify the use of generic, specific and bespoke software types. Website links contained within these files enabled students to develop a practical understanding of the different software applications within a real and relevant context. There are very good relationships between teachers and students. For example, students in Year 13 responded well to the constructive criticism of their work made through assessment, and actively sought additional help. Teachers assiduously mark students' work and use clear assessment procedures to support. Homework is set appropriately. Students are expected to carry out research using the Internet, work is marked well and informative comments are provided that help students to improve their work. However, students are often overly dependent on their teachers for guidance as their general learning skills have not been fully developed.
187. Resources within the sixth form teaching block are good. The quality and quantity of computers are good, and the school Intranet provides students with useful case studies. The subject is led well and, as a result, the new courses have been successfully introduced and the numbers of students opting for courses is growing.

**ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus of this inspection was GCSE English offered, for the first time in 2002/03, as a re-sit subject for a group of 13 students in Year 12. This means that there are no previous results.

## GCSE English

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

### Strengths

- Students undertake a good range of activities and written assignments which promote their progress well.
- Teaching is good.

### Areas for improvement

- Students' oral contributions are limited and they have not yet developed the ability to sustain discussion.

188. Standards of work are above nationally expected levels. Students are achieving well in relation to their low attainment at the start of the course. Students make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of linguistic terminology and frameworks and also in the way that they structure their notes and written assignments. They become more familiar with grammatical functions, with connectives and other linking phrases and are learning to structure an argument. They are developing their vocabulary and are able to define words such as 'resilience' and 'assimilate'. Overall, students' oral contributions are limited and they have not yet developed the ability to sustain discussion.
189. Teaching is good and supports good learning. The teacher's clearly expressed aims at the start of the session, the competent teacher-led exposition, followed by a well-paced question and answer session are effective. However, direct questioning of those who do not offer a response leads to only limited answers. Use of a gapped, discursive text and opening paragraph was more effective, and the teacher's annotation of the text developed good understanding of connectives. A carefully structured session with a sound plenary developed initial comprehension of writing skills. In the plenary, the higher-attaining students gave good, sustained responses. Although the majority of students are positive about the course, there are a few students who are on the margins of the class and they seem to have little interest.
190. The arrangement where the operational leadership and management of the Year 12 English group is the responsibility of the manager of the Key Stage 4 programmes is effective and the teacher has a very good understanding of the requirements of the course. Currently, curriculum and resource planning are at an early stage of development to ensure that the resources are specifically targeted at Year 12 pupils. Full departmental monitoring has not yet included a specific review of the work of Year 12 students, although there is good monitoring of these pupils' progress. Year 12 students make good use of the learning resources centre and the co-ordinator for literacy offers positive encouragement.

## CORE SKILLS

The school does not provide a specific course in core skills. The development of students' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology is provided within their other subjects.

### Core skills

Overall, the quality of provision in core skills is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Students make good progress from their entry level, notably in literacy, numeracy and the use of information and communication technology.
- The development of students' core skills is effectively integrated into subject teaching.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The core skills programme is not fully co-ordinated; there has not been any auditing of the curriculum or monitoring of students' progress in core skills.
- Students are insufficiently aware of their progress in core skills and do not have personal targets.

191. Students make good overall progress in the sixth form. Given that very few enter with GCSE grade C or above in English and mathematics, their reading, writing and numerical skills develop well through their programme of study and students are attaining average standards overall. All students use information and communication technology in their advanced courses and develop these skills to a good standard. Although they have opportunities to develop their study and learning skills through group work, and their analytical and evaluation skills through subject studies, there is no specific planned programme. There are shortcomings in their ability to work independently.
192. The development of students' core skills is an integral feature of both their advanced or GCSE courses, and the personal, social and health education programme. In lessons observed, from the perspective of core skills, good learning and achievement were seen in a number of lessons. In a Year 12 GCSE mathematics lesson, students made good progress when working on Pythagoras. In an English lesson, students developed their ability to analyse text and used the outcomes to create their own interpretation of the theme of nostalgia. In a Year 13 PSHE lesson, analysis of a range of newspapers led to good group-work and some effective communication of ideas. Learning was very good in a Year 13 information technology theory lesson. The central feature was a group task which produced good collaborative working, problem-solving and very good discussion and peer evaluation. Paired work, analysis and discussion were of very high quality in a Year 13 business education lesson. Analysis of a sample of students' work showed good data handling, presentation and steady development of written communication for a wide range of purposes. Presentation work using information and communication technology was of a high standard.
193. Teaching in the lessons observed was good overall, sometimes very good. Teachers are very well attuned to students' needs and provide a focused and supportive environment for learning. The needs of all students, including those with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English, are known and addressed by well-targeted materials and individual support.
194. Against this positive picture, there is scope for development in the overall provision for the development of core skills. The current emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy through GCSE courses is appropriate for the group of students currently in the sixth form. The school has recognised the need to base future provision on a broader assessment and diagnosis of students' needs and has appropriately included a review in its current school improvement plan. Although individual teachers understand their role in contributing to core skills, there is no co-ordination of efforts, nor has there been an audit of how core skills can be addressed across the curriculum. Students do not have individual plans or targets to help them focus and direct their work in core skills. Currently, the success of provision is dependent on the good knowledge teachers have of students' attainments.

195. The work done on core skills in the taught curriculum has been an important supporting element in the overall success of the sixth form. There is now a need to organise and structure the programme better and give it a higher profile with students.