

INSPECTION REPORT

COOPERS TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

Chislehurst

LEA area: Bromley

Unique reference number: 101667

Headteacher: Mr R Dilley

Reporting inspector: Mr G Clements
5317

Dates of inspection: 14th – 18th October 2002

Inspection number: 249960

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of students: 11 to 18 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Hawkwood Lane
Chislehurst

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs R Allan

Date of previous inspection: 17th March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
5317	Graham Clements	Registered inspector	Chemistry post-16	What sort of school is it? The school's results and students' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9799	Suzanne Smith	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30941	Keith Brammer	Team inspector	English post-16 Drama post-16	
30937	Mark Clay-Dove	Team inspector	Information and communication technology post-16	
32217	Elaine Cole	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	
7483	Ray Donne	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English	
15926	Janet Dyson	Team inspector	Music post-16	
20719	Ann Fraser	Team inspector	Religious education	
22609	Paul Grey	Team inspector	History Citizenship	How well are students taught?
8552	Wallis Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology	
27585	Ken Hounslow	Team inspector	Physics post-16	
30699	Arthur Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20527	Brian King	Team inspector	Mathematics post-16	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
28106	Michele Majid	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
31821	Brian McCann	Team inspector	Physical education	
12276	Terry Payne	Team inspector	Music	
19207	Mania Row	Team inspector	Art and design Educational inclusion, including race equality	
31159	Clive Simmonds	Team inspector	Science Biology post-16	
15277	Christopher Vidler	Team inspector	Business studies Travel and tourism	
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Students' 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	
ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	17
The school's results and students' achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	22
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	24
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	28
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	30
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	31
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	34
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	36
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	42
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	67

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Coopers School gained technology college status in September 2002. It is a comprehensive school of much larger than average size. The roll has increased steadily since the last inspection and is currently 1662 students aged 11 to 18 of whom 369 are in the sixth form. In Years 7 to 11, there are significantly more boys than girls. Students who join the school in Year 7 come from many different primary schools from both within the London Borough of Bromley and from the neighbouring boroughs of Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham. Most students come from white heritage backgrounds. A small minority, less than four per cent, comes from a range of other ethnic backgrounds including Indian and Black British. There are 23 students who speak English as an additional language and, of these, only one is at an early stage of learning English. There are 341 (21 per cent) students with special educational needs which is about the national average, and 41 (2.5 per cent) with a statement of special educational needs which is also about average. Most of the students receiving special educational needs support have moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties or have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). A small number have speech, hearing or visual impairment. The school accommodates a number of students with physical disabilities from the adjacent special school on a part-time basis each week. There are 174 (11 per cent) students known to be eligible for free school meals, which is below average. When students start at the school, their attainment is broadly average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Coopers is a good school that has built constructively on the many strengths identified at the previous inspection. Its commitment to innovation and very clear vision for the future have guided its improvement and continue to give a very strong impetus to development. During a period of rapid staff turnover, good standards and a high quality of teaching have been maintained. Excellent, purposeful leadership and very efficient management ensure that the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Excellent, purposeful leadership and very efficient management provide clear direction.
- Financial planning is well matched to school priorities for development.
- Very high levels of mutual respect between students and staff create a good climate for learning.
- The high percentage of good and very good teaching leads to good standards in Years 7 to 9 and post-16.
- Support and guidance for students, including those with special educational needs.
- Achieves very high standards in extra-curricular music and drama.
- Provision and timetabling of vocational courses in Years 10 to 11 which match the needs of students.
- Provision and access to computer facilities leads to high standards in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Provision for careers advice, particularly to the sixth form.

What could be improved

- GCSE results to match the above average standards achieved by students at the age of 14.
- Standards in modern foreign languages at GCSE and in Years 7 to 9.
- Organisation of lower attaining students in learning support classes in Years 7 to 9.
- The citizenship curriculum to ensure statutory requirements are met.
- The information provided to parents about their children's progress.
- Arrangements for health and safety by ensuring implementation of risk assessment procedures.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1997. Since that time, the school roll has increased substantially and new accommodation for science and humanities has been built. Provision for ICT has expanded considerably throughout the school and much of the school's 'Vision 2001' plan was achieved. Despite a recent large turnover in staff, mostly due to the teachers gaining promotion elsewhere, the quality of teaching has been maintained through effective induction and training. The school gained technology college status in September 2002. The 14 to 19 curriculum has been redesigned to provide students of all aptitudes and abilities with appropriate courses.

In response to the key issues raised by the previous inspection:

- Review procedures within the school now lead to sharp evaluation of progress in each curriculum area.
- Assessment information is used to identify areas of weakness and to determine strategies for improvement.
- Statutory curriculum requirements in ICT in Years 7 to 9 and religious education in Years 10 to 11 are now met.
- The provision of books for students to borrow and read has been increased.
- The electronic system of registration ensures that the legal requirements for afternoon registration are met.

However, after introducing religious education into the sixth-form curriculum, this provision was interrupted in September 2002 due to staffing difficulties. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A	A	B	B
A-levels/AS-levels	N/A	N/A	C	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The comparison with 'similar schools' above is based on schools with a similar percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals.

Overall standards of attainment of 14-year-old students as measured by National Curriculum tests and teacher assessment are above the national average; GCSE results are just above national averages and post-16 results in GCE examinations and AVCE courses are close to national figures. Standards in modern foreign languages are unsatisfactory. Students with special educational needs make good progress overall in all years and attain standards at least in line with expectations based on their prior attainment. There is no significant difference in standards between students of different ethnic backgrounds. In Years 10 to 11, the trend in results at GCSE is below the national trend. The school achieved its target in 2001 but was just below its target in 2002. Students do not achieve as well in Years 10 to 11 as they do in Years 7 to 9.

The trend in the school's results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 is upwards and in line with the national trend. Relatively few students achieve the highest levels in the tests which reflects their attainment on entry to the school in Year 7. Results in English are a significant improvement on those at the time of the previous inspection and reflect improvement in the standard of writing. Standards are particularly high in ICT where students develop a comprehensive range of computer skills by the end of Year 9.

The work seen in lessons generally confirms the picture provided by examination and test results but there are indications of higher standards in English in Year 11 due to well-focused support for students at the C/D borderline. Standards of literacy throughout the school are good because of the effective provision. Students are confident and fluent when speaking and have the reading ability to understand the range of texts they meet in all subject areas. Standards of numeracy are good throughout the school. Students are able to meet the mathematical demands of all other subjects.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good overall. Very good in the sixth form. Students are enthusiastic about school and have positive attitudes to work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The great majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Students have very positive relationships both with each other and with staff. They show increasing confidence as they get older.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most students attend punctually and lessons usually

	begin on time.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching has improved further since the previous inspection when it was high. Very effective induction of newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school, together with maintenance of the good learning climate of the school, have been major factors in sustaining this high quality of teaching during a period of many staff changes.

In all subjects, there are examples of very good teaching and, in several subjects, including English, mathematics, science and ICT, teaching is consistently of a high standard. This high quality of teaching is one of the main reasons why results in National Curriculum tests are above average. Teachers manage their students well and ensure they plan to meet the needs of all students and for a high level of active involvement. Teachers establish constructive relationships in their classrooms and inspire their students through their own enthusiasm. Many teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to engage and motivate students as well as to increase the level of participation in the lesson. In the very few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, either classroom management was not strong enough, the teacher talked for too long or did not manage time well enough to build in a fruitful review of learning at the end of the lesson.

The teaching of students with special educational needs is good in most curriculum areas. The teaching of English and mathematics to students in the lowest ability groups (transition classes) is good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The innovative 14 to 19 curriculum is well matched to students' needs through the inclusion of a wide range of vocational courses. Provision of citizenship in Years 7 to 11 and religious education in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements. Extra-curricular provision is very good.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. The management of the learning support faculty is in a period of transition. It has maintained strong teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants. Teaching assistants provide effective support and help students to be fully involved in lessons and to make good progress.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Students with English as an additional language have full access to the curriculum and make good progress in relation to their standards on entry into the school.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The college climate allows everyone to flourish and helps to build the inclusive culture and fosters a sense of community. The college provides a clear moral code as a basis for good behaviour. Provision for cultural development has developed well since the last inspection as students are introduced to more features of other cultures.
How well the school cares for its students	Good. Very good personal support and guidance but implementation of risk assessment procedures is unsatisfactory and needs to be more rigorous.

The school has a strong partnership and good links with its parents. Parents are right to feel satisfied about what the school provides and achieves. The strong tutor system ensures that any cause for concern about individual students is identified at an early stage and parents are encouraged to work with the school to resolve difficulties. Parents receive regular reports on their children's progress but these could give more specific advice about how to improve.

For all students, the curriculum is well matched to their abilities and aspirations but it does not meet the statutory requirements for citizenship or, in the sixth form, for religious education.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Leadership is excellent. Senior staff follow the headteacher's example which is innovative and supportive. Many heads of faculties and departments are new to their positions of responsibility and are managing well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and share the vision for development. They fulfil most of their responsibilities well and monitor spending closely but they have not ensured rigorous implementation of health and safety procedures or made sure that statutory requirements for citizenship are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The senior management team and governors have a clear appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school gained through good communication and extensive monitoring.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Spending has been carefully matched to school priorities. The investment in ICT is having a significant impact on student achievement.

The vision of the leadership, which is shared by all teachers and managers, effective delegation and the monitoring of teaching are strengths that have ensured that educational standards, the school's good climate for learning and the high quality of teaching have been maintained since the last inspection even though there has been a period of major staff turbulence. With the exception of one vacancy in modern foreign languages and the shortage of a specialist to teach religious education in the sixth form, the staffing of the school is sufficient to meet its curriculum needs. Principles of best value underpin all management decisions and are applied well. Priorities and actions are decided after wide consultation. In its striving for improvement, governors, staff and students are continually challenged to do better.

Accommodation has been improved considerably with the building of a new science block and a new classroom block for humanities. The accommodation for business studies and learning support is most unsatisfactory. The provision of learning resources, particularly for ICT, is very good. The learning and information centre is an excellent resource that is managed and used efficiently.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The way the school is led and managed.• Their children like coming to school.• Children are expected to work hard and achieve their best.• The good progress and growth in maturity of their children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The information they receive about how well their children are doing.• Arrangements for consultations about progress.

The inspection team agrees with parents' views about what pleases them most. The information provided by reports for students in Years 7 to 10 could be improved by more subject-specific comments about how well children are doing and what they need to do to improve. Their concerns about arrangements for parents' evenings arose after changes were made in arrangements for Years 7 to 10 in an attempt to reduce the workload on teachers and provide more coherent information to parents. The school's own survey of parents' views concluded that a significant number of parents preferred the new arrangement. Further improvements can be made to the new arrangements to ensure that all parents receive the information they desire.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The roll of the sixth form at Coopers School has increased substantially since the previous inspection and is now well above average. There are currently 369 students, 175 female and 194 male, who are studying a broad range of A-level, AS-level and vocational courses. There is a flexible, open-entry policy and, therefore, the sixth form recruits students of a wide range of ability not only from the main school but also from many neighbouring schools. The ethnic mix of the sixth form broadly reflects that of the main school. In 2002, 159 students from Year 11 in the main school (64 per cent) joined the sixth form. The school offers a particularly wide variety of ICT and business courses to its sixth form. In 2002, 87 Year 13 students (72 per cent) left the school to continue with higher or further education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

Most students are currently achieving well in relation to their previous GCSE examination results. Despite a recent large turnover in staff, mostly due to the teachers gaining promotion elsewhere, the high quality of teaching in the sixth form has been maintained through effective induction and training. The sixth form is cost effective, the number of post-16 courses has been increased and the economic viability of these courses has improved. The post-16 curriculum provides good continuity from the Years 10 to 11 curriculum with a wide choice of GCE and vocational courses.

Strengths

- Excellent, purposeful leadership with clear direction and very efficient management.
- Very good relationships with students.
- The curriculum is matched closely to the needs and aspirations of each student.
- The high quality of teaching and of reports to parents.
- Most students match or exceed expectations in the examination results they achieve.
- Provision for careers advice.

What could be improved

- Strategies to supplement the shortage of curriculum time for AS- and A-level courses.
- Registration procedures.
- Attendance of lower attainers in GCSE and NVQ lessons.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. There is now a change of direction following a drop in standards in recent years. A-level results were below national averages in 2001 and 2002. Teaching is consistently good or very good. Teachers are knowledgeable, achievement is good and will improve further through more focused questioning in lessons.
Chemistry	Good. AS- and A-level results were well above average in 2001 and 2002. The standard of work of current Year 12 and Year 13 students is of a similar high standard. Teaching is good and students are developing a firm understanding of scientific principles and competent techniques in their practical work.
Biology	Satisfactory. Students have excellent attitudes to their work and teaching is good. Examination results have been below average but current standards are higher.
Physics	Satisfactory. Good teaching and the very good attitudes of students are the reasons for satisfactory achievement. AS- and A-level results have been below national averages.
Design & technology (Product design)	Good. Students are well motivated. They work hard and progress well. New and interesting courses have been introduced. The students' learning is well supported by a highly qualified team of enthusiastic teachers. AS- and A-level results in 2002 were average.
Business studies	Good. A well-planned and expanding range of courses have provided a welcome vocational dimension to the sixth-form curriculum. The quality of teaching is good. In 2002, A-level results were satisfactory. Results for students taking NVQ and RSA qualifications were good.
Information and communication technology	Very good. Students achieve very well in the AVCE ICT and GNVQ ICT examinations. The standard of teaching is high and very good relationships between the teachers and students foster success.
Physical education	Good. Results at AS- and A-level are improving. Teaching is consistently good. Resources have been improved. Although optional, all students have an opportunity to take part in activities on an afternoon each week through the enrichment programme.
Travel and tourism; Leisure and recreation	Good. Teachers' planning of leisure courses is good and students develop independent learning skills to a good standard. AVCE examination results were very good in 2002.
Art	Very good. The curriculum is rich and diverse. Students work creatively and with imagination. The standard of their work is high. AS- and A-level results were good in 2002.
Music and music technology	Very good. Students show confidence and competence as performers and in creating, recording and editing their own music. Most recent A-level results have been above average.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Drama	Very good. Students show exceptional enthusiasm, industry and commitment and achieve very well. A-level results have been consistently well above national averages. Teaching is very good. The range of extra-curricular opportunities is very wide.
Geography	Good. A-level results were well above average in 2001 and 2002. AS-level results improved in 2002. The very positive attitudes of students are a consequence of very good teaching. Students and teachers use ICT very effectively.
History	Good. Teachers plan well and use a variety of very effective teaching strategies. Teachers and students make good use of ICT facilities. Recent A-level results were average.
English literature	Good. Standards are well above the national average because of good teaching and the positive attitudes and enthusiasm of students.

Media studies was also sampled. The provision is very good. Teachers have impressive subject knowledge and they challenge and support their students well; consequently, achievement is very good and standards are above average.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Teachers are very strongly committed to helping their students to be successful. The guidance that students receive when choosing their post-16 courses and the careers guidance provided are extensive and of high quality.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. Leadership of the sixth form reflects the common vision for the future and commitment to improvement and raising standards as shown throughout the school. Paramount importance is given to providing every student with the skills and qualifications they need to continue, and be successful, in their chosen career pathway.

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"> • The choice of courses available and the information they receive. • They way they are helped to settle into the sixth form. • The availability of teachers and the support they receive from them. • They are taught well and challenged to do their best. • They enjoy the sixth form and would recommend it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The advice they receive about careers.

The inspection team agrees with the positive comments made by the sixth-form students. The negative view about careers advice is contrary to that of the inspection team. The students receive extensive careers advice of high quality concerning further and higher education as well as employment.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

1. Since the previous inspection, standards have been maintained in Years 10 to 11 and improved in Years 7 to 9 and post-16. Attainment on entry is similar to that in 1997 and is broadly in line with the average for all maintained schools but relatively few students are classified as having very high ability. Overall standards of attainment of 14-year-old students as measured by National Curriculum tests and teacher assessment are above the national average; GCSE results are just above national averages and post-16 results in GCE examinations and AVCE courses are close to national figures. Students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make good progress overall at all key stages and attain standards at least in line with expectations based on their prior attainment. The standards attained and the progress made by students from minority ethnic groups is not significantly different from that of other students. Based on figures since 1997, the trend in the school's average point score in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 is upwards and in line with the national trend, but in Years 10 to 11, the trend in the average total GCSE point score is below the national trend. High recent turnover in staffing, particularly the departure of teachers with considerable experience in teaching GCSE, is likely to have been a major factor causing this trend.
2. In English, results in the 2001 and 2002 National Curriculum standard tests were above average with a high percentage of students reaching Level 5 (the nationally expected level) but relatively few achieving very high levels. Although girls attained better results than boys, the gender difference in the performance of boys and girls has narrowed considerably to less than that found nationally. These results reflect good progress in relation to students' standards on entry to the school and are a significant improvement on those at the time of the previous inspection. In particular, they reflect improvement in the standard of writing. Standards of reading and speaking are also good and students have a good command of standard English. There are, however, some students whose listening skills are underdeveloped and this affects the quality of their learning.
3. In mathematics, results in the 2001 and 2002 National Curriculum standard tests at the end of Year 9 were substantially above average and better than they were at the time of the previous inspection when compared with other schools. High percentages of students reached Level 5 (the nationally expected level) but the proportion of students attaining Level 7 (well above the national expectation) has remained below the national average. The results of girls and boys have been similar. These results reflect good progress in relation to students' standards on entry to the school. Where students with special educational needs receive additional support for English and mathematics, their progress is good and their attainment is often better than expected.
4. In 2001, results in National Curriculum standard tests in science, at the end of Year 9, were in line with similar schools. Although the proportion of students reaching at least Level 5 (the national expectation for 14-year-olds) was above average, the proportion attaining higher levels was slightly below the national average, reflecting their prior attainment at age eleven. Girls did slightly better than boys in the tests. Results improved in 2002 with the proportion of students achieving Level 6 and above rising to an all time high.

5. The work seen in lessons confirms that current standards in Year 9 are generally above average but there are differences between subjects and few students attain very high standards in any subject which reflects the profile of attainment on entry to the school. Standards are particularly high in information and communication technology (ICT) where students develop a comprehensive range of computer skills by the end of Year 9. Students with special educational needs are confident in accessing and using ICT. These standards reflect the major investment made by the school to provide the necessary resources and the efficient co-ordination of the curriculum to ensure that all students gain a breadth of ICT experience. Standards reached in geography, religious education and design and technology are also significantly above average. Standards are below average in modern foreign languages where staffing has been seriously disrupted for a long time and in music, where many students have low standards when they join the school.
6. Overall standards at GCSE are just above national averages for all maintained schools. Although the proportion of students gaining five or more A*-C grades has consistently been above average, the gap between school and national figures has narrowed since 2000. Also relatively few students gain the highest GCSE grades. Overall, as measured by their results in national tests and examinations at the ages of 14 and 16, students make less progress in Years 10 to 11 than in Years 7 to 9.
7. Although the numbers of boys and girls taking each GCSE examination subject were often very different, differences in their results were not apparent and no larger than that found nationally. For example, in 2002, 52 per cent of boys and 56 per cent of girls gained A*-C grades in English. In mathematics, the A*-C percentages for boys and girls were almost equal at 51 per cent and 50 per cent respectively.
8. Since the previous inspection, although always above the national average, average GCSE point scores have fluctuated with a slight downward trend whereas the national trend is slightly upwards. Boys' scores have remained fairly constant but the point scores of girls have fluctuated widely from well above the national average in 1997 and 1999 to almost equal to the national average in 1998 and 2001. Results exceeded the school's target in 2001 but were just below target in 2002. When compared to all maintained schools, GCSE results in 2001 were above average but, when compared to schools with similar average point scores at the end of Years 7 to 9, results were below average.
9. GCSE results in 2001 were above average in every subject except mathematics where the percentage of students gaining A*-C grades was just below the national average for all maintained schools and, in French and religious education, where results were well below average. Exceptional results were achieved in English literature where almost all the 101 students entered gained A*-C grades and, in drama, art and design and music where approximately four-fifths of those entered gained A*-C grades. Results in mathematics and religious education improved in 2002 to be close to national averages but results in French declined further due in part to staffing difficulties. Although not as high as in 2001, results in English literature, art and design and music were good in 2002. Results in double science and food technology were well above the national averages but results in physical education, business studies and technology (graphic products) fell below average. Most of these fluctuations can be attributed to instabilities in staffing that have now been resolved.
10. The work seen in lessons suggests that current standards in Year 11 are generally just above average and reflect continuation of the good progress made earlier in the school. There are, however, significant differences between subjects. Standards of work are

particularly high in art and design and drama, and some talented students achieve very highly in music. Standards in English, religious education, science and technology are above average, they are average in geography, history, mathematics and physical education but are below average in French. The progress made by students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language is good and similar to that of other students. There are no significant differences in the progress made by students with different ethnic backgrounds.

11. Standards of literacy throughout the school are good because of the effective provision. Students are confident and fluent when speaking and have the reading ability to understand the range of texts they meet in all subject areas. Most listen well and can concentrate for extended periods of time. They are able to adapt their writing to the varied demands of the curriculum and their levels of technical accuracy are generally good. Students with statements of special educational needs make good progress towards their individual literacy targets, some achieving gains of more than a year in their reading ages between annual reviews.
12. Although there is no planned contribution to numeracy across the curriculum, standards of numeracy are good throughout the school. Students are able to meet the mathematical demands of all other subjects. For example, they use their number skills as an integral part of learning science to tabulate results and draw graphs and they use measurement skills in technology and art and design to produce accurate diagrams and designs. By Years 10 and 11, students are confident with calculations. In Year 13, some students can use statistical techniques effectively to support their learning.

Sixth form

13. Results in A-level examinations and advanced vocational courses have improved considerably since the previous inspection and the numbers of students taking post-16 courses has increased. The average point score of Year 13 students in 2001, at 14.9, was below the national average but was in line with the average for similar schools and reflected the prior attainment of students at the start of their courses. The average point score for 2002, when calculated using the same method, rose to 17.3. As a consequence of taking AS-level examinations at the end of Year 12, some students on advice chose not to continue with some subjects in Year 13. The pass rate for A-E grades in 2002 was very high at 95 per cent, compared to the school's value in 2001 of 87 per cent which was almost equal to the national average for all maintained schools.
14. In 2001, the best results for larger groups were achieved in art, drama, English and geography. In each of these subjects, all entrants passed and more than a quarter gained the highest grades A or B. Best results for smaller groups were gained in chemistry where five out of six candidates gained A-B grades and French where half the entrants gained A-B grades. Results were weak in physical education where only half the entrants passed and biology where only three out of ten gained grades above E. In relation to their previous attainment at GCSE, results in most subjects were regarded as at least satisfactory according to the school's statistical analysis.
15. In 2002, the best A-level results for larger groups were achieved in English, drama and geography again as well as history and media studies. In each of these subjects, all entrants passed and almost a third or more gained the highest grades A or B. Best results for smaller groups were gained in chemistry where four out of six candidates gained A-B grades and sociology and physical education where at least a third of the entrants gained A-B grades. Results were weaker in biology and mathematics where several students were unsuccessful in the examination.

16. In AS-level examinations in 2002, exceptional results were achieved in drama where all 14 students gained A-C grades with eleven gaining A-B grades. Results were also very high in geography where eight out of 18 gained A-B grades, media studies where two-thirds of the class of 38 students gained A-C grades and English where all 27 entrants gained A-E grades. The number of students failing the AS-level examination was high in physics (six out of 15) and in product design, French, history, and accounts where more than a fifth of those entered were unsuccessful. Currently, most students are achieving satisfactorily in relation to their previous performance at GCSE, and some are achieving more highly as a result of their strong determination to succeed and the commitment of teachers to their success.
17. The new AVCE courses in business, ICT, leisure and recreation and travel and tourism were first examined in 2002, and results from small groups of students were very good. All those completing the courses passed with good grades showing considerable value-added to their achievements at GCSE. The work produced by current Year 13 students reflects similar high standards and their results in unit tests have been good. The work of Year 12 students shows some weaknesses in writing. Students taking NVQs and RSA business qualifications achieve results which are better than those achieved nationally.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

18. The attitudes of students to their learning are good. Inspection evidence confirms the views of most parents that they like coming to school and place a high value on the quality of teaching and the support they receive. Most show enthusiasm for their work, enjoy their lessons and are keen to learn. Students across the age range usually listen attentively to their teachers, try hard, have good levels of concentration and persist when confronted with problems; sometimes showing total absorption with the task in hand. This makes a substantial contribution to how well they learn. It is particularly so in the many lessons where the enthusiasm of teachers for their subject is linked to high expectations of students and where lessons have been suitably planned to ensure that work is set at the right level. On the few occasions that this is not the case, students become bored and find it difficult to remain focused on tasks set. There is a small number of boys in Years 10 and 11 who are not well motivated and this has an adverse impact on their learning; although rarely on the learning of others because of effective classroom management. Students grow in confidence as they move through the years and this enables them to respond well to the opportunities provided for them to take responsibility for working independently. They value the access they have to computers to support independent study and use it well. Homework is usually approached responsibly and completed to a good standard.
19. The behaviour of students is good overall and this makes a positive contribution to the school as an effective learning environment. Expectations are fully understood and students usually respond promptly to teachers' instructions. On the very few occasions that behaviour in classrooms slows learning, it is because the school's procedures are not being followed or students become bored when lessons do not provide them with sufficient challenge. There were 48 fixed-term and nine permanent exclusions during the last school year. This is broadly typical of other schools locally, although the number of permanent exclusions has risen recently. Exclusion is used only as a last resort and reasons given for all instances are fully justified. A few students do not respond suitably to subsequent support to achieve changed behaviour patterns and this results in them being excluded more than once. At break and lunchtimes, behaviour is usually good. Students of all ethnic backgrounds socialise well together despite situations that are

sometimes crowded and in which they occasionally show a lack of awareness for others. They are polite and courteous to staff on duty in the dining room. There is little bullying and students are generally confident that when it occurs it will be dealt with well.

20. Relationships throughout the school are a strength and, together with opportunities provided for their personal development, make a good contribution to students' growing maturity. There are very high levels of mutual respect between all students and staff that result in effective co-operation between them in lessons and support learning well. Relationships between students are usually very positive, they socialise well together and usually listen with interest and respect to what others have to say. They value and appreciate the work of their peers, for example in drama. Work done in circle time, with students in Year 7 during their first weeks at the school, develops their self-confidence, respect for others, and raises self-esteem. This gets them off to a good start at the school and helps to ensure their good participation and success regardless of their gender, ability or ethnic background. Students in Year 7 are briefed well about what to do if they know of bullying and, after only a few weeks at the school, are becoming confident they can share their concerns with staff. Throughout the school, students grow in their awareness of the needs of others; they respond with maturity and responsibility when being introduced to sensitive topics, for example in personal, social and health education.
21. Attendance for the last school year was 91.9 per cent which, together with an unauthorised absence level of 0.9 per cent, was broadly similar to the average for other schools. Reasons for absence are always required and are usually sound. In Year 7, attendance levels are higher than in other years. In Years 8 to 11, there is little difference between the years showing good levels of commitment from older students. Most students arrive promptly for the start of the school day, although a few are regularly late. Lessons usually begin on time, although the size of the site does result in lost time when students must travel some distance between classrooms. The attendance of students overall has a satisfactory impact on learning.

Sixth form

22. The attitudes of students in the sixth form to their education are very good and have a positive impact on how well they learn. They enjoy coming to school, feel that they are treated as responsible adults and value the encouragement they receive to develop as independent learners. They appreciate the access provided to ICT and respond well to the opportunities for independent study that this provides. They make significant strides in maturity during their time in the sixth form and this enables them to engage in discussion and debate that is developed well and in which they show they are able to sustain an argument effectively. They like and respect their teachers and feel this is returned, enabling concerns to be discussed with confidence.
23. There are no reliable figures for overall attendance in the sixth form as the electronic recording procedures have proved to be unsatisfactory. In 2001/2, for those students registered by the system, the average attendance recorded was 88 per cent but the true figure may have been much higher. Registration procedures are still not consistently well used resulting in there being no accurate record of those present in the school in the event of emergency. Levels of attendance vary considerably between subjects and, in some cases, may be unacceptably low. For example, the attendance level recorded during the current year for students in Year 13 on the travel and tourism course is only 65 per cent and, in Year 13 business administration, 71 per cent. Overall, recorded attendance for the current year is 79 per cent for Year 12 and 71 per cent for Year 13. These figures may reflect problems with the electronic recording procedures as the

levels of attendance in lessons seen were higher, although below 90 per cent. During the inspection week, absence was authorised for students to attend interviews at universities and training sessions with the Bromley Youth Orchestra.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. The quality of teaching in the school as a whole is good. This is the same picture as at the last inspection. Then, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons, now the figure is marginally higher. Of the lessons seen, in 97 per cent teaching is satisfactory or better. This includes three per cent with excellent teaching, 36 per cent in which it is very good and 39 per cent in which it is good. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in 19 per cent and only in three per cent of lessons is it less than satisfactory. The frequency of good and very good teaching surpasses that achieved in 1997. Very effective induction of newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school, together with maintenance of the good learning climate of the school, have been major factors in sustaining this high quality of teaching during a period of many staff changes. There was, however, a small dip in GCSE performance last year which may be attributable to the lack of experience of many teachers in preparing students for examinations.
25. For Years 7 to 9, the pattern is similar to that of the school as a whole, although the school's very small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is almost entirely concentrated here. In Years 10 and 11, only one lesson out of the 74 observed was unsatisfactory and, in the sixth form, all except one lesson were at least satisfactory. In the sixth form, a higher proportion of lessons (87 per cent) were judged to be good or better. Students learn well because of this good teaching. The quality of learning is good across the whole school.
26. All subjects can boast of examples of very good teaching and, in certain subjects, teaching is consistently of a high standard. These include English, science, religious education, ICT and personal, social and health education. In the few lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, there are a variety of reasons that led to unsatisfactory learning. In lessons where the students' behaviour is inappropriate, weak classroom management is the cause. In other lessons, the teachers talk for too long making the students passive recipients of, rather than active participants in, their own learning. Occasionally, the teacher does not manage time well enough to build in a fruitful review of learning at the end of the lesson.
27. The majority of lessons, however, have many good features. Of prime importance is the high quality of constructive relationships between students and teachers. Teachers manage their students well and ensure they plan for a high level of interactivity. Enthusiasm for the subject and brisk pace are features of many good or better lessons. On many occasions, teachers simply inspire their students. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to engage and motivate students as well as to increase the level of participation in the lesson. The quality of marking in particular subjects is very effective in helping students to achieve well and know how to improve.
28. In many lessons, the strength of teaching and learning combine with great effect. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on citizenship, the teacher began the lesson with an activity that required students to pair up statements relating to rights and responsibilities. The quality of relationships was so good that animated discussion followed in which all the students not only accurately linked the items but also decided that the lay out of the room was not conducive to whole-class discussion. Whereupon the students moved into a circle and spent time establishing clear ground rules for talking and listening. The

teacher had the confidence and control to let the students decide on improving their learning environment by encouraging thinking about how individual rights and responsibilities have direct and significant impact on the whole community.

29. In a Year 9 design and technology lesson focused on drilling skills and the making of a mechanical toy in wood, the teacher used ICT to motivate the students. During the lesson, the students downloaded files from which they could make the templates for an attractive range of mechanical toys. At each stage of the process, the teacher encouraged students to evaluate what they had achieved; this they did very thoughtfully. The teacher's enthusiasm and the brisk pace of activities enabled all the students to combine both practical and folder work seamlessly.
30. The teaching of English and mathematics to students in the lowest ability groups (transition classes) is good. Both English and mathematics lessons have structure and challenge and the plenary is a valuable contribution to learning. Where lesson activities are carefully timed and teaching assistants have a clear focus, learning outcomes and behaviour management are good. However, the composition and size of these groups and inadequate teaching accommodation are beginning to impact on the quality of learning for these groups, particularly for Year 9. Additional teaching support is provided for a number of students on the record of need. The extraction programmes are specific and focus on the delivery of a multi-sensory phonics-based programme, corrective reading, literacy and numeracy. Students are designated to the programmes according to their priority learning needs. The programmes are successful in raising achievement for many of the weakest students, with the result that they are able to tackle the wider school curriculum with greater confidence and independence.
31. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good in most curriculum areas. In the best lessons, work is matched to the students' needs and teaching assistants are used productively to provide effective support. This enables students with special educational needs to take a full role in the lesson and to make good progress. Teachers know how to use their expertise and resources to make learning accessible and challenging. Students are usually well motivated, work co-operatively and achieve success. Learning support assistants give good support and this has a positive impact on students' learning in mainstream classes. Teachers take account of the targets set out in individual education plans when planning class activities. Provision for challenging those students identified as gifted and talented is inadequate, although teachers often plan extension activities for when they finish their class work. The school has a clear policy and hopes to appoint a co-ordinator in the near future to ensure that action is taken to meet the needs of this particular group of students.

Sixth form

32. Eighty-three lessons were observed in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was satisfactory or better in almost all lessons and good or better in 87 per cent. In one lesson teaching was unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching is broadly similar in Years 12 and 13.
33. Amongst the strongest features of sixth-form teaching is the use of ICT. The use of PowerPoint and the interactive whiteboard enables teachers to set a challenging pace during lessons and encourages students to make presentations to their peers. This not only improves their presentation skills but injects a liveliness into debates such as the one held by historians in a Year 13 lesson about the benefits and costs of Stalin's agricultural policy of Collectivisation. Other strengths include the quality of questioning by teachers so that students have to sustain their arguments beyond giving superficial

judgements and the very positive teacher/student relationships that underpinned all the best lessons.

34. The pre-inspection questionnaire, completed by nearly all Year 13 students, gives a very strong endorsement of the teaching at the school. Nearly all considered they are well taught and expected to do their best. They believe they are well supported by their teachers and this includes having their work thoroughly assessed and being kept up to date about their progress. Inspectors agree with these judgements.
35. In the sixth form, there are a few weak features of teaching. In certain lessons, students are not given enough independence as learners – possibly because they lack confidence – and tend to rely too heavily on their teachers. In other lessons teaching strategies were not matched to the range of abilities within the class. As a result, some students found the work too easy, others too hard. In whole-class discussions, occasionally, the quieter students did not receive enough encouragement to participate or sufficient time to think before being required to answer.
36. In the vast majority of lessons, students work productively and respond well to skilful teaching. In most subjects, they achieve well and make good progress in their knowledge and understanding.

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

37. The college provides a curriculum which supports the needs of all students well. Citizenship has been included for all students as statutorily required but current plans for teaching do not ensure coverage of the statutory orders. Students identified as having special educational needs and those with English as an additional language have access to the entire curriculum. The curricular needs of students with statements of special educational needs are met. In the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11, students with statements for specific learning difficulties negotiate with the learning support faculty the nature of support required. The new and innovative curriculum offered to students aged 14 to 19 matches the courses students follow to their aptitudes and aspirations. Strategies for teaching basic literacy skills are good. Many subject areas help students to develop their numeracy skills, but there is no planned contribution to numeracy across the curriculum.
38. The college has adopted a teaching week of 25 hours for Years 7 to 9 which is in line with that of most secondary schools. The time allocation to each subject area is adequate but, in history, there is some unnecessary repetition of the Key Stage 2 programme of study that students will have covered in their primary school. ICT is covered very effectively across the curriculum with different faculties taking major responsibility for different strands of the statutory programme of study. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with two modern foreign languages offered to a quarter of students in Years 8 and 9. Technology challenge lessons for Years 7 and 8 are an exciting innovation that is enjoyed by those students observed and is consistent with the new technology college status.
39. In Years 7 to 9, the lowest ability groups (transition classes) are taught English and mathematics in the learning support base. In this new and promising initiative, each set of about 25 students is taught English and mathematics by the same teacher with a teaching assistant in support. The national strategies are taught and adapted according to the students' abilities which supports their progress. Arrangements for the organisation of students in these lower ability sets need improving by identifying

students in a more refined manner to take account of size and composition of groups, individual weaknesses and accommodation. A review of this new initiative is planned. Students with the most significant needs are withdrawn for additional support programmes; where possible, this is from English which prevents disruption of their learning in other subjects.

40. An innovative, personalised curriculum has been designed for Years 10 and 11. The college has adopted a teaching week of 26 hours for Years 10 to 11 which is greater than that of most secondary schools. There are five tracks offering a range of vocational and academic opportunities and each student selects the one that reflects their level of achievement and aspirations. Most students study English, mathematics, double award science, technology and two optional subjects to GCSE, and vocational GCSE in ICT at intermediate level. Other students study vocational courses such as NVQs or GCSEs such as art and design, business studies, health and social care and travel and tourism. Although these students are able to opt to study a modern foreign language, most choose not to do so. The number of students disapplied from modern foreign languages is very high. Some Year 10 students studying vocational subjects attend local colleges on one day each week for courses such as hairdressing, leisure and tourism, health and social care and construction. The school timetable has been designed so that these students do not miss lessons in any of the core subjects. This curriculum initiative has been well thought out and carefully planned with departments supporting the vocational provision. For example, the technology department runs a course on design realisation to link with carpentry, specifically to help those studying construction.
41. The extra-curricular provision, to which all students with special educational needs have full access, is very good. In English, there is a book fair each January, a Shakespeare workshop for Year 9 students, lunchtime clubs in handwriting, debating and reading, an annual poetry competition and visits from authors. The college reached the finals of the English Schools Mace Debating Competition. There is a very good range of extra-curricular provision in drama involving school productions, workshops and theatre visits. There were four whole-school musical/dramatic productions in 2001/2002. The standard of extra-curricular drama and music is a strength of the school. There is good provision after school in physical education. Teams compete successfully against other schools in numerous sports such as netball, basketball, athletics and football. There has been a programme of trips and visits to support specific curriculum areas, for example Year 7 have been on a history trip to Kentwell Hall and a group have done geography fieldwork locally. There are annual skiing trips and water sports activity holidays abroad.
42. The provision for careers is very good and the school holds the Investor in Careers Award. There is a fully resourced careers room and a fully qualified careers consultant is employed for one day a week. Students in Years 9 to 11 have timetabled careers lessons. All students have access to the excellent careers resources. Various careers days have been organised, for example the Year 9 skills day, Year 10 ACE day, Year 11 world of work day and Year 12 next step conference. The careers programme includes work on application forms, CVs, interview techniques and a two-week work experience. Partnerships with other institutions are very good, especially the links to further education colleges. There are good links with primary schools and with the Marjorie McClure Special School.

Sixth form

43. Curriculum provision in the sixth form is very good and provides opportunities for students with a wide range of interests and abilities. Students are directed to an individual choice of suitable courses that are well matched to their aspirations and needs through personal interviews and due consideration to their examination performance at GCSE. The curriculum offer is extensive and meets the needs of all students. Eighteen subjects are offered to GCE A-level, a further four to AS-level only, and a variety of one- or two-year AVCE or GNVQ courses in business, ICT, leisure and recreation and travel and tourism, and NVQ in business administration and CISCO Networking.
44. Key skills are currently delivered via the general studies programme, and a pilot group is taking the ASDAN Universities award. For students needing to improve their standards in English and mathematics, classes are available for those who wish to re-take GCSE examinations. Students with special educational needs are fully catered for. The statutory requirement for religious education is not currently being met as this component of the general studies course is no longer taught because of the shortage of a specialist teacher. Extensive documentation and advice are provided for students both prior to and during their sixth-form studies, and it is supplemented through the tutor scheme. Contrary to the views of students expressed in the questionnaire completed by Year 13 students prior to the inspection, the careers advice given to sixth-form students is judged as very good.
45. Recent reductions in taught curriculum time to just four hours for GCE AS- and A-level courses, although typical of other schools, have led to expressions of concern from some parents. The time now provided for these courses is minimal. In many subject areas, teachers have provided additional after-school lessons to ensure that students are prepared as well as possible for their examinations. This response reflects the strong commitment of teachers to students' success and welfare. The use of ICT resources to supplement curriculum time is under-exploited.
46. Study facilities in the learning and information centre are excellent, and additional support through technology college funding should enable students to gain networking qualifications. Sixth-form students participate well in extra-curricular activities where they support younger students.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

47. The overall provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
48. The provision for spiritual development is good. The college climate allows everyone to flourish. All students have the right to feel safe, be treated with respect and dignity and to be listened to. This helps to build the inclusive culture and fosters success. Students are beginning to develop their own values and beliefs as well as an awareness of others. In religious education, there are opportunities to reflect on the existence of God and the purpose of life. There are good opportunities in art and design, drama, English, graphics and music to be creative and expressive. Some of the assemblies are acts of worship. Assemblies provide a clear set of values and principles. An assembly during the inspection, which focused on stereotyping and discrimination, helped students develop an awareness of feelings and emotions and their likely impact. However, the college still does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students as is required by regulations.

49. The provision for moral development is good. The college provides a clear moral code as a basis for behaviour. Students know the consequences of their actions and these are emphasised by teachers with a considerable degree of consistency. Teachers are excellent role models. Students generally take responsibility for their behaviour, show respect to each other and the environment and are very courteous and helpful. The personal, social and health education programme covers contemporary topics such as drugs, alcohol, and tobacco abuse and sex education. During the inspection, the subject of virginity was sensitively covered from the standpoint of being in control. There are numerous opportunities throughout the curriculum to consider moral issues. In English, through the study of appropriate texts and in history, when learning about the holocaust, students reflect on right and wrong in the context of racism. In geography, they consider responses to hazards in other countries, while in physical education, they learn to play by the rules and abide by the decision of the umpire. Through religious education lessons, they begin to understand how Jesus' teachings show racism, prejudice and discrimination to be wrong.
50. The provision for social education is very good. The college fosters a sense of community with common inclusive values. The Marjorie McClure School, in the centre of the site, provides a unique opportunity to mix with physically challenged students. The college fosters the development of personal qualities that are valued in a civilised society. Paired and small group work occurs in many lessons helping students to learn to mix and work with everyone. In Year 7, students are encouraged to make friends and circle time helps them to do this. To raise awareness of others less fortunate than themselves, each year group raises considerable sums of money for charities of their choice. There are many opportunities for students in each year to take responsibility and be helpful. Year 7 students visit the Marjorie McClure School and play with younger children. They also act as hosts at the open day for prospective students. Year 11 volunteer to be student managers who then help younger students in a number of ways and help at school events. The skills day and world of work day, together with work experience and the 14 to 16 Flexible Curriculum Project, help prepare students for the world of work. The extra-curricular provision is extensive and is a strength of the college. There are many opportunities to be involved in music, drama and sport.
51. The provision for cultural development is good. The increasing cultural diversity of the college is enabling students to meet people from African, Asian and European heritages. The religious education programme involves the study of major world religions and increases awareness of the influence of religion on customs and behaviour. Theatre, art gallery and concert visits introduce students to characteristics of their own culture. Opportunities are increasing within subject areas such as drama, English, modern foreign languages, geography, history, music, art and design and design and technology to introduce students to features of other cultures and to the cultural diversity of British society. This area has developed well since the last inspection.

Sixth form

52. Overall, the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the sixth form is good.
53. The opportunities for spiritual development are unsatisfactory as there is no religious education, but the general studies course and the visiting speaker programme have some spiritual content. Opportunities for moral development are good and occur through many subjects, for example in English by studying selected texts. Social

provision is excellent. There are numerous opportunities for students to take responsibility. They organise the harvest festival and carol services in the local church and take responsibility for the leavers' ball. Members of the sixth form involve themselves in helping within college in many ways and are particularly active in music and dramatic productions and sport. Opportunities for cultural development are good. The enrichment programme encourages participation in a wide range of cultural, community and sporting events.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

54. Concern for the wellbeing and happiness of students is a high priority; staff know them and their personal circumstances very well and respond rapidly where they identify any cause for concern. Within this otherwise positive environment, some of the procedures to secure effective health and safety management are not in place. Risk assessment procedures have not been developed to cover all aspects of the school's work. Where consideration has been given to requirements, routines are not consistently well carried out. For example, although there are very good procedures to assess risks attached to trips and visits out of school, not all staff are aware of these or have the necessary understanding of what is required.
55. Emergency evacuation procedures are practised with sufficient frequency for staff and students to be familiar with these. The school has suitable procedures for the periodic testing of equipment and electrical appliances used. There are satisfactory arrangements to deal with child protection issues and a trained person with designated responsibility for this. Procedures are included in the induction of staff new to the school and there is an update for all staff at the beginning of each school year. At present, there is no formal arrangement for the regular review by the governing body of policies that guide the work of the school in relation to changes in health and safety legislation.
56. Students receive very good levels of personal support and guidance. Induction arrangements ensure they are familiar with the school before starting in Year 7. The summer school to support students transferring from Year 6, who have not achieved requisite minimal standards in literacy and numeracy, raises self-esteem and gets them off to a good start at the school. Subsequent personal, social and health education lessons in Year 7 build self-confidence and personal effectiveness well, helping them to take full advantage of learning opportunities provided. Planning for tutor group sessions is variable and, where it is effective, this time provides a very good start to the day. However, in some cases, the time is not used as well, for example when information provided about coursework for different examining boards is out of date.
57. The quality of marking is a strength. Across the school, students value the advice they are given about how to improve the work they have done, although some are not completely confident about the grading system used. Students in Years 10 and 11 have a good understanding of how well they are doing in terms of their personal progress. Annual progress reports are less helpful in providing an evaluation of relative strengths and weaknesses, and targets set in them are often not sufficiently specific to be of real help. Individual support provided in lessons is usually of a high standard and has a positive impact on learning. Advice given to students at the time they are making choices about the next stage of their education is effective. The personal, social and health education programme includes good guidance across a wide range of topics.
58. There are good arrangements to promote and monitor attendance and behaviour. The school has very recently introduced a new system for registration and this is able to provide suitable information to support the effective management of attendance.

Procedures ensure the school is able to access the information it needs to identify those present and there are suitable arrangements for this to be available in the event of emergency. Form tutors monitor individual attendance with care. Reasons for absence are always required and unexplained absence followed up assiduously. The school works effectively with the education welfare officer to follow up attendance concerns.

59. Procedures for managing behaviour are clear and students are very well aware of expectations. There is a high level of consistency amongst staff in the strategies used in lessons and this ensures that students know what is expected and what will happen if they misbehave. In the rare instances that procedures are not followed, behaviour management is less effective and sometimes results in disruption to learning. The school employs the services of two behaviour counsellors and this ensures effective support where needed for developing self-discipline and personal behaviour management. The school takes all instances of bullying seriously and has effective procedures to deal with them. An anti-bullying culture is promoted well through personal, social and health education lessons and older students are made aware of their responsibility towards those younger than themselves. The arrangement the school has for a confidential e-mail address to report bullying is very much appreciated and used. Students, particularly those in Years 9 to 11, value the awards given for achievement in all aspects of their life at school and this motivates them well. Procedures to deal with exclusion meet requirements. The school seeks the involvement of parents to find a way forward when behaviour is causing concern and students returning from periods of exclusion are suitably supported.
60. Provision for assessment is good overall. The school provides a very good range of raw data, which is electronically accessible to all faculties and helps them to monitor the academic progress of all students. This includes information on special educational needs, prior attainment on entry, and national test data at ages 11, 14 and 16. This information is further supported by commercial tests applied at similar intervals, which essentially is used as predictive data and as a benchmark for review. Assessment review meetings are collectively held with documentary commentaries supplied by faculties in order to provide a strategic base for improvement. The school uses average point scores as a basis for setting on students' entry to the school and when students are selecting their Years 10 to 11 and post-16 programmes.
61. Overall procedures for monitoring the academic standards of students are good. In the very best instances of assessment, monitoring and recording, faculties test students each half term using National Curriculum levels. These levels are entered on to the school database and students record them in their planners. Students also keep records of their own predicted grades at the appropriate stage of the National Curriculum so that they can monitor their own progress. Where marking is good, it includes suitable comments for improvement. However, there are some departmental inconsistencies in using National Curriculum criteria to assess students' performance in Years 7 to 9 and, consequently, students are unsure of their current and predicted level of achievement. Whilst the school centrally provides a highly efficient record of assessment data, its wider use by some faculties is a continuing issue for development.

Sixth form

62. Students receive good information about the sixth form and courses available prior to making decisions at the end of Year 11. In addition, there are very effective arrangements for guidance at the time examination results are published, ensuring students are supported well in any decisions necessary at this time. Careers advice is extensive and of high quality. The very positive relationships between staff and students result in students being confident to ask for help when needed. The individual tutorial each half term is valued and students find the support they are given helpful. Students place a high value on the accessibility of teachers and the guidance they receive through marking that helps them to understand what is needed to improve their work. There are effective arrangements to ensure that students have the information needed to make decisions about what they will do after the sixth form. Registration procedures for sixth-form students do not result in an accurate record of those present in the school and are unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. There are good levels of satisfaction amongst parents about what the school provides and achieves. They have a high regard for the quality of leadership and management provided. The large majority of those returning questionnaires say that their children enjoy coming to school, they are expected to work hard and make good progress. They are confident that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. Evidence during inspection confirms these positive views. Although in most respects the school works closely with parents, inspectors agree with those who feel that information provided in annual progress reports and arrangements for parents to meet and consult with teachers do not fully meet their needs. Some parents are not satisfied with homework arrangements and inspectors are able to reassure them that, in most instances, the quality and amount of homework provided make an effective contribution to learning. Concerns about standards of behaviour were not substantiated during the inspection when behaviour overall was observed to be good.
64. The effectiveness of the school's partnership with parents through the information provided for them is good overall. They are provided with effective information and opportunities to speak with staff prior to their children starting in Year 7. The prospectus and governors' annual report provide a comprehensive range of information about routines, expectations and achievements. There are regular newsletters that keep parents up to date with current news and events. At the beginning of each school year, parents are provided with a 'guide to courses to be studied' that enables them to take an active interest and be involved in what their children are learning. The school provides good opportunities for parents to learn more about matters involving their children's learning and the choices they need to make through a range of information evenings.
65. Annual progress reports to parents give good information about their children's attitudes to school and behaviour. They do not, however, provide an effective evaluation for them about what their children know and can do, their strengths and the relative weaknesses that need to be addressed to secure improvement. For example, a science report for a Year 9 student refers to 'gaps in the more difficult areas', but does not identify what these are. Targets are often insufficiently specific to be either achievable or understood, for example 'to set personal challenges in order to achieve potential'. Consultation evenings, for Years 7 to 10, do not always meet the needs of parents to discuss progress with members of staff who have a sufficiently good understanding of their children's performance.

66. The involvement of parents with the school has a good impact on students' learning. The strong tutor system ensures that any cause for concern about individual students is identified at an early stage and that parents are encouraged to work with the school to resolve difficulties. There is an active parent and teacher association that holds both social and fundraising events. Amounts raised support learning well. Parents show high levels of interest in their children's work. Attendance at parents' evenings is strong and there is usually good support in the home through the use of ICT for independent research and study.

Sixth form

67. Sixth-form students value the choice of courses available at the school and the way in which they are helped to settle in. Returns of questionnaires indicate that some students feel that they do not receive sufficient information about what to do in the sixth form, but those spoken to during the inspection found guidance in this respect helpful, particularly the support received to overcome problems associated with the publication of examination results. They feel they are taught well, provided with suitable levels of challenge and they find teachers accessible and helpful. Most enjoy coming to school. Some returning questionnaires feel that the assessment of their work is not helpful and that they do not receive sufficient information about progress; however, students spoken to during the week of inspection feel they know how well they are doing through the good quality of marking, level descriptors provided and comments about how to improve their work. Some students have concerns about reduced teaching time and feel that this places them under undue pressure. A high proportion of those returning questionnaires do not feel well advised about careers education. This is contrary to the view of the inspection team. The students receive extensive careers advice of high quality concerning further and higher education as well as employment. Parents' evenings are well attended.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

68. Leadership of the school is excellent and management is very efficient. The leadership vision which is shared by all teachers and managers, the effective delegation of responsibilities and the monitoring of teaching are strengths that have ensured that educational standards, the school's good climate for learning and the high quality of teaching have been maintained since the last inspection even though there has been a period of major staff turbulence.
69. The headteacher continues to provide a clear, visionary educational direction for the school which has resulted in a successful bid for technology college status. The very strong commitment to raising educational achievement and preparing students well for the modern technological world is clearly expressed in the college development plan and associated faculty improvement plans. This vision and purpose is shared by governors and by the leadership group who have all furthered their management expertise through professional development training. The responsibilities of each member of this group are clearly defined and each is encouraged to develop their own initiatives, which they do efficiently, effectively and in close co-operation with each other. For example, transformation of the 14 to 19 curriculum has involved them all in various ways such as timetabling, financial planning, discussions with teachers, interviews with students and communication with parents.
70. The college holds the Investor in People award which recognises its commitment to the professional development of all staff. In all their decisions, the leadership group is aware of the demands on teachers and explores ways to reduce this workload, for example by

providing teachers with a high level of administrative support. The change in structure of some parents' meetings, where parents meet only the form tutor rather than all their child's teachers, is an attempt to ease the demand on teachers while at the same time providing a way to give parents a more coherent picture of their child's progress. As for other initiatives, the consensus view of parents has been sought and improvements to arrangements are planned in response to this consultation.

71. Frequent, regular meetings between staff at all levels of responsibility ensure that communication is good and teachers are aware of changes and the rationale behind them. These meetings promote a common commitment to improvement of achievement and maintenance of the school's ethos. A climate of responsibility and accountability is fostered throughout the school. Procedures for performance management are implemented well and in accordance with college policy. The monitoring of teaching through regular lesson observation by the leadership group and other senior managers is well established and has ensured that teachers improve their expertise in a supportive atmosphere where their own ideas are valued. Principles of best value underpin all management decisions and are applied well. Priorities and actions are decided after wide consultation. Aspects of the college's performance, including standards achieved and its cost-effectiveness, are compared with similar institutions using the plethora of available information. In striving for improvement, governors, staff and students are continually challenged to do better.
72. Through their links with departments, governors contribute to monitoring procedures. They meet frequently and challenge management decisions in their role of critical friend. They are well aware of the school's priorities and have developed strategic and policy initiatives jointly with the leadership group. Financial control and management are very efficient and all developments are carefully costed. The college gives good value for money as standards are above average, the personal development of students is good and the major investment in ICT is having a very significant impact on learning. The decisions not to provide a daily act of collective worship because of logistic difficulties and to delay provision of religious education to the sixth form until a teacher with appropriate specialist knowledge can be appointed have been corporate. Governors meet all their other major statutory responsibilities with the exception of ensuring rigorous implementation of the health and safety policy regarding risk assessments. They have ensured that citizenship has been added to the curriculum and encouraged the school's involvement in a pilot project last year but were unaware that curriculum plans do not cover the whole statutory curriculum in citizenship.
73. Leadership of the learning support faculty is good. Special educational needs provision is managed by the head of the learning support faculty and the special educational needs co-ordinator. In a time of transition and change, this has helped to maintain the good provision identified at the last inspection and to identify a shared vision for future development. The special educational needs policy is reviewed annually in consultation with the special educational needs governor who takes an active interest in the work of the faculty. Provision for students with special educational needs, identifying what is additional to, and different from, the normal differentiated curriculum is not stated in sufficient detail in this policy. The learning support faculty has implemented a change in the deployment of teaching assistants this year which will require systematic monitoring to ensure support is deployed effectively and efficiently. The new initiatives implemented during this academic year would benefit from consolidation and clear criteria for measuring their success being established. School procedures ensure that students with English as an additional language have full access to the curriculum, receive support when necessary and generally make good progress.

74. There have been significant problems for the school management in coping with the large number of staff changes in the past two years. The English, mathematics, science, technology, physical education and modern foreign languages departments have all seen a large number of staff changes in this period. The leadership team has ensured that the good quality of teaching and learning observed in the previous inspection has been maintained. This has been achieved by thorough analysis of the short- and long-term effects of such staffing turbulence and developing innovative and creative strategies to offset problems arising. Recruitment policies have been successful and new teachers joining the school have good support from their mentors, are observed teaching regularly and are open to the positive suggestions given to help them develop their teaching. The newly qualified teachers feel valued and supported. The introduction of the Professional Extension Opportunity Programme, offered by the governing body to teachers who have been in post for at least two years, provides awards for further qualifications and study travel grants. The scheme is financed by sponsorship and will allow teachers to bring added benefits to the school by further developing their expertise.
75. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The school is able to cope with the demands of the curriculum. Since the last inspection, a major building programme and relocation strategy has substantially improved facilities for a number of faculties. Facilities for science, food technology, humanities and physical education are now good. The computer learning and information centre is an attractive, excellent feature which is used well. The listed house used by the learning support department and for some GNVQ courses is by far the most unsatisfactory accommodation on the campus. Inside the décor is unattractive and there is well-founded concern as to whether it is really fit for purpose. Music suffers problems with lack of practice space and soundproofing. The site is generally well tended and good use of shrubs and trees makes most areas look attractive. The surrounding playing fields and sports areas are maintained to a high standard.
76. Resource levels have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Indeed, in ICT, design and technology, physical education and modern foreign languages, they are very good. Science has some shortfall in texts for GCSE. English enjoys good access to ICT and there is very good availability of computers throughout the school. The computer learning and information centre, which is the focal point for the school's strategy for more independent learning, houses some 160 up-to-date computers. The school does not possess a central library and the stock of reference and other books remains small in the learning and information centre. However, more books for students to borrow and read have been purchased since the last inspection and many individual faculties maintain adequate stocks of subject-specific works. Several faculties make full and sometimes imaginative use of interactive whiteboards. This is a feature of some lessons which students enjoy and appreciate.

Sixth form

77. Leadership of the sixth form is very good and reflects the common vision for the future and commitment to improvement and raising standards as shown throughout the school. Within the management structure of the college, the head of sixth form has considerable autonomy and accepts accountability for her actions and decisions. The chair of governors provides experienced support as a critical friend in her role as link governor for the sixth form. They share the same philosophy and give paramount importance to providing every student with the skills and qualifications they need to continue, and be successful, in their chosen career pathway. Every student is guided to follow a curriculum programme that is closely matched to their needs and abilities.

78. The variety of GCE and vocational courses provides good continuity from the GCSE courses and ensures that each student follows a coherent programme that fits with their career aspirations. This provision is cost effective as most teaching groups are of viable size. Religious education was included in the sixth form after the previous inspection but was discontinued this year as the school was unable to appoint a teacher with the necessary specialist knowledge. The overall standards achieved and the progress made by each student are carefully monitored through rigorous analysis of performance data.
79. Policies and procedures relating to the sixth form are thoroughly documented and communicated to students and their personal tutors. The detailed guidance to tutors ensures that reports to parents are comprehensive and informative. Procedures are revised as necessary and as new ideas are introduced with a view to improving efficiency and reducing the workload of teachers. For example, following the introduction of an electronic registration system that proved unsatisfactory last year, a new system has been introduced this year where students are registered in their classes. This enables tutors to use time in the morning, that was previously used for registration, for mentoring their students according to an arranged schedule. Through this system, students are provided with more individualised support and given more responsibility.
80. With the exception of the shortage of a teacher for religious education, arrangements for staffing are good and all courses are taught by staff with the necessary expertise and commitment. Learning resources are good. Students are able to use ICT in all aspects of their work in the sixth form and they have access to some very good facilities, which they treat with respect. Accommodation for most courses is good but that provided for GNVQ business courses in the listed building is unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- (1) Raise standards further in Years 10 to 11 so that GCSE results reflect the continuation of good progress made earlier in the school by:
- identifying and sharing the most effective teaching and learning strategies used by teachers in the school to ensure examination success.

(Paragraphs: 1, 6, 8, 24-36)

- (2) Improve the organisation of students in the identified lower ability Years 7 to 9 learning support classes by:
- refining identification of the individual needs of each student;
 - reviewing the size and composition of these teaching groups; and
 - reviewing the accommodation for these groups.

(Paragraphs: 30, 39, 73, 75, 101)

(3) Improve provision and raise standards in modern foreign languages by:

- recruiting and retaining a sufficient number of well-qualified teachers.

(Paragraphs: 5, 9, 10, 148-154)

(4) Meet statutory requirements in citizenship by:

- auditing the knowledge, skills and understanding currently being taught; and
- supplementing current schemes of work to ensure compliance with legislation.

(Paragraphs: 37, 72, 117-121)

(5) Improve arrangements in Years 7 to 10 to inform parents about their children's progress by:

- ensuring that annual progress reports to parents include details of what their children know and can do, their progress and what they need to do to improve reporting as required on ICT in Years 7 to 9.

(Paragraphs: 57, 63, 65, 145)

In addition to the above main areas for improvement, the governors and senior management should consider including in its action plan:

- identifying and improving provision for gifted and talented students; (Paragraphs: 31, 130, 134, 194)
- reviewing procedures for parents' consultations; (Paragraphs: 65, 70) and
- improving health and safety arrangements by ensuring risk assessment procedures are fully developed and used as required. (Paragraphs: 54, 55, 72, 232)

Sixth form

(1) Address weaknesses in monitoring and recording sixth-form attendance by:

- ensuring that registration procedures provide an accurate record of all students present.

(Paragraphs: 23, 62, 79))

(2) Supplement the taught curriculum time provided for A-level courses by:

- exploring ways to use ICT more extensively for focused independent studies.

(Paragraphs: 45, 67, 175, 184, 189, 195, 221)

(3) Meet the requirements for religious education in the sixth form by complying with the locally agreed syllabus.

(Paragraphs: 44, 78, 80, 173)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 - 11	178
	Sixth form	83
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students		64

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	7	53	70	38	7	1	0
Percentage	4	30	40	22	4	1	0
Sixth form							
Number	2	31	39	10	1	0	0
Percentage	2	37	47	12	1	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 one percentage point.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1293	369
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	174	n/a

Special educational needs	Y7– Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	32	9
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	312	29

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	23

Student mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	34

Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving
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50

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2 2001/2
National comparative data	8.1 2000/1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.9
National comparative data	1.1

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

Attainment at the end of Years 7-9 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Years 7-9 for the latest reporting year	2002	133	125	258

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	97	105	112
	Girls	109	91	91
	Total	206	196	203
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	80 (85)	76 (80)	79 (75)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	68 (66)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	32 (31)	52 (49)	44 (31)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	95	102	104
	Girls	101	94	94
	Total	196	196	198
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	76 (70)	76 (77)	77 (81)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	21 (32)	52 (45)	38 (36)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (32)

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

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

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001/2	144	109	253

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	77	138	141
	Girls	57	107	108
	Total	134	245	249
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	53 (57)	98 (98)	98 (99)
	National	51.2 (48.4)	86.8 (90.9)	94.6 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	40.2 (41.8)
	National	n/a (39.0)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	68	43	111
	Average point score per candidate	71.5 (12.4)	73.4 (15.5)	72.5 (14.0)
National	Average point score per candidate	(16.9)	(18.0)	(17.5)

The system for calculation of average point scores was changed in 2002 and so direct comparison between years is not possible

National data for 2002 is not yet available

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	60	43	103	25	7	32
	Average point score per candidate	195	217	204	105	100	104
National	Average point score per candidate	(16.9)	(17.7)	(17.4)	(9.8)	(11.4)	(10.6)

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

Ethnic background of students

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1602	48	9
0	0	0
0	1	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
17	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
6	0	0
9	6	0
4	0	0
16	0	0
2	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	95
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	34
Total aggregate hours worked per week	701

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	68
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Years 7-9	26.4
Key Stage 4	21.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	5,284,588
Total expenditure	5,326,781
Expenditure per student	3,323
Balance brought forward from previous year	87,061
Balance carried forward to next year	44,868

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years (FTE)	56
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years (FTE)	46
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	3.8
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2.8
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1662
Number of questionnaires returned	409

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	39	53	5	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	52	5	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	58	9	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	54	12	4	2
The teaching is good.	23	67	4	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	49	18	5	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	45	5	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	43	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	23	50	18	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	43	49	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	54	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	38	44	5	1	9

Other issues raised by parents

Comments almost exclusively related to parents' evening where parents were only able to speak with form tutors and not with subject teachers as had been previous practice. The school consulted with parents through a questionnaire issued just after the parents' meetings took place and is reviewing arrangements in light of their response.

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

- The good progress students make in Years 7, 8 and 9 and their above average attainment in the national tests.
- The quality of the teaching which is predominantly good and at times very good.
- Students make good progress in developing their writing skills because teachers' marking focuses on what they must do to improve.
- Newly appointed teachers make a significant contribution to the work of the department because of the quality of the support they receive.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing attainment at the highest levels in public tests and examinations.
- Improving consistency in progress in Years 10 and 11 which has been variable in recent years.

81. The proportion of students attaining a grade in the A*-C range in the 2001 English language examinations was average, as was the case at the time of the last inspection. Girls did better than boys and their performance was the same as their counterparts nationally. This represents good improvement over the period since 1999 when girls underperformed compared to girls nationally. The girls outperformed boys nationally, as they did in 1999. Their progress has therefore been as expected. All students entered for the subject obtained an A*-G grade and students with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds made good progress. The proportion of students attaining at the highest A*/A grades, however, was below average. The 2002 results were similar to the standards obtained in 2001, although the girls did less well than girls in the previous year. The 2001 English literature results, in terms of the proportion of students entered attaining at the highest grades, were well above average but the school entered less than half the Year 11 cohort compared to over 80 per cent in most other schools so proportions are expected to be higher. Results were also well above the national average in 2002 when significantly more than half the Year 11 cohort was entered for the examination.
82. Results in the 2001 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were above the national average and above average when compared to similar schools in terms of attainment at Levels 5 (the nationally expected level) and 6. Relatively few students attained at Level 7 or above. This represents good achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds, given that attainment on entry to the school was average. The 2001 results were generally in line with the results of recent years but better than the average standards attained at the time of the last inspection. Boys and girls did better than their national counterparts. The 2002 results are broadly in line with those of 2001 and are above national averages.
83. The standards of Year 9 work seen are above average and reflect the standards obtained in the national tests. Students write with reasonable accuracy in a range of styles and this is an improvement since the last inspection when the standard of writing of a significant number of students was unsatisfactory. Students are able to use an

extensive vocabulary as was seen in a Year 9 lesson where the quality of descriptive writing was enhanced by the use of specialist terms for shades of colour. As a result, the writing evoked the atmosphere of the place described. The work is well presented and students often take advantage of ICT to improve the quality of their writing and present it in varied ways. Standards of reading and speaking are also good and students have a good command of standard English. There are, however, students whose listening skills are underdeveloped and this affects the quality of their learning. There is very good practice in the department to foster students' listening skills but it is not universally applied.

84. By Year 11, the overall standard of written work seen is above average and the contrast with the public examination performance is accounted for by the quality of the work undertaken with the higher attainers and the support given to those who are working at grades C and D level. Students' analytical skills are well developed and they are able to use evidence to sustain an argument. In a Year 11 lesson, students could analyse the different approaches to bereavement portrayed in the poetry of W H Auden and Pamela Gillilan and could contrast and illustrate the treatment of this sensitive subject in the two poems studied. They are able to speak and write standard English and their speech and extended writing are fluent. They read an increasingly challenging range of books and have developed an extensive vocabulary. Students' attitudes to the subject in all years are good and contribute significantly to how well they achieve. The standards being attained in Years 9 and 11 testify to the good progress all students are making and reflect the inclusive approach of the teaching.
85. This approach to teaching is rooted in the very good relationships the staff have with students and the quality of support given to young people of all levels of attainment and from all backgrounds. Teaching overall was of a good, and often very good, standard. Teachers' subject knowledge, their planning and their preparation are all of a high order and the quality of their marking is a particular strength. It is regular and detailed and clear explanations are given to students on how to improve the standard of their writing. Care has been taken with displays in all classrooms and there is an appropriate balance between the celebration of high quality work, attractive posters depicting aspects of our literary heritage, and the provision of learning prompts to aid literacy. The result is a distinctive ethos to the atmosphere in the English rooms.
86. Questioning is used extensively to develop and test understanding and students are encouraged to work collaboratively in small groups but, in the lessons seen, there were no opportunities for them to develop their speaking and listening skills through whole-class discussions. At times, the use of worksheets restricted any lively interchange of ideas between teacher and students. Year 11 students' desire to engage with the teacher in their usual lively way when studying the poem 'Not My Best Side' by U A Fanthorpe was frustrated by having to complete sections of a worksheet. The teaching was, nevertheless, very good but the students knew full well that the usual teaching approach was livelier and more inspiring. This failure to judge when to give rein to students' natural enthusiasm for learning was seen in other lessons. Teachers did not display sufficient confidence in their own ability to control and channel this enthusiasm. In a very small minority of lessons, the teaching did not match that of the best because the teacher's approach to a small number of challenging students was inflexible. The department is aware of this and has strategies in place to address the problem.
87. The leadership and management of the department are good and the acting head of department has a clear understanding of the strengths in the subject's provision and what needs to be done to improve. She is well supported by an able and committed team who work collaboratively in an open, critical but mutually supportive way. A

strength in this approach is the support for, and development of, teachers new to the department who quickly make a significant contribution to the quality of students' learning. Improvements since the last inspection have been good and, in addition to those recorded above, the gender difference in the performance of boys and girls in public tests and examinations has narrowed considerably. The monitoring of student performance is good because of the well-established and effective assessment procedures. Good teaching practice is shared through a programme of lesson observations and through discussions at meetings. Staff give of their time to provide additional tuition outside the taught week and there is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities which include a literacy summer school, a book fair, poetry competitions, debating and reading clubs and workshops by visiting authors. A substantial number of students take advantage of this provision.

88. The strong corporate ethos and the capacity for successful work place the department in a strong position to raise standards further.

Literacy

89. The school's provision for improving students' literacy skills is good. It has a literacy policy in place to enable all members of staff to make the teaching of such skills a part of their routine classroom practice. Departments have revised their schemes of work to include key words and subject-specific language and teachers have received initial training in the teaching strategies to be adopted. This initial training has focused on improving students' spelling and sentence structures. At the present time, there is no formal mechanism in place to monitor the effectiveness of provision apart from what is seen during lesson observations and what arises during discussions between teachers.
90. There are instances of good practice being used at departmental level. Science makes very good provision for literacy by extending students' use of specialist vocabulary and giving them opportunities to develop their speaking skills. The quality of the writing in science exercise books is good and teachers give attention to spelling and punctuation in their marking. There is good group work and whole-class discussion in personal, social and health education and students speak confidently and fluently in those lessons. They write extensively in geography and receive help with the organisation and structure of their work. Good diary writing on World War One was seen in a Year 9 history lesson and students have a clear understanding of historical categories and key terms. The work in religious education enables students to write in a range of styles and they are also encouraged to read aloud. In English, starter activities are used in lessons to improve students' use of language and sentence structures.
91. Standards of literacy throughout the school are good because of the effective provision. Students are confident and fluent when speaking and have the reading ability to understand the range of texts they meet in all subject areas. Most listen well and can concentrate for extended periods of time. They are able to adapt their writing to the varied demands of the curriculum and their levels of technical accuracy are generally good.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- The high standards attained by students in the public examinations.
- The quality of teaching which is predominantly very good and at times excellent.
- The quality of leadership and management which seeks ways to raise standards further and extend provision outside of taught time.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

92. Standards in the GCSE examinations are well above average and have been so for some time. The proportion of students obtaining A*-C grades in 2001 was high when compared to the national figure, with both boys and girls attaining very good results. Students were not taught drama until Year 9 and so did not master the basic disciplines of the subject until much later than in many other schools. Their levels of achievement at GCSE are therefore all the more commendable. GCSE results in 2002 were below the national average, but represented good achievement when account was taken of these students' levels of prior attainment.
93. The school has just introduced drama to Year 8 and the standard of work seen in that year and in Year 9 is in line with national expectation. Students are making good progress in developing their basic skills and a capacity for group work and are becoming critical observers of each other's performances. By the age of 16, students' evaluation skills are well developed and they are confident in their use of specialist terms. In one lesson seen, students explored how the tone and emphasis of a piece of dialogue could be varied to create different responses in the audience. They showed very good understanding of how these techniques can be used to add dramatic significance to lines. Standards overall in the current Year 11 are well above average and are comparable to the standards attained in the 2001 GCSE examinations. Students' levels of achievement are, therefore, very good considering their average attainment in the subject before starting the GCSE course.
94. The quality of the teaching seen during the course of the inspection was very good and, at times, excellent and accounts for the high standards being attained. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and of different teaching methods. They plan well to meet the needs of all students. The work is challenging but delivered in such a way that all students, including those with special educational needs, make significant progress. A particular strength in the work seen is the ability of students to evaluate their own, and each other's, work and this is because the learning objectives have been so clearly communicated. The relationships between teachers and students are very good and are an important contributory factor in helping students to learn. Drama makes a significant contribution to the personal development of older students and their increase in confidence and fluency of expression enable many to take on responsibility for aspects of the extra-curricular provision.
95. The leadership and management of drama are excellent and teachers are supportive of each other. There is a strong sense of unity and common purpose and a great deal is provided for students to extend their experience and understanding of the subject beyond the taught curriculum. Students are encouraged to take part in performances and a wide range of theatre visits and workshops are organised. There are effective procedures in place for the monitoring and assessment of students' work and teachers

work closely to share good practice and so improve the quality of their teaching. The subject is well placed to maintain the excellent provision and high standards of work because of the strong commitment of the teachers and their developmental approach to their work.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Teaching is usually good, and sometimes very good.
- New leadership which, in identifying particular issues, has immediately set the right tone for change.

Areas for improvement

- Raising attainment in GCSE at the end of Year 11 to that seen at the end of Year 9.
- Developing implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy.
- Clarifying management structures within the department.

96. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. Results of National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2001 were above the national average and also above average for schools with a similar intake. Results have been consistently above national averages for the last two years but the proportion of students attaining Level 7 (well above the national expectation) has remained below the national average. In 2001, the overall attainment in mathematics was similar to English and better than science. Results for mathematics in 2002 were above national averages.
97. The percentage of students gaining A*-C GCSE grades was broadly in line with national averages in 2001 with almost all students gaining grades A*-G. The percentage of students gaining the highest (A*-B) grades was below the national average. Results for 2002 were broadly average, which maintains the consistency and the continuing gentle trend of improvement since the last inspection.
98. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in written work at the end of Year 9 broadly reflects the pattern of results in national tests and confirms the good achievement of students in Years 7 to 9. Higher ability students in Year 9 are able to express themselves confidently using upper and lower bounds. The work was presented in a challenging manner and students responded with correct explanation of methodology. In work previously completed, Pythagoras' theorem is usefully linked with explaining the principles of square roots and, elsewhere, the complex transformation of formulae is undertaken and securely understood. The standard of work seen at the end of Year 11 suggests better progress than indicated in recent national tests but, overall achievement in Years 10 to 11 is not as good as in Years 7 to 9. Higher attainers are able to recognise the properties of rational and irrational numbers and understand other definitions of mathematical number systems. There is no significant difference in standards achieved by students with different ethnic backgrounds.
99. In statistics students understand the differences in bias, random and stratified sampling and can analyse graphs from newspapers applying the notion of growth and decay. Middle ability students can explain successfully and calculate confidently the principles for solving pairs of algebraic equations. Note-taking, using examples and mathematical definitions, is generally an inconsistent feature of students' work although, in the instances where it was evident, it was usefully applied to help them consolidate their understanding.

100. The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, including a proportion of lessons that were very good and one that was excellent. In general, in lessons observed, teaching was better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The very best teaching was characterised by good classroom management, secure subject knowledge, review of prior learning which led to shared lesson development, well-established work routines and lively presentations which then encouraged enjoyment which supported an increased level of understanding. In one particular lower ability Year 10 lesson, the students' needs were extremely acute and challenging. The teacher introduced the topic of median and mode and invited students to participate by suggesting their own understandings from previous lessons. The lesson was skilfully and incrementally developed, contributions were patiently examined; diversionary tactics and the needs of those who craved attention were sensitively and firmly dealt with, but without undue intrusion. A very good practical demonstration of sorting heights with full student participation led to a firm recognition of the median value. The overall flow of the lesson was seldom compromised, the variety of activities was well timed, students were praised and, as a result, students made very good progress. The single instance of unsatisfactory teaching was mainly due to weak classroom management which led to excessive teacher direction and so student interest declined which, therefore, impaired progress. In some Year 7 lessons, the work failed to match the full ability range of the students as it was not sufficiently challenging for the most able.
101. Learning by students with special educational needs is good overall in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of students taking GCSE is higher than the national average. In Years 7 to 9, a numeracy specialist teaches students who start at the school with very weak mathematical skills. This very recent initiative is well staffed and appropriately resourced with alternative teaching material. However, the overall organisation of these transition classes with high group numbers fails to identify or discriminate the acute needs of many students so their progress is not as fast as it could be.
102. Implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is mainly restricted to short mathematical starters to lessons. Additional teaching resources were not in evidence and extended dialogue was seldom attempted. The strategy overall is underdeveloped; its inclusion currently is tokenistic and therefore any impact is minimal. However, additional aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy are included in the technology college development plan. ICT is excellently provided for in the school. Provision in Year 9 for the use of spreadsheets is particularly impressive; all students have timetabled sessions, and access to the computer facilities is open and supportive of elements of their mathematical studies. Use of interactive whiteboards in two classrooms was extremely supportive to the delivery of the lessons observed. The increasing impact of ICT represents an improvement since the last inspection. Department documentation is currently under review and in draft form; cross-referencing to ICT is to be closely linked with the new teaching programme.
103. The head of faculty is newly appointed and there is clear evidence that an analysis of immediate needs has been undertaken. Immediate action has been taken to implement a new teaching scheme, which reflects more accurately contemporary teaching and learning demands. The faculty does not have a clearly defined responsibility structure and this limits the dual process of shared change and improvement. The school assessment information is very comprehensive and individual teachers maintain detailed records of the assessments of their students, including those with special educational needs, together with results of national tests and details of modular GCSE examinations. However, the overarching faculty process of tracking individual student profiles across the National Curriculum is not in place. This would assist in confirming

underachievement and thus support the collective desire to improve attainment at the end of Year 11.

Numeracy across the curriculum

104. Students are able to meet the mathematical demands of other subjects, though there is no planned contribution to numeracy across the curriculum. Students develop their number skills as an integral part of learning science. In Year 7, lower ability students are able to carry out friction experiments, tabulate results and calculate averages with limited teacher support. More able students can extend this work and include simple resistance calculations. Similarly, in Year 9, lower ability students are able to measure heights accurately in metres and centimetres and represent data in graphical forms. By Years 10 and 11, students are confident with scientific calculations. They are able to time experiments in producing gases, can measure and use angles, calculate inverse data and plot the results. There is also some promotion of mathematical skills in design and technology. Students are able to deal with simple calculations relating to voltages and use of grids in single point perspective. In geography, students in Year 9 are able to draw bar and line charts to illustrate different climates and, with help, lower ability students are able to master the same techniques. Students in Years 10 and 11 can use number weightings to evaluate possible solutions to problems of coastal erosion. In Year 13, students effectively used statistical terms such as quartile ranges when annotating graphs of grain sizes in beach sediments.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- The much improved results in GCSE double award science.
- The high quality of teaching which leads to good student achievement.
- Leadership of the department and the clear plan for development.
- The purpose-built accommodation which provides a pleasant learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing the provision of textbooks for GCSE students.
- Making more use of computers in lessons to demonstrate experimental procedures and display results.
- Providing more preparation space for technicians.

105. Results in national tests for 14-year-olds in 2001 were in line with national averages and with averages of similar schools. Although the proportion of students reaching at least Level 5 (the national expectation for 14-year-olds) was above average, the proportion attaining higher levels was slightly below the national average for all maintained schools. Girls did slightly better than boys in the tests. Results improved in 2002 with the proportion of students achieving Level 6 and above rising to 44 per cent, compared to the national average of 33 per cent.

106. Results in the 2001 GCSE double award science examination were above the national average in the percentage of A* to C grades, but fewer than average gained the higher grades of A*-A. Boys did better than girls. The proportion of students achieving an A*-G grade has been above the national average for several years. These results are in line with those of similar schools. Results have improved significantly since the previous inspection. In 2002, GCSE double award science A*-C passes reached an all time high

with 65.6 per cent of those students entered achieving this. About a fifth of the Year 11 students were entered for the single award science in 2002 with 95 per cent achieving a C-G grade. Overall, almost half the students in Year 11 in 2002 gained at least one A*-C grade in science which is in line with the national average.

107. Standards observed in Year 9 during the inspection were above average and there was evidence of improving standards in Year 7 reflecting the improved understanding of science by students joining the school. Achievement is good. Students have acquired a good general knowledge of science and can recall work from previous years and apply their knowledge confidently. Lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and are well supported by learning assistants. Their literacy levels are improving and science is making a full contribution to the development of writing.
108. Standards seen in Year 11 during the inspection were above average. Higher attaining students have a good knowledge of science and can talk confidently about their work. They produce good coursework for practical investigations, but opportunities are missed in everyday lessons for assessment of skills. Lower attaining students and students with special educational needs are well supported in class and make good progress because teachers produce tasks to match their specific learning requirements, sometimes using ICT effectively.
109. Following a period of acute staffing instability, there is now a stable team of dedicated teachers with a variety of experience. Teaching is good. Lessons have very good pace and are very well planned. Resources are used well to produce good opportunities for learning. For example, a life-size model of a human skeleton captured the interest of Year 7 students and generated a lively discussion about its functions because of the perceptive questioning of the teacher. Clear learning objectives for lessons are identified and shared with the students, but they are not always adequately reviewed at the ends of lessons to assess and consolidate progress. Student management is good and there is consistency across the department, but a minority of students in Year 9 have a poor attitude to learning and this disrupts the progress of more motivated students. Students' classwork and homework is well marked with crisp, clear comments that help the students to improve.
110. The faculty is well led and managed. The recently appointed head of faculty has a clear and realistic view of how to raise standards further and there is a good faculty improvement plan. However, little has been done to incorporate the scientific enquiry strand of the National Strategy in science for 11 to 14-year-old students. The newly qualified teachers and graduate trainee teacher receive good support from departmental mentors who advise them on planning and classroom management. There are good procedures for assessing and tracking students' progress throughout the school. The use of computers has improved since the previous inspection but they are not used enough to support practical work. There are insufficient textbooks for GCSE students to take home which limits their opportunities to read in more depth. The purpose-built laboratories are pleasant, functional rooms in which to teach and learn science but, in two, there are insufficient sinks. The efficiency of the technicians is impaired by a lack of preparation space.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Very good examination results since the last inspection.
- A large number of students opting for GCSE art and design.
- Good use is made of assessment information to inform future planning.
- Enthusiastic students actively involved in individual research.
- The wide variety of consumable resources available.

Areas for improvement

- Making better classroom use of sketchbooks by students in Years 7 to 9.
- Less reliance on templates for use in preparatory studies.
- Widening the 'world' cultural diversity offered at all key stages and including more women artists.

111. Art and design continues to be a popular option at GCSE level with approximately two-fifths of current Years 10 and 11 following courses. GCSE results have been consistently high since the last inspection. In 2001, 80 per cent of students entered for the GCSE examination gained A*-C grades which was well above the national average. In 2002, the percentage of students achieving A*-C higher grades fell marginally to 75 per cent, which was still well above the national average, with 12 per cent gaining the highest grades. In 2002, almost equal numbers of boys and girls were entered for the examination and there was no significant difference in their attainment.
112. Students in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress through the National Curriculum Programmes of Study. They develop their knowledge and understanding of artists and different art styles as well as improving their skills in investigating, making and evaluating artefacts. At the age of 14, almost all students reach the nationally expected standard or just beyond, but too few exceed this standard to attain very high standards. Students are confident in their work, display pride in their performance and achieve well.
113. Current standards in Years 10 and 11 are above average. Year 11 students use their research skills effectively to develop designs, for example of surfboards, and apply their knowledge to produce work of high quality in graphics, textiles or fine art according to their own choice. They maintain sketchbooks well and make good use of the Internet in their contextual studies to supplement the information about artists and their different styles of painting and sculpture which they find out from art books available in the studios. Their achievement is good but the occasional organised museum or gallery visit is insufficient to support their studies and research to the necessary depth.
114. When students in Years 7 to 9 are given the opportunity to record from observation, they attain good standards but they make insufficient use of their sketchbooks to explore their own ideas. Teachers place too much reliance on the use of templates which limits the students' own creativity. For example, in Year 8 lessons where students were asked to design mobile phone covers or Egyptian masks, the provision of templates to draw in and colour gave them no opportunity to use their own imagination. The knowledge and understanding that students in each year develop of the work of artists and other cultures are somewhat limited by repetition of a similar range of topics and cultural diversities, such as twentieth century art movements, like Pop Art and Surrealism, and other cultures, like the Australian Aborigine and Egyptian tomb artefacts. Also, there is too much reliance on European male artists for too many of the projects rather than

diversifying into other cultures and including contemporary women artists such as the Mexican Frida Kahlo.

115. The quality of teaching is generally very good and has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers establish good working relationships within groups, they motivate students well and always demand good behaviour. Teachers plan their lessons well and take account of the different needs of students, for example expecting the higher attainers to focus on the full perspective of a painting while encouraging others to focus on a single object in the same painting. Although teachers differ in their style of delivery, they share their thoughts when planning and so continually develop ideas. Where teaching is good, teachers use a variety of visual resources to stimulate interest and encourage students to respond to the work of a number of different artists. Teachers address aspects of literacy and numeracy in art and design lessons through activities such as measuring for symmetry, drawing in proportion or using creative lettering for words.
116. Most teachers have secure command of the subject and they are well led and managed. Teachers achieve consistency and accuracy in their assessment of students' performance through productive team meetings where they assess samples of work. There is ICT provision in most art studios and students use the technology with confidence. Art and design is part of the creative arts faculty and benefits from a shared vision with drama and music. Art and design makes a significant contribution to the joint productions by creating many ambitious set designs each year. Teachers provide an after-school catch-up club where students can finish off work or extend their individual studies.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- The teaching of citizenship is good and lessons are carefully planned.
- Each student's portfolio for collecting evidence of citizenship activities provides a useful record of their achievements.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring plans for teaching citizenship fulfil the statutory requirements.
- Giving the school council a high profile amongst the school community.

117. Overall, students in Years 9 and 11 are making good progress and are on target to reach average standards by the end of the school year. The citizenship programme started recently but already Year 7 students have been taught about their responsibility for the school environment; in particular, the damage done by litter and graffiti. Students of all abilities are developing an appropriate sense of ownership and what counts for the collective good at their school. In Year 8, students' work on biodiversity in the Brazilian rainforest conveys a secure understanding of the needs of the people living in the forest and the pressures they are under to change their way of life. The modules for citizenship are enriched by the work of the year and school councils.
118. Student representatives on the school and year councils are enthusiastic about their achievements; last year an 'own clothes' day raised over a thousand pounds; this year a luggage deposit room for students will be run by councillors themselves. Attitudes of other students are more mixed with many not knowing their year or class

representatives and some finding it a frustrating struggle to effect change in relation to issues such as the damage done to toilets and improving the canteen facilities.

119. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons observed. Good teaching was seen in carefully planned lessons that were interactive in style, thereby encouraging students to develop their communication skills. Good questioning enabled the teacher to draw thoughtful, personal responses from the students. In one Year 8 lesson, students linked the school's code of conduct and sanctions with a fictitious character called 'Kim' who was going to court to be sentenced. In another lesson in Year 11, the teacher engaged students in discussion about children's rights by using a ranking activity. In all lessons, most students showed respect for each other's views by listening carefully and co-operating with one another.
120. The citizenship curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is planned in distinct modules that are taught in a carousel alongside work on personal, social and health education. However, current plans do not quite fulfil the statutory requirements in Years 7 to 9 and, in Years 10 to 11, the gaps are larger. Days devoted to issues such as human rights are planned and these should enrich the provision for citizenship.
121. The new subject co-ordinator has developed a well-organised programme that builds upon the strength of the work already undertaken in the school's personal, social and health education course. New resources have been bought that will help students' learning significantly in the future. The co-ordinator has put in place a system for assessing, recording and reporting on progress in the subject. This has yet to be tested and will need to be refined in light of the changes made to fulfil the statutory requirements. The co-ordinator has ensured that every student has a portfolio that contains work relating to citizenship. This helps students assess how well they are achieving and what standards they are attaining in relation to the end of key stage descriptions.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The high quality of teaching and the inspirational enthusiasm of teachers.
- High achievement especially of students in Years 7 to 9.
- The very good leadership and management of the department which support and encourage new ideas and teaching methods.

Areas for development

- Raising the proportion of highest grades at GCSE.
- Manufacturing with computer-controlled machines.
- Ensuring more consistent teaching quality in Years 7 to 9.
- Involving students more in the setting of their personal targets to improve their work.

122. Standards of attainment in GCSE examinations in 2001 were above average. Overall, 57 per cent of those entered for GCSE design and technology subjects gained A*-C grades but very few attained the highest grades. Boys did better than girls. The proportion of the year group taking the examinations was high. In 2002, half of those entered for GCSE design and technology subjects gained A*-C grades which is in line with the national average. However, again very few attained the highest grades. In both years, best results were obtained in food technology, with 76 per cent of those entered

in 2002 gaining A*-C grades and 23 per cent achieving the highest A*-A grades. In 2002, standards achieved by students aged 14 in tests set by teachers were very high. The trend in standards in Years 7 to 9 is upwards.

123. In the work seen during the inspection week, standards in Year 9 were above average. Achievement of students, including those with special educational needs, is very good. Boys and girls do equally well. The students proceed very well through step-by-step designing and making sequences. They make decisions thoughtfully and use computers well for research. However, they do not show on their plans alternative ways of doing things. They do not do enough work with metal. Standards in the work seen by Year 11 students are above average and their progress during the GCSE course is good. The students have high levels of confidence when designing and they use computers well. However, they too rarely annotate their plans and do not evaluate their sources sufficiently. The deployment of teachers in their specialist areas is already having a positive effect in lessons. At this early stage of the year, the new teaching team has not had enough time to share and develop best practice. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because of the progress in Years 7 to 9, improved teaching and good recent recruitment.
124. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9. They vary from excellent to unsatisfactory as innovative methods are tried. The planning to meet National Curriculum requirements is very good. This quality of planning, combined with the teacher's inspirational enthusiasm and capability, enabled Year 9 students to design first-rate mechanical toys. Students are well used to both thinking and doing. They are also rapidly extending their technical vocabulary. There was, however, too much variation in teaching quality in lessons seen. Time at the end of the lesson was not always used well. In an excellent Year 7 lesson, students engrossed themselves totally in the designing and making of pop-up cards. Year 9 students talked confidently about how they had downloaded exciting resources from the Internet to further enhance the excellent progress in a lesson on mechanical toys. They, and many others, clearly find the subject very rewarding.
125. The teaching in Years 10 and 11 is very good. The very good subject knowledge of teachers produces purposeful interactions. Firmness ensures good pace and the meeting of practical deadlines. Marking is very good although teachers' comments are sometimes too lengthy and imprecise to result in a fast and effective response from the students. The students are not sufficiently actively involved in agreeing their short-term targets. They make satisfactory use of a limited range of numeracy and literacy techniques. Progress overall is now good enough to enable the highest grades to be attained. Students with special educational needs were observed to make very good progress because they were both challenged and valued. Most students respond positively to the teachers, behave well and are keen to learn. They are proud of the products they make and have a good knowledge of cultural influences upon choice of products in present day society, for example when designing and making a range of high quality products in food studies.
126. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Equipment is very well organised and students are very well managed to learn well and to be safe. A careful analysis is made of test scores and individual target setting is good though currently too time consuming. Priorities for development are very appropriate and include, for example, using computer-operated machines and working with metal.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Thoroughly prepared and demanding teaching to which students respond well.
- Good collaborative working which ensures good teaching and consistently high expectations.
- Very good use of ICT by students and teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing provision for gifted and talented students.
- Involving students in self-assessment so that they know what to do to improve.

127. Overall, students at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are attaining standards that are above national averages. The progress made by students in all year groups, including those with special educational needs, is good. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 and 2002 also show that the attainment of both boys and girls was above national expectations and there was no significant difference between them. In the GCSE examinations in 2001 and 2002, the proportion of students gaining the higher A*-C grades was above average with boys gaining slightly higher grades than girls. Almost all students achieved a grade in the A*-G range. However, students' performance in GCSE geography in 2001 was below that of most other subjects in the school. When compared with their attainment at the end of Year 9, the results students gained in the GCSE examinations indicate that they achieved the grades expected of them.
128. In work seen during the inspection, students' attainment in Year 9 is above national expectations. In Year 7, students develop geographical mapping skills and learn to interpret the symbols shown on maps and use co-ordinates to locate places. In Year 9, students understand the 'push' and 'pull' factors associated with migration and are aware of the social and cultural difficulties experienced by many migrants. Students in Year 9 construct and interpret graphs and make comparisons between data sets with a good degree of accuracy. In a Year 10 lesson, students responded to the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and were able to identify and explain clearly the physical factors responsible for coastal erosion. In work seen during the inspection, the attainment of Year 11 students is broadly in line with the national average. Both boys and girls in Year 11 show satisfactory subject knowledge and use the technical vocabulary of the subject with confidence. Most students' factual writing is satisfactory but the range of writing styles they use is limited. Students make good and extensive use of ICT for wordprocessing, desktop publishing and drawing graphs. They use the Internet effectively to research geographical issues.
129. Overall, the standard of teaching is good. It is never less than satisfactory and usually it is good. Teachers' planning is very thorough and they share the learning objectives with students. Well-produced, varied and carefully selected resources motivate students and maintain their interest. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, good use was made of a range of attractive resources to solve the mystery of 'Why Betty's house had fallen into the sea'. Most students respond well to the demanding and fast-paced lessons that are carefully prepared for them. Students work well in pairs and small groups, although the opportunities seen in lessons for extended independent work were limited. Most students speak confidently and listen carefully to others. For example, in a very good Year 8 lesson, one student told the class the details of his very interesting recent visit to Mexico. This helped to bring to life a lesson on migration.

130. The use of ICT by both students and teachers is a strength of the department. In most lessons seen during the inspection, teachers made extensive use of interactive whiteboards and photographs, maps and graphs projected from laptop computers. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use interesting examples as well as recounting personal experiences which enliven lessons and capture students' attention. Teachers have high expectations of both learning and behaviour. In almost all lessons seen, these expectations were met. In a minority of lessons, some lower attaining students had difficulty maintaining their concentration for the whole lesson. Provision for students with special educational needs is good and is enhanced by the work of the teaching assistants who are attached to the faculty. Consequently, these students make good progress. At present, there is too little provision for gifted and talented students within the department.
131. The leadership and management of the department are good and have contributed to an improvement in standards during a period of numerous staff changes. The collaborative working of the faculty team of very committed teachers has ensured that the standard of teaching is good and is a strength of the department. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored effectively and teachers share best practice. Good use is made of national and school data to set targets for students. Students' self-assessment is less well developed and has been identified as an area for development.
132. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Teachers' expectations for lower, middle and higher attaining students continue to be high, they plan well and use a wide range of teaching strategies. The teachers in the department are strongly committed to further improvement.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The positive ethos for learning and constructive teacher-student relationships.
- Good teaching and learning in Years 10 to 11.
- The good teamwork and open climate within the faculty and department enable innovation to flourish and improvement to take place, particularly in relation to ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Applying National Curriculum criteria more accurately in assessment of students' levels at the end of Years 7 to 9.
- Marking of students' work and reporting to parents.
- Increasing provision for gifted and talented students.

133. There has been a steady trend of improvement over the five years since the last inspection. Then, GCSE results were below the national average whereas in 2002, two-thirds of the students entered achieved A*-C grades. This is just above the national figure. In 1997, girls outperformed boys significantly; this year that gap has closed. Teacher assessments suggest that attainment at the end of Year 9 has risen to well above national expectations in the last three years. Scrutiny of work and lesson observations provide evidence that attainment is in line with the national average and not above. This is the same standard as in the previous inspection. When making judgements of students' levels of attainment, teachers are not rigorous enough in applying National Curriculum criteria and, as a result, their assessments are too high.

134. In Years 7 to 9, nearly all students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in developing a secure understanding of aspects of British history from the eleventh to the twentieth century. In Year 9, students study propaganda and conditions in the trenches during the Great War. The higher attainers can analyse recruitment posters and explain why it was that so many men rushed to join up and endured the trenches once in France and Belgium. Lower attainers have a secure grasp of trench conditions by studying photos, film and written sources. Nearly all students make satisfactory progress in developing their skills. However, the provision for gifted and talented students needs to be more clearly targeted as few attain very high standards. Students are taught how to use sources by weighing up evidence about King John, Oliver Cromwell and the Somme. The National Curriculum is met through an appropriate balance of knowledge, skills and understanding. However, sections of the Tudors and the Home Front during the Second World War repeat students' primary school experiences and the section on local history is not developed enough. Students' learning is enriched by visits to Kentwell and to Yprès which help bring history to life. Students use ICT effectively in organising and presenting their work.
135. At GCSE, students build upon their experiences in Years 7 to 9 by studying medicine and the American West; units that are structured around cause, evidence and change and development. The students achieve well in their lessons and across the two years of the course. Their standards are in line with the national average. They learn to categorise and prioritise 'push' and 'pull' factors in explaining migration westward across North America. Within the unit on medicine, students study changes over time and develop good understanding of the causes of change. Students benefit greatly from visiting the history displays at St Thomas' Hospital.
136. Overall, teaching in both Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 to 11 is good. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is nearly always satisfactory or good and, occasionally, very good. Constructive relationships between teachers and students characterised all lessons observed. In good lessons, the teacher injects a brisk pace from the start, refreshing students' memories of prior learning and priming them for new experiences. In some lessons, the teacher's voice motivated the students and drove learning forward at a furious pace; in others, ICT was used very effectively to challenge students' thinking. Objectives are clear and link to carefully planned activities that are progressively more challenging. In one Year 7 lesson, for example, students were introduced to the feudal system by studying the school hierarchy. Then, using the interactive whiteboard, students were invited to sort text into the correct place on the feudal diagram. Where teaching is less effective, the start of the lesson is slow and dominated by teacher talk, learning objectives are not reviewed effectively at the end of the lesson and marking does not help students understand what they have done well and what they can do to improve. Most students enjoy history, behave well in lessons, co-operate with their peers and respect them by listening carefully to their contributions. In a small number of lessons, lower attaining boys behaved inappropriately, largely because they were not motivated.
137. In GCSE lessons, teaching is always at least satisfactory, often good and occasionally very good. Teaching is most effective when teachers use mark schemes or other forms of guidance to model for students what is expected of them. Students respond well to the demands made of them and found these clear goalposts very helpful in improving their work. Other features of effective teaching include the use of short video excerpts with well-pitched tasks and clear marking that relates to assessment criteria. The students' attitude towards learning history is positive. This stems from the teachers having high expectations of students' behaviour and work. Students work confidently

together within a climate of trust and security. Most take pride in their work. Overall, students of all abilities make good progress in lessons.

138. The history team is led effectively and efficiently by a new head of department. She is committed to raising standards and to playing a full part in the innovative work of the humanities team and is ably supported by the head of faculty. The department enjoys good accommodation and many of the displays help enrich the learning environment.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The effective co-ordination of contributions from each faculty to the ICT curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and very good assessment of the standards reached by students.
- Provision for Year 10 which enables all students to study GNVQ ICT at intermediate level.
- Management and organisation of the college's learning and information centre which ensures efficient use by students and supports their learning well.
- Use of online and e-mail facilities for homework.

Areas for improvement

- Providing opportunities in science for datahandling and measurement.
- Increasing the use of databases across the curriculum for all year groups.
- Reporting to parents of students in Years 7 to 9.
- Increasing the speed of Internet access to enable additional activities, such as video-conferencing, to take place.

139. There has been a very good improvement since the last inspection when 'opportunities to apply ICT to support learning were not fully exploited in all subjects' and statutory requirements were not met. Provision has been transformed. Statutory requirements are met and ICT is now a strength of the school. Every student in Year 10 is following the GNVQ ICT course at intermediate level. The provision for students in Years 7 to 9 is offered on a cross-curricular basis and certain faculties are responsible for different strands; for example the humanities faculty for communication, the mathematics and technology faculties for modelling and control and the science faculty for data-logging and measurement.

140. Overall standards in ICT throughout the school are above average and some students achieve very high standards. There has been a steady improvement in standards over the last few years. All Year 7 students receive an ICT induction programme in their first term, at the end of which they are able to use basic wordprocessing and desktop publishing skills, they can make charts using a spreadsheet, and access relevant information by using CD-Roms and searching the Internet. In one lesson seen, a group of Year 7 students made good use of a desktop publishing program to create an interesting and well-presented spider diagram.

141. By the age of 14, students acquire a comprehensive range of computer skills. For example they learn to link pages with hyperlinks, to use simple formulae in spreadsheets and to use computer-aided design (CAD) in technology. In accordance with faculty targets that are stated in the technology college plan, very challenging opportunities are provided within the curriculum for higher attainers, and the particular

needs of those with learning difficulties are also addressed well. Consequently, the achievement of all students, including those with special educational needs, is good.

142. In Years 10 to 11, students generally work consistently and make good progress. They appreciate the facilities provided, especially those for working at home and the fact that they can send homework in by e-mail. Most students are confident in their computer skills and are able to work independently, for example to produce high quality presentations including text, images, sound, animation and hyperlinks. Lower attaining students make good progress because help is readily available for those needing it. Occasionally, when activities are not matched to their needs and interests, lower attaining students do not make sufficient progress. Students make excellent use of their ICT skills in other subjects. For example, in geography where Year 11 students used graphics, wordprocessing, desktop publishing, graphs from spreadsheets and downloaded maps, diagrams and photographs from the Internet to produce very effective presentations. Their ability to evaluate the quality of their own work is good.
143. The overall quality of teaching is good in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 to 11. Teaching is very good in a significant number of lessons and occasionally excellent. The excellent and very good lessons seen were very well planned with clear objectives and excellent teacher knowledge. There was a good pace to the lessons and very high expectations of the students, with the encouragement to achieve the highest level possible. The behaviour of students was managed very well with the appropriate use of praise and encouragement. As a result, the students' attitudes are generally very good and sometimes excellent as they are proud of their ICT skills. For example, a group of Year 10 GNVQ students were very engaged in a multimedia task on a presentation package; they worked very hard and made very good progress. In an unsatisfactory lesson, the inappropriateness of the task for lower ability students led to a significant number of boys making little progress because their behaviour, interest and concentration were poor.
144. The use of ICT facilities to extend the range of teaching methods is strongly promoted and the interactive whiteboard is being used effectively in a number of faculties. For example, when working on grid references in geography, this technique helped to engage students' attention and enabled them to respond to questions. Good use is made of the digital camera for fieldwork photographs in geography. Very good use of the Internet is made in many subjects, especially in Years 10 and 11. For example, in Year 11 chemistry to research the properties and uses of metals and, in French, where students make frequent use of foreign websites which they regard as an interesting way to work. In a very good English lesson, the teacher made excellent use of a presentation package to give a moving picture display with vivid and emotive images that was effective in establishing an appropriate mood for the lesson and stimulating interpretation and responses.
145. Assessment of ICT is very good as it gives all students a very clear idea of what they need to do to improve and how to meet National Curriculum criteria. In Years 10 and 11, students have individual learning plans containing the unit aims and objectives, grades and scores for each unit achieved, a record of work needed to complete each unit and individual targets according to ability. This helps to motivate them as they have a very clear idea of their teachers' expectations. Reporting to parents needs to be improved. Last year, there were no ICT reports for Years 7, 8 and 9 and the Year 10 reports merely documented the curriculum and gave no indication of what each student knew, understood or could do.

146. Management of ICT is very good and the organisation of the programme for Years 7 to 9 is excellent, resulting in the very good progress of many students in Years 7 to 9. The Years 7 to 9 co-ordinator has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the ICT programme. She is particularly aware of the need to introduce databases and to improve the attainment of more able students. With the exception of the Internet connection, which is too slow to support activities such as video-conferencing, resources for ICT are very good. The learning and information centre is an excellent, modern resource. It is efficiently managed by a supervisor, who makes sure the equipment is properly looked after, takes care of bookings and liaises with other staff by ensuring that the software they need is available and provides suggestions to help with projects.
147. Expansion of ICT continues to be a central part of the visionary college development plan. Partnership with a leading software manufacturer to pilot use of the school server to create worksheets online, and the facility for marking students' work through e-mail, is a most impressive innovation that is likely to have a major impact on learning. All students with computers and Internet connection can access this facility from home.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good overall.
- Teachers make imaginative use of interactive whiteboards to improve students' motivation and interest.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the percentages of A*-C grades at GCSE.
- Refraining from the unnecessary use of English in lessons.
- Continuing to encourage students to be more self-reliant learners.
- Increasing opportunities for teachers to observe each other's lessons in order to spread best teaching practice.
- Providing students with regular opportunities for study visits and exchanges abroad.

148. Long-term illness and considerable turbulence in staffing has adversely affected the continuity of learning of many students and has lowered standards. Five teachers left last year and the department is currently short of one full-time teacher for whom specialist supply cover has yet to be found. In response to the new personalised, individual curriculum offer, a large number of students opted out of languages in Year 10. Recent student achievement in modern foreign languages compares unfavourably with most other subjects.
149. The percentage of students reaching the nationally expected standard at the age of 14, as determined by teacher assessment, has fluctuated in recent years. Although the percentage in 2001 was above the national average, the results of these students in modules already completed towards GCSE in 2003 indicate below average standards. The percentages of students gaining A*-C GCSE grades in French have decreased since 1998 to an all-time low in 2002. The second language option is only taken by higher attainers. GCSE results for these groups have been significantly better. Relatively few students take A-level French but half the group in 2001 attained top grades. In 2002, more students passed successfully but the proportion gaining high grades was low.

150. Standards attained by the age of 14 in French and Spanish are in line with those found nationally for higher and many average attainers. Lower attainers are below, and sometimes well below, national standards, especially when classes are large and classroom assistance is unavailable. Overall, standards are below national expectations. Listening skills develop quite well but speaking skills remain sub-standard where minimal answers are tolerated and the use and practice of the foreign language is not fully developed. Written work ranges from very good to poor as it is not set regularly and the volume accepted is often minimal.
151. Standards attained in French by Year 11 students are below average. Lower attainers have hardly progressed beyond the recognition of individual words. Higher attainers have reasonable listening and comprehension skills and some are quite ambitious in speaking, but a significant minority is underachieving. Most lower attainers and a substantial minority of average attainers do not know the structures to speak at any length. Their written work contains far too many careless errors. Overall, achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards attained post-16 are average. The A-level French group performs very well orally but standards of grammatical accuracy require improvement.
152. Teaching is good. Two-thirds of the lessons seen were good and a few were very good. The remainder were satisfactory. Teachers are using ICT increasingly and their imaginative use of interactive whiteboards promotes students' motivation. Teachers use lesson time to the full and sustain pace and momentum by setting challenging time limits on activities and exercises. They share learning objectives with students and review these at the end of lessons so that students are aware of their progress. Teachers encourage full student participation in lessons, often by imaginative learning games, and most are determined that all students should learn to the full extent of their capabilities. They mark students' work conscientiously and point the way to improvement through their helpful comments. Occasional flaws in lessons include the unnecessary use of English, unchallenging pace and the tolerance of very short, unstructured answers, both oral and written.
153. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because of the decline in standards, the unsettling effects on student achievement of staff changes, the need to embed the foreign language in lessons and the irregularity of study trips abroad. However, student self-reliance is being developed, their dictionary skills are improving and they enjoy incorporating ICT in their learning. The availability of text books is now good.
154. The head of department has only been in post since the beginning of this term but is already having a positive impact. The new team shares a commitment to raise standards and they have set demanding, but achievable, targets for each teaching group. The department is now focusing on borderline GCSE candidates and identifying weaker areas of its provision, such as modular courses, to achieve change and improvement. The new head of department is well aware of the desirability of recruiting foreign language assistants to raise attainment in speaking.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**. It is **satisfactory** in classroom work, **good** in instrumental tuition and **excellent** in extra-curricular work.

Strengths

- Standards are above average in GCSE work and instrumental tuition.

- Students show positive attitudes in GCCE work and behaviour is good.
- The range of opportunities in instrumental tuition is very good and teaching is mainly good.
- Standards in extra-curricular work involve large numbers, are outstandingly good and bring much credit to the school.
- The department is vibrant; leadership is enthusiastic; management and the support given to music are good.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards in Years 7 to 9 to expected levels.
- Requiring students to use their own instruments more in classroom work.
- Reducing shortages in resources, which include classroom instruments and music.
- Providing practice rooms for group work.

155. Students enter the school with variable musical experience related to the quality of their musical education in their previous schools, instrumental tuition experience, interests and level of home support. Many instrumentalists enter with above average attainment but many more students enter with below average attainment.
156. By the age of 14, although some talented students attain very high standards, overall standards are below national expectations with the majority of students working at, or below, Level 5 (the level expected nationally of 14-year-old students). The standard of singing is below average as insufficient attention is given to posture, diction or breathing. Students make good use of keyboards but their performing skills are underdeveloped. Students find it difficult to keep in time in ensemble, use wrong fingering and have to use letters written on keys. Students do not use their own instruments enough in classwork to support instrumental tuition and strengthen their classroom work. Most students show insufficient understanding of devices and structures and this limits the development of their composing skills. Instrumentalists are very secure in their music reading skills. Many students do not listen respectfully enough to recordings or to each other in practical work; the more experienced use technical vocabulary in appraising but most students do not. General musical knowledge, for example of instruments, composers, forms, structures and well-known pieces of music and artists, is weak. Progress is good when students are motivated but overall achievement is only satisfactory.
157. GCSE examination results in recent years have been above the national average. In 2002, results were similar to those of previous years with almost half of those entered gaining the highest grades. The standards achieved by current Year 11 students are above average. Their instrumental skills are, on average, approaching Grade 5 with some talented students playing at Grade 8 level. Students show good understanding of harmony, devices and structures and create effective compositions. They use music technologies well (including computers at home) to develop pieces and notate work. Students have a mature attitude to their work, they listen respectfully and their general musical knowledge is broader than average. Overall achievement is good. Their work is supported well by the instrumental tuition programme and the wide range of high quality extra-curricular opportunities in which they participate.
158. Overall, classroom teaching is satisfactory. It is often good but, occasionally, some of the teaching to younger students is unsatisfactory. Teachers teach confidently and use competent musical skills well when demonstrating, accompanying, directing or conducting. Lessons start briskly and proceed at a lively pace to keep students interested. Instructions are clear; students understand the objectives and how to achieve them but discipline is not always fully established and, in some classes, the poor behaviour adversely affects learning and the atmosphere. In the best lessons,

expectations are high and students are challenged and enjoy lessons, especially in practical work but, in weaker lessons in Years 7 to 9, the work is pitched too low and some students lose interest. Students with special educational needs are well integrated and make similar progress to the majority, but able or more musically experienced students who learn quickly are not stretched enough because all students usually do the same work. Lessons are well organised but, in some, the approach is too academic and theoretical and students make insufficient use of their own instruments. When students are attentive, they work productively but they are not always supportive of each other or respectful enough to teachers; they have too little opportunity to work in groups because of the shortage of practice rooms. Homework is not set regularly enough to extend students' learning. GCSE students are good-humoured, have positive attitudes to their work and are keen to answer questions. Through thorough assessment of their work, teachers show students how they can improve. The most enthusiastic students involve themselves in musical opportunities offered by the department and outside school but not all students take advantage of the extensive opportunities in instrumental or voice tuition and extra-curricular work to strengthen their achievement.

159. The head of department and other newer teachers are enthusiastic, committed to raising standards further and extremely hardworking. The department is well supported by the school so that leadership and management are good. Good quality documentation supports learning but assessment is too generous and schemes focus insufficiently on developing the practical skills of younger students. Curricular links with primary schools are being strengthened to build on their work. Shortages in resources include larger classroom instruments to enhance creative work, music (for class and extra-curricular use and the library) and video. The lack of technical support imposes pressures on staff and insufficient time is given to the head of department to organise music. Since the last inspection, standards and the quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 have deteriorated. There has been much staff turbulence during this time. The department has the capacity and support to improve provision in class for younger students.
160. The range of extra music tuition provided is very good. Approximately 70 boys and 33 girls take advantage of the opportunity to receive instrumental or voice lessons. The high ratio of boys to girls is very unusual. In addition, a high number of students receive tuition privately. Standards are above average and the progress and achievement of students are good in relation to their ages and the time they have received tuition. Students have achieved well in graded music examinations. Teaching is mainly good, as seen in electric guitar tuition, and students show positive attitudes.
161. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is excellent and includes orchestra, concert band, senior choir, chamber choir and many other sectional ensembles and rock bands. Participation, standards and the quality of teaching are excellent. Individual students reach high standards. Visiting teachers give excellent support to these groups. The school promotes a large number of concerts and musical events, including 'Musicfests' (termly informal concerts), Christmas and summer concerts, a cabaret and a staged musical every two years, most recently 'Calamity Jane' and 'My Fair Lady'. These involve high numbers of students and they are well supported by sixth-form students and students in the GCSE groups. Their mature attitudes, high levels of musicianship and willingness to help organise events, boost the quality of the groups which perform at local arts, civic and charity events, festivals and on European tours. Music makes a most valuable contribution to students' personal development, especially their social and cultural development, but the use of music in assembly is underdeveloped. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, commitment of parents

and the enthusiasm of the many talented musicians whose performances and successes bring much credit to the school and this vibrant department. Extra-curricular music is a strength of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good or very good in the majority of lessons.
- The attitudes and commitment shown by students are good.
- Extra-curricular provision is good.

Areas for improvement

- Reviewing assessment procedures and improving the monitoring of students' attainment and progress.
- Producing a faculty handbook that will serve as a useful working document for staff.
- Providing a permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the examination course.

162. Physical education continues to be a popular option at GCSE level with almost half of Year 10 and two-fifths of the current Year 11 following the course. In 2001, 60 per cent of students entered for the GCSE examination gained A*-C grades; all achieved A*-G grades. These figures were above the national average. In 2002, the percentage of students achieving A*-C higher grades fell to 34 per cent. A change in the syllabus, some poor behaviour, a lack of motivation by some students and staffing instability were all contributory factors in this reduction. There was no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls, although three times as many boys were entered for the examination. In both 2001 and 2002, the number of students following the GCSE course as a percentage of the total cohort was well above the national average.
163. Inspection evidence indicates that attainment by the majority of students in the present Years 7 to 9 is in line with national expectations and remains similar to the picture described at the time of the previous inspection. According to the teachers' assessment, standards at the end of Year 9 in 2001 were well above average, but this judgement seems to be too high and it is likely that assessment criteria were not used accurately enough. Lesson observations and analysis of written work indicate that students in the present Year 11 are making satisfactory progress and reaching standards that are average for the course. Most have a satisfactory understanding of the theoretical aspects of the syllabus, although a minority experience difficulty with this aspect of the work. The attainment of students in Year 10, who are in the early stages of the course, is average. Overall, the attainment of non-examination students, who have only one period of physical education each week, is satisfactory and remains similar to the picture described in the previous report. A number of individual students of various ages attain above average standards in basketball, netball, football, athletics, swimming and tennis.
164. Overall, the achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is good. The majority of students in Year 7 are achieving well after only a short time in school. They are making good progress in gymnastics, dance and football. Some students have yet to develop consistently good learning habits. In Year 8, students are achieving particularly well in swimming and dance. Students with special educational needs, who are integrated fully into all lessons, progress as well as others. The majority of students following the

GCSE course in both Years 10 and 11 are interested and enthusiastic, and their achievement is good. A netball group in Year 10, for example, worked without complaint in cold and wet conditions. However, several boys in Year 10 lack the motivation and self-discipline necessary for success.

165. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to very good. In the majority of lessons, teaching and learning are good. Relationships between teachers and students are positive and encourage progress. Students in most lessons show a ready willingness to co-operate with their teachers and with each other in order to improve their level of performance. Where teaching and learning are very good, students are given the opportunity to exercise personal initiative, for example by leading warm-up activities. Teaching in some examination classes occasionally involves the use of ICT to support students' learning, for example in the production of student training programmes. Students are encouraged to use CD-Roms and the website. This good practice has not been consistent across all groups. Students are also encouraged to evaluate work in some lessons. Good examples of this were seen in gymnastics, dance and football. However, opportunities for meaningful evaluation are often missed. Levels of participation and the standard of kit are very good. Most students work hard and behave well in lessons, consequently, the quality of their learning is good.
166. The faculty staff offer a good range of extra-curricular activities for students of all ages after school. During the inspection, these included basketball, netball, swimming and football for boys and girls. A small number of activities take place in the middle of the day but it is much more difficult for teachers to arrange activities during the staggered lunchbreaks. Although some older students participate, particularly in activities like basketball, netball and football, extra-curricular activities are more popular with younger students. School teams have enjoyed recent local and county successes in basketball, football and netball. The faculty has good links with clubs like Bickley Basketball Club, Blackheath Harriers, London Towers and Chislehurst Netball Club. Such links provide additional opportunities for some students to extend and improve their skills.
167. Several developments have taken place since the last inspection. The college has gained the Sportsmark award. The curriculum, that includes swimming for students in Years 7 to 9, is now more balanced. The Junior Sports Leaders Award has been introduced successfully. Earlier this year for example, 47 students gained accreditation. Students now take part in the English School Athletics Championships. Girls' football has been added to the curriculum and is proving very popular. Photographs of successful athletes are displayed in a 'hall of fame'. This both recognises their achievements and serves to create additional interest in the subject.
168. The head of faculty has been in post for only a few weeks. He is exercising good leadership and management and he is being well supported by his colleagues. A number of areas for development have been identified, all of which focus on raising standards. At present, for example, students following the examination course do not all have textbooks to assist with their independent study. In GCSE classes, there is insufficient monitoring of students' attainment and progress linked to individual target setting. The current assessment procedures at the end of Year 9 do not always provide an accurate assessment of students' ability levels. The good practice of using ICT to support learning in examination classes is not consistent. The faculty does not have a suitable handbook containing up-to-date policies. There is no permanent base for teaching the theoretical elements of the syllabus, making the delivery of this aspect of the course more difficult, nor can staff promote the teaching of literacy, numeracy and ICT as effectively as they would like.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education for students aged 11 to 16 is **good**. There is no religious education in the sixth form.

Strengths

- Attainment at the ages of 14 and 16 is good.
- Collaborative working of the department sustains the good quality of teaching.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- Providing religious education in the sixth form to meet requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.
- Increasing students' awareness of their own learning.

169. The overall standard of work seen at age 14 is above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. At age 16, the overall attainment of students is above the national average. The GCSE short course examination results in 2002 (the first year of entry) were significantly above the provisional national average. Overall, results of the very small cohort that took the full examination in 2002 were in line with the national average and were a significant improvement on the previous year. Girls achieved better results than boys and exceeded the national average for girls.
170. Achievement is good. Students respond to the very high expectations of their teachers. They sustain interest because the work matches their different levels of competence. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on spirituality, after identifying key aspects of the physical and spiritual dimensions, the less able used a writing frame to express their ideas while the more able wrote confidently at some length. Objectives for each lesson are clear to students, and the pace and several changes of activity maintain their interest. Due to the attention given to discussion and literacy, students improve their oral and writing skills. They make good gains in specialist vocabulary. They make good progress in knowledge and understanding when they are active learners, as in a Year 8 lesson on the gurdwara when they went on a virtual reality tour of a Sikh temple emphasising the place of the Sikh holy book in worship. Assessment tasks show they understand what they have learned. In a Year 9 lesson on the Christian view of God and the idea of monotheism, they produced posters showing three aspects of famous people illustrating their comprehension of the concept of the trinity. The use of ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9 helps develop students' communication skills. They learn to select and combine prose and pictures in a number of ways including the use of PowerPoint. Students with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are met. The presence of learning support assistants helps ensure they achieve success.
171. Students come to lessons eager to learn and are very courteous. They exhibit an obvious pleasure in religious education lessons and behaviour is usually very good. The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Issues concerning the purpose of life, contemporary issues and the influence of belief on lifestyles are all included in lessons. The study of aspects of world religions provides an ideal context to raise awareness of, and respect for, other cultures, as occurred in a lesson on Hindu teaching regarding the treatment of animals.
172. Teaching is good. In the lessons observed, it was always good, sometimes very good and occasionally excellent. The close co-operation of members of the department, many of whom are non-specialists, sharing best practice helps the quality of teaching

and is a strength of the department. When teaching is very good, lessons are exciting. Explanations are very clear. Questions probe, extend and verify students' knowledge and understanding. Relationships are very good and the atmosphere encourages achievement. Students take responsibility for their own learning and rise to challenges by thinking deeply and creatively. Teachers have clear expectations for each student but students are not always aware of them. This is an area for improvement.

173. Leadership and management are good. Leadership sets a clear direction for the subject. The department monitors teaching and learning. Assessment is thorough. Appropriate independent study is regularly set. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Resources have improved and are now good. Standards are the same in Years 7 to 9 and have improved in Years 10 to 11. All students are now following the GCSE short course and some who pass in Year 10 enter for another paper in Year 11 that gives them a full GCSE. Religious education, introduced in the sixth form after the last inspection, has been discontinued due to a shortage of specialist staff. To meet statutory requirements it needs to be reintroduced.

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

In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002. National performance information for 2001 is bracketed. Changes to the system for calculating average point scores were introduced in 2001. This means that the post-16 average point scores are not comparable with previous years. The national performance information for 2002 is not yet available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Chemistry	6	67	(43)	50	(5)	32	
Biology	8	88	(n/a)	38	(n/a)	36	
Physics	15	60	(n/a)	7	(n/a)	21	
Design and technology	21	76	(n/a)	14	(n/a)	26	
Business studies	26	80	(76)	15	(12)	28	
Physical education	16	81	(n/a)	6	(n/a)	26	
Art	31	100	(n/a)	32	(n/a)	39	
Music	6	83	(n/a)	17	(n/a)	28	
Drama	14	100	(n/a)	79	(n/a)	51	
Geography	18	94	(74)	44	(6)	38	
History	13	77	(n/a)	15	(n/a)	24	
English	27	100	(n/a)	19	(n/a)	35	

GCE A level and AVCE courses 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	20	85	(87)	15	(43)	62	
Chemistry	6	100	(90)	67	(43)	87	
Biology	9	78	(88)	33	(34)	64	
Physics	11	100	(88)	18	(40)	76	
Design and technology (Product design)	15	100	(88)	0	(22)	63	
Business studies A level	29	100	(92)	21	(32)	73	
Business studies AVCE single award	6	100	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	60	
Business studies AVCE double award	4	100	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	95	
ICT AVCE single award	11	100	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	71	
ICT AVCE double award	7	100	(n/a)	14	(n/a)	163	
Physical education	6	100	(92)	33	(25)	87	
Travel and tourism AVCE single award	3	100	(n/a)	67	(n/a)	100	
Travel and tourism AVCE double award	1	100	(n/a)	0	(n/a)	160	
Leisure and recreation AVCE single award	2	100	(n/a)	50	(n/a)	90	
Art	12	100	(96)	25	(46)	70	
Music	8	100	(93)	25	(35)	81	
Drama	19	100	(99)	58	(38)	93	
Geography	24	100	(92)	29	(38)	74	
History	18	100	(88)	33	(35)	80	
English	17	100	(95)	41	(37)	88	

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
ICT	8	100	n/a	25	n/a	0	n/a

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection covered the A-level courses offered by the school in mathematics, further mathematics, chemistry, biology and physics. Two lessons of the resit course in GCSE mathematics were also observed.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The department is fully staffed and teachers have good subject knowledge.
- The thorough notes provided to students help them to consolidate their understanding.
- Teaching is good and teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively.
- There are good teacher/student relationships.

Areas for improvement

- More focused questioning in lessons and provision of exemplar solutions, apart from those in the textbooks, to promote independent learning skills.
- Marking needs to be more thorough and give students more advice on how to improve.
- Increasing the use of ICT within the curriculum to compensate for limited curriculum time.

174. In 2001, overall GCE A-level results were below national averages and the average point score was the lowest for four years. Girls achieved slightly better than boys. However, when account is taken of students' earlier GCSE performance, the results represent satisfactory achievement. Provisional 2002 A-level results from a smaller entry of 20 students are not as good. Although a similar proportion of entrants passed, significantly fewer gained the highest grades.

175. Results in AS-level further mathematics in 2001 were good. In the new AS-level mathematics examinations in 2001, although the proportion of highest grades was low, overall results were well above national averages. Because of insufficient time to prepare thoroughly for all three modules of the AS-level course, in Summer 2002, AS-level candidates took only two modules, intending to take their third module in November 2002 leading to AS-level qualification.

176. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teachers exhibit good subject knowledge and awareness of the needs of the GCE examination courses. Teaching by all six staff who contribute to A-level mathematics was good or very good in lessons seen. Lessons were thoroughly planned and clear objectives shared with students. Subject matter was delivered with confidence and appropriately graduated in difficulty. In the better lessons, students were given comprehensive notes though, at times, replicating textbook material as distinct from providing supporting exemplars. Good instruction was seen in Years 12/13 further mathematics linear programming, and in Year 12 classes on probability distributions and in using the chain rule in calculus. Targeted questioning of students to assess understanding was rare; responses to open questions being dominated by a few outspoken students with some teachers feeling the syllabus

demands of the course permitted little more than direct instruction within the limited curriculum time available. Where lively interchange occurs, as in a Year 12 lesson on probability density functions and in a lesson on polynomials, students become more involved, their minds are challenged, misconceptions are removed earlier and progress is improved. Conversely, one GCSE resit lesson suffered through inappropriate levels of algebraic tasks demanded of those present; though good progress on scatter diagrams was made by a different GCSE group.

177. Students are attentive and respectful and, overall, they make sound progress. Learning is generally good, aided by the notes they take and through follow-up work. Lack of direct involvement in lessons inhibits higher achievement. Their responses tend to be brief with minimal reasoning given, and some students remain passive throughout lessons. Their understanding of analysis is insufficiently stimulated and could be contributory to the relatively few top grades being achieved.
178. Attendance at lessons is generally high, though lateness and some absence, notably in the GCSE groups, creates problems. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys or girls, nor of those with differing ethnic backgrounds. Students are happy with their choice of mathematics, though they find the modules in pure mathematics the most challenging. Work scrutiny reveals well-structured notes and competent attempts at ensuing problems. The quality of marking varies, from very comprehensive with helpful comment, to mainly ticks, and to student self-assessment relating to 'answers in the back of the book'. Teachers mark mechanics coursework, such as projects on projectiles (football free kicks) or friction (child's slide), in very useful detail. Several of these projects revealed good ICT usage but little use of ICT was evident elsewhere. School reports lack specific details of areas of students' strengths and weaknesses.
179. Extensive assessment records are provided by the school. The new head of mathematics shows good leadership skills and is alert to improvements that can be made. With incoming benefits from technology college status and co-operation of staff, there is great opportunity to take the department forward and enable students to achieve more highly than in recent years. Inspection evidence shows that students are willing to learn and the capability is there, it needs fully drawing out both within lessons and in the development of their independent learning skills.

CHEMISTRY

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

Strengths

- Good standards achieved and very good recent results in A-level examinations.
- Good subject knowledge and commitment of teachers and their very good relationships with students.
- The very positive response of students to learning which leads to good achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Sharing ideas concerning teaching approaches and effective questioning.
- Supplementing taught curriculum time with independent studies, particularly using ICT.

180. Standards in chemistry have improved considerably since the previous inspection and are now good. Although the numbers taking the GCE A-level examination have been relatively small, students have generally achieved grades above expectations based on their earlier performance at GCSE. In both 2001 and 2002, results were well above

national averages with almost all entrants gaining the highest grades. Results at AS-level have also been above average. The current Year 12 AS-level class, with 12 students, is much larger than chemistry groups in previous years.

181. Overall, standards are above average and students in both years are achieving well. However, the knowledge and understanding demonstrated by students during the inspection varied from below average to very good. For example, Year 13 students have a good understanding of factors that affect chemical equilibria and are able to apply Le Chatelier's Principle correctly. They understand how to determine the units of equilibrium constants from equations. They do not all, however, have the ability to express their understanding fluently and concisely in their written work. Year 13 students have a secure understanding of chemical concepts such as covalent bonding, hydrogen bonding and the idea of electronegativity. They can apply this knowledge in unfamiliar situations, for example to explain the physical and chemical properties of amines.
182. Year 12 students have good safety awareness and they are developing competent volumetric techniques. They understand how to calculate the accuracy of their measurements. However, during a practical lesson, a repeated teacher demonstration of the required method was necessary and may have prevented students from making some elementary mistakes, such as failing to shake a flask thoroughly after making a standardised solution. They have a good basic understanding of atomic theory and have made good progress in extending their conceptual model from electron shells to orbitals.
183. The quality of teaching is good and both teachers are strongly committed to helping their students to be successful in examinations. For example, last year a teacher devoted a lot of time after school to provide additional A-level lessons to compensate for the minimal, four hours per week, allocation of teaching time. Teachers have established very good relationships with their students whose confidence they have gained through their enthusiasm, knowledge and commitment. As a result, students are eager to answer questions and participate actively in lessons. Although different in their style of teaching, both teachers explain concepts carefully and motivate students effectively through questioning. Sometimes, however, their explanations are too abstract for some students to follow and they do not always allow sufficient thinking time after asking questions which challenge students to apply their knowledge. Consequently, they often receive spontaneous answers that do not take all relevant factors into account.
184. Chemistry is managed well and students are given clear guidance about the course and what they are required to do. Assessment procedures are thorough and students' work is marked regularly with helpful comments. The scheme of work is comprehensive but there are insufficient opportunities for students to use ICT because of a shortage of resources and easy access to computers. Adequate coverage of the A-level syllabus in four hours teaching time per week is very difficult and possibilities of supplementing this time by independent use of ICT resources by students has not been explored sufficiently. The new accommodation is pleasant and spacious but the lack of sinks on central benches makes some practical work difficult. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

BIOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have a good, diverse knowledge of the subject.
- Students have excellent attitudes to learning.
- Biology is a popular option and the number of students studying A-level has increased.
- The spacious accommodation provides an environment conducive to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards at A-level and AS-level, particularly the proportion of higher grades.
- Supplementing the shortage of curriculum time.
- Providing sufficient journals, monographs and offprints for the students to research from.

185. A-level examination results have fluctuated in recent years since the previous inspection but, with the exception of 1998 when results were very high, results have been below the national average with relatively few students gaining the highest grades. These results are, however, in line with predictions based on students' GCSE grades and indicate that the achievement of most students was satisfactory. In the recently established AS-level examinations, the 2002 results were good with several students gaining the highest grades. Biology has recently increased in popularity and recruitment is high. Retention into Year 13 is very good and most students have very good attendance which supports their progress.
186. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average. Year 13 students discuss aspects of biotechnology well and refer confidently to the commercial production of yoghurt and mycoprotein. They appreciate the wider social issue of starvation in the third world and the use of synthesised protein as a food source in drought zones. They use difficult vocabulary in the correct context and can sustain logical arguments.
187. Effective teaching has taken Year 12 students to a level above GCSE in a short time. They have a good knowledge of biochemistry and can make accurate predictions about the properties of different types of protein based on the structure. They have good recall of their GCSE work and use it as a baseline for further development of their knowledge.
188. The teaching is good and students make good progress. Thorough planning and brisk pace are strengths of teaching and expectations are high. All work is very well marked and linked to A-level criteria. Through their constructive comments, teachers steer the students to improvement. Homework is sometimes marked in class where common errors are identified and rectified. The two biology teachers are new to the school but, between them, they have considerable experience. They share their diverse knowledge and good practice to promote good learning.
189. The students have an excellent attitude towards learning with strong interest and keen enthusiasm. They have access to good textbooks but there are insufficient journals and research offprints to supplement these texts and provide greater depth and breadth to their study. The students research independently but there is insufficient curriculum time to achieve a balance between this, delivered theory and practical work. As a result, their progress, although good, is not as fast as it could be.

190. The management of the subject is satisfactory and the newly appointed head of department has clear direction for the development of the subject. The performance of the students is regularly reviewed but does not, as yet, guide curriculum planning sufficiently well. The diagnostic use of assessment data is being developed. The laboratories are spacious and well lit and they are ideal places to teach and learn biology.

PHYSICS

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of physics.
- Effective teaching and good relationships between students and teachers lead to good learning.
- Good accommodation provides a pleasant and suitable environment for learning.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards to at least the national averages at both AS- and A-level.
- Raising the profile of physics so that more students, girls in particular, opt for the subject.
- Providing students with more regular feedback of their strengths and weaknesses.
- Writing a scheme of work, which includes health and safety and opportunities for ICT and SMSC, and details opportunities to develop students' key skills.

191. The number of students who enter the GCE A-level examination has varied over the last four years from nine to 23. Students' average point scores and the proportions of students gaining A-E grades have been below the national average. Results in 2002 were better with all eleven candidates gaining A-E grades but relatively few obtaining the highest grades. The ratio of male students to female who study physics is significantly higher than the national ratio. Generally, there is no significant difference in the performance of male and female students, although the number of female students is too low for rigorous analysis. The department does not make sufficient efforts to promote the subject amongst girls.

192. In 2001, AS-level results were below the national average. In 2002, AS-level results were quite disappointing with more than half of the students ungraded on at least one of the three modules. Three of these students have opted not to study physics to A-level. Despite the examination results being below national averages, achievement is satisfactory as the results of students in both Years 12 and 13 are broadly in line with what might be expected of them based on their GCSE attainment at age 16.

193. The standard of work seen was below average. Students have below average levels of mathematics and this limits their achievement as it makes it difficult for them to cope with the large number of calculations required. For example, when working through a practical question on resonance, those Year 13 students not taking A-level mathematics could not answer a large proportion of the question. Without additional lessons in mathematics, it is very difficult for these students to obtain the highest grades. The quality of the written work of Year 13 students is variable. Teachers do not use a sufficiently directed approach to ensure that students have a good set of notes from which to revise. Year 12 students have settled down well to the demands of AS-level physics. Despite the required increase in standards, all students are pleased with the choice they have made.

194. Teaching is good overall so students have confidence in their teachers and make satisfactory progress. Teachers use effective questioning techniques, which make the students think about and discuss the topic very carefully. Year 13 students in a lesson about the Universe asked some very perceptive questions despite some gaps in their understanding of previous work. Similarly, in a Year 12 lesson about relative velocity, it was another teacher's challenging questioning technique which enabled the students to understand well about frames of reference. Evidence from students' work indicates that students are not given enough regular feedback of their strengths and weaknesses in the subject, which could, for example, be provided by more frequent tests in physics. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of physics. They plan well the use of a range of methods and resources to aid learning. However, teachers do not provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop their basic skills of communication, numeracy and ICT. Presently, there is no detailed scheme of work where these opportunities could be identified. Teachers do not make enough provision for the needs of the gifted and talented students. There are few opportunities for the exceptionally able students to research a topic or to be challenged, for example through links with industry or by entering the Physics Olympiad. Students show high levels of interest. Relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good but their independent learning skills are not well developed.
195. The head of department has sound leadership and management skills. The two physics teachers work closely together so that the examination board's requirements are met through the curriculum. However, the time allocated for teaching is too short for students to be adequately prepared to take AS-level modules in January of the first year. Consequently, they could not take full advantage of the system, which allows them to be tested after the completion of a relatively short piece of work. At present, the science department has insufficient sensors to develop the students' ICT skills through experimental work. Physics teachers give due attention to health and safety but they do not have written risk assessments for the experiments or demonstrations which are carried out. Since the last inspection, the department has made satisfactory progress. However, standards remain broadly similar and uptake remains fairly static.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

The inspection focused on the A-level course in product design. The school does not offer any post-16 vocational courses in this curriculum area.

Design and technology – product design

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

Strengths

- Very good subject knowledge and understanding, and approachability of teachers.
- Very effective use of assessment data to set targets and motivate students.
- Students' achievement in using computers for designing and communicating.

Areas for improvement

- Providing opportunities for computer-aided manufacture and metal working.
- Increasing links with science.
- Providing interactive tutorials and seminars more frequently so that students learn to make presentations and field questions.

196. In 2001, results in graphical applications at A-level were well above the national average. In the same year, attainment in the newly introduced AS-level product design course was average. In 2002, all entrants for A-level product design passed but none gained the higher grades. In AS-level product design, 16 out of 21 entrants gained A-E grades. The trend in performance in A-level technology results over the past three years has been irregular because of course changes, staffing changes and variations in students' attainment on entry to the sixth form which have generally been below average.
197. Standards of attainment in the work seen in Year 13 are above average. Students have good understanding of technical vocabulary and definitions associated, for example with the role of the computer in automated commercial production methods. They use computers very effectively, for example when researching, designing and communicating. They also make very good use of previous learning, for example of traditional graphics methods such as texturing and rendering. However, they do not produce sufficiently detailed working schedules and plans to inform their product making. Their writing indicates relatively weak understanding of relevant scientific concepts. Nevertheless, achievement over the full two years of the course is good and higher grades seem likely to be attained this year.
198. Standards of attainment of Year 12 students taking the AS-level course are below average. However, they have good awareness of the characteristics that make products fit for their intended purpose and they are building satisfactorily on their previous learning. Students use observational evidence from product analysis thoughtfully to make accurate inferences about manufacturing processes. They understand manufacturing in industry and can explain, for example, why batch production methods are necessary. However, they make too little reference to their own notes and were not seen to be using interaction and debate enough in the early stages of the course.
199. Teaching in the sixth form is good and has many very good features especially in Year 13. Learning support and guidance through note-making, explanations, mnemonics, humour and very good relationships help to build each student's confidence and self-esteem. Students work hard, listen carefully and do their very best to achieve well. The teachers' very good knowledge of assessment requirements and the syllabus content is well used to interest and to motivate the students. Students benefit from the teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm and their willingness to adjust the pace of the lesson to the response of the group. The system for target setting for individuals and groups is very effective but time consuming in its present form because the students are not sufficiently actively involved. Teachers encourage students well through marking and feedback on their work but the comments are not sharp enough to cause a quick response and immediate improvement. Sometimes, the comments are overgenerous. In the early stages of the AS-level course, students are given too few opportunities in lessons to make presentations and to field questions. When taking the next important step to improve, the students are over-reliant upon their teachers' willingness to repeat explanations rather than refer to their own notes.
200. Overall, the leadership and management are very good. Well-substantiated decisions have been made about the types of course on offer and when to introduce them to allow teacher confidence and good facilities to be in place in time. Within product design, there are opportunities for designing and making with a range of different materials. This course is relevant to the real world and offers the students a degree of choice. Indeed, almost half of the students in Year 12 have been attracted from other schools. Most of the students stay with the subject from AS- to A2-level. However, there are indications that attendance in Year 12 may not be as good as it is in Year 13 which would impair

progress. The vision for further improvements to include, for example, manufacturing and vocational courses is most appropriate.

BUSINESS

The inspection covered all aspects of this curriculum area that the school offers. These include A-level business studies, and NVQ and RSA courses in business administration

Business studies

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

Strengths

- New and changed syllabus specifications are met through thorough planning.
- The vocational aspects of courses are well suited to students' aspirations.
- The support provided to students is very effective in helping them to learn.
- Students respond enthusiastically to business courses.

Areas for improvement

- Planning of individual lessons so that they have a sharper focus on meeting individual learning needs, particularly the writing skills of some students.
- Raising standards of attainment and the achievement of some students.
- Planning in the long term, including resourcing and providing accommodation that is less cramped and more suitable to learning.

201. Results of students taking GCE A-level courses have improved recently and, in 2002, a 100 per cent pass rate was achieved but relatively few entrants attained the highest grades. In terms of national comparisons, results in 2001 were below national averages and were also below those reported in the last inspection. Recent results are partly attributable to the recruitment of students with relatively weak GCSE grades. When these are taken into account, measures of added value indicate that students taking business courses make good progress. Students taking NVQs and RSA qualifications achieve results which are better than those achieved nationally.

202. Teaching of business classes is good. Courses are very well planned and great attention is paid to meeting the changing demands of the new syllabus specifications. Students are very well prepared for both internally and externally assessed coursework and those students in Year 13 taking the new 'unseen' case study last January did particularly well. NVQ business administration students follow individual learning plans which incorporate work experience with formal assessments. These are very well organised. In the best classes, teachers show considerable skill in developing and extending students' 'streetwise' understanding of business concepts. For example, students just starting business courses were able to quickly understand possible rationales for the provision of 'public goods'. Teachers have good subject knowledge and most are able to draw on their own vocational experiences to provide good examples of current business practice. The support offered to students, both in and out of lessons, is very good. Staff are approachable and always ready to help. In some classes, insufficient attention is given to help students develop written skills and, in others, learning objectives are not defined closely enough.

203. Business courses are now amongst the most popular in the sixth form. Students in the second year of AVCE programmes have highly developed learning skills and are able to take considerable responsibility for their own learning. The standard of their work is above average. The integration of work experience into the business administration

courses makes a major contribution to the maturity and employability of students. In all classes, students respond well to their enthusiastic teachers. They are very ready to contribute to discussion and debate but, in some cases, are more reticent about developing their written skills. Overall standards in Year 12 are below average. The written work of some students is poor and a minority has yet to learn basic skills of punctuation and sentence construction. In some AS-level classes, understanding of simple concepts, such as different forms of business ownership, was below that which would be expected from students on advanced programmes.

204. Most teachers in the faculty work very well together, pooling ideas and sharing responsibility for developing new resources. Their different skills and experiences are complementary and there is a shared commitment in supporting the learning of all students. The range of courses offered by this faculty has increased rapidly over a short period of time and attention now needs to be paid to longer-term planning. Sharing the teaching of AS- and A2-level classes between different teachers might not represent the most effective use of staff. Clear priorities need to be set, supported by appropriate development strategies including adequate resourcing and staff development programmes. This process needs to be more formalised. Accommodation is cramped and inadequate.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The inspection covered all aspects of this curriculum area that the school offers. These include AVCE ICT (single and double award), intermediate GNVQ ICT and CISCO networking course.

Information and communication technology

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

Strengths

- The good achievement of students in the AVCE ICT and GNVQ ICT examinations.
- The high quality of leadership that has created a strong team ethos.
- The high standard of teaching and student monitoring which has led to very good examination performances.
- The constructive relationships between the teachers and students that have contributed to the very good progress made by students.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing the range of teaching and learning styles through the sharing of good practice between colleagues.
- Enhancing the Internet learning facilities by using a higher specification connection.

205. The examination results in the intermediate GNVQ and at AVCE are very good, with all students on both courses achieving at least a pass and most a higher grade in the most recent results. Those students with previously lower attainment performed well and, therefore, there is very good achievement. There are no differences in the performance of boys and girls or students from different ethnic backgrounds.

206. Students make very good progress and the overall standard of their work is well above average. They are enthusiastic, mature and confident in the use of all aspects of ICT, having the skills to use programs as they are appropriate for the learning task being undertaken and with an incisive awareness of the implications of the audience and purpose in their products. Students evaluate well the page attributes of fax forms and e-

mail designs and use the Internet effectively as a research tool to analyse how product information is presented to the public. When constructing letters for job applications, students are able to edit text quickly and produce work of which they are proud. They have produced some excellent publications called 'Teen Help Guides', using templates, wizards and importing data and visual material from the Internet. These display the creativity of the students in their use of the technology. Students are also able to update websites, document them, as well as design spreadsheets and test them. The students are aware of the uses of ICT in the wider community and in the work place. Those students who follow the CISCO networking course have an outstanding knowledge of the engineering aspects of computing. Students are able to use ICT in all aspects of their work in the sixth form and have access to some very good facilities, which they treat with respect.

207. The quality of teaching is always good and often very good. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is excellent and some have joined the teaching profession from working with ICT in other occupational fields and this has brought a new dimension to the relevance of the subject in the eyes of the students. The teachers support and monitor the progress of the students carefully, raising their self-esteem and encouraging them to become critical thinkers. Teachers annotate and mark work in detail so those students know what they have to do to improve the quality of their work. The level of individual help for students is high but there are sometimes opportunities missed for collaborative and group discussions that would enhance the learning of all. There are times when the progress of students is held back because slow Internet access stops them from working as fast as they need.
208. Leadership of the department is excellent. The newly appointed head of faculty has a clear vision of how the ICT courses can be developed and is pragmatic in knowing how to move the subject forward. After a period of turbulence in staffing, a strong team ethos has been quickly established. Teachers are supported, courses are well organised and the continuing professional development, needed to ensure the department maintains its very good teaching standards and teachers' very good knowledge of the uses of ICT in commercial and industrial environments, has been identified.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The inspection covered the A-level courses offered by the school in physical education and the AVCE courses in leisure and recreation and in travel and tourism that were both recently included in the curriculum and first examined in 2002.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and involves a variety of approaches that sustain interest and motivate students well.
- Effective use is made of ICT to support learning and achievement.

Areas for improvement

- Reviewing the current arrangements for monitoring students' attainment and progress in Year 12.
- Implementing the existing plan to extend practical skills and reinforce theory work in Year 13.
- Consider offering all sixth-form students the opportunity of undertaking accredited courses as part of the enrichment programme.

209. A-level examination results have fluctuated in recent years. Results were good in 2002 and a substantial improvement on the previous year. In 2002, all six entrants passed and two achieved the highest grades. In comparison, results in 2001 were well below national averages as only half of those entered gained pass grades. Results in the AS-level examination in 2002 were satisfactory. Most students passed and they all equalled or exceeded their predicted grades which were based on their earlier performance in GCSE examinations. There was no significant difference between the performances of girls and boys.
210. Although standards of attainment among students in the present Year 13 are extremely variable, they are generally achieving well in relation to their prior attainment. Within this wide ability range, most students are producing work that is of a satisfactory standard, with a small number attaining at higher levels. Their practical ability, as seen through teachers' records and in lessons, shows that they possess a satisfactory range of skills in different activities. Several students are able to identify the main strengths and weaknesses of their own performance and that of others. Some have a good understanding of contemporary issues whilst others appear to lack self-confidence and have an uncertain recall of earlier work. They are more comfortable when looking at aspects such as the development of sport in the nineteenth century. Their understanding of energy systems is good. Year 12 students are progressing well in the early stages of the AS-level course. Motivation and attendance are good. Students in both groups are attentive and concentrate well in class.
211. Overall, the quality of teaching at AS- and A-level is good. In some lessons, it is very good. Planning is thorough, lesson objectives are made clear and teachers' subject expertise is good. The most effective teaching involves the perceptive use of questions and a good pace to lessons resulting in good learning. Teachers use a variety of different approaches to sustain interest and help to develop knowledge and understanding. They make very good use of ICT. For example, the interactive whiteboard is used very effectively to deliver PowerPoint presentations on historical aspects of sport and exercise physiology.
212. All sixth-form students have an opportunity to participate in physical education through the enrichment programme. During the inspection, girls took part in health-related fitness and netball whilst boys fielded two football teams who played against visiting opponents. Some students from Years 12 and 13 assist teachers in activities involving younger students, although there are no opportunities at present for sixth-form students to undertake any accredited coaching, umpiring or refereeing courses.
213. The teacher with particular responsibility for examination work in the sixth form only took over this role at the beginning of term. He has a clear determination to improve standards further. Timetabled provision for practical work has been restored. Schemes of work are in the process of being reviewed and revised. New textbooks have been provided to help develop students' understanding and independent study skills. There are plans to provide more tutorials for students as part of the monitoring process and to standardise marking in line with examination criteria. There is currently no permanent

base for teaching the theoretical elements of the syllabus making it more difficult for staff to organise work in the way that they would like.

Travel and tourism; Leisure and recreation

Overall, the quality of provision in leisure courses is **good**.

Strengths

- Examination results have been very good.
- The confidence and self-assurance of students are well developed.
- Course planning is good and the leisure-based courses are matched well to students' aptitudes and aspirations.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the standards of achievement, particularly in written work, of some students.
- Planning lessons to take account of the full range of learning needs.
- Devising and implementing strategies to deal with the gender imbalance of courses.
- Providing accommodation that is less cramped and more conducive to learning.

214. The new AVCE courses in leisure and recreation and travel and tourism were both first examined in June 2002, and results from two small groups of students were very good. All those completing the courses passed with good grades showing considerable value-added to their achievements at GCSE. Unit results for students who started in September 2001 indicate that high standards are being maintained.
215. The achievement of students in the second year of their course is good. They are independent and mature. They are able to take responsibility for their own learning and welcome the greater freedom that they have to work out how they are going to undertake assignments. They work well together and are responsive to the promptings and advice of their teachers. Second year students showed excellent telephone skills and understood the importance of good product knowledge. First year students have yet to develop these skills but they are encouraged to build on work that they have done for GCSE and their experiences of leisure industries. Overall, the standard of their work is satisfactory. They are able to understand the relative merits of large- and small-scale production, but some appear immature tending to jump to conclusions rather than making more considered responses. Some of the work seen, especially written, was of a low standard.
216. Teaching is good. Advanced courses are very well planned and students are provided with a wide range of different tasks, all of which have a very clear vocational context. Preparation for both external tests and coursework is very thorough and students benefit from vocational experiences of their teachers, all of whom have worked outside teaching. Teachers are enthusiastic and very supportive of their students. Insufficient attention is paid to the learning needs of individual students and individual lesson plans failed to make reference to the different needs of students supported by a learning assistant. Strategies need to be developed to involve more students, not just those who are more articulate or vocal.
217. Management and leadership of these courses are good. The head of faculty communicates an infectious enthusiasm for the success and contribution to the curriculum made by vocational subjects. He and his colleagues are developing a good range of links with outside organisations, and an annual educational visit to Euro-Disney with Croydon College is looked forward to by staff and students alike. Almost all the

students who take travel courses are female. This gender imbalance is reversed on leisure and recreation courses. This may reflect likely employment patterns but the faculty is considering strategies to achieve more teaching to more balanced groups. Accommodation is cramped and inadequate.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection covered the A-level courses offered by the school in art, music, music technology and drama. Music technology was included in the curriculum for the first time in September 2002. A multi-media provision for art is available for the large numbers of post-16 students who study art.

Media studies was also sampled. The provision is very good. Teachers have impressive subject knowledge and they challenge and support their students well. Consequently achievement is very good and standards are above average.

Art

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

Strengths

- Examination results are good.
- The curriculum is well planned and makes good use of the expertise of the different teachers in the department to provide a rich variety of experiences for students.
- Students respond positively to their teachers and to each other which helps them make very good progress.
- Self-directed art studies outside the normal timetable supplement the limited amount of curriculum time.
- The excellent displays of sixth-form artwork in all areas of the school.
- The excellent contribution made to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Area for improvement

- Decoration of the entire art area and renovation of furniture in all studios.

218. In 2002, GCE AS-level results were good with a high proportion gaining A-B grades and all others passing. Similarly, all entrants for A-level art gained A-E grades but the proportion gaining the higher grades, was slightly lower. In 2001, A-level results were in line with national averages.

219. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average and reflected the good achievement of students. The observational drawings made by Year 13 students working on a landscape project were of high quality as they visually reiterated a visit they had made to an urban area near the Millennium Dome. Their drawings were influenced by their earlier introduction to the work of contemporary artist Andy Goldsworthy. Their individual sketchbooks were full of imaginative ideas and the photographs of dereliction, rubbish, abandoned shopping trolleys and graffiti they had taken to support their study. Their contextual studies were in early exploratory stages. The observational drawings of portraits produced in charcoal by Year 12 students were also of high quality and reflected their understanding of distortion. Students in both years are making very good progress.

220. Teachers require art students to take responsibility for their own work and encourage them to work creatively and imaginatively. The quality of teaching is very good and students are actively encouraged to work from first-hand experiences. Learning objectives are made clear and targets based on individual attainments are effectively communicated to the students. The variety of expertise of the different teachers in the department is used very effectively to provide a rich and diverse curriculum. For example, Year 12 students used black and white photographs that they had taken and developed themselves to support their painting in Pointillist style of self-portraits. Teachers are imaginative in their choice of resources. For example, to enhance their understanding of flesh tones, students were required to paint a huge magnification of a slice of bacon.
221. The department is managed well and led effectively. Resources are adequate but the accommodation is unsatisfactory as the studios are in need of decoration and refurbishment. There is a good provision for extra-curricular art. Teachers give their time generously to support students at lunchtimes and after school to compensate for the minimal timetabled time of four hours per week. Students are encouraged to work from direct observation during the weekly life drawing classes, organised for after school. These classes also attract students from neighbouring schools. The art department also receives day-release students, who spent a whole day each week in the art studios for their AS-level art studies, thus enlarging the social mix among the intake of students. Students are well motivated and have developed capacity for personal study.
222. A vital contribution to students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is made in all art lessons. Artists and art movements from a range of historical periods and cultural diversity are used. Students are encouraged to look at different cultures, for example Aboriginal and American, and they feel spiritually fulfilled by making drawings and paintings and by studying aspects of moral and spiritual matters, for example forms of worship in Egyptian tomb preparations. They are made aware of social and moral issues by discussion and by making visual interpretations through drawings and photographs, for example of environmentally challenged urban areas and their affect on the people who live there.

Music and music technology

Overall, the quality of provision for music and music technology is **very good**.

Strengths:

- Teachers have very good subject expertise; they motivate students well through their confidence and enthusiasm.
- Teachers strike an effective balance between providing challenge and appropriate encouragement and support.

Areas for improvement:

- Increasing the perceptiveness of students' listening.

223. Over three years, the number of students entered for GCE A-level and AS-level courses has been very small. However, the number of students opting for these courses is growing and the recent results, in 2001 and 2002, have been above the national average with all students successfully gaining pass grades and a few gaining the highest grades. The newly introduced AS-level music technology course is proving popular with students. In the one music technology lesson seen, the teaching very effectively motivated the students, who were engaged and totally absorbed in the lesson. Current

standards are above average. Students show confidence and a high level of ability as performers and in creating, recording and editing their own music. Their playing and singing are also of a high standard. A-level students are introduced to a very varied repertoire of music. Their compositions show evidence of their study of composers such as Haydn, Wagner and Debussy and reflect their desire to apply their knowledge in new situations.

224. Students demonstrated that their aural perception is well developed in an AS-level lesson where they identified ways in which the composer of the 'Apollo 13' film score had used forces, texture and instrumentation to create an atmosphere of tension. Their ability to respond accurately in tasks which require them to write down a melodic line after several hearings is less well developed. Teachers support students well, helping them to devise strategies which will help to improve the perceptiveness of their listening.
225. Teaching is very good overall, and ranges from good to excellent. The high quality of the teaching motivates students and enables them to achieve well. Teachers expect students to use musical vocabulary and model this well themselves. There are good examples of teachers working alongside students in lessons. Teachers strike an effective balance between challenging the students and providing them with appropriate encouragement and support. For example, when teaching the use of unfamiliar studio equipment, they explain sound theory using simple scientific terminology and make the implications for music recording clear. They then give the students freedom to explore the capabilities of the equipment. Questioning is often good with teachers building well on students' responses and challenging them to extend and justify their answers. Students made clear progress in all the lessons seen. They responded to the teaching, persevering and improving their ability to tackle the tasks.
226. There is very good involvement of sixth-form students in the musical life of the school. They are good role models, working with younger students in choirs and instrumental ensembles, conducting, arranging music and accompanying. There are very good opportunities for students to be involved in a wide range of musical opportunities including a variety of ensembles and regular major productions, the most recent being 'My Fair Lady'. The participation of A-level students in these activities adds significantly to their achievement.
227. The department is very well managed. It is a strength of the department that the three specialist teachers work very effectively together, both in the classroom and through their regular, weekly meetings. There is a strong focus on how teaching and learning can be improved. The department has good, up-to-date resources for teaching A-level music and music technology. There is a need for soundproofing to prevent disturbance from instrumental lessons and to enable students to rehearse without distraction.

DRAMA

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above national expectations.
- Students achieve very well.
- Students show exceptional enthusiasm, industry and commitment.
- The range of extra-curricular opportunities is very wide and students take advantage of them to improve their performing skills.
- Leadership and management offer clear educational direction and vision.

Areas for improvement

- Introducing a technical option within the course.
- Implementing regular health and safety checks in all areas.

228. Standards attained at A-level over the past three years are well above national expectations, as are those at AS-level since it was introduced. Unvalidated results for 2002 show an identical picture. Many students do better in drama than they do in their other sixth-form subjects. All achieve well and most continue their study of the subject into Year 13.
229. Standards of work seen are above average, though students have only recently started their courses. Half of Year 12 is new to the school and they are working co-operatively and integrating well, but a few are not yet good listeners. Year 13 students' portfolios are carefully prepared and contain thorough investigations into a wide range of dramatic forms, styles and genres. There is also detailed research into historical and social contexts, writers, directors, theatrical conventions and concepts. Individual performance work shows a good awareness of acting styles and techniques, and their impact on an audience, and is of high quality. Ensemble work is also very good because students know that they can trust and rely on each other. Students are creative and self-critical; they evaluate their work effectively, challenge, support and learn from each other and are constantly looking for ways to improve. Overall, students in both years are achieving very well.
230. Teaching is very good. Students are motivated well by their teachers whose impressive subject knowledge, clear lesson planning, excellent modelling of techniques, useful assessment advice and awareness of individual needs ensure that all achieve well. There are opportunities in all lessons for students to develop their acting, directing and evaluative skills and to become confident and creative performers and independent, critical thinkers. This was particularly evident in two Year 13 lessons in which students, under the expert guidance of teachers, devised sketches to demonstrate their understanding of the drama of the absurd genre whilst at the same time conveying important social warnings, such as our obsession with time and our neglect of the planet.
231. Because teaching is very good, so too is learning. Learning is also considerably enhanced by a curriculum which goes well beyond the AS- and A2-level syllabuses. Students frequently discuss and present spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues through studying a range of challenging playwrights and practitioners, such as Brecht, Pinter and Stanislavski. They are able to develop independently through exploring their own choices of coursework texts and using the Internet for research. There is also an outstanding programme of activities which affords frequent opportunities for students to perform in, and direct, school plays and reviews, see, and work with, professional actors in workshops and visit London theatres. There is, however, no module of planned work which deals specifically with the technical side of drama; furthermore, the curriculum time now allocated to the subject is less than in most schools and could well have an impact on future standards in this practical subject.
232. The leadership and management of drama are very good. The department is enthusiastically and imaginatively led and the commitment and hard work of this small team, which includes two newly qualified teachers, are most impressive. Induction procedures for new staff are excellent and best practice and planning are constantly discussed and shared. However, some potential hazards in teaching rooms, such as unchained lanterns and trailing cables, indicate that the school's risk assessments and health and safety procedures are not adequate.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on the A-level courses in geography and history. The school does not offer religious education in the sixth form. It does, however, offer sociology and has recently introduced AS-level courses in law and psychology. Examination results in each of these subjects have been in line with national averages.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching produces good examination results.
- Very positive attitudes of students result in very good achievement.
- Students and teachers make very good use of ICT.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing opportunities in lessons for students to develop and explain their own ideas in depth.

233. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Examination results at A-level and, over the last two years at AS-level, have improved significantly. Results in GCE examinations were well above national averages in 2001 and better still in 2002. In 2001, all A-level students passed and over a third gained an A or B grade. In 2002, all students passed and almost half gained an A-B grade. The average point score of students was also significantly higher than the national figures. Overall, in relation to their GCSE results, students did much better than expected at A-level. Results in the AS-level examination at the end of the first year of the course in 2001 were below the national average and lower than expected for some students. Results in the 2002 AS-level examination results were good and represented a considerable improvement compared with those of the previous year. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls.
234. In work seen during the inspection, students' attainment was above the national average. Students in Years 12 and 13 achieve very well. They have developed a good understanding of the causes and consequences of migration in both less and more economically developed countries. In a very good Year 12 lesson, students responded well to the teachers' challenging questioning and demonstrated their knowledge of how contrasting population pyramids illustrated different dependency ratios. In a Year 13 lesson, students asked perceptive questions about coastal processes following a recent fieldwork visit to Cliff End which had stimulated their interest in the topic. Students use specialist subject vocabulary with accuracy and show a good understanding of more complex geographical concepts. For example, in a very good Year 13 lesson, students could define and differentiate between cultural and biological carrying capacity. In lessons seen during the inspection, students had few opportunities to develop and explain their ideas in depth. This is an area for development. Students make good use of ICT for researching geographical issues, for analysing coursework data and for communicating with teachers via e-mail.
235. Students' attitudes towards geography are very good. Students respond well to the challenging, fast-paced lessons and are totally focused on their work. Students work very well in pairs and small groups. In a very good Year 13 lesson, students worked co-

operatively to evaluate data rapidly and reach logical conclusions about the relative success of ecotourism in selected countries.

236. The standard of sixth-form teaching is very good. It is never less than good and mostly very good. This is a strength of the department. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly with clear objectives. They make very good use of ICT to produce varied, high quality resources, which enliven lessons and capture students' interest. In lessons seen during the inspection, teachers made extensive use of interactive whiteboards and resources projected from laptop computers. The use of ICT by both students and teachers is a strength of the department. Teachers have high expectations of lower, middle and higher attaining students. The provision for a student with a specific learning difficulty was particularly good as it was sharply focused on the student's individual needs.
237. The leadership and management of the department are good and have contributed to an improvement in standards during a period of significant staff changes. Sixth-form teachers in the department are very committed and collaborate effectively to ensure that the standard of teaching is very high. Teachers share good practice and the quality of learning and teaching is monitored effectively.

History

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

Strengths:

- The most recent results in A-level history broadly match the national figures and most students show good achievement in relation to their previous attainment.
- Students and teachers use ICT well to enhance teaching and learning.
- Teaching is very good overall. Teachers plan very well, they have secure subject knowledge and use a variety of very effective teaching strategies.

Areas for improvement:

- Ensuring all students participate in debates and discussions.
- Supporting students to organise their work to make learning easier.

238. At the time of the last inspection in 1997, only four students sat A-level; they all passed but none was awarded a top grade. Since then, standards in history have improved and the subject has become more popular as a choice at post-16. Standards at A-level in 2002 broadly match the provisional national results across grades A-E and all the candidates passed. Students who achieved A-C grades achieved well in relation to their prior attainment, the achievement of others was satisfactory. Students' performance in GCE over the last three years has fluctuated considerably as against a steadily rising trend in terms of national results. Observations of lessons and scrutiny of work confirm that standards are broadly in line with the national average and that students' achievement is good. In Year 12, standards are in line with what would be expected at this very early stage of the AS-level course.
239. During lessons, students carefully analyse historical sources about the October Revolution and Stalin's purges within units on Russian history. In Year 13 their skills are carefully honed and they reach conclusions that are substantiated. They make use of mark schemes provided by the teacher to understand the expectations of the examining board. In Year 12, some of the lower ability students are writing descriptively rather than analytically and their contributions to discussions are limited in number and depth. These students respond to the question 'why was Russia so difficult to govern before

1917?' with descriptions of the landmass, the peasantry and the poor communication system. Analysing and prioritising factors are challenging for these students, but not so for the higher and middle attainers. In debates, most students are developing, to a good standard, the skills needed to marshal arguments and defend their points of view. On some occasions, a few students did not contribute to discussions and so lost out on important learning experiences.

240. Students work well together and make use of PowerPoint to present their arguments in debate. This helps them develop confidence and presentation skills. Students make further use of ICT when writing their essays. Some of the students' folders are not well organised and this does not help them become effective learners.
241. Students learn well in their sixth-form history course. They make good progress in their thinking about historical controversies and in their writing. The very good teaching helps students learn. Careful planning of lessons that include activities that are progressively challenging; setting high expectations in terms of personal organisation; encouraging use of the school's learning centre and very helpful marking all combine to support students in their learning. Students make rapid progress in their knowledge of Soviet history and in their analytical and communication skills. They develop understanding of why there are disagreements amongst historians. They study the nature of these arguments as in Year 13 when students investigated the various interpretations of Stalin's motives for the vicious and cruel purges undertaken during the 1930s.
242. Teaching is good overall and often it is very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is so secure that they can guide students' learning with assurance as to what is expected. Spider diagrams are used to good effect by some teachers, debates are carefully structured and teachers ensure that tasks and instructions are clear and help students make progress. No activity lasts too long and the pace of lessons is brisk. The rapport between teachers and students is extremely positive and underpins the commitment of the students to their work. They know they are being taught well and respond accordingly.
243. Management of the department is effective and it is led well. Resources are used efficiently and there is a strong, common commitment to creative use of ICT, providing, for example, the facility for students to e-mail their work to teachers for marking and feedback.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection focused on the A-level course in English literature. The school does offer French which is studied by a small number of students in the sixth form at AS- and A-levels. Over the last two years, examination results in French have been below national averages.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above the national average for grades A-E.
- Students have positive attitudes to the subject and each other.
- Teachers have high expectations of all students which leads to high achievement, particularly of boys.

Areas for improvement

- Increasing the number of students attaining the highest GCE grades.
- Students' critical and analytical skills.

244. Standards in both AS- and A-level examinations have been well above the national average for the past three years. Unvalidated data for 2002 shows an improvement over the 2001 results and confirms a rising trend. However, the percentage of students gaining the higher grades is below the national average. Students' achievement, particularly that of the small number of boys who take the subject, is very good.
245. The standard of students' work seen is above average. Year 12 students readily discuss their texts in small and whole class groups, sometimes showing original and perceptive insights into character and themes. Year 13 students are confident in discussions, plan their work carefully and produce writing which is individual and thorough. The highest attaining students have a mature vocabulary and show particularly good skills when comparing their own choices of texts. Those who do not reach such high standards usually show a good understanding of the books they are studying and can respond personally to them, particularly to characters. However, instead of being analytical and evaluative, their writing is sometimes in an inappropriate narrative style. Additionally, some paraphrase rather than analyse writers' language, and do not always consider its effect on the audience or readers. This is because they tend to think and write about plot and characters in plays and novels as if they are real events and people, forgetting that they are literary constructs.
246. Teaching is good overall, and some of it is very good. Teachers have high expectations of all students and have a very good working relationship with them. They often set interesting and challenging tasks and, in their marking, usually give clear advice on how writing can be improved. In the best lessons, students have the opportunity to consider a range of social and moral themes and to link them with their other A-level subjects, such as music, art, history and drama, and to understand the historical contexts of the works being studied. A good example of this was seen in a Year 13 lesson in which students considering female perspectives on the Great War were also listening to contemporary songs whilst looking at photographs of soldiers and war. However, in a few lessons, teaching is too teacher directed and students are not given sufficient choice in their approaches; consequently, because they rely too much on their teachers, they are slow to develop their independence and confidence.
247. Because teaching is good, so too is learning. Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive and they help and support each other well but not all are regularly punctual. They are encouraged to use computers, both for writing and research, and there are many extra-curricular activities, such as theatre visits, which enrich their learning opportunities.
248. The leadership and management in English are good. Although a relatively inexperienced department, all teachers are truly committed to sharing their love of the subject with students. Lessons are planned conscientiously, resources are good and communication is excellent. The teamwork engendered in the department is the key to the very successful induction of new staff and enables best practice to be regularly shared and, because of paired teaching groups, the quality of teaching and learning is well monitored. Although it has been a department in transition in the past few years, it is now staffed with specialists, results continue to improve and morale is high.