

INSPECTION REPORT

MARIA FIDELIS RC CONVENT SCHOOL

Camden

LEA area: Camden

Unique reference number: 100055

Headteacher: Mrs Maria Williams

Reporting inspector: Michael Merchant
27368

Dates of inspection: 23 - 27 September 2002

Inspection number: 251313

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Girls
School address:	34 Phoenix Road LONDON
Postcode:	NW11TA
Telephone number:	020 7387 3856
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Walsh
Date of previous inspection:	November 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
27368	M Merchant	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>How high are standards?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9214	Janet Garland	Lay inspector		<p>How high are standards?</p> <p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
20243	David Benstock	Team inspector	Science	
15051	Lynne Kauffman	Team inspector	Design and technology Inclusion	
7926	James Bowden	Team inspector	Physical education Sociology Special educational needs	
6044	Roger Perkins	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	English as an additional language	
31690	Bridget Smith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

1990	Graham Preston	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Business education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
8090	Frank Turns	Team inspector	Art	
22849	Ronald Catlow	Team inspector	Geography	
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	History Citizenship	
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English	
23308	John Morrell	Team inspector	Music	
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Health and social care	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Maria Fidelis RC Convent School is an average sized comprehensive school of 895 girls aged 11 to 18. Although situated in the inner city London Borough of Camden, the school draws pupils from 14 other London Boroughs. It is broadly similar in size as at the last inspection in 1996. A very large number of pupils (275) are from minority ethnic groups. A very high number of pupils (395) have English as an additional language and 115 are in the early stages of language acquisition. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs register, including those who have statements of special needs, is above average. The majority needs help with emotional, behavioural, dyslexia and moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils qualifying for free school meals is above average. The profile of pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average and the number of pupils who enter and leave the school other than at the beginning and the end of the school year is very high. The school is involved in Camden "Excellence in Cities", an initiative designed to help raise standards. The school has experienced severe difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers over the last two years (28 teachers have left the school and 30 have joined) and uses a large number (10) of temporary staff.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Maria Fidelis provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. It is a school with many strengths but also significant areas for improvement. The strong leadership by the headteacher promotes a clear shared ethos which sustains good pupil progress. The cost of running this school is higher than most schools across the country. This coupled with average standards of attainment, satisfactory teaching and good progress, means that the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- **Standards:** pupils achieve well from Year 7 to Year 11 and attain very well compared to schools in similar circumstances. Girls attain particularly high standards in art and design.
- **Teaching and learning:** well-focused teaching in English, art and design and modern languages is promoting enthusiastic and well-motivated pupils. In these subjects, teaching ensures very effective learning at a productive rate, leading to above average achievement.
- **Leadership:** under the head teacher's strong leadership, there is a real and shared commitment to the school's Catholic ethos and to school improvement.
- **Care:** the school cares well for its pupils. Attitudes are positive. Pupils' spiritual and moral development is very good.

What could be improved

- **Standards:** the progress of higher attaining girls.
- **Teaching and learning:** a better match between teaching and the needs of all pupils, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- **Assessment:** the use of assessment and other information to plan the next steps in learning and to identify pupils who are in danger of underachieving.
- **Staffing:** too high a turnover of teachers and too many staff teaching outside their specialism.
- **Accommodation and resources:** facilities for teaching, especially for physical education, dance, drama, science, ICT and design technology. The library in the upper school and learning resources in all subjects.
- **Curriculum:** statutory requirements for the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT). The breadth of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11.
- **Attendance:** which is below the national average.
- **Links with parents:** the partnership between the school and home.

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 November 1996 and has made satisfactory improvement since then. The previous report highlighted six major issues for improvement, five of which have been wholly resolved. School development planning is now effective and is fully integrated with financial planning. Funds allocated to pupils with special needs are spent appropriately, there is now a clear policy for health and safety and the

governors play a greater role in monitoring the development of the school. However, the requirements of the National Curriculum in relation to information and computer technology (ICT) and design technology, have still not been met. There is now far more good, very good and excellent teaching and a smaller proportion of teaching that is unsatisfactory. Leadership and management continue to be satisfactory and the head teacher is providing good leadership.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and by sixth form pupils at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-Level/AS-Level examinations. At the time of the inspection the data to compare the schools' results in 2002 with other schools in the country was not available and so the 2001 results are used.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2002	2001	
GCSE examinations	C	C	C	A
A-levels/AS-levels	n.a.	E	E	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The grading for similar schools based on the 2002 results is likely to be well above average.

Year 9 results in national test in 2001 were average in English, below average in mathematics and well below average in science. Taking all three core subjects together attainment was below average but is improving at a pace similar to that of other schools in the country. Standards have improved in mathematics and science but have remained broadly the same in English over the past four years. There was little difference in the attainment of girls from different ethnic backgrounds. In relation to their attainment when they enter the school pupils make satisfactory progress over time and achieve well in English. Compared with pupils in similar schools attainment in English is well above average: it is average in mathematics and below average in science.

GCSEs: in 2001, 96 per cent of pupils gained at least one grade in the A* - G range (average compared to all schools); 93 per cent gained five or more A* -G grades (above average) and 41 per cent of pupils gained five or more A* - C grades (below average compared to all schools). In 2002, 45 per cent of pupils attained grades A* - C. These results show a trend below the average for all schools nationally and the school did not meet its GCSE targets in 2001 and 2002. In 2001, results in art and design and music were above average and in English language, history, home economics they were broadly average compared to similar schools. In drama, design technology French and Spanish, results were below average and in science, English literature, geography, mathematics and sociology they were well below average. Pupils gained better grades in Spanish, art and design, French, English Language and home economics, than they did in most of their other subjects. In relation to what pupils knew, understood and could do when they entered the school, most, including those with a special need and English as an additional language, made good progress from Year 7 to 11 and achieved well.

Standards seen: work seen during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 is above average in art and design, average in English, design technology, history and modern foreign languages. In mathematics, science, geography and music, standards are below average and in ICT and physical education they are well below average. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are well above average in art and design, above average in design technology, average in English, geography, French, history and Spanish. Physical education standards remain well below that expected and are below average in mathematics, science, ICT and music.

Achievement: the school does well for its pupils and they achieve well. The vast majority of pupils, of all ethnic groups, make good progress from Years 7 to 11, although they make only satisfactory progress from Years 7 to 9. Compared to pupils in similar schools, pupils at Maria Fidelis achieve very well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
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Attitudes to the school	Good: the majority of pupils respect their teachers and appreciate the importance of working hard to attain good grades at GCSE. Their good attitude to learning is demonstrated by the way that they arrive early at lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory: pupils behave very well around the school and in the majority of lessons, where good relationships are established. Poor behaviour is not well managed in a significant minority of lessons, especially Year 9.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory: most pupils develop a mature attitude as they move through the school. The school places strong emphasis on fostering the general personal development of its pupils but many lack confidence in taking responsibility for their own learning and working independently.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory: although below the national average, through the recent efforts of the school, the attendance rate is improving.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	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, and therefore of learning, has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory throughout the school. The proportion of very good teaching is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 and is reflected in the quality of learning. Teaching is particularly effective in art and design, design technology, English modern foreign languages and physical education. The less than satisfactory teaching was seen in art and design, geography, history, ICT, music and science. In nearly all these lessons, unsatisfactory teaching was carried out by temporary staff. The school meets the needs of all its pupils well. Teaching of literacy skills across the range of subjects is good overall, while the teaching of numeracy is satisfactory.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory: the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is too narrow and there are too few vocational courses. The school does not meet the National Curriculum statutory requirements in ICT for all students in Years 10 and 11 and for ICT across the curriculum and for aspects of design and technology.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory: good provision where pupils receive special support. The pupil support centre supports pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties well. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is inconsistent in many subjects.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory: there is effective individual support for pupils but provision is inconsistent across subjects because the school does not have up-to-date information on the large number of pupils with English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: the school makes very good provision for students' spiritual and moral development and good provision for social development. Provision for their cultural development is satisfactory.

How well the school cares for its pupils	Good: arrangements for child protection and health and safety are satisfactory and pastoral care is good . Procedures for promoting attendance are unsatisfactory The behaviour policy does not support less experienced teachers well. Bullying and very rare incidents of racist comment are taken seriously. The school provides a safe and harmonious place. Assessment information is not used well to plan work.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The effective leadership provided by the headteacher ensures that this is a school with a real common shared sense of purpose. As a result, pupils make good progress and standards are rising.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory: although the chair and key governors largely understand the school's strengths and priorities for improvement, important statutory requirements are not fulfilled.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory: The school evaluates its examination and test results and senior management monitors teaching regularly. There are inconsistencies in how subject leaders evaluate the performance of their departments.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: the school applies the principles of best value satisfactorily.

Resources are satisfactory and accommodation is poor. Staffing, due to a high turnover, is unsatisfactory. The school's partnership with its parents is unsatisfactory.

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 school's Catholic ethos. Their daughters like school. The school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. The school and staff are approachable if problems arise. Pupils who present difficulties are helped to continue at school instead of being excluded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are not sure about many aspects of the school. They are not kept well enough informed about progress. They would like more reporting during the year. There are not enough activities outside lessons. The amount of work to do at home is too variable. School does not work closely enough with parents.

Inspectors' judgements are that the school needs to improve the frequency and quality of its communication with parents, some of whom live some way from the school and so find it difficult to have day-to-day contact.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The school was inspected by 14 inspectors led by Michael Merchant. This summary report focuses on subjects and aspects of the sixth form. The full report is available from the school. The sixth form of this average size school now numbers 190 students, mostly drawn from the main school. The school's involvement in a local sixth form consortium has increased the number of students with a fifth now coming from other local schools. The sixth form sustains the school tradition of providing a Roman Catholic provision to pupils in an area of London that includes a very mixed population, including families from various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form sustains the strong Catholic ethos and provides a supportive learning environment. Particular subjects that are strong include art and design, graphics and sociology while satisfactory provision is made elsewhere. Teaching is a major strength in almost all of the subjects enabling most students to achieve well in relation to their qualifications on entry to the sixth form. However, student absence is higher than average and a number of students do not complete their courses, in part because they are following inappropriate courses. The significant increase in the popularity of the sixth form has broadened its curriculum and combined with the raised student attainment has ensured that it provides an improving and cost effective provision although too many students fail to complete the course they have enrolled on.

The main strengths and the areas that could be improved in the sixth form are:

Strengths

- **Standards:** improved and most students who complete their courses achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- **Teaching:** good overall and good and excellent in a third of lessons observed.
- **Leadership:** the more recently appointed head of the sixth form provides clear and positive direction for further improvement.
- **Curriculum:** the increase in the sixth form size and its participation in a local sixth form consortium have enabled it to provide a wider range of courses.

What could be improved

- **Attendance:** unsatisfactory with insecure procedures for tracking attendance.
- **Guidance:** weak match of some students to their courses.
- **Monitoring:** the system of inducting students and monitoring their progress and setting them examination targets.
- **Resources and accommodation:** insufficient study space and inadequate teaching rooms and not enough textbooks.

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
English	Good: teachers know their subject very well and use their expertise and experience effectively to raise standards.
Mathematics	Satisfactory: teaching is good but standards are below average because students have difficulty in meeting the required levels and a number are

	unable to complete the studies.
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Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Physics	Satisfactory: well planned and secure teaching is helping students make satisfactory progress in their studies.
Design Technology	Satisfactory: very good teaching by the new subject leader is now helping students improve though lack of resources, including access to ICT, inhibits overall student progress.
Business studies	Satisfactory: well informed teaching and good subject leadership is helping raise standards though students are not always well matched to the demands of the Advanced level courses.
Sociology	Good: the good teaching and learning results in students making good progress in lessons.
History	Good : the very good, well-informed teaching enables the students to make progress though some new to the subject struggle to cope with the demands of the course.
Health and social care	Satisfactory: good teaching and effective use of outside links help most students make progress though some of the Advanced level students have difficulty in reaching the required standards.
Art	Very Good: the excellent teaching and learning together with the committed and inspiring subject leadership enables students to achieve very high standards over a number of years.

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

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Satisfactory: the guidance students receive before entry is variable and results in some students making inappropriate course choices. Students benefit from positive help and support in most of their lessons though the school has not developed a shared and coherent system of tracking their overall progress and setting them challenging examination targets. In this respect, the role of the sixth form tutor has yet to be established.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Good: the positive leadership by the recently appointed Assistant Head is improving standards. There is a clear strategy for addressing those areas in need of development and of promoting a sixth form which is open to all.

Inspectors make overall judgements of the effectiveness of leadership and management in the range: outstanding, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, very weak.

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 good teaching in subjects. The help and support in most lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careers and course information before entry to the sixth form. Information about their overall progress in the sixth form.

Most students, including the fifth coming from other schools and colleges, like the teaching and support though the inspection confirmed their concerns about careers guidance and information about overall progress.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. **Attainment** refers to the standards that pupils achieve compared to national averages. Standards are also compared to results obtained in similar schools, that is those with a similar entitlement of free school meals. **Achievement** refers to the progress that pupils make in terms of where they started when they entered the school, or when they started their GCSE courses. Thus good achievement means that pupils do well and make better than expected progress. It does not necessarily mean that standards are above average.
2. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment as measured by the average points scored in tests taken at the age of 11 and so prior attainment is below average. Very high numbers of pupils begin their education at Maria Fidelis mid way through the school year. This, together with the high numbers of pupils with special education needs and the very high number whose first language is other than English, presents very real challenges to the school.
3. **End of Year 9:** Pupils are expected to reach at least National Curriculum Level 5 in English, mathematics and science in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9. Level 6 and above are referred to as "higher levels". In 2001, the national percentage of pupils reaching Level 5 and above (with Level 6 and above shown in brackets) was 82 per cent (44 per cent) in English, 70 per cent (35 per cent) in mathematics and 78 per cent (26 per cent) in science. Average points scores are also calculated. Level 5 is worth 33 points. A pupil achieving Level 5 in all three subjects would therefore have an average points score of 33, which was also the national average points score in 2001. At the time of the inspection, national comparisons for the test taken in 2002 were not available.
4. The overall trend over the last five years has been broadly similar to the rate of improvement of all other secondary schools in the country. Attainment is better in English because skillful teaching in Years 7 to 9 gives pupils the skills they need to be successful in the national tests. Attainment in science is held back by the below average literacy skills they have when they enter school and by the interruption to learning experienced by many pupils because they enter and leave the school other than at the usual times of year. However, pupils make satisfactory progress in all three core subjects overall because of the careful attention given by teachers to the wide range of needs of individual pupils. There is little difference between the percentage of differing ethnic groups reaching the expected levels because the school has worked hard to devise ways ensuring no group of pupils is disadvantaged.
5. It is important to note the below average standards that pupils have when they arrive at Maria Fidelis. A comparison of pupils' average points score at the end of primary school with results they attained at the end of Year 9 shows that progress in English is good and in mathematics it is satisfactory. However, pupils make unsatisfactory progress in science. Taking all three core subjects together, their achievement is satisfactory. Over three years, the school is therefore teaching the pupils the knowledge, understanding and skills than might be expected. Pupils with special needs and those with English as an additional language do as well as expected because of the overall satisfactory support they receive in class. The faster rate of progress pupils in English is because of the effective teaching, which is well directed at enabling girls to acquire confidently and quickly the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the national tests at age 14.

Standards seen in other subjects during the inspection in Years 7 to 9 are:

Above average	Art and design
Average	Design and technology, history, modern foreign languages.
Below average	Geography, music
Well below average	ICT, physical education

Progress and achievement in subjects in Years 7 to 9 are:

Very good	Art and design
Good	History, modern foreign languages
As expected	Design technology, geography

Below expected	ICT, music, physical education
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6. Good teaching is the norm in art and design where pupils attain well and make good progress. Similarly effective teaching that motivates and inspires pupils, leads to good progress over time in history and modern foreign languages. Standards in music are impeded by the absence of a head of department and in physical education the new subject leader is working hard to make up for lost time when the subject had no leader.
7. The school carefully monitors attainment by using the ethnic backgrounds of their families and those with English as an additional language. This analysis and direct observation of their work shows that the attainment and progress of these pupils is similar to that of other pupils at the school.
8. *End of Year 11: In 2001 nationally, 48 per cent of pupils attained five or more grades A* to C, 91 per cent attained five or more grades A* to G and 96 per cent attained one or more grades A* to G. The average total points score was 39 (calculated by 8 points for A*, 7 for A, etc). No national figures were available for 2002 at the time of the inspection.*

The table below summarises the attainment of pupils in the 2001 GCSE examinations compared to:

	All schools	Similar schools
Proportion attaining five or more grades A* - C	Below average	Well above average
Proportion attaining five or more grades A* - G	Above average	Well above average
Proportion attaining one or more grades A* - C	Average	Above average
Average points score	Average	Well above average

9. The school does well by its pupils, particularly in relation the attainment of pupils in similar schools. The school does particularly well to move pupils on from below average attainment at the end of Year 9 to standards that are close to those expected nationally by the end of Year 11. Teaching is more effective at motivating and moving on middle attaining pupils and less effective at challenging higher attaining pupils to give of their best. This explains why, although the average points score is above average, the proportion of girls gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C is below average.
10. These results are lower than in 2000 and reflect the difficulties the school has had at attracting and retaining specialist teaching staff. The proportion of pupils attaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C in 2002 is now close to that attained in 2000 because of more settled staffing in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
11. Difficulties in staffing and some weaknesses in the management of some subject areas meant that the school did not meet its quite reasonable targets of 55 per cent attaining five or GCSE grades at A* to C in 2001 and 50 per cent in 2002. Over time, the rate of improvement at the school, as measured by the proportion of pupils attaining these grades, is broadly in line with the rate of improvement of all schools nationally.
12. In English, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE A*-C in 2001 was average. Filipinos and pupils of African and Caribbean descent attained highly but white British and Irish girls underachieved because of the higher incidence of absenteeism amongst these two groups. Results in 2002 were an improvement over the previous year.
13. Results in mathematics are well below the national average, a decline from 2000 which were close to the national average, but those for GCSE mathematics in 2002 are close to those achieved in 2000. The subject is very effective at gearing teaching to the needs of middle attaining pupils and the proportion of girls gaining five or more GCSEs grades A* to G is above the national average. Teaching is less effective, however, at encouraging higher attaining pupils to achieve their best.
14. The situation in science is similar. In 2001, the percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* to C in double award combined science was well below the national average. However, with a new subject manager, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C has risen again in 2002.
15. Art and design was the only subject to attain above national averages at GCSE grades A* to C in 2001. Here, consistently effective teaching, a low turnover of staff and subject leadership that is sharp and clearly focussed on raising attainment, has contributed to this success.

16. The school analyses its results carefully to highlight any significant difference between ethnic groups, pupils with a special need and those whose first language is other than English. This analysis shows pupils in these groups attain equally well with the exception of some of some girls of white British origin, who under-attained in 2001. This was because a significant minority of girls in this group experienced behavioral difficulties and had a weak record of attendance.

Standards seen during the inspection in Years 10 and 11 are:

Well above average	Art and design
Above average	Design technology
Average	Geography, history, modern foreign languages
Below average	ICT, music
Well below average	Physical education

Progress and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are:

Very good	Art and design
Good	Design technology, ICT, modern foreign languages
As expected	Geography, history
Below expected	Music, physical education

17. It is of note that the two subjects in which pupils are underachieving are those that have experienced the greatest turbulence in terms of subject leadership and, in the case of music, the position is still not settled.
18. Pupils enter the school with well below average literacy skills. However, by the end of Year 9 and 11, they make good progress in reading, writing and communication skills across the curriculum. This is because pupils are encouraged to make good use of speaking and listening skills across the curriculum and most subjects provide a wide range of opportunities to develop good writing skills. Pupils' standards of numeracy in their work in subjects across the curriculum are below average because most departments are in the early stages of devising numeracy policies for their subject areas. For example, pupils' lack of spatial awareness in design and technology limits their perception of design drawings.
19. Standards for special educational needs pupils, those from an ethnic minority background plus those with English as a second language are similar to other pupils in the school. The school has worked hard to remove barriers to learning and so their progress mirrors that of their peers: they make sound progress in lessons and learn appropriately well across the full range of subjects. This is because teachers are provided with information on the pupils with a special need and this contributes to the ethos of care, support and inclusion of all in departments.
20. There are very large numbers of pupils in the school who have English as an additional language. At present it is about a third of the school population. From the school's figures, around 115 pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition. There is some uncertainty however regarding these numbers, as some data, particularly that being used by the department itself, are significantly out-of-date. The language needs of the EAL pupils have not been reassessed for some time and so their progress from one language stage to the next has not been recorded or particular areas for development identified and targets set. Although the pupils make at least satisfactory progress in their work, the lack of targets and the general lack of up-to-date information means that particular individuals may be at risk of underachievement or have particular weaknesses in one or more of the skills of the target language.

Sixth form

Overall, students make good progress and achieve well in the sixth form. Many begin their sixth form studies with modest attainment at GCSE.

Standards seen during the inspection in Years 12 and 13 are:

Above average	Art and design, English, sociology
Average	Business studies, health and social care, history,

Below average	Mathematics, physics, design technology
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Progress and achievement in Years 12 and 13 are:

Very good	Art and design
Good	Business studies, English, health and social care, history, sociology
As expected	Mathematics, physics, design technology

21. Through well-directed teaching that nearly always meets the needs of these young people, most attain grades at GCE AS and A level and at GNVQ that are in excess of those predicted for them.
22. Very good teaching which makes excellent use of the long three-hour lessons is the main reason for the very good progress students make in art and design. Inspiring teaching, which gives students with modest GCSE grades the confidence to learn, is a strong feature of most English, health and social care, history, mathematics, sociology lessons and so students achieve well. In business studies, changes to the leadership and management of the subject are having a very positive effect on standards attained.
23. Very limited resources, particularly of ICT, inadequate accommodation for personal study, and weakly developed systems for monitoring the progress of students are preventing even better progress being made in most of the subjects inspected in depth.
24. A severe lack of access to computers is holding back standards in physics, health and social care, history and sociology. In design technology, very good teaching now is starting to make up for weaker teaching in the past, which held back attainment. Teachers do not always make good use of the results of tests and examinations to help students move on in mathematics, physics, history and health and social care.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- Pupils' attitudes to school are **good**.
 - Behaviour is **satisfactory**.
 - Pupils' personal development and relationships are **satisfactory**.
 - Attendance is **unsatisfactory** and is below the national average.
25. Most girls are ambitious and articulate about the fact that they see their time in school as helping them to achieve their goals. They are clear about the school's expectations and the many different groups of pupils in school are enthusiastic about their studies.
 26. Attendance is an ongoing problem for the school and, despite several attempts at encouraging better levels, it remains unsatisfactory. It is well below the national average in the last published figures. The new management has launched new initiatives and procedures, which, in the first few weeks of the year, are starting to show improved results, with all classes over 90 per cent. There is no identifiable group of pupils whose attendance level is poor, though some pupils are habitual non-attenders. Work with individuals, particularly by the learning mentors, has sometimes seen improvements, including the provision of off site courses, but without a reasonable way of analysing figures with the aid of a computer, this area remains a problem.
 27. Unauthorised absences are also above the national average. Weaknesses in the form tutor system, made worst by the split site nature of the school, make it difficult for teachers to follow these up consistently. Some girls come late to school in the mornings; many travel long distances by public transport and are conscious of the need to be on time.
 28. Pupils are interested in the opportunities offered to them for involvement in the life of the school, although these are limited. Older pupils feel a responsibility to support younger ones, and several new Year 7 pupils spoke positively about the contact they had had with older girls when journeying to and from school, which gave them confidence. Pupils respond positively to initiatives such as the Samaritans by which a few older girls provide a listening ear for younger pupils in the school's new inclusion unit. Many pupils mentioned the sense of achievement they experienced in last year's whole school music and drama production which involved most pupils in the school and which was performed in a nearby prestigious theatre.

29. Behaviour in and around school is generally good and in most classes girls get on with their work and concentrate on what they are being taught. Nevertheless, some behaviour observed in Year 11, and particularly Year 9, lessons was unsatisfactory and this inhibited learning for the pupils in these classes. Behaviour in assemblies is very good and pupils show an appropriate respect for prayers and religious themes. Pupils behave well when travelling between the two sites and on their way home in public places. Although there are short-term exclusions for unacceptable behaviour, (83 in the last year) permanent exclusions are non-existent, and reflect the school's Catholic ethos of forgiveness and reconciliation. Many pupils come from areas and backgrounds where there is a high degree of social pressure and most pupils respond well to the school's behaviour management, including many of those who have experienced short-term exclusions. There are two groups of pupils who can be identified in the short term exclusions, white 'other' pupils and those from Black or Black British African descent. The groups broadly correspond to the proportion of these ethnic groups in school. There are two groups of pupils who are over-represented in the figures for short-term exclusions: white "other" pupils and those from Black or Black British African descent. Because the school does not monitor pupil exclusion by ethnic background it has taken insufficient action to determine the reasons for this pattern. Pupils in the lower school sit in companionable circles at lunch and break-times; they chat or help each other with their work. The idea of the "circle of friends" has been a focus for personal development and support for their peers, and pupils show they understand the principle well.
30. Most pupils accept Christian values as part of the learning ethos and they recognise the need to act kindly to others. They can speak eloquently about their school and discuss its strengths with visitors. Pupils respond well to the personal development provided by many subject areas, such as art and design, design technology and English, where principles of co-operation and collaboration are emphasised. Pupils respect each other's contributions to lessons.
31. The atmosphere in the school is very positive and multicultural. Pupils, unprompted, praised racial harmony and the family feeling, which incorporates respect for beliefs and differences. They are adamant that bullying is not a problem in school and that differences are dealt with effectively, particularly by the inclusion unit (St Patrick's) where pupils can be directed if they are experiencing difficulties. Pupils with English as an additional language feel welcomed in school and are settled members of the society, and girls with special educational or behavioural needs usually respond to the support they are given.
32. Pupils take responsibility where it is offered, but the school does not make enough opportunities for this to be available to them. There is not enough done to involve pupils in their own academic progress, enabling them to know precisely how they are achieving and how to improve their work. Opportunities for self-reliance and independent working need to be improved.
33. There are strong relationships in the school, including those between pupils and staff. Girls speak well of their teachers. This appreciation extends to office and support staff; there is a shared ethos of respect for individuals. Many of these members of staff provide valuable informal support to pupils.

Sixth form

34. Sixth form attendance figures have also been unsatisfactory, but individual agreements and tighter monitoring, including the provision of attendance cards, although disliked by the pupils, is making some improvement. Most sixth form pupils intend to go on to higher education and have good attitudes to their work, gaining in confidence during their studies.
35. Sixth formers have satisfactory learning skills and opportunities for personal study and respond to encouragement to research topics independently. The sixth form is a companionable place where pupils, including those from different schools and some from different religions, mix well together. There is a cohesive spirit and several pupils want to be involved with a proposed mentoring project for younger girls.
36. The sixth form pupils' questionnaires indicate positive attitudes to school, that they feel they are taught well and encouraged to study. Many are critical about the quality of activities outside their subject and the advice and guidance provided by the school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- Teaching is **satisfactory** in all years.
 - Learning is **satisfactory** in all years.
37. The teaching profile has improved since the last inspection, leading to standards of achievement that have risen in line with those in other schools nationally. Inspectors observed 116 lessons in Years 7 to 11. Of these, teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in 89 per cent of lessons, good or better in 64 percent and very good or excellent in 20 per cent. Four lessons were outstanding and were seen in art and design, design and technology and dance. Unsatisfactory teaching was seen in art and design, geography, history, ICT, music and science. Temporary supply staff taught the great majority of these unsatisfactory lessons. Although teaching and learning are now monitored closely, the procedures are not robust enough to ensure consistent good quality teaching and learning by all teachers, especially those new to the school.
38. In the more successful subjects (art and design, English, dance, modern foreign languages) staff spend considerable time ensuring that teaching methods are matched to the different learning needs of all the pupils in their charge. The overriding concern of teachers here is to include everyone in what the subject has to offer. As a result, the great majority of youngsters, irrespective of their prior attainment, are provided with many opportunities to make progress.
39. Teachers mostly have a secure knowledge of their subjects. Most know just the right questions to ask and the right resources to use in order to provide realistic challenges for pupils of all attainment levels. Teachers' enthusiasm is contagious in many art and design, design and technology, English, history and modern foreign language lessons and pupils quickly pick up on the excitement of learning. In an excellent design technology lesson in Year 11 pupils were working on their GCSE graphics project. The teacher's excellent planning, very high expectations and very skillful use of examples really got pupils thinking and prompted all to work at full pace and give of their best.
40. Pupils with special education needs, who often find the work difficult, are well catered for and included effectively in lessons. This good understanding of individual needs does not always apply to gifted and talented pupils. They are too infrequently exposed to teaching that challenges them to think more deeply about the subject matter.
41. Relationships are well established in most art and design, design technology, English, history, mathematics and modern foreign language lessons. In these classes, pupils settle down quickly to work and little time is lost in establishing good order in the classroom. Teachers in these lessons demonstrate that they have the utmost regard for their pupils and, as a consequence, have the highest expectations of what they can do. Pupils of all attainment levels rise to the challenge, respond very well to this dignified treatment, treat their teachers with real respect and produce work in which they have immense pride. Behaviour is, therefore, very good and pupils thrive on the opportunities to become independent learners and also to learn from the knowledge and talents of their classmates.
42. However, classroom management is less secure in a number of subjects, particularly in music and in some art and design, geography, history and science lessons. This is mainly confined to Years 7 to 9 but more often in Years 9. Where teachers fail to control the challenging behaviour of a minority of pupils, time is wasted and the learning and progress of all pupils in the class is affected. The large number of inexperienced and temporary teachers the school has been forced to employ recently makes this worse. They often find great difficulty in managing the behaviour of these pupils and in coping with the demands of teaching outside their specialism. In some lessons, the slow pace of the lesson and lack of challenge in the activities leads to disruptive behaviour. This was the case in a Year 10 science lesson on "work and power", which was dominated by teacher talk and teacher led discussion. Here, the teacher's very real difficulty in expressing the lesson content in an interesting and relevant way, and unclear diction meant that many pupils were lost and very little learning took place.
43. In good lessons teachers ensure a brisk pace is maintained through a series of short tasks that integrate literacy skills and identify clear steps in learning. As a consequence, pupils experience

success, build up confidence in their knowledge and understanding and are excited by the rapid rate of learning. An example of this positive learning was seen in a very good Year 9 English lesson where pupils worked through a well-prepared and very stimulating information sheet, which carefully prompted their understanding of texts that persuade, argue and advise. There was a good emphasis on learning correct terminology and plenty of opportunities for these terms to be used. The lesson was very well structured and organised and pupils enjoyed the challenge and made very good progress.

44. A strong feature of much of the good, very good and excellent teaching is the teachers' very skilful choices of methods and careful planning. Such choices catch and retain pupils' interest, develop their confidence and offer them many opportunities to work in pairs and in groups. Pupils respond very positively and develop very mature attitudes to their studies. Moreover, they work very well with their classmates, behave impeccably, enjoy the challenge of the assignments and are not afraid to display very high levels of industry. In an excellent dance lesson, for example, pupils in Year 7 were desperate to contribute because they had found the use of music and movement to express the struggle between good and evil such an exciting experience.
45. In the unsatisfactory lessons there is too much teacher-led activity and pupils have to listen for long periods. This decreases opportunities for pupils to work independently and the pace of a lesson is slowed down. Sometimes tasks are not demanding enough which means that higher attaining pupils made very little gains in knowledge or understanding and spent too much time in low-level tasks such as copying and colouring. This is well illustrated in a Year 9 geography lesson where pupils were studying images of Africa but spent too long copying, quickly became bored and began to behave inappropriately.
46. The use of resources is very variable. There are some very good visual displays, for instance in art and design classrooms, which engage pupils' interest and which are often used to reinforce learning. But too many classrooms are bleak, uninspiring, devoid of display and do little to reinforce learning. The creation of effective classrooms to challenge and aid learning is therefore unsatisfactory. The split site and the unsuitability of many classroom spaces often prevent pupils concentrating because of noise and interruptions. Lack of notice boards prevents the celebration of pupils' achievement through display.
47. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy is good overall. In science there is a good emphasis on using the correct terminology. In modern languages supportive frameworks help girls to structure their writing. In most English lessons, useful short opening sessions with a focus on spelling or vocabulary work help pupils to build up their literacy skills. However, in geography, history, music and some science lessons, opportunities to extend discussion and develop more advanced speaking skills are missed.
48. Although some subjects, such as science, ensure that girls develop and use their numeracy skills within the subject, there is inconsistent use of the whole school policy to support teachers in promoting these skills and consequently too many opportunities are missed to develop pupils' low standards of numeracy.
49. Where ICT is taught as a discrete subject the teaching is good overall. No subject makes sufficient use of computers to help pupils to develop their ICT skills. Consequently, opportunities are missed to use ICT either to develop specific ICT skills or as an integral part of the subject. Computers are not used sufficiently to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
50. In most subjects marking is at least satisfactory but there are great variations. In English, many pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what to do to improve. The school's rewards system is inconsistently used to effectively motivate and encourage pupils. In some subjects work is marked infrequently or pupils do not have a clear understanding of the criteria against which they are being marked. This often reflects the very high turnover of staff in that subject. Sometimes pupils know their marks but do not know what to do to improve. Knowledge of how well pupils are doing is not used sufficiently by teachers to help them to plan challenging or supportive work.
51. Parents expressed a concern about the small amount of homework. Homework was found to be satisfactory in most subjects and is used to consolidate and develop learning. In English, art and

design, design technology geography, history and modern foreign languages, homework is used effectively to promote learning, especially in Years 10 and 11.

52. Teachers generally provide satisfactory challenges to pupils' very diverse needs. Data and information on different groups in the school are available for all teachers but not all make good use of this. A good handbook outlines pupils with difficulties, which enables a satisfactory response to all pupils' needs.
53. Support in lessons from support teachers and teaching assistants is effective. These staff are guided well by the learning support department's 'pupil progress' sheet that gives details of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs. This helps them plan their lessons and activities well to meet the needs of these pupils. As a result of this pupils learn well and make appropriate progress in lessons.
54. Pupils benefit from the industry and skill of learning support teachers. Good examples were seen where support teachers were able to stimulate pupils' ideas, target the needs of pupils experiencing difficulty and ensure that all pupils had access to the objectives of the lessons. In the withdrawal lessons for literacy in the lower school, for example, the teacher's calm and patient approach created a very good atmosphere for learning. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, the support teacher was effective in helping those pupils experiencing difficulties with decimal calculations. In a Year 10 GCSE improvement lesson, however, pupils were given insufficient opportunities to contribute themselves; therefore the lesson became rather colourless.
55. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory as the teachers are actively involved in supporting the pupils in the lessons. This is usually in the form of identifying the key words and helping them to understand them and use them in a written context. The teachers also help with conversation by simplifying explanation and then by prompting pupils to share simple conversations. At times the pupils learning is impeded by insufficient preparation for the lesson before it starts.

Sixth form

- Teaching and learning are **good** in Years 12 and 13.
56. Inspectors observed 36 lessons across 10 subjects. Teaching and therefore learning were satisfactory or better in all of them and good or better in 78 per cent. In a third of all lessons, teaching and learning were very good or excellent. Outstanding teaching was seen in art and design (three lessons), English and modern foreign languages. Teaching was particularly effective (more than 80 per cent of lessons good or better) in art and design, design technology, English, modern foreign languages, and business studies.
 57. Teachers know their subjects very well and use their knowledge of students' strengths and needs to maximise learning in English, health and social care, mathematics and sociology. As a result students share the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and are eager to succeed. Thorough planning, which ensures that each pupil is fully stretched, is a characteristic of art and design, history and sociology.
 58. Whilst some subjects, for instance art and design, make very good use of the long three-hour periods, others, such as sociology, do not make sufficiently good use of students working in groups or pairs to share information and learn from each other.

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

- The quality and range of learning opportunities are **unsatisfactory**.
- The appropriate statutory curriculum is **not** fully in place.
- Provision for pupils' personal development is **good**. Provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is **very good**.

59. The school provision covers the main National Curriculum subject areas and mostly gives an appropriate mix of experiences that meets the needs of its pupils. Religious education, art and design, history, geography and dance are all important features of the school and have greater than average curriculum time.
60. However, the school only provides for 24 hours curriculum time per week rather than the recommended 25 hours. Some curriculum areas have more limited time and this is holding back standards particularly in design and technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. Design and technology, for example, has particular problems in fully covering the programmes of study in Years 7 to 9. Lack of time results in a limited amount of control technology and insufficient design and make activity. In modern foreign languages, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are only able to take one of the two modern foreign languages offered. This is limiting given the linguistic strengths of many of the pupils, particularly those for whom English is an additional language. There is only one physical education lesson per week.
61. In Years 10 and 11, the school structures its option system to ensure that all the National Curriculum areas are covered. The school allows a measure of 'disapplication', that is, allowing pupils to discontinue certain required subjects where it is felt they would benefit from a worthwhile alternative. However, the school has not taken advantage of the increased flexibility now possible in Years 10 and 11 to introduce vocational and other courses that better meet the needs and interests of many pupils.
62. The school meets its requirement to provide for drug education and personal relationships and sex education. Very recently it has sought to improve the effectiveness of its arrangements with the appointment of new staff. Similarly, the school now has a new careers co-ordinator who is working to develop an effective careers education programme. As part of its provision there are established links with the local careers service and all pupils in Year 11 benefit from work experience. However, current careers education and guidance, including resources, are still limited. The guidance aspect is noted as a weakness by many sixth form students who are otherwise very positive about the school. A third area of development is the appointment of a co-ordinator for the new National Curriculum subject of citizenship. Despite these many changes the school has not made available any additional timetable time for those three major areas and instead will rely heavily on the use of tutor time and occasional daylong events. These are part of the preparation for adult life programme (PAL) includes a minimum of 10 days per year, which is equivalent to one hour per week. This is an ambitious and complex approach. Although use will be made of visiting experts, it places considerable responsibility on tutorial staff and other non-specialists at a time when the school is required to deliver and assess a challenging citizenship scheme of work and address weaknesses in its careers education and guidance.
63. Given the inner city nature of the school it operates a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities though participation of the girls is limited by after-school transport arrangements and the lack of games facilities. The school has never had any playing fields and the upper school provision is further limited by the lack of an on-site sports hall.
64. The school has effective strategies for development of literacy skills although a clear literacy policy does not fully underpin work in mathematics and physical education. The provision for pupils to use numeracy in other subjects is satisfactory and departments are now beginning to devise policies for their subject areas. ICT is taught as a separate subject in all years and has enabled the school to cover the essential aspects of the prescribed programme of study with what has until recently been poor computer facilities. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils follow the GCSE ICT short course and most complete it successfully. Provision for the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. This is because, while a few other subjects have over the years tried to make use of ICT, at the time of the inspection no curriculum area was meeting the National Curriculum requirement to plan and implement the use of ICT in its teaching.
65. Overall, curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The special education needs co-ordinator has ensured the full implementation of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs. The learning support team have a strong commitment to promoting an inclusive education and work hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. However, not all subject departments have a clear and concise formal policy in place for special

educational needs. The targeted literacy development programme in the lower school and the policy of in-class support in mainstream lessons throughout the school means that pupils with special educational needs receive effective support and are enabled to access the full curriculum on offer. Extra support for reading and writing is made for those pupils with special educational needs who are disappplied from aspects of the National Curriculum in the lower school. In the upper school a GCSE improvement groups caters for those pupils who wish to take one fewer GCSE course. There is formal extra-curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs outside normal curriculum time in the lower school support base.

66. The school does not meet fully the curricular requirements as outlined in pupils' statements of special educational needs. This is because one pupil, whose statement of special educational needs specifies full access to the National Curriculum, is disappplied from the full National Curriculum in Years 10 and 11. A scrutiny of this pupil's records shows that there is no record of parents or carers being informed and that the statement of special educational needs has not been appropriately amended. The school looks after all its pupils well, but full access to all areas of the curriculum is impeded by the structure of the building and modifications are beyond the control of the school. A further grouping of special needs pupils are supported through a GCSE Improvement programme to help them with planning, sequencing and achieving their best result.
67. Positive attitudes displayed by pupils come from the strong ethos provided by this school within a Catholic framework of beliefs. This ensures that pupils' spiritual development is very good. There is a shared commitment to the spiritual in the form of regular prayer and reference to gospel values. There is also a strong drive to spiritual qualities such as courage, commitment, strength and tolerance, evidenced in the school's mission statement 'Growing together in Christ with courage confidence and dignity' which is frequently referred to. Pupils have an opportunity in many subjects to develop a spiritual approach by reflecting on their work: for example in art and design, music and English. Pupils in Y9 composed poems in the form of prayers to express their views, and Year 7 pupils wrote touchingly about 'what music means to me'
68. Moral development is also very good, with strong messages about justice and right and wrong delivered by clear and visible role models in the school. There is a strong Catholic thrust to look after others, both in the school and outside, and the sixth form have worked with the St Vincent de Paul (SVP) organisation and have been involved with the St Mungo's charity for the homeless. Younger pupils suggest charities to support and raise large sums of money, for example for children in Africa. The school's behaviour expectations are well understood by pupils, based on a perception of right and wrong and administered in a consistent way by teachers and governors. For example, when clear breaches of the school's discipline occur, girls may be excluded for a fixed period, but there is a clear commitment from governors and management that permanent exclusions are avoided if possible to accord with Christian values of forgiveness and redemption, and that work with individuals is carried out to influence future behaviour. Subjects such as PE develop pupils' sense of right and wrong well, and foster the need to respect each other's capabilities. This is also evident in French and Spanish lessons where pupils are encouraged to listen carefully to others' contributions. Study of texts such as Marlowe's Dr Faustus has involved Y9 pupils in analysing how people make choices between good and evil.
69. Aspects of moral development are discussed in Health and Social Care classes in the sixth form and result in consideration of qualities like respect, humility and equal opportunities in international and domestic settings. Sixth form English A level students have been helped by the study of Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience to develop a deeper understanding of the prevailing moral climate at the time of the French and Industrial revolutions.
70. Pupils' social development is satisfactory. They are encouraged to respect each other and to have good attitudes and relationships. Social groups are ethnically diverse and culturally mixed. Pupils are taught to be courteous, to behave well to visitors and to develop qualities such as confidence and self-respect. The diversity of cultures represented in the school is welcomed and pupils are persuaded to have belief in themselves as women. This is achieved through a focus on good examples of successful and worthy female role models from all sorts of different backgrounds. The school sends out a strong message on social inclusion and development. The way the pupils are treated is intended to inspire confidence and self-belief and in this it is successful. Pupils mix well and teachers set up opportunities to work effectively in groups, for example in English, where pupils

often work in pairs. Dance and drama encourage group work successfully in a creative context. There are however two main weaknesses:

- pupils are not involved sufficiently in their own progress and learning. There is a lack of development of independent learning skills and pupils do not have a great enough role in assessing their work and how they can improve it.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to be involved meaningfully in the life of the school, for example in a school council. There are few roles where girls can take on positions of responsibility and influence and contribute to school life as a whole.

71. The school's strong ethos of inclusion and support for those pupils with special educational needs has a positive impact on the social development and learning experience of these pupils. The school has effective relationships with outside specialist agencies: this enhances further the quality of support for those pupils with special educational needs.

72. Cultural development overall is satisfactory. The school is a place where many different ethnic groups work and socialise well together. Tolerance and understanding are well promoted. Various cultures are celebrated in the curriculum; for example, African drumming in music, varied texts in English and a focus on ethnic traditions in dance. Teachers sometimes refer to pupils' home backgrounds in lessons, for example in a Year 12 class, where soda bread was being made, a pupil from an Irish background was invited to comment on how her mother made it. But there is not enough made of individuals' cultures round the school, except in isolated instances. There is limited use of the opportunity to benefit from the variety of ethnic groups and influences, which the pupils bring to school, which could also brighten up the somewhat gloomy nature of much of the accommodation. The staging of a major music/drama production involving the whole school every two years benefits pupils' cultural and social development.

Sixth form

73. The school offers a satisfactory range of AS and A levels and has been helped by the increased sixth form size, which has enabled all proposed courses to run. Most of the main arts, humanities and sciences are provided as well as the opportunity to take both Spanish and French in a school where there are a significant number of Spanish speaking pupils. The AS and A level courses are complemented by courses in two of the main vocational areas of business and health and social care and the school has recently recognised the need to offer these at all three of the levels of advanced, intermediate and foundation.

74. The school attracts around a fifth of its sixth form from other schools and works with these and a college in the local sixth form consortium. This consortium also provides valuable breadth by enabling the school's pupils to take other courses elsewhere, such as ICT, photography and psychology.

75. All pupils take general studies, which contributes well to pupils' personal development, study and research skills. Activities include research into environmental and social issues and make good use of local facilities such as the British Museum and the British Library.

76. Although the three key skills of communication, application of number and ICT are integrated into the general studies programme, the school does not have an effective way of developing and assessing those skills. A number of subject areas are now using the new computer facilities to incorporate ICT in to their learning schemes. For example, vocational business pupils use ICT to research and present their assignment work.

77. The strong Catholic ethos is appropriately promoted through the regular acts of worship, the weekly lesson and occasional special interest days. These days are also used to develop other social and political issues as well as support the careers and higher education programme. In the sixth form there has been useful work to develop spiritual approaches in discussion groups, where the differences and similarities between Christians and Moslems has been addressed. Study of set texts such as Attwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* for English have had a powerful impact on students' understanding of the use of Biblical references in the author's work.

78. Sixth formers are encouraged to develop socially through effective group work and by some measure of freedom to socialise within the building. This is also aided by the development of counselling skills

in Social Care and by regular work placements at various levels. They become involved with supporting younger girls and schemes are in place for them to become mentors.

79. Aspects of moral development are discussed in Health and Social Care classes in the sixth form and result in consideration of qualities like respect, humility and equal opportunities in international and domestic settings. Sixth form English A level students have been helped by the study of Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience to develop a deeper understanding of the prevailing moral climate at the time of the French and Industrial revolutions.
80. Sixth form students participate in master classes and benefit from cultural enrichment through organised trips to the theatre, Royal Opera House, and visits to the British Museum for research in Art and History.
81. The sixth form curriculum is firmly committed to its open access to all pupils who wish to continue their studies. While many achieve well when compared with their prior attainment, there is a significant number who struggle to cope with the requirements of both the general and vocational advanced level courses. This is reflected in higher than average drop- out rates, non-completion of coursework and modest levels of attainment. The school recognises that its curriculum offer does not meet the needs of all of its pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- The school provides **good** pastoral care and welfare support but there are **weaknesses** in the academic guidance provided for pupils.
 - There are **satisfactory** procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare.
 - Procedures to support pupils' academic and personal development are **unsatisfactory**.
 - The use of assessment information to help teachers plan the next steps in learning is **unsatisfactory**.
82. There is much attention paid to the individual care of pupils. Child protection is well addressed and there is now a health and safety policy, in contrast to the last inspection. Pupils feel secure and safe in school. There is satisfactory liaison with outside agencies; for instance, the school values the support of the school nurse. The accommodation presents several negative factors, for example showers and toilets for physical education are in a dilapidated state and do not ensure privacy for pupils.
 83. Educational support and guidance is too patchy, with inconsistent systems across the school and a variation in the methods of assessment and record keeping used by different subjects. Teachers do not use assessment results enough to fully to plan the next steps in learning. They are not used enough to help pupils to understand how they can improve.
 84. Procedures for monitoring behaviour are satisfactory; teachers and staff know their pupils well and work hard to influence antisocial behaviour and to promote good conduct. There have been some difficulties with a significant minority of pupils in Year 9, which the school is analysing and working to resolve. The school's emphasis on preventing bullying results in a harmonious atmosphere.
 85. In lessons, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils with special educational needs is positive on the whole. They respond well to the help and support they receive and are keen to make progress in, for example, small group withdrawal sessions. Where pupils with special educational needs receive extra support from support teachers or from teaching assistants in lessons this is accepted by other pupils and they themselves often ask for help. Year 11 pupils with statements of special educational needs said they were appreciative of the extra help and support they had received since Year 7.
 86. Methods of monitoring and promoting good attendance are unsatisfactory, despite recent improvements in this area and its focus in the school improvement plan. The absence of ICT means that tracking systems are laborious and it is not easy to analyse patterns which might be emerging. The absence of a computerised system makes it difficult to check lesson attendance against daily registration. Although the school employs an educational social worker, at the moment her area of operation is confined to only one authority, even though pupils come from several London Boroughs, and this represents a weakness in the system.

87. Procedures for assessing how well pupils are progressing are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient use of computers for the analysis of data and target setting and procedures are inconsistent. Targets centre round projected grades but there is not enough detailed advice to pupils on how to reach these. Too few subjects see assessment as an integral part of the learning process (exceptions are English, art and design, dance and drama). The special education needs co-ordinator (SENCO), however, is able to draw upon a range of assessment data in order to enable her to identify those pupils who need support and place them appropriately on the school's register of special educational needs.
88. Overall, assessment is not used enough to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses nor to evaluate the successes of teaching. Good use is beginning to be made of data collected of pupils when they enter the school: for instance average points from tests taken in Year 6 and from cognitive ability tests. This is used very well to analyse the attainment of different groups of pupils in the school and to inform whole-school planning. However, the school is not ensuring that all subject areas are making use of this data to:
- set individual targets for pupils in those subjects,
 - carefully monitor the progress of pupils towards meeting those targets,
 - intervene if a pupil is in danger of not meeting their target,
 - use that data to evaluate how effective their teaching and learning has been.
89. The monitoring of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, with identified agreed targets for pupils. Teachers understand their pupils well and, even at the start of the year, most staff members knew their new pupils. This creates a supportive environment in which pupils feel secure and valued. Pupils with English as an additional language progress well, but records do not always indicate their up-to-date stage of language acquisition. Similarly, gifted and talented pupils are not always identified in lesson plans.
90. When statements of special educational needs are reviewed annually, the review draws upon a wide range of professional opinion and consultation with parents or carers and pupils. This provides for and effectively informs the updating of pupils' records on a regular basis. Individual Education Plans are in place for all on the school's register of special educational needs. They are reviewed on a regular basis and targets subsequently modified or changed. This is an improvement on an area that was criticised at the last inspection. However, targets, which are rather vague and generic, do not reflect the advice of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs in relation to them addressing pupils' additional needs.
91. There are satisfactory structures and systems for assessment to meet the diverse needs of pupils. Ethnic minority cultures are respected and assessment clarifies pupils' individual needs. There are inconsistencies in establishing support for gifted and talented pupils because the identification does not always recognise practical gifts and talents.

Sixth form

Assessment

92. The systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in subjects are unsatisfactory. This is because procedures are inconsistent between subjects and do not ensure that all pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Too few subjects regularly use the outcomes of assessment to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching nor the quality of pupils' learning.

Advice, support and guidance

93. Advice is satisfactory; useful systems are developing but here, too, there is a lack of short-term targets and pupils do not have enough information to inform their choices and help their progress. This is compounded by weakness in the monitoring role of the tutor system across the school as a whole, which, owing to the split site, can result in pupils not seeing their tutor at every session.

94. Attendance in the sixth form involves marking cards each lesson and many pupils object to this, thinking it childish, though it is proving effective. Procedures for assessing how well pupils are progressing are unsatisfactory. The quality of advice is generally satisfactory, although many pupils need more detailed guidance on academic choices. Careers and higher education guidance are satisfactory. The sixth form has a well established procedure to help students in their application for university and college entrance. The staff concerned provide a number of worthwhile visits to local universities and careers conventions. There are no fixed periods of work shadowing for all students though effective arrangements are made for those taking vocational courses such as health and social care as well as others who want to shadow a chosen professional occupation.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- Overall, parents' views of the school are **satisfactory**.
 - Parents make a **satisfactory** contribution to the pupils' learning.
 - The schools' links with parents are **unsatisfactory** as is the quality of information the school gives to parents.
95. Many of the parents' views of the school were positive, expressed in the pre- inspection questionnaire and the meetings, showing many strengths. However, in the questionnaire and in the parents' meeting before the inspection, a substantial minority had reservations about some aspects of the school's work and the quality of the school's communications.
96. Parents agreed that the school expects their children to work hard, and that their children like school. Most parents choose the school for its ethos and support their daughters' work in school. They travel long distances to attend the annual consultation on progress.
97. Annual reports to parents are strong on attitudes to work and behaviour but contain insufficient detailed information about how pupils can move on and how good their academic progress is. A re-designed journal is being used as a way of increasing home - school communication but it is not yet used for records of progress. Reviews of statements for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory and parents are appropriately involved.
98. There is insufficient communication with parents other than by routine letters. The *governors' annual report to parents* has little explanatory detail. This may account for the large number of parents who are unsure about some of the school's approaches. For example, some parents in the meeting expressed negative views about how the school tackles bullying, which were not supported by the pupils, inspectors nor by examination of procedures. The school is aware of the need to contact parents and has undertaken its own questionnaire to gauge the level of parent satisfaction.
99. The school does not make the most of the resources parents can bring to school. Parents are not asked to help in school apart from sometimes escorting visits, and opportunities are lost to share their knowledge of different cultures with pupils. The new parent- teacher association, which was mentioned in the last report, has ceased again.
100. Too many parents take their children out of school during term time for holidays and some responsibility must rest with them for unsatisfactory levels of attendance and for failing to provide adequate explanations of absence.
101. A significant number of parents do not feel sufficiently engaged with the work of the school to make it an effective partnership: 19 per cent of respondents said they did not feel that the school works closely with parents, and 16 per cent did not know. Parents and carers of pupils with special needs are invited to and are involved in the annual reviews of pupils with statements of special educational needs. Their views are recorded and this keeps them involved and informed as to their daughter's progress towards the targets set out as part of the review process. Productive links with parents are established through the learning mentors. This liaison with parents helps to encourage motivation for pupils with special needs to attend school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- The leadership team provide effective support for the headteacher who leads the school well.
 - The school monitors and evaluates its performance **satisfactorily** and takes effective action.
 - The strategic use of resources, including specific grant and other funding, is **satisfactory**.
 - The principles of best value are applied and the school provides **satisfactory** value for money.
102. The dedicated headteacher works extremely hard and is delivering good leadership. Since her arrival two years ago, she has galvanized the school and has established a very clear strategic direction, reinforcing and strengthening its Catholic ethos and the message of the Faithful companions of Jesus. This is particularly commendable given the relative paucity of forward planning prior to her arrival, the very large turnover of staff that has occurred over the last two years, and severe weaknesses in accommodation. All of these have acted as breaks to raising standards. The headteacher has succeeded very well in sharing this vision of where the school is going with staff and, largely, has won their support in helping her realise it.
103. This clarity of vision is very well expressed in the school's improvement plan. The aims of this plan, although entirely appropriate, are not always prioritised to ensure that those that will have an immediate impact upon standards (for instance, improving the levels of attendance) are tackled first. There is too much of a mixture of short, medium and long term aims, which serves to dilute its overall effectiveness. There is also insufficient rigour in setting criteria by which the performance and effectiveness of aspects of the plan can be measured. However, the improvement plan is well integrated into the school's financial planning, but there remains a lack of rigour in providing details of how much each aspect of the plan will cost the school.
104. The school has recently re-organised its leadership team to comprise three deputy headteachers and five assistant head teachers. Each has clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Although a very large group, they are growing into their roles and are giving the headteacher satisfactory support.. Despite the leadership team having to manage a split-site school with severe shortcomings in accommodation, it is, nevertheless a much larger group than that found in similar schools. It is too early to evaluate its effectiveness. Whilst clearly strengthening the line management of subject areas and to some extent making up for management gaps at this level (for instance music, where there has been no subject leader for over a year) the new structure does have inherent weaknesses:
- The combination of whole-school and pastoral roles for the assistant heads, so that insufficient time is dedicated to each.
 - The very strong focus of management responsibility on the leadership teams detracts from that of the subject leaders. This contributes to the school's procedures for monitoring teaching and learning not being rigorous enough to ensure that all temporary staff teach well.
 - The emphasis on management tasks dilutes the strategic leadership role of the group.
105. The overall quality of leadership at middle management level is satisfactory. Leadership and management are excellent in English: they are very good in art and design: good in mathematics, and modern foreign languages and satisfactory in science, design technology, history, ICT and physical education. There is no subject leadership in music and this is one of the main reasons why there is such a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching here. Most heads of departments have established clear educational direction for the work of their departments but too few monitor pupils' academic standards very effectively. The driving up of standards, then, though the sharing of good practice is uneven. Standards are improving fastest in departments where the head of department provides a clear direction for the subject, motivates colleagues, monitors teaching and spreads good practice. These have been important factors in raising attainment in English and art and design. Where relative weaknesses exist, the monitoring of the work of the subject is informal (as in science, design technology, geography and history).
106. A characteristic of management at this level is the inconsistent way in which many managers implement their own and school policies. The very wide range of approaches to marking, assessment and the use of information provided by the school causes confusion amongst pupils and does little to move standards on. Middle managers in all subjects, are not given enough time to carry out the quality assurance aspect of their roles or to ensure that good teaching and learning are achieved consistently through their departments.

107. Governors give freely of their time, and are beginning to develop frequent formal and informal contacts with staff at all levels but have a very mixed working knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although governors receive and discuss school performance data reports, they are not, as yet, fully aware of how well pupils are doing compared to pupils in similar schools, and of the progress they are making. However, a well-structured programme of subject reviews and presentations has been introduced and this is helping governors to understand clearly the strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of the school. There have been three chairs of governors in two years, and during this very busy period, governors have not played a sufficiently influential part in working with the head teacher and senior managers to create a strong strategic direction for the school. They have placed too high an emphasis on the role of the head teacher to forge the strategic path for the school and have been too content to act as revisers of policy rather than its instigator. Governors have, however, a good understanding of the challenges facing the school and are constantly striving for improvement, and they are rightly very proud of the school's achievements.
108. Financial planning is satisfactory. The school manages its enhanced budget, additional funds and grants well, although resources for learning remain modest. The very large surplus carried forward from the 2000 – 2001 budget has been used entirely to equip the school with new ICT equipment. The school applies the principles of best value well. It consistently applies the principles of comparison, challenge, competition and consultation. Financial and whole-school planning is closely woven together, but the school does not evaluate the impact of its spending decisions on standards in the classroom. The specific grants that the school attracts are spent appropriately. The costs of running this averaged-sized school are higher than the average for other schools in the country. The school uses funding for special educational needs appropriately; thus it has now addressed a key issue raised at the time of the last inspection.
109. Overall, the quality of leadership and management of the learning support department is good. The special education needs co-ordinator provides effective management of the procedures for the support of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs and has prepared the school well for the introduction of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs in place since January 2002. Improvement planning, linked closely to the whole school improvement plan, guides the work of the learning support department. The school's policy for special educational has recently been redrafted but still needs amendment to ensure that it meets fully the legislative requirements. Support teachers and teaching assistants are deployed effectively in order to provide the required support for the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs. However, the recent re-organisation of some subjects makes it difficult to provide the same breadth and level of support in lessons as before.
110. English as an additional language is unsatisfactorily managed by a non-specialist co-ordinator who is new to the post and important up-to-date information and documentation has yet to be completed. This includes a re-assessment of the language needs of the pupils. In the light of the very high numbers of pupils with English as an additional language in the school, the management of the subject, both by the department and by the school generally, is not sufficiently vigorous. The provision for the needs of these pupils has too low a profile. It does not fully support the pupils who are at the lower stages of acquisition nor does it enable the more able pupils who have English an additional language to achieve to the best of their ability.
111. Accommodation at the school is poor. It prevents or adversely affects the quality of provision in almost all areas of the curriculum. The split site nature of the school greatly adds to the problems of curriculum delivery, communication is inefficient in terms of resources and adds a considerable stress factor for teachers needing to move between sites between lessons. The school has made some efforts to improve the accommodation since the last report. These have included the building of a new humanities block, improved toilet facilities, compliance with health and safety issues and the use of an external consultant to help prioritise the constant work needed to maintain such an old set of buildings. The school remains well cleaned.
112. Many subject areas, however, remain unsatisfactorily or poorly accommodated. The upper school site has no provision or facilities for physical education. The changing rooms attached to the lower school gymnasium are cramped and in poor condition. Music has poor ventilation and poorly shaped rooms. Science also suffers from outdated benching and room shape. Accommodation for English is scattered and along with mathematics lacks a central departmental focus. Modern foreign

languages are taught in a dividing room and suffers from noise. The lower school computer room is cramped. Despite efforts by some teachers to improve the appearance of rooms many still look shabby.

113. The school has experienced acute difficulties at recruiting and retaining staff and there is an unsatisfactory match of teachers to the classes they are expected to teach. There has been a very high turnover of staff during the last two years and at the beginning of the year there were 10 unfilled posts. The school has used a variety of ways to attract staff and has been tenacious in getting teachers into school and the headteacher has done as much as could be expected to fill these vacant posts. This has, however, taken up a disproportionate amount of her time and has prevented her from fully driving through elements of the school's improvement plan. In ICT, the lack of suitably qualified teachers is contributing to standards being held back in Years 7 to 9. In design technology, art teachers cover a significant proportion of the teaching. In music, there has been no head of department since April 2001 and two part-time teachers who teach on different days of the week currently cover the teaching. In physical education, a head of department has been appointed for this year following a long period without one:but in art and design and modern foreign languages, following a period of instability, appointments this year mean both departments are fully and appropriately staffed.
114. Resources for teaching are satisfactory. Most departments have sufficient resources to meet their needs and the resources in ICT have received major new investment, including the library. but the two ICT rooms are essentially for lessons in ICT, with little opportunity for other subjects to use them. The two libraries are well used, however the book stock is low. The library is not well used by subjects across the curriculum as a resource for learning.

Sixth form

Leadership and management

115. The school is committed to its sixth form, which is well led and managed. Until two years ago the sixth form had declined in popularity and standards had declined. The new management of the sixth form has ensured that numbers have increased and overall standards have improved.
116. Areas where there is good progress include improving attendance, introduction of general studies and key skills and creating a more positive and supportive learning environment. Some areas that have yet to be successfully addressed include; creating a strong and effective team of sixth form tutors, inducting new students including those from other schools, and establishing a shared and rigorous system of academic monitoring and target setting.
117. Subject departments manage their sixth form courses satisfactorily with some strength in the curriculum areas of art and design, English, sociology and business studies. Most departments have successfully negotiated the recent changes in the examination system in terms of modifying and improving course delivery. There is though a wider concern about ensuring that students are appropriately matched to their courses, which involves improving the management of course guidance and sixth form recruitment.
118. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and, in some areas, poor. There is inadequate space for students to work in when they are not in lessons: classrooms are drab and bleak: there are insufficient laboratories in science.
119. The financial management of the sixth form is satisfactory and the growing sixth form size has ensured that it now provides value for money. The school participation in the local sixth form consortium has also had a beneficial effect in terms of improving the viability of groups in certain subjects as well providing some additional curriculum breadth. However, some students find the very long teaching sessions that arise from co-ordinating different schools' timetables difficult to manage.

Resources

120. Resources are unsatisfactory. Subjects use their resources well though the library provides limited resources and there is a lack of resources in some classrooms, for example, business studies and English, to support wider reading and research in lessons. The new computer facilities will go some way to addressing a long-term weakness in ICT provision in the sixth form. The library now has a suite and there are plans to provide computers in the sixth form study area.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

121. To further raise standards and improve the quality of education, the headteacher, staff and governors should draw on best practice already evident in the school and elsewhere to:

1. Further raise attainment by:
 - equipping all teachers with the skills to challenge higher attaining students. (*paragraphs 40, 45*)
2. *Improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in Years 7 to 9 by:
 - developing further training opportunities to help teachers meet more effectively the learning needs of pupils with learning difficulties, and emotional and behavioural difficulties;
 - supporting and monitoring learning and teaching in a more systematic way across all subjects and including the provision of opportunities to share good practice;
 - ensuring that lessons are actively interesting and make appropriate demands of pupils, especially those of higher prior attainment. (*paragraphs 16, 29, 37, 42, 45, 105, 106*)
3. Making more effective use of assessment information by:
 - providing training to ensure that all heads of subject are able to make use of the large amount of assessment data made available to them;
 - ensuring that all teachers use this information to match work in class to pupils' learning needs;
 - develop more rigorous ways of setting targets for pupils, of monitoring their progress towards meeting those targets, and intervening when pupils show signs of not meeting them. (*paragraphs 20, 52, 66, 87, 88*)
4. Improving staffing by:
 - continuing to explore further ways of attracting and retaining good teachers;
 - continuing to work closely with the local education authority to ensure that adequate levels of staffing are maintained;
 - developing a retention policy that rewards good teachers and encourages them to stay at Maria Fidelis;
 - appointing, where appropriate, advanced skills teachers in key areas of the curriculum. (*paragraphs 10, 17, 113*)
5. *Improve accommodation and learning resources by:
 - working with the local education authority and other appropriate bodies to find ways of providing additional teaching rooms, a science laboratory, indoor sports facilities, dance and drama studio;
 - develop the library as a learning resource centre for pupils;
 - increasing the proportion of the school's budget spent on books and other learning materials. (*paragraphs 23, 24, 46, 102, 111, 112*)
6. Broaden the school's curriculum, especially in Years 10 and 11 by:
 - ensuring that provision for ICT in all years meets legal requirements;
 - ensuring that all subjects in Years 10 and 11 make full use of ICT as a medium for teaching and learning, and that its impact on students' ICT skills is carefully monitored;
 - making the curriculum more relevant by introducing more vocational courses. (*paragraphs 49, 60, 61, 62, 64*)
7. *Further improve attendance by:
 - making use of ICT to analyse attendance figures and using this information to identify particular groups of pupils whose attendance is poor,

- taking steps to find ways of improving the attendance of those groups identified above. *(paragraphs 12, 16, 26, 27, 86)*
8. Make better use of parents' help and support in raising standards by;
- extending and improving the ways in which the school communicates with parents,
 - finding ways to encourage more parents to help in the school and share their knowledge of different cultures with pupils. *(paragraphs 51, 95, 97, 98, 99)*

Sixth form

1. The attendance levels and the current procedures for tracking attendance by:
 - implementing IT based management information systems,
 - ensuring sufficient attendance recording procedures for students' non-lesson time. *(paragraph 34)*

2. Further improve retention and successful completion rates leading to better matching of students to their courses by:
 - improving careers and educational advice in the main school,
 - setting realistic entry requirements for some courses,
 - ensuring a wider range of appropriate courses that meet the needs of all students,
 - continuing to improve teaching and learning that maximises students' capacity to succeed. *(paragraphs 62, 93, 94)*

3. Improve the system of inducting and monitoring student progress and setting them examination targets by:
 - having a more rigorous induction period and ensure that prior attainment and other data is available for both internal and external students so as to provide better initial assessment,
 - establishing a common system of monitoring and recording student progress that includes predicted and target attainments,
 - more firmly establishing the sixth form tutor in the overall process. *(paragraph 34)*

4. Improve resources and accommodation by:
 - implementing the current plans to provide more ICT facilities for private study,
 - enabling particular subjects to have a wider range of resources in teaching areas
 - Improve the library resources for sixth form courses. *Paragraphs 23,24)*

Those issues marked with a * (improving teaching and learning, accommodation and improving attendance.) are referred to in the school's improvement plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	116
	Sixth form	36
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		134

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

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

Number	4	18	42	41	11	0	0
Percentage	3.5	15.5	36	35	9.5	0	0

Sixth form

Number	5	7	16	8	0	0	0
Percentage	14	19.5	44.5	22	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	751	144
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	291	0

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	15	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	104	2

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	395

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	55
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	57

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	11

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2

National comparative data	8.1
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National comparative data	1.1
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001		155	155

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	104	89	77
	Total	104	89	77
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	67 (74)	57 (53)	50 (56)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	24 (21)	29 (24)	20 (25)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys			
	Girls	108	90	73
	Total	108	90	73
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	70 (67)	58 (46)	47 (44)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	37 (28)	33 (23)	17 (15)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001		150	150

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys			
	Girls	61	139	144
	Total	61	139	144
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	41 (47)	93 (89)	96 (93)
	National	48 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	39.4
	National	39

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

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001		30

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	0	30	30
	Average point score per candidate	NA	12.8	12.8
National	Average point score per candidate	NA	17.7	17.4

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates		30	30			
	Average point score per candidate		12.8	12.8		39.4	39.4
National	Average point score per candidate		17.7	17.4		39	39

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	NA	NA
	National		81

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
100	7	0
275	50	0
18	2	0
8	1	0
9	1	0
14	2	0
3	0	0

Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	4	5	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	93	13	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	77	14	0
Black or Black British – African	184	24	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	34	4	0
Chinese	6	0	0
Any other ethnic group	62	4	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	60.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	14.8

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	0.8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	30

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	n.a.
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	n.a.
Key Stage 4	n.a.

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001- 2002
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	£
Total income	3618440
Total expenditure	4030269
Expenditure per pupil	4503
Balance brought forward from previous year	411829
Balance carried forward to next year	0

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	28.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	30

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	10
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	10

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	895
Number of questionnaires returned	253

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	44	2	0	4
My child is making good progress in school.	35	43	5	0	17
Behaviour in the school is good.	38	39	10	2	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	36	14	2	13
The teaching is good.	31	45	9	1	13
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	36	14	4	19
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	37	7	1	10
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	58	31	4	0	6
The school works closely with parents.	27	38	15	4	16
The school is well led and managed.	29	42	4	4	20
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	36	40	6	2	16
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	16	29	19	7	29

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Pupils from all ethnic groups achieve better results than expected.
- Good quality teaching so that pupils learn well and achieve better results in English than in most subjects.
- There is excellent leadership and management, which provide clear direction.

Areas for improvement

- Raising the standard of the gifted and talented pupils.
- ICT is undeveloped.

122. On entry to the school, pupils' literacy skills are well below average. Over several years, standards in the National Curriculum tests have varied from average to above average. Attainment in the 2001 test was average and below previous results and that of girls nationally. The local education authority's analysis of the test results indicates that minority ethnic pupils achieve the standard expected nationally with Bangladeshi pupils achieving the best results. The 2002 results were higher than the previous year with 73 per cent reaching level 5 and above. English results in the tests were better than those of science and mathematics. The test results were well above average for similar schools. By the end of Year 9, attainment is average and when the starting points of pupils is considered, achievement is good.
123. In 2001, the proportion of pupils achieving GCSE A*-C in English was average for girls nationally but the English literature results were well below average. Overall, all pupils achieved a grade in both subjects and pupils with a special need and those at the early stage of learning English achieved better than expected results. The results show that Filipinos and pupils of African and Caribbean descent are among the higher performers whereas white British and Irish girls are not performing at the same level. This is due in part to the higher incidence of absenteeism amongst these two groups. The department is monitoring performance closely. Based on their achievements in Year 9, these results are above those of similar schools. The English results were above those of mathematics and science. The 2002 results were higher than the previous year but no pupil achieved the higher grades.
124. **Speaking** skills are good throughout the school. Pupils speak confidently and clearly when expressing a viewpoint. They speak at length when answering questions and articulate their ideas effectively. Most listen intently to instructions. By the end of Year 9, pupils of all abilities use good communication skills with the high and middle attaining pupils using standard English effectively. A small number of pupils at the early stage of learning English and those with a special need lack the confidence to join in whole class discussion. A minority of white girls in Years 9 to 11 do not contribute to oral work as they sit quietly or become engaged in trivial activities. In contrast, pupils from minority ethnic groups, in particular African and Caribbean girls, tend to dominate oral work.
125. Standards in **reading** are above average for most pupils and satisfactory for the lower attaining pupils including those with a special need. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 read texts closely and extract and use information well when completing comprehension work as seen in Year 7 pupils' work on Swindells' "Abomination". The higher attaining Year 9 pupils make succinct notes and show very good engagement with themes as illustrated in their response to Christie's "My Left Foot". They can identify the key features of texts very well and comment on the use of language as seen in the response of Year 8 pupils on Marlowe's "Dr Faustus". The middle attaining pupils read competently whilst pupils with special needs and those at the early stage of learning English read aloud fluently. Their achievements in reading are good because of the strong emphasis on text level work. This results in pupils reading between the lines when exploring the use of language, as well as the behaviour of characters and the implications of their action. For example, in a Year 9 lesson where

they discussed the prejudiced attitudes towards Shylock and in Year 11 lessons where pupils examined Iago's response to Othello.

126. Standards in **writing** are average overall. The higher attaining pupils write fluently and at length, producing well-organised essays with powerful descriptions. Essays are very well structured and they use a wide vocabulary. For example, a high attaining Year 9 Nigerian girl wrote a detailed and witty piece on 'the idiots guide to making a cup of tea'. Although by the end of Year 9 and 11, middle-attaining pupils achieve satisfactory standards, overall, they do not use a wide enough vocabulary and their structuring of sentences is weak. Lower attaining pupils, including pupils at the early stage of learning English and those with a special need, do not write at length. There are weaknesses in spelling, sometimes words are not recognisable and care is not always taken when copying. Pupils are not thorough in applying editing and proof skills. There is very little use of ICT in their work. The department ensures that pupils write for a variety of purposes. The clear and appropriate focus on word and sentence level work is leading to improvement in writing. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the very good emphasis on writing clear sentences led to the teacher adapting the National Strategy on writing to persuade, argue and advise. Pupils made good use of key phrases and descriptive language as the teacher worked with them on modelling the opening paragraph.
127. The quality of teaching, and consequently of learning, in English is **good** with some very good features. All teaching seen was satisfactory or better: 75 per cent was good or better and 25 per cent very good or excellent. There was slightly more very good and excellent teaching in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are very well structured and teachers make clear what pupils are expected to know, understand and do. Pupils' knowledge of their learning is good as teachers use the summary at the end of a lesson to review the work covered. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan varied and interesting work, which is well matched to pupils' needs. In the very best lessons, there is a sharp focus on developing pupils' vocabulary and language skills. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on descriptive writing, pupils made very good progress in selecting and using interesting and descriptive similes in their work. In this lesson, the high expectations resulted in fluent second language learners, such as a Swedish girl, writing imaginatively.
128. Teachers' skilful questioning extends pupils' understanding of the work and evokes emotional and in-depth responses. A very good example was in a Year 11 lesson where pupils were studying Othello: here learning was accelerated because of the teacher's powerful descriptions and probing questions which captured pupils' imagination. This led to all pupils, 50 per cent of whom had a special need, making very good progress in their understanding of the characters. Overall, teachers manage pupils well but there are occasions when low level talk disrupts the pace of lessons because a small number of disengaged pupils, mainly white girls, are not very focused. When this happens, teaching is satisfactory, as progress is slower than expected. Support is very good as demonstrated in a Year 7 lesson where the support teacher's work of signing, explaining and modelling enabled the statemented pupil to keep up with the pace of the work. However, there are occasions when there is a lack of support staff to help the large number of special needs pupils. Marking is very good and pupils are given concise targets to improve their work.
129. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The head of department has a clear vision of raising standards and is supported by a hard working and committed team. The development plan clearly identifies the issues for improvement but it lacks a strategic overview and precise targets for action. Timetabling arrangements whereby some classes are taught twice in one day, poses problems of continuity and progression.
130. Since the last inspection, progress within the English department is good. Teaching has improved significantly. Writing shows improvement based on the use of the Literacy Strategy. There is now a greater emphasis on promoting reading. The accommodation is still poor, the décor is sparse and the lack of non-specialist rooms results in some teachers constantly changing rooms. Although teachers have been trained to use ICT in English, it is still not used extensively in the subject.

Literacy in other subjects of the curriculum

131. Pupils use **good** speaking and listening skills across the curriculum and most subjects provide a range of opportunities for them to develop **good** oracy skills. They speak confidently and articulate

their ideas with ease and poise. However, a literacy strand does not fully underpin work in mathematics and physical education. Teachers do not use questions effectively in physical education to gauge pupils' understanding of the work. Pupils use specialist terms accurately as teachers emphasise the importance of using precise vocabulary. In art, high order reading skills are well promoted through research work. Writing skills are satisfactory, overall, and pupils take pride in their work. They write fluently in history and draft and edit their work in modern foreign languages; however, pupils do not do much extended writing in art and science. Marking is well used in science to reinforce literacy skills.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

-
- The high percentage of pupils attaining grades A*-G in GCSE mathematics.
- The after-school revision classes for Year 9 and Year 11 pupils to help raise standards.

Areas for improvement

- The well below average percentage of pupils attaining grades A*-C in GCSE mathematics.
- The use of information and communication technology.
- The quality of accommodation and display.

132. Pupils enter the school with below average attainment in mathematics. Pupils' attainment in 2001 mathematics tests at the end of Year 9 was below the national average but close to the average for similar schools. Results have been improving in recent years, except for a slight dip in 2000. The provisional results for mathematics in 2002 continue this upward trend. Pupils achieve better results than in science but below those in English. They make satisfactory progress as they move through the school because the overall quality of teaching is satisfactory.
133. The percentage of pupils achieving GCSE grades A*-C in 2001 was well below the national average, a decline from 2000 which was close to the national average. However, provisional results for GCSE mathematics in 2002 are close to those achieved in 2000. Lower attaining pupils achieve well and the GCSE grades A*-G in 2001 was much higher than the national average. Pupils' mathematics GCSE results in 2001 are broadly in line with their performance in many other subjects.
134. Inspection evidence shows that overall attainment by the end of Year 9 is below that expected nationally. Pupils' achievement, based on their attainment on entry, is satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding across mathematics, including elements of investigational work. Middle attaining pupils have appropriate skills in number, algebra and geometry. Some lower attaining pupils lack confidence in basic number work. Standards by the end of Year 11 are below average overall but match GCSE results. Pupils achieve satisfactorily from their earlier Year 9 test performance. More able pupils use and apply mathematics effectively in their GCSE coursework tasks. They have well-established skills in geometry and handling data. Middle attaining pupils have a broad range of knowledge and understanding but weaknesses in aspects of number and algebra impede their work in other areas such as geometry and trigonometry. Lower attaining pupils can cope with basic written number work but sometimes struggle with mental and oral calculations. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily because they receive some extra help in the classroom. Pupils with special educational needs also benefit from help provided by teachers and support staff.
135. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall throughout the school. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all lessons seen: in 44 per cent of lessons teaching was good or better. Teaching was very good in only one lesson seen. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of mathematics and are enthusiastic about it. This transmits to the pupils, enabling them to make steady progress and to enjoy the subject. Teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is well established, encouraging pupils to use appropriate terminology and calculate accurately but ICT is not used sufficiently to support mathematics learning. In the best lessons teachers manage pupils effectively, involving them in whole class discussion or paired work so that they behave well and are

fully challenged by the work set. For example, in a very well taught Year 8 lesson on probability, all pupils participated by writing an answer on their own flash card before displaying it in unison. Thus all were engaged and made very good learning gains. In some lessons higher attaining pupils are not fully challenged by the work. In most cases time, support staff and resources are used well so that pupils maintain their pace of working. On a few other occasions pupils become restless towards the end of a lesson and their productivity drops.

136. The subject is led and managed well and there is a genuine shared commitment to high achievement for all pupils. Along with many other central London schools there is a perennial problem in recruiting and retaining high quality mathematics teachers despite the valiant efforts made. The resultant frequent change of teacher borne by many pupils impedes their overall progress and achievement. The split site, dispersed mathematics classrooms on each site, limited display of pupils' work and lack of mathematics resource/meeting room also take a toll on achievement and progress by reducing the day- to- day efficiency of teachers and lowering the status of mathematics. Pupils' achievement is brought back up to a satisfactory level only by the dedication and professionalism of the permanent mathematics staff and the occasional long-term supply teacher of high quality.
137. Although teachers observe each other's lessons from time to time, the stretched staffing prevents the more experienced teachers giving any more than basic support to their less experienced colleagues. The department has made a good start to implementing the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for mathematics, for example, in producing comprehensive modules for Year 7. There are good opportunities for after-school revision classes for Year 9 and Year 11 pupils and master classes for gifted and talented pupils that help raise standards. The department is at an early stage in making use of the large amount of data on attainment. However, the useful analysis of how much progress pupils make from their end of Year 6 mathematics tests in 1996 to GCSE mathematics results in 2001 is a good starting point. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. There is less reliance on published texts, investigational work using and applying mathematics is more evident but there is still too little use of ICT to support mathematics.

Numeracy in other subjects across the curriculum

138. The provision for pupils to use numeracy in other subjects is satisfactory. There has been a whole staff in-service training session and a working party formed to take ideas further. Departments are beginning to devise policies for their subject areas. In science, pupils manipulate number and construct and interpret graphs of various kinds. In geography, pupils use principles gleaned from their study of co-ordinates to help them understand and use grid references in map work. In design and technology, pupils weigh ingredients and analyse and present data graphically. In modern and foreign languages, pupils count in French and complete simple calculations.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths:

- Improved standards of attainment in Year 9 and 11.
- Good planning of lessons and management of pupils.
- Good pupil attitudes and relationships
- Enthusiastic and committed leadership.

Areas for Improvement:

- Teacher expectations of higher attaining pupils.
- Use of ICT in teaching and administration.
- Use of accommodation and displays.
- Monitoring of teaching and use of assessment information.

139. In 2001 attainment was well below the national average, and below average for similar schools. However, the proportion gaining the higher level 6, or greater, was close to the average for similar schools, but still below the national average. Attainment, relative to national averages, increased from 1997 to 2000, but fell sharply in 2001, mainly because experienced staff left. Performance in

2001 in science was below that of other core subjects, mathematics and English. In 2002, although national data is not yet available for comparison, the overall performance and percentage of pupils gaining level 5, or greater, has significantly increased again, and represents good improvement over the previous year.

140. Currently, pupils enter the school with knowledge and understanding of science broadly as expected for their age. However, for older pupils, including the Year 9 group in 2001, the prior overall attainment on entry in Year 7 was below average. Pupils' performance in the 2001 National Tests, being well below average, indicated achievement below that expected. For the most recent Year 9 group, improving National Test results in 2002, indicate that achievement was satisfactory. This is supported by first hand observation of pupils work in Year 9, which indicates attainment just below that expected nationally.
141. At the end of Year 11, in 2001, the percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grades A* to C in double award combined science was well below national average. The percentage A* to C was also below average when compared with schools in a similar context and also below average compared to schools with pupils of similar prior attainment at the end of Year 9. However, mirroring the pattern of the younger year group, the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C had been rising relative to national average from 1997 to 2000, fell in 2001 and has risen again in 2002. Again the fluctuation is attributed mainly to staff changes, including a new head of department appointed in 2001. Analysis of data, comparing performance of the pupils in Year 11 with their prior attainment in Year 9, indicates that progress over the period was satisfactory.
142. In the work seen in lessons and through analysis of pupils' work in the current Year 9, knowledge and understanding of science are still below the expectation for the age. For example, pupils are studying the nature of continuous and discontinuous variation in genetics as part of the work for attainment target 2, living processes. Most recognise the variation but do not extend their understanding with any depth of thought. A small minority can explain the genetic and environmental factors involved, although few have well developed scientific enquiry skills. Most pupils have gained satisfactory understanding of the principles of fair testing and reliability in measurement, but organization and analysis of data is underdeveloped. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on the reactivity of metals with acid, pupils realise that the concentration and volume of acid must be kept constant in order to make reliable comparisons. The quality of analysis is however limited to simple observation of any noticeable effect.
143. In the current Year 11, pupils undertake coursework that is satisfactorily detailed and methodically carried out. Observations are mainly accurate and clear, but insufficient skill in analysis and evaluation of experimental work is apparent and relatively little use is made of ICT in presentation or analysis. Most pupils have knowledge of basic facts about physical processes, living organisms, and chemical materials. They are less clear about application of knowledge to problems and lack clarity with their explanation of essential ideas. Overall from the work seen, standards are below average and progress from Year 9 is satisfactory.
144. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress where there is additional support teaching provided. Otherwise, support from peers in practical work and some use of adapted worksheets helps pupils to make satisfactory progress. Similarly, pupils with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress, partly since their command of English is often good, but also due to good relationships and collaborative work between pupils in lessons. Lower and middle attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in gaining understanding of science and acquisition of skills, due to sound planning in the teaching. Higher attaining pupils are not always reaching levels appropriate to their capability. There was no significant variation noted in the performance of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds
145. The quality of teaching and learning in science is satisfactory overall. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 80 per cent of lessons seen and good or better in half of them. One very good lesson was seen and two lessons were unsatisfactory. The main reasons for these unsatisfactory lessons were the either lack of clarity in explanations or weak management of pupil behaviour. In one case the teacher was on short- term supply. Teachers' planning is strong overall and good, detailed reference is made to National Curriculum requirements and schemes of work. For example, in one lesson in Year 8 the teacher had identified clear objectives related to learning about the structure of the heart.

This was developed well by groups of pupils discussing the characteristics such as muscle size related to function of the heart components. Practical observation of a heart dissection, using video camera links raised interest and enjoyment of this lesson.

146. Teachers use their knowledge well to question and support pupils, although many of these are reluctant to respond actively, preferring to listen only. The level of productivity expected of higher attaining pupils is not well enough defined in terms of appropriate challenging tasks. For example, in a typical lesson all pupils have essentially the same work. Additional work is sometimes anticipated from higher attainers, but appropriate focussed problems are not sufficiently demanding to stretch this group of pupils. Very little use is made of ICT, although the department is about to benefit from a new dedicated network of computers recently installed in the laboratories. Good reference is made to spiritual and moral and social aspects of the curriculum, for example in topics such as genetics or pollution, and in the high level of collaboration and sharing in practical work. Few opportunities are provided for cultural development.
147. The subject leadership is well led and management is satisfactory. The head of department is enthusiastic and has a clear vision for development, backed by clear, relevant improvement plans. All staff are committed to improvement, although the focus on raising standards is not as prominent as it might be. Good response has been made, and work carried out, on development of schemes of work for pupils in Years 7–9, through recent national initiatives. Routine assessment is efficient but insufficient use is made of the data and little use made of ICT in recording or analysis of underachievement, although this area is improving greatly with new approaches to tracking progress in Year 7. Overall targets for attainment are modest, but targets for individual pupils are being increasingly developed to support pupils' learning. Monitoring of teachers' work has been carried out, mainly by analysis of examination results, talking to pupils and moderation of work. Not all teachers have been observed teaching. The split site has been a barrier to effective regular observation.
148. Management of the department generally is hampered by the nature of the accommodation. Being on two completely separate sites organisational problems occur. Where possible, equipment is duplicated on each site, but some requires transport from site to site. Laboratories are old and depressing, with only mediocre display to lighten the areas. Full refurbishment is needed, especially in the upper school.
149. Since the last inspection, standards have fluctuated, and had fallen in 2001, from the previous year, but have risen again in 2002. Teaching quality has improved and committed leadership is beginning to have a positive impact on progress. Overall, improvement is satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths:

- Very good teaching and learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- High levels of attainment by pupils of all abilities and backgrounds.
- Very good leadership of the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- The use made of ICT.
- Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning of temporary staff.

150. In 2001, results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above national average. Pupils' work seen during inspection, both in two and three dimensional work, was also above national standards for all age groups and matched results achieved in tests and exams. Pupils draw well from observation as a result of a systematic programme of drawing skill development, which lies at the centre of the curriculum provision
151. GCSE results since the last report have been consistently well above national average and in 2001 were outstanding, with 97 per cent of pupils achieving an A*-C grade followed by 84 per cent in 2002. Pupils do better at art than in other subjects. Careful analysis of pupils' attainment shows all ethnic

groups and the large number of pupils whose first language is other than English, achieve equally well in art and design.

152. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good visual research skills, often inspired by artists from different times and cultures. This is clearly evident in pupils' sketchbooks, which are used extensively in lessons and for homework to experiment and develop personal ideas using a wide variety of media. Pupils are able to discuss their work with confidence using appropriate art terminology as a direct consequence of the many opportunities being provided within lessons for individual and group review where pupils discuss their work and set future targets.
153. Teaching and therefore learning, is very good overall. Teaching was good or better in 75 per cent of lessons seen and very good or excellent in 63 per cent of lessons. Two lessons, delivered by staff on short-term supply, were unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives. They are well structured, involving a variety of activity ensuring lessons are pacy and never dull. Regular review occurs within and at the end of each lesson involving whole or small group discussion thus ensuring that all pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are supported and challenged throughout the lesson.
154. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and use this well to motivate and inspire pupils to learn. Regular reviewing sessions provide on-going opportunities for the teacher to challenge and encourage all pupils to greater effort and standards. Teachers have high expectations for pupils of all ability and backgrounds and bring out the best in all of them. The style of teaching makes a significant contribution to the social development of pupils. Curriculum content often involves pupils developing sensitivity and appreciation of the art of other cultures.
155. The department is very well led and managed with a clear vision of how the art and design should be taught. There is an effective system for the assessment of pupils' work, which is well used by staff. High levels of motivation and commitment, clearly directed for the benefit of pupils, are evident throughout the department. This high quality leadership has ensured that the subject has made good improvement since the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Assessment policy and practice.
- Teaching and learning informed by good training.
- Good relationships and teamwork from teachers and pupils.

Areas for Improvement

- Recruitment of specialists' teachers and a food technology technician.
- Insufficient ICT.
- Accommodation.

156. In 2001, attainment at the end of Year 9 was below average. Although teacher assessment indicated standards were well above, this was not secure because work seen in the scrutiny of pupils' folders did not support the judgement.
157. GCSE results in 2001 were below national average. Results suffer from non-specialist teaching. This was compounded by a lack of accuracy and standardisation of marking to help pupils identify what they needed to do to improve. The result was pupils were entered for GCSE at the wrong level, with disappointing results. Poor attendance of specific groups of pupils also effected results because portfolios of work were incomplete and in a few pupils failed to attend the theory examination. Pupils did not perform in design and technology as well as they did in other subjects. The trend over the past three years has dropped from in line with the national average in 2000, to below in 2001 and 2002.

158. In work seen during the inspection standards are reaching expected levels by the end of Years 9 and above average at the end of Year 11. This judgement represents satisfactory achievement in Years 7-9 and good achievement in Years 10 to 11. The new head of department has introduced new and effective systems but attainment is being held back because the subject has insufficient time to cover the programmes of study in Years 7 to 9. This lack of time results in a limited amount of control technology and insufficient design and make activity and this is a breach of the statutory requirement.
159. Scrutiny of high attainers work in Years 7 to 9 showed they reach potential in some skills, but lack consistent use and knowledge of techniques such as flow planning and accurate working drawings. ICT remains an issue from the previous inspection.
160. Work seen in Years 10 and 11 is good. New and rigorous methods of assessing work clarify pupils' understanding of the examination board's marking system, which is helping to raise standards. Pupils treat homework seriously because of the quick turn around in marking and feedback enabling them to improve their standards. Research ideas from other designers for challenge and inspire. Years 11 were astounded by the development of their ideas for a storage container following very good design research. ICT is a limiting factor for all work in Years 10 and 11.
161. Pupils with special needs, those from different ethnic backgrounds and those with English as a second language achieve similarly to their peers because teachers make good use of pupil data related to individual's previous learning. Gifted and talented pupils are unable to reach their full potential because an inconsistent system across the school fails to recognise talents within practical areas of the curriculum such as design and technology.
162. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, an improvement on the previous report. One third of teaching and learning was very good or better. High calibre teaching from specialist teachers, some with industrial practice, is improving learning. Non-specialists have benefited from the recent weekend training and observation of specialist design technology teaching because it has strengthened their corporate identity. A very good technician ensures ordering and preparation of materials, keeps the department running smoothly, but food technology lacks similar support. Teachers' expectations of pupils' work and behaviour are high and met. They plan good purposeful lessons with active participation from pupils. In Year 8 pupils' investigation of proverbs from different cultures was the basis for a banner design and they gained confidence in sharing their designs with others. Basic skills including good writing frames are used to help pupils complete their creative writing or reports. Visits to the surrounding galleries and museums give an insight into designs from other cultures, as seen in textiles work in Year 10. Assessment is a good feature of teaching because it drives the pace of progress forward and challenges target setting, but pupils do not use their National Curriculum levels. Critical evaluative skills are marginalized in a minority of lessons because there is no time for consolidation.
163. Leadership overall is satisfactory within the faculty structure. Good leadership of the new head of the design technology department is strengthening development planning and use of pupil data to improve examination grade forecasts. Overall teaching is constrained by the physical condition and location of the classrooms. The rooms are outdated and cluttered which has an impact on pupils' independent organisation and study skills.
164. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory with the majority of issues covered. Accommodation and ICT are major areas where development has been limited and learning suffers.

DRAMA

Overall provision for drama is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils' enthusiasm for the subject and their determination to achieve well.
- Consistent, good quality teaching, which promotes good progress.
- Helpful and constructive evaluation of pupils' work.

Areas for improvement

- Raising standards in the GCSE examination.
- The quality of the accommodation is poor.

165. The subject is taught as a separate GCSE option to Years 10 and 11 and to all pupils in Year 7 to 9. Standards are satisfactory, overall, by the end of Year 9 and 11. GCSE results in 2001 were well below the average for girls nationally. Standards in the GCSE examination have fallen since the last inspection when they were judged as good. The 2002 results were slightly lower than the previous year.
166. Pupils display very positive attitudes to the subject and work with enthusiasm and engagement in all activities. They listen very well to instructions and display an increasing awareness of using drama conventions to develop characters. By Year 11, pupils perform with zest and explore ideas with energy. They demonstrate a high level of dedication when rehearsing and throw themselves into their work. Pupils generate ideas well as they adapt and choreograph their movements, gestures and expressions to the sound of music to express a particular mood and atmosphere.
167. Teaching and learning are **good** overall and talk is used effectively to captivate and involve pupils in their learning. This leads to them making good progress because there is very good emphasis on developing their evaluation skills to critically appraise each other's work as well as their own. Lessons are highly structured, pace is good and pupils are encouraged to use specific skills to enhance their performance. The warm up exercises are used appropriately to instil discipline. This increases pupils listening, their co-operation and communicating skills. For instance, in the Year 10 lesson, pupils' worked through a number of warm up exercises before confidently taking part in a whole class drama around a 'train station'. In role, they successfully used spontaneous improvisation as part of a group before individually using thought tracking to develop their characters. Teaching makes very good use of modelling. This ensures that pupils achieve very good standards in interpreting and performing as seen when Year 11 pupils worked on portraying one of the deadly sins, 'wrath', to the background of Holst's 'Planets'.
168. The subject is well led by the new head of department. There is now a stable team of specialist drama teachers. The head of department has taken action to introduce well-planned schemes of work and a substantial handbook. The accommodation has not improved since the last inspection. Without a dedicated drama studio, the subject is taught in the hall, which is unsuitable. The floor covering is dirty and the noise level during rehearsals adversely affects lessons in adjoining rooms. The department does not have adequate lighting, storage space or props. Overall, the subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' moral and social development. The new head of department has already introduced the initial bi-annual large-scale productions involving one-eighth of the school population. Very good links have been established with the local theatre to host such events. The subject provides the means to meet the needs of pupils from different ethnic groups and abilities.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Relationships between staff and pupils are good.
- Specialist teachers have a good knowledge of their subject.

Areas for improvement

- Over reliance on worksheets.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.
- Learning resources, especially the use of video material.
- Marking, to give pupils a greater opportunity to improve their work.

169. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2001 are just below national averages. Standards in the work seen during the inspection at the end of Year 9 are also just below national expectations. Pupils, therefore, achieve satisfactorily as they enter the school with below average knowledge and understanding of geography.

170. Results in GCSE examinations in 2001 are well below national expectations. Pupils do less well in geography than in most of their other subjects. The 2002 results, however, although still below average, show an improvement.
171. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils show a satisfactory understanding of both physical geography and human geography and the effects on the environment of human activity. Pupils can access information from both text and diagrams but many have difficulty with mapping skills, in particular grid references. They can satisfactorily discuss their findings and write short answers to questions but weaknesses in literacy skills impede progress. Higher attaining pupils have little opportunity to attempt more extended writing. There is little use made of graphs and pie charts. Pupils with special educational needs are not always achieving their targets because of lack of support in class. Girls of white British origin and higher attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should because of weaknesses in teaching. Poor attendance in some classes greatly affects progress.
172. Standards seen at the end of Year 11 are just below national expectations. Many have a satisfactory understanding of geographical processes. The range of work is reduced by the lack of the use of ICT. Pupils with special educational needs are working satisfactorily towards their targets. White girls take a less active role in lessons than do the others and their progress suffers accordingly. Higher attaining pupils are not fully stretched by work which has the same difficulty level for all members of the class
173. Teaching and learning overall is **satisfactory**. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 91 per cent of lessons, good or better in 36 per cent and was very good in one lesson. Teaching is well planned with clear aims but these are rarely shared with pupils. Starter sessions at the beginning of lessons are usually by question and answer. An innovative idea of involving pupils to act as trees in the rain forest in Year 9 had a great impact in demonstrating the impact of deforestation. The use of ICT and video is under-developed in assisting pupils' learning. Teachers have a good command of their subject and usually set high standards, which pupils rise to. While the tasks matched the needs of most pupils in the wide ability groups used in geography there is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils. The over reliance on using a single worksheet in lessons is not always stretching pupils of higher prior attainment. Homework is set regularly and completed to a satisfactory standard but it was rarely referred to in lessons. Marking is irregular and does not include comments to help pupils learn from their mistakes.
174. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The department is working hard to improve standards at a time when it has new teachers, supply teachers and teachers for which geography is not their main teaching subject. The curriculum has been well planned to develop and reinforce key skills. There is, however, insufficient monitoring and regular evaluation of teaching so as to improve the performance and standards of pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Progress has been satisfactory since the last inspection, but resources and accommodation are still areas of weakness.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- The marking and correcting of pupils' work.
- The high level of presentation of written work.

Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment to help improve teaching and learning.
- Support for new and inexperienced teachers.

175. Inspection evidence shows that pupils attain in line with that expected nationally by the end of Year 9. This represents good achievement considering their below average attainment when they enter the school. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of major historical events and can

extract information from a variety of sources. Higher attaining pupils have a good appreciation of events through time and can make good links between the cause of an event and its' consequence later.

176. Over the past three years, pupils have performed well in history when compared to other subjects in the school. In 2001, GCSE results in history were in line with the national average, a decline over 2000 when they were significantly above the national average. The GCSE results for 2002 are similar to those attained in 2001, in that over 50 per cent of pupils entered gained grades A*-C. Careful analysis of examination results shows that pupils from the various ethnic groups in the school attain equally well.
177. At the end of Year 11, first hand observation of work shows standards are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils write with increasing sophistication and can produce reasoned arguments. All pupils are well able to use source material to support their accounts.
178. Pupils arrive at the school with below average levels of literacy and skills in the subject. They make good progress over time largely due to the focused teaching of basic skills. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, including English as an additional language, generally make similar rates of progress as their peers. However, an opportunity exists for teachers to enhance the achievement of these pupils, and that of the gifted and talented, by setting specific targets and extending the range of pupil tasks in lessons. Pupils who continue to study history to GCSE make good progress in terms of prior achievement, although that of the most able is less marked.
179. Teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. In 88 per cent of lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better: in 38 per cent it was good or better. One lesson seen was very good. All lessons are well prepared and structured. Learning objectives are clearly outlined at the start of each lesson and an attempt is made to conclude with an evaluation of gains in learning. All teachers possess good subject knowledge, which they deliver confidently. Pupils are appropriately challenged and skilful questioning on the part of teachers encourages them to think critically. Satisfactory teaching resources are used to stimulate learning. In two lessons observed, lack of teaching experience, specifically in classroom management techniques, and the inaccessibility of management support, resulted in unsatisfactory pupil behaviour and insufficient learning.
180. Overall, the leadership of the subject is satisfactory and benefits from a sufficiently clear and shared ethos and common commitment. Management, which is spread across a faculty head and two co-ordinators, is also satisfactory. A particular strength of the department is a constructive marking and correction policy, which reinforces literacy skills. However, there are shortcomings in record keeping and the tracking of pupil progress. The history area has few attractive displays designed to celebrate pupil achievement. Opportunities are also lost to enrich the curriculum, as the department organises only a limited range of outside visits. In the absence of a school network, the subject provides few opportunities to develop ICT skills. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Citizenship

181. Provision for the teaching of citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.
182. The school intends to meet the 2002 statutory order for citizenship education by incorporating a programme of study in their preparation for adult life (PAL) course and tutorial schedule. This programme was devised following a whole school audit, which identified aspects of the topics of study in citizenship already delivered via the existing curriculum. The school does not propose to offer discrete citizenship provision in separate curriculum time. This complex arrangement, which expects small elements of citizenship to be dealt with in many different subjects, is unlikely to be effective.
183. Education in citizenship is co-ordinated by a trained specialist teacher of politics and is based on appropriate learning objectives and a clear action plan. This plan targets gifted and talented pupils as well as those with special educational needs, including English as an additional language. The requirement to set suitable learning challenges and extend extra-curricular provision for all pupils is

clearly recognised. Nevertheless, serious procedural gaps are already emerging as the system for monitoring, assessing, recording and reporting pupils' achievements in citizenship has yet to be finalised by senior managers. Resourcing for citizenship is underway and should be sufficient to support the programme of study.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Specialist teaching enables most pupils to make good progress in the GCSE short course.
- Substantial improvement in computer facilities, though this is too recent to have had an impact on standards.
- A clear action plan for the development of the ICT resources.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils do not do as well as they should in ICT particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- The National Curriculum requirement for teachers to make effective use of ICT in their teaching is not met in almost all subjects.
- There is a lack of a team of ICT teachers.
- The external provision of ICT training for all staff, which has not been of a satisfactory standard.
- The management of the ICT curriculum across the school, which is under-developed.

184. In 2001, the school judged that standards at the end of Year 9 were well below national average and until very recently, the continuing staff and resource limitations have resulted in little improvement in pupils' attainment. However, the benefit of specialist teaching in the core ICT course in Years 10 and 11 enabled most pupils to successfully gain a graded result in the GCSE short course in 2002. Standards in that course were below national average but over 40 per cent of pupils attained grades A*-C.
185. Standards in Year 9 are well below national average hindered as they are by the lack of specialist teaching in the taught programme and little or no opportunity to use ICT in other subjects. Pupils are not making the gains in knowledge and understanding of ICT from Year 7 to Year 9 that they should be. In a Year 9 lesson for example, pupils were able access the Internet but needed support in using the search engines and had few skills in evaluating the usefulness and validity of the information gained. In some respects, the younger years show more confidence in their use of computers to analyse data, particularly when taught by a more ICT experienced teacher. The higher attaining pupils in Year 8 produced effective presentations and simple websites often benefiting from access to computers outside school. Year 7 pupils too, showed stronger knowledge and skills on entry and though still below national average a significant number were able to calculate numerical values in a spreadsheet as part of a simple modelling activity. There is little difference in the standards attained by the different ethnic groups in the school, nor of pupils with a special need or English as an additional language.
186. In Years 10 and 11, pupils gain considerably from the GCSE short course. Where they are still dependent on the teacher for help and guidance, these lessons help them develop skills in collecting, organising and presenting data. However, while some pupils make use of ICT for GCSE coursework, often at home, there are few if any opportunities to consolidate the learning in GCSE ICT in other lessons.
187. Over Years 7 to 11, pupils' progress is hindered by the limited computer facilities and the lack of computer use in other subjects. The need to use temporary, non-specialist staff to deliver the taught ICT programme in Years 7 to 9 results in teaching, which is not sufficiently challenging. In contrast, the specialist teaching in the GCSE course helps pupils retrieve some of earlier lost ground. However, over the five years of main school pupils acquire too narrow range of knowledge and skills and develop insufficient confidence and independence.
188. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In 90 per cent of lessons, teaching was satisfactory or better and in 30 per cent of lessons teaching was good. The good teaching was seen in those lessons taught by specialists who structure the lessons well with clear aims for the pupils. Teaching aids are used effectively including a new interactive whiteboard and all of this sustained lesson pace and enabled pupils to learn rapidly and develop their understanding. Most of the other teaching, mostly in Years 7 to 9, was satisfactory in the way it provided supervised access to the computer facilities and enabled pupils to develop their basic ICT skills. However, pace in a number of lessons was slowed by pupil talkativeness and inattention, in part because teachers were less skilled in keeping pupils in order. This was particularly true of the unsatisfactory lesson where the level of the work was not well matched to the needs of the class many of who had special educational needs and for whom English was an additional language.
189. The development of ICT since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory but most recently the school has made considerable efforts to bring about improvements. The ICT co-ordinator with senior staff, has drafted a clear resource development plan. At the time of the inspection the school was installing computer facilities across the school. This has enabled it to come in line with the current secondary school ratio of one computer for every six pupils. The development is being supported by outside technical staff but the school has yet to appoint a permanent network technician/manager.

Furthermore, it has yet to clearly delineate the respective management roles necessary to develop ICT across the school and manage and expand the taught programmes. The lack of specialist teachers continues to be a concern. While many teachers are keen to make use of the new facilities, recent ICT training as part of a national government initiative has been ineffective because it proved unsuccessful at preparing them to make use of computers in the classroom

ICT in other subjects across the curriculum

190. Provision for the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is **unsatisfactory** because, although some subjects have attempted to make use of ICT, no subject is meeting the National Curriculum requirement to plan and implement the use of ICT in its teaching. This is a significant weakness in provision.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning for all pupils are good, resulting in good progress and a positive attitude to language learning.
- A well lead department, resulting in a shared commitment to improving standards in languages.
- Pupils show good understanding of basic grammatical concepts and can apply them when using the foreign language.

Areas for improvement

- The development and use of assessment to National Curriculum levels.
- The use of ongoing assessment for pupils in Years 10 and 11 in order that pupils know what to do to improve their performance at GCSE.
- The use of ICT to support language learning.
- To review schemes of work in order to reflect fully the revised National Curriculum programme of study and to ensure progression in skills for GCSE pupils.

191. The teacher assessment of pupils' attainment at age 14 in 2001 shows that standards are below national expectations at level 5. This was the first year that languages reported at level 5 however, and the judgements appear to have underestimated pupils' attainment. Results in the 2001 GCSE examinations for both French and Spanish are in line with the national average at grades A* to G and just below the national average at grades A* to C. Pupils do well in French and Spanish compared to other their other subjects.

192. Standards seen in the inspection in Year 9 in both French and Spanish are in line with national expectations. Pupils have positive attitudes to language learning and in speaking they respond readily with good pronunciation and intonation and can ask and answer questions and express simple opinions. They work well in pairs and can produce short exchanges, although middle and lower attaining pupils sometimes require the support of the written word. Pupils have good listening skills and respond well to teachers' clear but sometimes quite complex instructions and explanations in the foreign language. They take part in a range of listening and reading activities, although there was little evidence of pupils reading independently. When writing French and Spanish, most pupils require support to produce more than single sentences in the new topics introduced but their work is careful and accurate. Higher and middle attaining pupils can write short independent descriptions of themselves with some accuracy.

193. In French, work seen from last year's end of Year 9 shows that higher attaining pupils can write at length and accurately using tenses other than the present across a range of familiar topics. Most pupils have a good understanding of some basic grammatical concepts and can apply them in their own work. As a result of teacher planning and careful questioning, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in a mixed ability setting in Years 7 to 9 and pupils with English as an additional language make good progress in language lessons in what is often for them their third language.

194. Standards seen in the inspection in Year 11 in both French and Spanish are also in line with national expectations. Pupils respond in speaking with good pronunciation and intonation. They take part in dialogues in pairs and can give opinions with reasons. In one Year 11 French lesson, pupils were able to say what they wanted to do for a job and give reasons why their personality suited that job. Higher and middle attaining pupils were able to give accounts using the past tense about what they did on holiday. Pupils take part in a range of listening and reading activities, including some more extended reading in Spanish. In writing, in both languages, pupils have already started preparing writing coursework for GCSE. In both languages they can write about a range of topics, including descriptions of their school, a holiday and a famous person. Higher attaining pupils in both languages are already quite secure in their use of tenses and can write clearly and accurately. Middle attaining pupils are less secure in the use of tenses but still reasonably accurate and lower attaining pupils are often quite inaccurate, but are still able to communicate.
195. Achievement in French and Spanish is good. Teachers' high expectations mean that pupils make good progress in lessons. The teachers' own use of the foreign language in the classroom helps pupils to use the language themselves quickly and to make progress in speaking and listening. By Year 9 pupils are able to use the language with some independence and confidence and by Year 11 are developing the skills required in the GCSE examination, including writing at length.
196. Teaching in French and Spanish for all pupils was **good** in 55 percent of the lessons seen and 20 per cent were very good, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers have good classroom management and use the foreign language consistently so that pupils have very good models of language to follow. Teaching contributes to pupils' social and spiritual development and to their cultural development. Lessons always began with a moment to reflect and a prayer in the foreign language. Pupils were encouraged to work in pairs and groups and to respect and to listen to other pupils' language. Displays showed authentic material from the countries of the foreign language, so that pupils were able to make cultural comparisons. Teaching contributed to pupils' progress in literacy by ensuring pupils had good grammatical understanding and enabling pupils to use grammatical concepts, as well as teaching pupils dictionary skills and how to deal with unknown words. Homework was well planned and consolidated or developed the language learnt in the lesson. It is marked regularly and positive comments encourage pupils. However, the use of ICT in languages is underdeveloped and does not fulfil the programme of study in modern languages and the lack of ongoing assessment in relation to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades in modern languages means that pupils do not know what they need to do to improve their skills and performance in French and Spanish.
197. The department is well led. The head of department, who has only been in post for one year, supports the department well, including the two new members of the department, and ensures that there is a shared commitment to raise standards. Departmental documentation is clear and all members of the team follow policies such as for homework, behaviour, literacy and numeracy consistently. All pupils have their own textbook and the department's resources are clearly linked to raising pupils' attainment. The priorities for the development of the department are clearly focused on raising standards and include the review of National Curriculum assessment and a shared understanding of the revised level descriptions. Schemes of work in French are insufficiently linked to the revised National Curriculum and those in Spanish are still being developed and for GCSE pupils the schemes of work do not clearly indicate progression in skills and structures. Although this was an issue at the last inspection, improvement since the last inspection overall is good.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The vision and drive of the recently appointed head of performing arts faculty.

Areas for improvement

- The urgent need for a full time head of music department.
- The implementation of the assessment procedures already in the new department handbook.
- The lack of opportunity to study GCSE music in Year 10.

- Accommodation and teaching resources.
- The provision of extra-curricular activities, which do not draw enough on the wealth of cultural experiences already inherent in the pupils.

198. There are no music results for the end of Year 9 teacher assessment tests for summer 2001 or 2002. Inspection evidence shows standards at the end of Year 9 to be below national averages and pupils do not achieve well enough. This is due to the lack of continuity caused by frequent changes in music teachers over the past years, and insufficient resources to meet the need of the National Curriculum.
199. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are below those expected nationally. Although pupils sing well with obvious enjoyment, their practical skills, for instance when using keyboards, are underdeveloped. This is because a lack of resources in the department has resulted in little or no use of keyboards. Little or no provision is made for the more musically able pupils. The pupils in Years 8 to 9 have no access to work covered in previous years and no recordings of compositions are in existence. This prevents revision of earlier work or the opportunity to revisit earlier compositions with a view to developing them further. There is no difference in attainment between the wide range of ethnic groups in the school, pupils with special needs or those whose first language is other than English.
200. In the 2001 GCSE examination, the percentage of pupils obtaining A*-C grades was just above the national average but the results for summer 2002 are below the national average for 2001. At present GCSE music is not studied in Year 10. Standards in Year 11 are below expectations. Pupils lack the basic skills of performance and listening, and the composition section of the requirements has not been started.
201. The standard of teaching and learning overall is unsatisfactory. Only 64 per cent of lessons seen were satisfactory or better, and two were good. Nearly all the unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the lessons of temporary supply teachers who are no longer at the school. This highlights, however, the urgent need for a head of department to monitor the work of all members of the department. Teachers' subject knowledge and musical experience is good, but how pupils learn has not been thoroughly thought through. There is no related progression from one activity to another. The regular presence of writing activities, often material copied from the board, is counterproductive when pupils require worthwhile musical experiences, particularly when the material to be copied is not required by the examination syllabus. Very little performing by pupils to the remainder of the class and ensuing evaluation by the listeners is carried out. Pupils do not know how well they are progressing, and the absence of regularly kept data, monitoring, and informed target setting is holding back learning.
202. Extra-curricular activities consist of choir and the needs of the more musically able are partly catered for by instrumental lessons. However the wealth of inherent musical ability originating from the diversity of cultures to be found in the school has been largely untapped.
203. The department accommodation is unsatisfactory. The main teaching room is poorly ventilated, the blinds do not cover all the windows and the drawstrings are inaccessible. There are insufficient practice rooms for group work. Resources are unsatisfactory. The lack of computers prevents the full delivery of the National Curriculum, percussion instruments require repairing or renewing, and there are few multicultural instruments.
204. Since the last inspection the department has been largely dependant on temporary staff, and without a head for over a year. Key issues from the last report have not been tackled. The arrival of a new head of performing arts faculty in September 2001 has started the slow process of reversing this situation by devising valuable procedures, which are informing and improving learning. Progress since the last inspection remains unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The improving ethos for provision by the very recently appointed head of department.

Areas for development

- Staff recruitment and retention difficulties since the last inspection, makes the achievement of pupils unsatisfactory as a consequence.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11 which are well below average.
- The progress of the more physically capable pupils.
- Poor quality accommodation.
- Changing, toilet and shower facilities, which are appalling.

205. As a result of staff recruitment and retention difficulties since the last inspection, the quality of physical education provision has declined. Pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, have not received consistent quality teaching or the curricular provision required as part of the National Curriculum.

206. In lessons seen in the common course, all groups of pupils' attainment is well below the levels expected for their age at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. In relation to their physical capabilities all groups of pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. In netball, for example, Year 9 pupils' passing techniques and quality of accuracy is poor and in games, their footwork and use of space is not sufficiently developed to allow games to flow. In their trampoline lessons in Year 11, the great majority of pupils are still working on basic routines and perform only a limited variety of moves.

207. Across all years pupils have a secure grasp of the principles and procedures of preparing for physical activity. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language receive good support that enables them to integrate well and to make good progress. Physically talented pupils achieve well in lessons but have had limited opportunities to take part in school teams and the GCSE physical education course is no longer offered in Years 10 and 11.

208. The quality of teaching is good and results in effective learning. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better and 80 per cent were good or better. As a result, progress in lessons is good for all groups of pupils. Lesson planning provides for a variety of structured and progressive activities and helps ensure pupils remain motivated. Most lessons start promptly and efficiently; this results in pupils being quickly involved. Pupils respond well to this, which helps to promote a positive learning atmosphere in lessons. For example, they work well as pairs and small groups and show clear respect for the capabilities of one another. In a Year 10 association football lesson, for example, pupils worked well together in this respect and as a result improved the techniques of their basic passing and ball control skills. Pupils responded well to the high expectations of the teacher in a Year 9 basketball lesson, which resulted in good quality learning and effective consolidation of passing skills. However, the punctuality and negative attitudes of some older pupils affect the progress they should be making. A significant minority of Year 11 pupils fail to bring kit and when questioned about this are surly and rude in their response. Effective breakdown and demonstration of skills, for example in a Year 11 trampoline lesson, ensures that pupils know what to do to make progress. Pupils are made aware of their capabilities because teachers circulate well and offer constructive praise and criticism. Effective questioning enables teachers to assess what pupils know and understand and also enhances pupils' speaking and listening skills.

209. There are, however, not always sufficient opportunities for pupils to be involved in evaluation by observing and coaching one another. Non-participants are not always as fully involved as they should be, for example, as part of whole group introductions and demonstrations or in coaching or evaluative roles. Sometimes, teachers tend to give a short evaluation at the end of lessons rather than to also ask pupils for their responses as to what they feel they have achieved; thus, pupils are not fully actively involved in assessing the quality of their learning.

210. Learning is held back because of the poor quality accommodation. In the upper school, for example, there is no physical education accommodation at all. Leadership and management of the department are developing well; there is already an improving ethos for the subject and there is also a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The quality of changing facilities in the lower school is a poor reflection of the school's generally positive caring ethos. The changing room is cramped for the number of pupils expected to use it, there are few hooks for pupils to hang up their clothes and not all toilet partitions and doors are in place. Furthermore, the shower area is filthy and does not provide the privacy expected by pupils because there are no cubicles. This does nothing for pupils' self-esteem and has a negative impact on their perceptions of standards of personal hygiene.

DANCE

211. Although there has been a problem with staffing since the last inspection, dance has remained part of the school's curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and a GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. The proportion of pupils achieving A* to C grade passes has remained fairly constant over the last three years with approximately four in ten pupils successful at this level each year. Four lessons were observed – two being good quality teaching and learning and two being excellent. A particular strength is that pupils learn very well from the teachers' evaluation of their work. Suggested improvements are not only oral but also teacher demonstrated. As a result, pupils are very well motivated, enthusiastic and respond well to being asked to work as pairs or small groups. When asked to evaluate the work of one another in a Year 7 lesson, pupils' comments were constructive as well as being sensitive. Since September 2001, dance has been part of the performing arts faculty alongside drama, music and physical education thus continuing its presence and enhancement of the overall curricular provision in the school.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	1	100	83	100	23	5	2.27
Mathematics	1	-	62	-	15	-	1.51

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	100	96	75	96	8	6.57
Biology	2	50	88	50	88	4	5.25
Communication studies	11	36	93	-	93	1.82	5.53
Drama	4	100	99	-	99	5	6.59
English Literature	14	86	95	21	95	5.14	5.91
French	1	100	89	100	89	8	5.59
Design technology	8	88	91	-	91	3.25	5.38
History	2	100	88	100	88	9	5.45
Mathematics	2	100	87	100	87	8	5.8
Religious studies	4	100	93	25	92	6	5.84
Sociology	9	89	86	44	86	5.78	5.32

Intermediate vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	11	100	-	-	-	4.36	10.45

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge so that students' learning is good.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and generous with their time for after-school sessions.
- Students are very positive about mathematics teaching and the individual help provided.

Areas for improvement

- GCE AS-level results are below average.
- Some students' weakness in algebra impedes their overall achievement.
- On occasions more able students make slower progress than they might.

212. When they start their sixth form course students' standards are below average. Some embark on GCE AS-level mathematics having previously taken a GCSE intermediate course. These students struggle to achieve an AS-level pass grade by the end of Year 12. GCE AS-level results were average in 2001 but provisional data for 2002 shows a very high percentage of unclassified GCE AS-level grades. A small number of students complete the GCE A-level course by the end of Year 13. GCE A-level results vary from year to year around the national average.

213. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 13 students are competent in a range of topics in pure mathematics and statistics but are less secure in mechanics. Some students have significant weaknesses in algebra that prevent them from completing questions in all three courses in the most efficient or elegant way.

214. Teaching is of good quality and students learn well as a result although, in some cases, they lack confidence in whole class discussions. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of A-level mathematics, and of examination requirements, so that problems students encounter are swiftly and competently answered. This is enhanced by the enthusiasm teachers have for the subject and their positive relationship with pupils who appreciate the individual help provided. Lessons move at a brisk pace but, on occasions, more able students can mark time while the teacher helps other students.

215. There is a strong commitment in the department to high standards and teachers give freely of their time to helping students realize their potential, for example, in after-school mechanics sessions. The timetable allocates one two-hour and one three-hour period each week for mathematics. Teachers do their best to vary both the topic and mode of teaching in these sessions to maintain students' interest and involvement but it is not an ideal arrangement for the subject. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Good achievement by some students from GCSE.
- Increased student numbers through consortium enhances opportunities for discussion.
- Good relationships between students.
- Good planning and use of resources.

Areas For Improvement

- Overall achievement of the majority of students.
- Expectations of higher attaining students.
- Use of assessment data for tracking underachievement.

- Specialist management and teaching of subject.
- Insufficient use of ICT.

216. In 2001, there were no entries for GCE advanced level physics, and in the previous year, two candidates gained moderate grades. In 2002, results were similar and were as expected from GCSE predictions. In the advanced subsidiary examination of Year 12 students in 2002, examination results ranged from A to D, representing satisfactory achievement overall, with a few students not progressing from GCSE grades as well as expected.
217. The standards of work seen in the third week of term of Year 13 are below average and reflect their attainment so far certified at AS level. They learn the basic ideas, as in the theory and experimental investigation of simple harmonic motion, but do not assimilate the knowledge, or consider in more depth the reliability of investigation. Standards of work in Year 12 are very mixed, with a wide range across the nine candidates, including one able student who has already achieved a high AS grade. Most have a good understanding of the topic being studied, radioactive isotopes, but greater depth of understanding had yet to be developed at the time of the inspection.
218. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. After staffing difficulties, resulting in urgent re-arrangement of the timetable, teaching is shared between two experienced staff members, but who are not specialist physicists. Planning is good, resulting in careful progression through the syllabus, and sound learning of ideas. Explanations are clear and simple which helps the weaker candidates especially to have time to consider concepts. Good development of mathematical evaluation and problem solving is provided and experimental investigation is well prepared as an integral feature of the course. The depth of approach is not sufficient, however, to extend the higher ability students. Discussion of issues, so as to ensure greater understanding, is not sufficiently exploited by the teachers and some students are reluctant to work or participate proactively to seek out the knowledge. ICT is under used in the work programme.
219. The subject is being managed satisfactorily after the unexpected departure of the specialist teacher in charge of the subject. Schemes of work and development plans are established, resources are well organised and assessments are clearly arranged. Insufficient use is being made of assessment data to promote achievement and track progress. The focus on the subject development is difficult in view of interim arrangements.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design Technology

Overall provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Effective and committed teaching.
- Effective monitoring and assessment practice.
- A good policy for gifted and talented students.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient access to ICT.
- Poor accommodation and resources.
- A lack of sufficient and informed guidance before course entry.

220. The GCE Advanced level product design is a new design and technology course. The most recent results for the previous design and technology syllabus were in 2001 when standards were broadly in line with those nationally.
221. Attainment in lessons seen was below national average. Year 13 students, in researching a design context, select good design briefs from their own interest and experience. The briefs range from a redesign of a children's playground to a series of sales and marketing documents for a hotel. Business letters, as part of research, show good literacy and pupils have a sound understanding of technical terms. However, the students' lack of ICT skills, in part because of a lack of access to computer facilities, limits the overall quality of presentation.

222. Students achieve well because of the very effective teaching they now receive. However, their achievement over time is unsatisfactory. Previous teaching lacked rigour and little attention was paid to providing assessment opportunities to enable students to improve their performance. Even now the students' design work is inhibited by the poor accommodation and lack of graphical drawing equipment and furniture.
223. Much has changed since the start of Year 13 with the appointment of a new subject leader who has done much to retrieve lost ground and improve students' knowledge and skills. The introduction of individual tutorials, with much higher expectations about the completion of work in school and at home, has enabled all students, including those with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language, to now make better progress. The better focus on assessment now means students use the examination criteria to give a framework to their design and make a critical analysis of their work against the work of other designers.
224. Teaching is very good overall and in one lesson was excellent. Lessons are well planned by a very experienced specialist who is very effective in supporting learning and developing student interest and confidence. Students are beginning to respond to his high expectations and are now showing greater independence in their research and design analysis.
225. Leadership and management of the course are very good in the ways that more rigorous monitoring and assessment have been introduced. Considerable effort is made to overcome the effects of poor accommodation and resources, including the lack of ICT, though these still have a negative impact on student attainment. A further concern, expressed by students, is the lack of informed guidance about the nature and demands of the course with some having limited prior skills and qualifications for this particular GCE Advanced level.

BUSINESS

The overall quality of provision in business is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Most students make good progress, often from a modest prior attainment.
- The specialist teachers are knowledgeable and have high expectations.
- Subject management is conscientious and procedures are well documented.
- The increasing business links enhance student learning.
- The learning mentor is helping improve attendance and course completion.

Areas for improvement

- Students are not always well matched to the course level.
- Assessment practice is thorough but lacks some flexibility.
- Lack of accessible resources limits opportunities for students to work independently.

226. In the last inspection, business was one of the more successful sixth form subjects but recent standards at both GNVQ Intermediate and Advanced Vocational level have been well below national average. In 2001, the Advanced level students gained little more than a third of the average points score per student nationally, while only two thirds successfully completed the GNVQ Intermediate level, again below the levels in the local area and nationally. The new subject leadership has retrieved some of the lost ground, particularly at intermediate level where nearly 90 per cent of students were successful in 2002. For most of these students this represented good achievement given their limited qualifications on entry. Success at Advanced level continued to be modest in 2002 with many students struggling to meet the required standards.
227. In lessons and work seen, standards in the GNVQ Intermediate continue to reflect the recent improvement with students making good progress in developing and understanding of basic business concepts and demonstrating sound communication and ICT skills in their written work. Advanced level students have gained considerably in their understanding of, for example, business organizations and marketing and make effective use of ICT in researching and preparing their assignments. However, many of the advanced students have modest prior qualifications and have yet

to develop sufficient numerical skills to cope with the financial component of the course, nor do they use business and economic concepts and theory with sufficient rigour to effectively analyse business problems.

228. Teaching is mostly good with both teachers having strong specialist knowledge that they use well in the classroom. Lessons are well organised with clearly structured learning and assessment activities that enable students to develop their understanding. Teachers use question and answer to involve and interest students as well as developing a number of outside business links. These include Young Enterprise as well as other projects using local employers that provide a realistic context in which students can improve their skills and understanding.
229. Assessment practice has improved to give students clearer short-term targets. Staff rightly set assignment deadlines to ensure coursework completion though, on occasion, these lack sufficient flexibility to enable students to further improve their work as they gain in understanding and maturity.
230. The subject leader is conscientious and hardworking and has well documented procedures that include good practice in student monitoring. The two specialist rooms are satisfactory though one tends to be a thoroughfare to the adjoining ICT room. Both rooms lack a sufficient range of resources to enable students to work with greater independence.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Overall provision is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Intermediate and Foundation students achieve well and gain good results.
- Regular work placements in care settings help develop good counselling skills.
- Teachers are well informed and establish a very good rapport with students.
- Students' attitude and behaviour are generally very good.
- Those students with special needs are well supported.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT in lessons.
- Students taking more responsibility for their learning.
- The monitoring of students' work and the setting of clear targets.
- Attendance at lessons.

231. GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications) at Foundation and Intermediate level and AVCE (Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education) lessons were inspected. Courses are popular and the AVCE has recently replaced the GNVQ Advanced.
232. In 2001, standards at Foundation and Intermediate level GNVQ were in line with the national average. Over four fifths of Foundation and Intermediate students were successful with half gaining merits. These results maintained improvement from the previous two years.
233. Standards seen are broadly in line with recent results. Most Year 12 students are making good progress evident for example, in a well-taught Advanced lesson where students developed their counselling skills through group discussions of possible situations they might meet in care settings. However, some of the written work is less strong as there is a sizeable minority of advanced students whose prior qualifications do not meet the normally accepted entry standards. Attendance for some of these is erratic. Foundation and Intermediate students appreciate different care settings and understand aspects of human development related to care. Higher attaining students use computers well to research aspects, such as genetic disorders, and those with special educational needs use ICT to research and improve presentation. However, in general, students make insufficient use of ICT because of a lack of planned use by staff and problems in gaining access to computers.
234. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers motivate students through their own enthusiasm for the courses and their informed help enables students to develop their knowledge and skills. Students of all ethnic groups make good progress through open and often frank discussion as well as working in

groups to develop and present their ideas. However, the teachers' readiness to provide information and learning materials discourages more independent student learning. Marking and assessment is regular in Foundation and Intermediate though less so at Advanced level where the means of checking work and setting students attainment targets is less developed.

235. Leadership and management are satisfactory in the newly restructured department and staff work well as a team. There is a good, up-to-date range of textbooks, videos and other published materials and learning is supported by good links to local schools, nurseries and residential homes. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and the long lessons spent in the small, cramped classroom test student concentration and motivation.
236. The new AVCE course is proving popular and the department has a very good capacity to further develop.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

The overall quality of provision for art and design is **excellent**.

Strengths

- High quality of teaching and learning.
- High levels of attainment by pupils of all abilities and backgrounds.
- Students have highly developed art and learning skills and are highly motivated.
- Excellent leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- The use made of ICT within the sixth form, particularly as a tool for making art.

237. Since 1994, all students taking A Level Art have achieved either a grade A, B or C, though the number of candidates entered is small, typically around 7 per year. In 2001, all but one of the 15 students entered for AS Art (Graphics) achieved a pass grade with 67% achieving a grade A-C. Similar results were attained in 2002 with a 100% pass rate.
238. Work seen during inspection was above national average and matched standards attained in examinations. The students' skills as artists are highly developed and wide-ranging as a result of the high quality of teaching and consequent learning. They can draw to a high standard for different purposes and can communicate ideas visually using a variety of different media. They clearly take responsibility for their own learning and are able to discuss and evaluate their own work. They quickly assimilate ideas gained from other artists into their own work and are confident enough to articulate their own artistic preferences. Their mature research skills are further developed by weekly visits to appropriate art galleries in London.
239. In lessons seen, overall teaching was very good and ensured high levels of student interest and involvement. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives and have a clear structure that ensures variety, pace and good progress. Despite the long three lessons, very good learning is sustained by regular review both within and at the end of each lesson involving whole or small group discussion. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and the examination requirements. They have high expectations for all of the students and the style of teaching further contributes to the students' good personal and social development.
240. Sixth form art is excellently managed and led. There is a clear vision of teaching and learning methods within a framework which is flexible and responds to the individual needs of students. Regular departmental meetings ensure that teaching and learning strategies are reviewed and developed. Resources are modest but well used, though the lack of access to ICT results in opportunities for creative work being undeveloped. There are missed opportunities to display and celebrate the excellence of student work around the school. Overall, the subject has made good

progress since the last inspection and a measure of its success is the high proportion of students continuing their art studies in higher education.

HUMANITIES

History

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

Strengths

- Results at A and AS level were above the national average in 2001.
- Teaching in lessons is very good and the strong individual support ensures students make good progress.

Areas for improvement

- Record keeping and the monitoring of student progress is less developed.
- The range of external visits and university links is limited.

241. Between 1999 and 2001, overall results for A level and AS level were well above the national average with students performing relatively better in history when compared with their other advanced level subjects. Provisional results in 2002 were less strong though students still achieved in line with expectations.
242. In lessons and work seen, students display skills of analysis, interpretation and synthesis and most have good knowledge, understanding and a developed sense of historical enquiry. In their coursework, students are able to select and use knowledge relevantly and effectively, even if not all issues under discussion are necessarily addressed.
243. Students make good progress in lessons and achieve well in terms of their prior GCSE qualifications. Much of this progress is a consequence of the challenging teaching and regular diagnostic feedback on class and homework that helps students to focus on individual weaknesses. This support enables students to steadily acquire confidence in extending writing, as well as increasingly looking more critically at evidence and challenging the assumptions implied in historical interpretation.
244. Overall teaching is very good. Teachers work hard to provide well-structured lessons using a variety of tasks to challenge students. Learning objectives are clearly stated at the beginning of lessons and linked to examination standards. Care is taken in the way that information is imparted. Through skilful questioning and interventions, teachers check on learning during lessons and reinforce basic skills. Students respond well to this approach, and the progress made in lessons is good. The rapport between teachers and students is positive and is reflected in the general attitude of students to their work. Discussion with students indicates that they understand how well they are doing and what they must do to improve their performance. However, though well motivated to succeed, there is little evidence that students are reading widely or making reference to the views of different historians.
245. Leadership and management of the subject at faculty level are satisfactory. However, there are shortcomings in the monitoring of student progress and maintenance of student records throughout the department. The monitoring and support of teaching are also limited given that many of the teachers involved in organization and teaching of history in the sixth form are newly appointed. Departmental learning resources are satisfactory though additional library resources are limited and there is limited access to ICT facilities in lesson time. Insufficient use is made of external visits and university links to promote the subject and enhance learning. Despite these wider areas for improvement, the strong teaching contributes to consistently good outcomes.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Students achieve well and the proportion with higher Advanced level grades in 2001 was above the national average.
- The quality of teaching is good and results in effective learning.
- Students are enthusiastic about the subject and consequently there is a good learning atmosphere in

lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Insufficient subject monitoring and evaluation over time to ensure effective target setting for students.
- Structured guidance to help students organise and improve the quality of their work.

246. Sociology has remained a popular choice for students since the last inspection with increasing numbers and results in the subject have consistently been in line with or better than those nationally. In 2001, the proportion of students achieving A and B grade passes at GCE Advanced-level was above average and this represented good achievement for many students who had not previously studied the subject. Results in 2002 were more modest though most students attained in line with expectations.
247. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are in line with national average. In their analyses, students are able to argue from different theoretical perspectives and demonstrate secure research skills in their research projects. They express their ideas effectively in oral and written work but have less developed ICT skills because of a lack of sufficient and planned access to computer facilities. Student folder work indicates a sound understanding though the content is more variable in terms of the quality of presentation and completeness.
248. Students in both years make good progress and achieve well in relation to their previous GCSE attainment. This is largely because of the good teaching that both interests and challenges the students. Year 12 students for example, use sociological theory and concepts with increasing confidence in their work on socialisation and gender identity and produce interesting and insightful outcomes.
249. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching is well planned with some varied and structured activities that meet the needs of all students and maintain good pace to learning over the long three-hour sessions. The students share the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject and are keen to do well. The carefully directed questioning stretches students' intellectual capacities and engages them well in discussion using their own experiences as well as sociological perspectives they have learned. Students show insight in lesson discussions; they express their own ideas confidently as well as listening and respecting the beliefs and views of others. However, on occasion the long three-hour sessions make insufficient use of group and paired work that ensure students participate more actively in their learning.
250. The recently appointed head of department is developing good quality procedures for support and guidance as well as effective assessment procedures but, as yet, there is insufficient data collected over time to help her refine and implement target setting for students. The school has satisfactorily maintained the good provision identified in the last inspection.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

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

Strengths

- Significant improvement in the 2002 AS and A-level results.
- There is a good match of teachers to the advanced level courses.
- The relationship between teachers and students is very good.
- Students learn very well because of the confidence they have in their teachers.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- There is scope for using the assessment criteria more explicitly in lessons.
- The quantity and quality of resources for wider reading.

251. The GCE AS and A-level courses in English literature attract the highest proportion of students studying advanced level courses in the school. There is also provision for students re-sitting the GCSE English examination in order to improve their results.
252. Over the last two years, AS and A-level results have risen, as have the number of students choosing to take the courses. The 2001 A-level results were below national average but were better than those in previous years. There was a significant improvement in the higher grades A and B. The 2002 AS-level and A-level results are above those of the previous year. Students who did not achieve a grade in the 2002 A-level examination were noticeably weaker in terms of their GCSE qualifications and so struggled with the demands of the course. The attendance and retention rates are generally good on both courses.
253. The standard of work seen in lessons and folders confirms rising standards as students work towards attaining the higher GCE grades. The quality of their discussion skills is above average, particularly in analysing, explaining and raising questions on their reading. They demonstrate the communication skills necessary to work effectively as part of a group and to give well-argued points. Skills of analysis and interpretation emerge forcefully at the start of Year 12 when students are expected to give a personal response, ask searching questions and develop their critical thinking. This was well illustrated in a Year 12 lesson where students analysed the opening chapters of Atwood's **The Handmaid's Tale**. By Year 13, students use wider reading to develop their interpretation of texts. They move with ease between literature from different periods and cultures to include authors such as Tennessee, Rosetti, Larkin, Blake and Atwood. Writing skills is a particularly strong feature of the higher attaining Year 13 students. By Year 13, these students are rarely at a loss for the right word. Although the middle and lower attaining students convey complex ideas, structurings ideas lacks the sophistication to gain the higher grades.
254. Students of all abilities respond well to the good quality teaching and make good progress in their lessons. They work conscientiously and thrive well in English because of the trust and respect they have for their teachers. There is a high level of participation by most students and even the more passive members contribute appropriately to pair or small group work. All of this helps ensure that students achieve well in relation to their prior GCSE attainment.
255. Teaching is good overall with many very good features. There was one excellent lesson. Teachers know their subject very well and use their knowledge of students' strengths and needs to maximise their achievements. Teachers use their expertise to widen students' critical appraisal of literary texts by introducing them to critical and historical writing to reflect the assessment criteria. However, the assessment criteria are not always explicit enough to reinforce examination techniques. Planning is thorough and ensures that students make good progress. Teachers have high expectations and ensure that students work at full stretch and respond critically and sensitively to literary texts. Occasionally, students are too passive and are not given sufficient opportunities in the advanced and GCSE courses to give a personal response. Teaching in the GCSE re-sit lessons is direct with a sharp focus on improving students' writing skills. Marking is exemplary and students are given clear guidelines on improving their grade.
256. Teachers give good support to students through planned seminars with invited guest speakers, and individual tutorials. Very good arrangements for extra-curricular activities include attending lectures and the theatre. Students enjoy the subject and value the good quality teaching, which they describe as 'not mechanical as teachers open up our minds to think in a challenging way'.
257. The subject is very well led and experienced specialists teach the courses. The department is very responsive and sensitive to the needs of students and, where possible, accommodates and provides quality support for lower attaining students with a burning desire to study literature at advanced level. Students use the Internet for research and obtain extra reading lists and texts from their teachers. However, there is an insufficient range of non-literary texts to support student studies. The department contiguously reviews its progress and takes appropriate action to improve standards. This ongoing process contributes to students making good progress in English.