

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WILLIAM MORRIS ACADEMY**

London

LEA area: Hammersmith & Fulham

Unique reference number: 133545

Principal: Liz Walton

Reporting inspector: Leslie Stephen  
16419

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 251961  
Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2002

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE ACADEMY

Type of school:	Secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	16 - 19
Gender of students:	Mixed
School address:	St Dunstan's Road London
Postcode:	W6 8RB
Telephone number:	(0208) 748 6969
Fax number:	(0208) 600 0198
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	David Williams
Date of previous inspection:	N/A

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
16419	L Stephen	Registered inspector		How well are students taught? How well the academy is led and managed?
9708	S Daintrey	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the academy care for its students? How well does the academy work in partnership with parents?
17331	N Pett	Team inspector		The academy's results and students' achievements. How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
6044	R Perkins	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12226	C Clarke	Team inspector	English	
27984	A Whitehall	Team inspector	Science	
4615	M Bostock	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
8159	K Wright	Team inspector	Art	
14573	H Wareing	Team inspector	Geography	
2299	J Bolt	Team inspector	History	
11751	D Sutcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
7926	J Bowden	Team inspector	Sociology Special educational needs	
2200	J Stirrup	Team inspector	Drama Media studies	
27082	G Henshall	Team inspector	Business education	
15576	D Nebesnuick	Team inspector	Key skills	
13122	S Matthews	Team inspector	Travel and tourism	
2971	K Hooper	Team inspector	Health and social care	
16982	P Natham	Team inspector	English as an additional language	

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd  
7 Hill Street  
Bristol  
BS1 5RW

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

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

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>5 - 11</b>
Information about the academy	
The quality of provision in individual curriculum areas	
Other aspects of the academy	
Student's views of the academy	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12 - 14</b>
The academy and students' achievements	
Students' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>14 - 16</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?</b>	<b>16 - 18</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE ACADEMY CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?</b>	<b>18 - 20</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE ACADEMY WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE ACADEMY LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>20 - 23</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE ACADEMY DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PART C: ACADEMY DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>25 - 29</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>30 - 55</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE ACADEMY**

William Morris is a popular and oversubscribed academy that started in 1994 as a sixth form centre for five of the local 11-16 secondary schools. The academy also attracts many students from outside the borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The number of students has increased significantly since 1994, from 350 to 761 at the time of this inspection. Since 1994 there have been a number of building programmes, the most recent being to provide new science laboratories and further classrooms. In January 2002 the academy gained status as a 16-19 school, the first in the country, as ratified in the Learning and Skills Act. This is the first inspection of the academy.

The students come from a wide range of backgrounds but the areas served by the academy are among those recognised as being socially deprived. This is reflected in the higher than average proportion (40 per cent) of the students who are eligible for free meals.

Girls outnumber boys particularly in the second year, where for every three girls following advanced courses there are two boys. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups reflect the populations of the immediate and surrounding areas: about one-third of the students are white; one-third are from black ethnic groups, one-sixth are from the Asian minority groups and about one-twelfth are of Middle Eastern descent. A number of other ethnic groups are represented among the remaining students. Ten per cent of the students have been identified as having special educational needs; of these, over half have a statement that sets out their specific learning needs. Most of the students on the academy's register of special needs have moderate learning disabilities. Half of the students speak English as an additional language and about 6.5 per cent are in the early stages of learning English.

The academy provides a GCSE programme and vocational courses at foundation and intermediate level as well as a wide range of A- and AS-level and advanced vocational courses, to cater for the diverse needs of students, from those with very low prior attainment to those who have achieved well in GCSE examinations at school. Overall, the students' attainment on joining the academy is lower than usually found in schools and colleges providing education for 16 to 19 year olds.

In order to extend the ablest students, the academy participates in the Excellence Challenge initiative for gifted and talented students and in a local partnership initiative with St Paul's Girls' School.

### **HOW GOOD THE ACADEMY IS**

This is a good and effective academy, in which most students make good progress and achieve well. Results in public examinations are close to the national average. The number of students who go on to higher education is very impressive. The academy has a good ethos, which supports learning and in which the teaching is good. The principal provides outstanding leadership and the academy is well managed. Taking account of the achievement of students, the quality of teaching and the efficiency of provision, the academy is cost effective and provides good value for money.

#### **Strengths**

- Good teaching together with effective assessment, guidance and support systems result in most students making good progress and achieving well.
- Provision in science and French is very good and leads to very good progress and standards in these subjects.
- Provision for the students' personal development is effective and promotes high standards of behaviour, good attitudes and values and very good relationships between students themselves and with staff.
- The academy has established an environment of racial harmony and one in which all students have equal opportunities; the students' cultures and backgrounds are highly valued.
- The academy works closely with other schools and educational providers and with the local community.

### **What could be improved**

- Rates of attendance and punctuality.
- Strategic planning, to take into account longer-term priorities and relevant budget cycles.
- Planning for students to be more independent in their learning, including better facilities for private study.

*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.*

### **STANDARDS**

Overall, the academy is effective in raising the achievement of its students. Students of all abilities and of both genders make good progress and many achieve standards that are higher than might be expected given their starting points. When students enter the academy their levels of attainment span the entire range of ability. Standards on entry are lower than usually found for students entering post-16 education. In A-level examinations the students' performance has risen steadily over the last three years and in 2001 it was similar to the national average, although fewer students than average achieved the top grades. However, the overall pass rate was better than in most schools and this represents good achievement given the students' starting points at the beginning of the courses. National data is not yet available for the 2002 A-level examinations, but the academy's results indicate that standards have been maintained and in some subjects they have improved. The students have done consistently well in the science subjects over the years. In the AS level examinations, the picture is very similar to that at A-level; the students achieve better than might be expected given their results in the GCSE examinations when they joined the academy. The girls' results at A-level are better than the boys'. Even so, given that the boys starting the A-level courses generally had done less well than the girls in the GCSE examinations at school, their A-level results represent good achievement.

Results in the AVCE examinations show that students are generally attaining well, with a high pass rate in both single and double award courses. However, in 2002, the number of students leaving courses in business and art and design before completion was high. In foundation and intermediate GNVQ courses, the pass rate was well above the national average and most students who started the course completed it. In health and social care a high proportion of the students gained merits.

The students' performance in GCSE examinations, which are a combination of resit courses and new subjects, is better than the average nationally.

In the key skills of communication, application of number and information technology the students make good progress. Students who are learning English as an additional language sometimes find the language used in external tests difficult to understand and this limits the standards they can achieve.

Overall standards of work seen during the inspection, including key skills, are good. Students from all ethnic groups progress well, although progress for some students is hindered by their low levels of literacy. Students with special educational needs make good progress in lessons, learn well and many go on to higher-level courses as they move through the academy. A significant number of students who do not attend regularly or are late for their lessons do not achieve as well as they should.



## 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 academy. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the academy were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Good. Overall, students' achievement is good in relation to their prior attainment. A-level and GCSE results in 2001 were above average. Standards have been maintained in 2002 at A-level but GCSE results have fallen. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result.
Physics	Very good. The A-level results in 2001 were better than the national average. Results in 2002 are not as high, but the students did well when their prior attainment is taken into account. In the GCSE examination, results in 2002 were similar to those for 2001 and were close to the national average. Teaching is good and this helps students to progress well. Lack of ICT resources limits the use of computers in teaching and in practical work, such as data logging.
Chemistry	Very good. The A-level results in 2001 are better than the national average; 2002 results show further improvement. The achievement of students is very good. Teaching is very good overall and as a result students learn very well.
Business Studies	Good. In the 2001 A-level examinations, the pass rate was above the national average, although few students achieved the top grades. In 2002 there was a slight improvement in the number of A and B grades, but a slight fall in the overall pass rate. In GNVQ, overall pass rates and student retention rates have mostly been good. Teaching is good overall with good opportunities for independent learning and the promotion of key skills.
ICT	Good. A-level computing results in 2002 rose significantly from below the national average in 2001 to close to the national average. GNVQ intermediate results are above the national pass rate for this subject, having improved significantly between 2001 and 2002. Teaching is good overall. The standard of work of students is good.
Travel and Tourism	Satisfactory. In 2001 results at A-level were close to the national average in relation to pass and merit levels but few students were awarded a distinction. In 2002 almost all students gained a pass in the AVCE course. Students' work is better in year one than in year two. Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Health and Social Care	Good. Although there are relatively few distinctions at foundation and intermediate levels, the number of merits is high particularly on the intermediate course. Results in 2002 were better than in 2001. Teaching is good. Standards of work are good on the Intermediate and AVCE courses and students make very good progress.
Art	Good. Results in vocational and AS and A-level courses showed a marked improvement in 2002 and were above average. Teaching is very good. Standards of work are above average and students have a sound understanding of the range and uses of visual media.
Drama	Satisfactory. In 2001 all students gained A-E grades with a small number gaining A and B grades. Results in 2002 were not as good as 2001. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress; many students enter the course with below average literacy skills and some start the AS course with limited drama skills and techniques.
Media Studies	Good. Students achieve well in the A-level and AVCE courses in relation to their prior learning. They make good progress and achieve standards in line with the national average. A-level results improved in 2002. The quality of teaching is good overall.
Geography	Good. Results are improving and those for AS level in 2002 were well above those attained in 2001. A-level results for 2002 were above the national average for A to E grades. Teaching is good overall. Students' work is progressing well in the subject and their work is improving.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
History	Good. Students make good progress and achieve results in line with national standards for A and AS examinations; A-level results in 2002 show an improvement. Students make good progress and achieve good standards of work. Teaching is at least good and at times very good.
Sociology	Good. The achievement of students in relation to their prior attainment is very good. The overall pass rate at A-level in 2001 was in line with the national average. Standards of work are good. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good and results in very effective learning.
English	Good. The results are above or at the national average in AS and A-level in relation to A-E grades on both courses this year. Students achieve well and their standards of work are good. Teaching is good overall.
French	Very good. A and AS level results show a good improvement in 2002. Standards of work, including listening and speaking, are good and students learn well. Teaching is very good.

Overall the provision for all students to develop their skills in communication, application of number and information and communication technology are good. The approach to key skills in the academy has been innovative and flexible and has enabled students on many courses to make good progress in their studies. The teaching of key skills is good. Opportunities for independent learning are not provided consistently across all subjects and courses.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the academy	Very good. The students are proud of the Academy's reputation and greatly appreciate the support they receive from teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in lessons and around the academy. This has resulted in a very positive learning environment that helps students to progress well.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are excellent. Students' personal development is good.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. The majority of students attend sufficiently often to be able to complete their courses satisfactorily. However, there are a significant number of students whose unsatisfactory levels of attendance and punctuality hinder their progress and attainment.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	One and two year courses
Quality of teaching	Good overall

*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 across the academy overall is good; in only one lesson seen was it unsatisfactory. The teaching promotes high quality learning among the students and provides well for students of differing capabilities. Teaching is very good in art, science, French and sociology. It is good in all other courses except in drama and travel and tourism, where it is satisfactory.

Teachers work hard and are committed to raising standards. Strengths in the teaching include:

- teachers' expertise in their subject;
- clarity of the teachers' explanations;
- good use of lesson time so that students work at a good rate;
- challenging activities;
- variety of teaching styles and methods; and

- very good relationships between the teachers and the students.

In lessons where the teaching and learning were satisfactory, rather than good, the relative weaknesses include:

- limited styles of teaching, with little variety of activities. Too often the lesson entails the teacher giving students information rather than requiring them to find things out for themselves.

A tendency to keep a tight control occurred in a number of lessons, even where teaching was good, with the result that some students are over-reliant on the teacher and are not sufficiently independent in their learning. In addition, the limited facilities for private study and independent research do not help the students to become more independent learners.

The teaching carried out by support teachers is effective and they provide good support in lessons to students with special education needs. The individual and small group teaching of students who speak English as an additional language is good, but the support within whole-class lessons is more variable, although it is usually effective in helping these students to cope with the subject matter of the lesson.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE ACADEMY

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The academy provides a wide range of A and AS-level courses as well as vocational courses at all levels and a GCSE programme. The overall quality and range caters well for students of different abilities and aspirations.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Satisfactory. Small group and individual support lessons are effective in helping the students make progress, but the academy is not yet fulfilling all its obligations under the new Code of Practice.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Good. Support provided in lessons and in small groups and in one-to-one sessions is effective and means that these students learn well and make good progress.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The tutorial arrangements are particularly effective in supporting the students' personal development. The academy is especially successful in helping the students to understand and appreciate the cultural diversity of the student body.
How well students are guided and supported	Very good personal support and guidance are given to students, which help most of them to progress well through their courses and go on to higher education or employment.

Parents are very pleased with the way in which the academy helps the students to develop in maturity and responsibility.

## HOW WELL THE ACADEMY IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the principal and other key staff	Leadership and management of the academy are very good. The outstanding leadership of the principal, supported by key governors and managers, provides a purposeful and clear direction for the academy. Planning for the academy's future development has focused on just one year at a time; there is now the need for preparing longer term plans, linked to the budget cycle, to reflect current and future priorities.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are clear that as a new governing body they need to be effective in fulfilling their responsibilities and shaping the direction of the academy. They are in the process of establishing appropriate structures that reflect the needs of the academy.
The academy's evaluation of its performance	A strength of the academy is the way in which it monitors and evaluates the students' performance in examinations and analyses the results to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and where improvements can be made. The academy does not, however, compare its performance in the required format with other institutions that provide education for 16 to 19 year olds to gain an accurate picture of how well it is doing.
The strategic use of resources	The academy uses its budget wisely. Money is directed to finance the academy's priorities and spending is carefully checked. Financial administration is of a high order and the academy seeks best value when making purchases. Resources, both human and physical, are very well deployed and used efficiently.

The academy has enough qualified teachers and other staff to teach its curriculum and to support those students who need assistance with their learning. Materials, books and equipment are in good supply and are of good quality. The accommodation is kept in very good condition and the current building programme will address the shortcomings for science courses. Space, however, is limited and this restricts the curriculum that can be offered. There are few areas where students can engage in private study.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE ACADEMY

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students like the academy.</li> <li>The teaching.</li> <li>The academy is approachable.</li> <li>The academy has high expectations.</li> <li>The academy works closely with parents.</li> <li>The academy is well led and managed.</li> <li>The academy helps students to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no specific areas that parents wished to see improved.</li> </ul>

Only 27 parents answered the questionnaire. The majority of comments at the parents' meeting held before the inspection were supportive of William Morris and its high expectations of work and behaviour. The inspection team endorses the parents' views.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE ACADEMY

What students like about the academy	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The choice of subjects and courses.</li> <li>The academy helped them settle well.</li> <li>The quality of teaching and challenge.</li> <li>Teachers are accessible and helpful.</li> <li>They enjoyed the academy and would</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More helpful and constructive advice.</li> <li>More information on their progress.</li> <li>Advice on future options.</li> <li>Support and help with personal problems.</li> </ul>

recommend it.	
---------------	--

In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, some students indicated dissatisfaction with aspects of the academy's support, guidance and assessment systems. This was because the questionnaire was issued at an early stage of the term when nearly 350 students out of the five hundred and eighty seven who returned them were new to the academy and its arrangements. Students starting their second year expressed more positive views, stating that they enjoyed being in a place where students from different cultural and religious backgrounds integrate well and are very friendly. They appreciate the quality of teaching they receive and the support and guidance given to them.

## **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 academy's results and students' achievements**

1. When they join the academy the students' attainment spans the entire range, but many start with lower levels of attainment than usually found in schools and colleges that provide courses for 16 to 19 year olds. Students of all abilities and of both genders make good progress and many achieve standards that are higher than might be expected given their starting points.
2. In A-level examinations, the students' overall performance matches that of students in comprehensive schools with sixth forms. In 2001, the pass rate (students gaining grades A to E) was better than the average nationally, but fewer students achieved the top grades (A and B). However, given the generally lower levels of attainment when they embarked on the courses, the students' results represent good achievement. In the 2002 A-level examinations, standards in most subjects have been maintained or improved. In most subjects, the students' performance matches that of sixth forms in comprehensive schools. In the sciences, the students do particularly well; the results are consistently better than in most schools, although in physics they were not as good in 2002 as in 2001, reflecting the prior attainment of the cohort. Results were good in the 2002 examinations in mathematics, Spanish, French and history. The history results were much better than in 2001, as a result of better teaching.
3. Low levels of literacy among some students hinder their progress and attainment. In drama, a significant number of students have difficulty in writing well-structured essays and this affects their examination work. Irregular attendance on the part of some students is also a contributory factor to the below average examination results in drama.
4. Students' performance in the AS level examinations mirrors that in the A-level examinations, except in mathematics where results in 2002 were much lower than the year before. This is explained, in part, by the fact that fewer students sat the examination in 2001 and the group was of a higher ability than the 2002 group.
5. Results in AVCE examinations show that students are generally attaining well, with a high pass rate in both single and double awards. However, in 2001 almost half of the students studying business and art and design failed to complete the courses. Fewer students failed to complete the first year of the courses in 2002. The pass rate is good but the proportion of students gaining top grades is low.
6. In foundation and intermediate GNVQ courses, the pass rate is well above the national average. Most students starting on these courses complete them. In health and social care a high proportion of the students gained merits.
7. Results in GCSE examinations, which are a combination of resit courses and new subjects, vary considerably between subjects and from year to year. In the 2002 examinations the proportion of students gaining A\* to C grades was lower than in 2001 but they were still better than the national average. In some subjects, the numbers entered for the examination are small and results are bound to fluctuate from one year to the next. Overall, however, the students achieved well, especially in sociology, where half achieved grades A\* to C. In psychology, results have been disappointing; half of the students failed to gain a grade in the 2002 examination.
8. The academy's analysis shows that girls perform better than boys, but that most girls enter the academy with higher prior attainment. When their starting points are considered, boys and girls progress at similar rates and generally achieve well. The academy also analyses examination results by the students' ethnic backgrounds. This enables the staff to measure relative performances of the different groups and to take action if a particular group appears to underachieve. These strategies are effective and all groups make good progress from their starting

points. The help and support given to bilingual students, for example, results in very good progress and many such students do well in public examinations.

9. The academy has highlighted the need to improve the students' key skills so that they can achieve well in their courses. Specific teaching of skills in communication, application of number and information technology is good and the students' skills are improving. Almost 400 students achieved further key skills qualifications in 2002. The approach to key skills in the academy has been innovative and flexible and has enabled students on many courses to make good progress in their studies. However, low levels of literacy still hinder some students and their attainment remains low. The academy's records show that there was an increase in the proportion of students learning English as an additional language on some courses. Some of these students found the language of the examination papers difficult to understand.
10. The significant proportion of students who have special educational needs and other learning difficulties make good progress and achieve well. The support they receive in the lessons and small groups and sometimes on a one-to-one basis enables them to keep up in their work. Many go on to higher level courses as they move through the academy. Gifted and talented students are clearly identified. The academy's participation in the Excellence Challenge provides extra opportunities for these students, who respond well. In their lessons, the support given to them is not always consistent, but the majority achieve well, as illustrated by their success in A-level and AVCE examinations and entry to higher education. The academy generally supports its students well so that they can achieve to their potential, but it has not yet managed to increase attendance rates and punctuality. The poor attendance of a few and poor punctuality of a significant number of students affects their learning and they do not achieve as well as they should.
11. Overall, the standards of work seen during the inspection were good and reflect external examination results. In some subjects and courses there is an improving trend. In AS and A2 level courses standards of work seen were as expected for the stage of the courses and often above average. In English, mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, art, sociology and modern languages, standards of work seen were above average. In AVCE and GNVQ courses, standards were at least average and in health and social care they were above average. Standards of work seen in GCSE courses were broadly as expected.
12. Overall, the academy is effective in raising the achievement of its students. The students' performance in public examinations compares favourably with national averages. The achievement of students is good and that of a significant proportion is very good. As a result of good teaching and students' positive attitudes to their work the added value for the majority of students is at least good; they achieve better results than would be expected on the basis of their prior attainment.

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

13. The vast majority of students hold very positive views about the academy. They speak with pride of the academy's good reputation and enjoy being in a place where students from different cultural and religious backgrounds integrate well and are very friendly. They appreciate the quality of teaching they receive and feel they are helped to settle in well. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, some students indicated dissatisfaction with aspects of the academy's support, guidance and assessment systems. This was because the questionnaire was issued at an early stage of the term when nearly 350 students out of the 587 who returned them were new to the academy and its arrangements. The older students are more positive and say they have a high level of support and their work is thoroughly assessed.
14. Students' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around the site are very good and significant strengths of the academy. The students know very clearly as soon as they consider coming to the academy what is expected of them and they willingly comply because they want to do well.
15. Attitudes and behaviour were very good or excellent in half the lessons seen and were never less than satisfactory. They are of consistently high quality in nearly all subjects and courses. This results in a very positive learning atmosphere throughout the academy, which, in turn, contributes

to the good progress the students make. Students' very good attitudes and behaviour are underpinned by the excellent relationships that pervade the academy. Students value and appreciate the efforts of their teachers and respond by trying to give of their best. They respect the feelings and beliefs of their fellow students. This enables them to work well in pairs and small groups when asked to do so and to express their views and opinions. In sociology and psychology, for example, students are able to discuss sensitive issues, such as suicide and the break-up of relationships, with a high level of seriousness and perception. In drama, however, students who have recently started the course are not yet mature and self-disciplined enough to derive full benefit from the course. All students work hard in the learning resource centre during their private study time. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language highly value the drop-in facility provided by the learning support department where they can get help with their work. In their tutor groups, students are keen to read their interim reports and to reflect on how they can improve their performance.

16. Outside lessons, students behave very well and interact with each other in a very harmonious way. A striking feature is the manner in which students move up and down the narrow staircases between lessons without any jostling. They treat all adults, each other and the environment with great respect. There is excellent social interaction between the different ethnic and gender groups. Students feel very much a part of the academy community. The academy insists on high standards of behaviour and its expectations for hard work are well understood by the students. In the last year only six students were asked to leave because they failed to meet these standards, despite the academy's best efforts to support them.
17. In lessons the behaviour and attitudes of students with special educational needs are positive. They respond well to the help and support they receive and are keen to make progress in, for example, one-to-one withdrawal sessions. Where students with special educational needs receive extra support from support teachers in lessons this is accepted by other students and they themselves often ask for help. Students with statements of special educational needs, in their second year at the academy, said they were very appreciative of the extra help and support they had received since starting, some adding that the support was of a far higher standard than they had experienced in their previous schools. Because of this they felt they had grown in confidence and had made good progress.
18. Students with English as an additional language have good attitudes to their learning which help them make good progress. They make good use of the learning support area, where they know they will get help so that they can complete their course work. In lessons, students respond well and can also sustain concentration on extended pieces of work. For example in a communications (Level 2) class, students worked well and sustained concentration for half-an-hour on their own, writing job application letters.
19. Students' personal development is good. Parents are very pleased with the way in which the academy helps the students to develop in maturity and responsibility. This is achieved through the very effective system of support and guidance and the good range of activities outside of the classroom that are available. Students respond well to the opportunities provided, but some do not always make the most of what is on offer; for example, some choose not to participate in the enrichment programme. Generally, the students make good progress, from a low base, in developing independent learning skills, but some students find it difficult, without support, to organise their studies so that they can meet coursework deadlines.
20. Students comply reasonably well with the academy's expectation that students attend for most of the timetabled day and for their weekly tutorial. However, some students arrive late for the first lesson of the day. A significant minority of students have a range of personal problems which result in irregular attendance. Attendance has fallen over the last three years from 85 per cent in 1999, to just over 82 per cent in the past year. The academy continues to place attendance and punctuality at the top of its list of priorities in its annual development plan.

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



21. Teaching is good overall. In three quarters of lessons inspected the teaching was good or better; in a third it was very good. In a small number of lessons it was excellent, and only in one lesson was it unsatisfactory. Teaching promotes high quality learning in the academy. It provides well for the differing needs of students, and the provision in many subjects leads to good standards of achievement. In most subjects the teaching is good and in art, science, sociology and French it is very good. In drama and travel and tourism the teaching is satisfactory overall.
22. Throughout the academy, teachers work hard and are committed to raising standards. Across most subjects there are common strengths: time is used well in lessons; the pace is well judged so that the students have just the right amount of time to complete the tasks they are given; lessons are well planned and the teachers make sure that the students know what they have to achieve by the end of the lesson; the teachers have high expectations of their students and set them work that will give them a challenge and yet be within their capabilities.
23. The teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. This is evident in the way they question their students and in their explanations when students seek advice. In a physics lesson, for example, the teacher's timely intervention as students discussed the relationship between forces in dynamic settings helped to clarify key points and ensured that the students had a thorough understanding of the concepts involved. The students' good progress in French is the result of the teachers conducting the lesson almost entirely in French, using wide ranging vocabulary and modelling good accents.
24. Most teachers treat their students as young adults and this promotes an effective partnership that encourages high quality learning. There were many examples where teachers encouraged students to think for themselves and develop their independent learning skills. For example, in a business studies lesson, the students were encouraged to plan their work and use the Internet to research for information on leisure parks and to use this information to determine which park gave best value for money. The students gained much from having to plan their work and determine what information was needed and how they were going to gather this. In lessons that are satisfactory rather than good, the teachers could require more of the students to find things out for themselves. Too often the teachers give students information; students receive this passively and so they do not develop skills in research or in learning independently. There is a tendency for some of the teachers even in the good lessons to keep a tight control, with the result that some students are over-reliant on the teachers. With the very positive learning environment that exists in the academy, teachers could give the students greater scope to develop independence in their learning.
25. A feature of the best teaching is the skill with which teachers ask questions to check on the students' understanding, to reinforce what they have learned and then to extend this learning further. In sociology, questioning is used particularly well to initiate discussion that draws on the students' own experiences as well on sociological perspectives. The students are encouraged to join in the debates and they gain much from hearing others' views.
26. Subjects generally are well resourced and teachers use books and equipment effectively to promote the students' learning. In a mathematics lesson, for example, the use of personal whiteboards meant that the teacher could immediately check the students' answers to questions and rectify any misunderstandings that had led to errors. A government funded ICT training programme for the teachers has not made a significant impact on the teachers' use of ICT in lessons.
27. The teaching carried out by support teachers is effective and they provide good support to targeted students in lessons. The support is all the more effective because the learning support department provides these teachers with a student information sheet that helps them to plan their work well to meet the particular needs of individual students. In one-to-one sessions the support teachers provide effective support and guidance for students. The work is tailored to meet the specific needs of the student. The questions the teacher asks are probing and make the students draw on what they have learned and apply this to a new situation. The support teachers are confident in the use of ICT and make good use of a range of computer programs to help students

learn. The support teachers have a good rapport with their students and this helps to create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

28. Students who are learning English as an additional language are well taught, especially in one-to-one sessions. When the specialist teachers provide support in subject lessons, their impact on the progress that students make is variable. Some lessons are not always planned to make full use of the additional teacher. In most lessons, however, a wide range of effective teaching approaches and learning resources such as visual aids and writing frames are used and the teachers make good use of ICT. For example, in a business studies (intermediate) GNVQ lesson, an interactive whiteboard was used to highlight key vocabulary in a text describing how a business works. Students were then asked to describe how different parts of the company worked together, using a writing frame that focused on the key vocabulary and phrases and supporting the development of note-taking skills. Lessons are well planned to meet the needs of students and good use is made of pair and group work. This provides students with good opportunities to practise their speaking and listening skills and to develop understanding of new concepts.

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

29. The academy's curriculum has been carefully planned to provide a wide range of courses, at different levels, to cater for the needs of the local population of 16 to 19 year olds. The academy is flexible in its admission arrangements, so that students of all abilities, including those who have had little success at school, are encouraged to continue with their education. The success of the academy is, in large part, due to the careful advice and guidance before the students start, to ensure that they pursue suitable courses. This approach helps students gain confidence and improve and enables many to go on to attend further and higher education courses. The academy has a very good partnership with the local 11-16 schools, to ensure good progression and continuity for students.
30. GCSE resit courses, including English and mathematics, together with a range of new subjects, give students who have had little success at school a fresh start in their education. Many welcome the opportunity to start on something new, such as sociology and work hard to achieve success. A comprehensive range of advanced supplementary (AS) and advanced level (A2) courses are offered, including subjects such as media studies and business. Students have a choice of different levels of vocational courses, but the offer is somewhat restricted by the available accommodation. For example, the academy is unable to provide courses in design and technology. Some provision is made for subjects such as art and design within the present curriculum, for music during enrichment time and for physical education through partnerships with other providers. Although within the tutorial and general studies programmes, topics relating to values and beliefs are covered, the statutory requirement to teach religious education is not met.
31. The academy gives high priority to developing the students' key skills, recognising that the students need to be competent in literacy, numeracy and information technology if they are to succeed in their chosen courses. To this end, the academy has a designated key skills course, as well as these skills being taught within the context of a subject. The designated key skills course is good and is effectively taught by English, mathematics and ICT teachers. However, within subjects, the provision for teaching key skills is not consistent; it is well planned in AVCE and vocational courses. Overall, the support for the teaching of literacy and numeracy is good.
32. The academy provides well for those students who speak English as an additional language. High priority is given to providing additional help to these students so that they can follow their chosen courses and the academy directs part of its budget to paying for specialist teachers to support these students. It does not receive any additional funding for these posts. The specialist teachers help students through a variety of strategies – in class, in small groups and, where appropriate, in one-to-one sessions. This support is valued by students, who also feel confident to go to the learning support area to seek help when they need it. There is little provision for students who are

at the very early stages of learning English because of staffing and accommodation issues and the academy sometimes directs such students to other institutions who have the facilities needed.

33. Overall, the provision for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. The ethos of the academy helps students with special educational needs to make good progress. Students have appropriate education plans and there is effective use of small group and individual withdrawal sessions. However, the academy has not yet implemented in full the new Code of Practice for special educational needs. The language and learning support department operates a 'drop-in' facility throughout the day for students who feel they need support and guidance in relation to their work in subjects. Where appropriate, the support department organises special arrangements in examinations to help support students who have writing difficulties.
34. The academy's commitment to providing a broad educational programme is evident in the range of activities it provides through its enrichment programme, which occurs on one afternoon each week. It offers a wide range of courses, including academic courses, sports, cultural and musical activities, which enable students to develop their interests and talents. There are opportunities for students to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, skiing excursions and exchanges organised through the modern languages department with European countries. A programme of visits and work experience serves to enhance other courses; for example, two companies support students' work through a case study of their organisation and students benefit from a very good partnership with St Paul's Independent Girls' School to further their learning, confidence and self-esteem. Within the enrichment programme there are also opportunities for gifted and talented students, some funded through the national Excellence Challenge. The academy is also involved in partnerships with other organisations such as universities for booster classes, master classes and a range of joint conferences. The academy is committed to giving all students equal opportunities and students with special educational needs and students from all backgrounds and minority groups are encouraged to participate in the enrichment programme. While some students eagerly participate in many activities, some take no part. Overall, however, the take up of enrichment opportunities provided by the academy is satisfactory.
35. The opportunities for personal development are considerable and aimed at increasing students' confidence and self-esteem. A significant contribution is made to the personal development of students through the tutorial programme, which operates weekly. All students are expected to attend these tutorial sessions. The programme is well structured and covers many elements of students' personal development, including sex education, education on drug and substance misuse and study skills. The tutorial sessions are well taught and examples of very good teaching were seen in some sessions during the inspection.
36. Provision for careers and higher education advice is very good. These topics are covered well through the tutorial programme, with additional support available from tutors, counsellors, advisers and other staff at alternative times.
37. Tutorials are also used to discuss the progress of students. During the inspection the academy's half-term personal review took place, where tutors discussed with each student their overall progress and achievement on courses. Tutors also used this session to set and review personal targets for students. There is also a Personal Development Day, during which students can choose to participate in workshops that include first aid, health and fitness, presentation skills, safety and self-protection. A Futures Day is held, which helps students to make informed decisions about their destinations. Students generally spoke very highly about the quality of support that they receive through these programmes.
38. The provision for students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good and that for social development is very good. The academy does not follow the locally agreed syllabus for religious education nor does it provide a daily act of collective worship for students. Nevertheless, the academy's tutorial and enrichment programmes include opportunities for students to reflect on and appreciate the spiritual dimension of life. The themes closely link the moral and social dimensions to the spiritual and there are frequent opportunities to celebrate the cultural diversity of the academy's students and teachers.

39. The themes of identity, culture, values and tradition allow students to reflect on their own personality, their awareness of themselves and of others. The programme also provides opportunities for students to debate different faiths, beliefs and religion in the twenty-first century to study what shapes their lives and those of others. Through personal target setting in tutorials, students have many opportunities to reflect on what they wish to achieve, how they wish to plan and live their lives and the values they wish to set for themselves. The theme of intimate relationships, for example, allows students to explore and reflect on deeper feelings and emotions and in sociology, discussion on different theories of suicide encourage students to look more deeply into human motivation.
40. The academy's good conduct contract (the learners' code) sets firm standards and high expectations of students' behaviour and attitudes, which teachers consistently reinforce. Citizenship themes make students aware of their rights and their responsibilities, especially towards their local communities and environment. Students learn about the effects of drugs, the global impact of HIV/Aids and related moral issues. Several subjects link into these themes. For example, students on business studies courses learn about ethics in competition and in sociology they study issues relating to family, education, crime and deviance. Many of the moral issues are closely linked to social themes, which are very strongly represented in the tutorial and the enrichment programme.
41. The students' social development is well fostered through taking on responsibility, problem solving and by their participation, through the academy's student council, in the day-to-day running and development of the academy. Students regularly take part in charity fund raising activities and many help with reading support activities in local primary schools. The link with St Paul's Girls' Independent School provides a good opportunity for students to meet and discuss issues with others from different social and economic backgrounds. Teaching approaches within the academy enable students to work together in pairs and groups. The academy's very strong ethos of inclusion and support for those students with special educational needs has a positive impact on the social development and learning experience of these students as well as that of all other students.
42. The richness of cultures and backgrounds of the academy's intake is highly valued and celebrated and is a strength of the academy. Black History Month is a key event in the academy's celebration of cultural diversity. A focus on women's issues has been planned to take place in March 2003 to coincide with International Women's Day. The tutorial programme has a strong focus on helping students learn and understand about cultural diversity. This was linked in with a multicultural fashion show that took place in the week prior to the inspection and was attended by over 100 students. The academy is very conscious of the needs of refugees and the "Student Action for Refugees" group provide visiting speakers for discussions and also some support for individual students.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE ACADEMY CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

43. Arrangements to ensure students' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory overall. There is a good number of staff who have recently qualified in first aid and a medical room provides appropriate facilities for those students who become ill whilst on site. Key staff have had training in health and safety and students are also made aware of their responsibilities. The new governing body still has to assume its legal responsibilities for health and safety by, for example, approving a health and safety policy. The academy has clear procedures for dealing with child protection issues but there is the need for a senior manager to take over responsibility for this area. Although there are clear procedures for evacuating the building in the event of an emergency, its arrangements to record attendance need to be more rigorous to ensure that it is able to account for all students who are on site at any given time.
44. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very effective. There is a very clear code for students, which is printed in their organisers and supplemented by a very good agreement on the use of the Internet. A consistently applied system of referrals and warning letters, sometimes involving parents, is very successful in ensuring that students behave very well and are

able to concentrate on their studies. There is a high degree of racial harmony and the academy has a clear system for the recording of racist incidents should they occur.

45. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are unsatisfactory. The academy has used a weekly monitoring system that has enabled staff to identify and target individual students whose attendance is of concern, but this has not always been effective in closely monitoring overall levels of attendance. A new computerised system for recording attendance has been installed, which the academy hopes will enable the staff to more easily identify and monitor absences so individual cases can be followed up quickly. At the time of the inspection the system was not operational due to software problems.
46. The academy is taking steps to improve attendance and punctuality and these are given high priority within its development plan. The plan, however, does not extend to developing strategies to ensure that students returning from absence are helped to catch up on the work they have missed, so that they can take part in lessons. This is important if these irregular attenders are to be encouraged to attend lessons and complete coursework. Staff appropriately challenge latecomers, but so far this has not improved overall punctuality, especially at the start of the day.
47. The academy has very effective procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress. Its assessment policy sets out clearly what is expected of all staff. Guidelines for marking and assessing students' work are useful and provide staff with clear information on arrangements for recording assessments systematically and using this information constructively to bring improvement. Although current procedures are good, the academy is not complacent and further refinement of systems for recording and using attainment data has been identified as a continuing priority.
48. The academy makes good use of information about the attainment of students in their GCSE examinations. This data is used to set minimum targets for all students at the end of their first term. Targets are set at levels which will present a significant challenge to all students. Progress towards targets is reviewed after the interim review in October and in the light of internal examinations and assessments which take place twice yearly across the whole academy. The review process is very thorough; it includes assessments by staff, student self-evaluation and a review meeting at which student and tutor agree actions that will support students in meeting their target grades. The outcomes of the assessment and review processes are recorded in reports, which are shared with both students and parents. Where these processes identify any cause for concern, both tutors and subject teachers take responsibility for working with students to bring about improvement.
49. These assessment and review arrangements are implemented consistently across the academy and as a result students and parents have very clear information about progress and attainment. In many subjects, including geography, modern languages and sociology, marking and assessment are of a very high standard and contribute significantly to the students' progress. There have been marked improvements in the quality of assessment in ICT. This high quality assessment enables teachers to use the outcomes to plan future work and students to identify what action they need to take to improve their performance. Many targets agreed at review meetings are precise and closely related to the requirements of the courses being followed. Some, however, are very general and provide only limited guidance as to how the student can make progress.
50. All students at the academy are working on externally examined courses. This means that staff regularly need to carry out assessments that are a formal part of the examination process in line with the expectations of the awarding bodies. Current monitoring reports show that all the requirements of the awarding bodies are being fully met.
51. Statements of special educational needs are reviewed annually; the review calls upon a wide range of professional opinion and consultation with parents or carers and students. The information from reviews helps the academy to effectively update students' records on a regular basis. The special educational needs coordinator is able to draw upon a range of assessment data in order to enable

her to identify those students, without a statement, who need support and place them appropriately on the academy's register of special educational needs. However, although individual education plans (EPs) are in place for students with a statement of special need, students designated for 'school action plus' do not yet all have IEPs. This falls short of what is required. The students' individual plans are reviewed on a regular basis and targets subsequently modified or changed. However many targets are not sufficiently specific and do not reflect the advice of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs for preciseness. The academy has good relationships with outside specialist agencies and these strengthen the quality of support for students with special educational needs.

52. The initial assessment and enrolment process for students with English as an additional language is good. Teachers visit contributory schools from early in the spring term before the students come to the academy. The students' English language proficiency is assessed and they are well supported in choosing the most appropriate course. This process also means that students can be targeted from the outset for additional one-to-one or small group support when they start at the academy. This ensures that they have access to the curriculum and the opportunity to make progress in their chosen courses. The assessment and monitoring procedures for students whose main language is not English work well and teachers make effective use of the information to plan work at a suitable level for the students.
53. The educational and personal support and guidance provided for the students are very good. They are effective in helping students to progress through their courses and go on to higher education or employment. The academy's tutorial system and half-termly individual student reviews help to identify at an early stage those students who may be at risk of underachieving, so that strategies can be put in place to help them fulfil their potential.
54. Students who experience barriers to continuing their education, including refugees and asylum seekers and students in public care, are very well served by the academy. Many are referred to the learning mentors who provide very good support to help them organise their coursework and also information on how to find somewhere suitable to live. One member of staff has responsibility for coordinating the support for refugees and asylum seekers. The academy also employs a counsellor who provides a confidential service to students seeking personal and practical support for the problems they have. The academy's support services benefit from good links with outside agencies.
55. The students, particularly the older ones, appreciate the very good careers education, advice and guidance they receive. Two part-time staff, one for careers and one for higher education, provide an intensive programme of careers and higher education guidance. The programme includes tutorial sessions, one-to-one interviews and information in assemblies. Visiting speakers, a drop-in careers library, group work, visits to universities and employers and liaison with the local careers service are also part of the programme. Students are very well supported when they make university applications. An important part of the careers advisers' work, funded by the Excellence Challenge, is to raise students' aspirations and broaden their horizons so that, for example, they are encouraged to consider studying at a university outside London.

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

56. Only a few parents completed the pre-inspection questionnaire or attended the meeting with the registered inspector. Those who offered their views were very positive about all aspects of the academy. They feel their children do well and that good support is provided for all students, including those who have special educational needs. They find the academy welcoming and approachable and feel well informed.
57. The academy has good links with its parents. It has struck a balance between keeping parents informed and giving students responsibility for their own learning and development. For example, the termly reports are given to students but parents are informed by post that they have been issued. The reports give detailed information about students' progress. Parents are regularly given information about coursework deadlines and arrangements for examinations and how they

can help students. Parents have formal opportunities to meet their child's tutor and subject teachers. The academy tries hard to ensure that all parents can take advantage of these meetings by providing interpreters for those who speak little English, but does not translate letters or documents. Parents welcome opportunities to attend information evenings such as the one held recently on the university application process.

58. A significant number of parents attend consultation meetings with teachers. The academy is keen to work with its parents; for example, parents of students with special educational needs are kept well informed about their child's progress and the outcomes of review meetings and parents of students who have difficulties meeting the academy's expectations are closely involved in strategies to help raise their achievement. Parental involvement in the life of the academy is fairly limited, but is typically at the level found in most institutions that provide post-16 education.

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

59. William Morris Academy has many strengths. The outstanding leadership of the principal, supported by key governors and managers, provides a purposeful and clear direction for the academy. The principal is very committed to the academy's ethos and aims and to its role within the community. She leads by example and works tirelessly to further the best interests of the academy. She enjoys widespread support from students, staff, parents and governors. The principal has been in post since the start of the academy eight years ago. Until this year, when it gained status as a 16 to 19 school, the academy did not have a governing body. Instead, it operated with a management committee. This committee with the principal provided the vision and educational direction which have helped to establish William Morris as a successful provider for 16-19 olds and also to gain a good reputation within its local community. In February 2002 the management committee was replaced with a governing body. The academy continues to receive very good constructive advice and support to improve standards from the local education authority through regular external monitoring and evaluating of its work.
60. The focus of the academy is very much on enabling all students, whatever their background and ability, to benefit from the education it provides. In all it does, the academy tries to ensure that all students are included. Students are encouraged to relate well within a multiracial community and to respect each other's religious and cultural backgrounds. The most striking feature of the academy is the harmony and sense of purpose in the whole community.
61. The chair of the recently formed governing body, who also chaired the management committee, has worked steadily to develop the academy and, since February, to establish the governing body. Governors understand the need to be effective in fulfilling their responsibilities and shaping the direction of the academy. They are in the process of setting up appropriate structures within the governing body that reflect the needs of the academy. There is a good balance of expertise and experience among the new governors and recent agendas and minutes show that they have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy and a clear understanding of its role and future within post-16 provision. The governing body is very committed to increasing the participation of young people in education after their compulsory school age and also to further raising the achievement of students. The governing body's first annual report provides much of the information statutorily required, but its publication of examination results fails to provide the information in the required format. The present format makes it difficult for parents and students to compare the academy's results with those of other schools and colleges.
62. The two vice principals take on a very strong leadership role. They maintain a very visible profile around the academy. The senior management team has been extended recently to include three assistant principals and they provide clear leadership in relation to their pastoral areas of responsibility. There is a strong sense of teamwork and individuals bring complementary strengths to the senior management team. Members of this team have regular meetings with managers and staff and good systems of communication help the academy to run smoothly. A collaborative and close working relationship between staff at all levels has led to a strong collegiate style working ethos within the academy.

63. Many areas of the academy's work are well managed and include the recent introduction of performance management for all staff. There is much strength in the way in which the academy monitors and evaluates the students' performance in examinations and analyses the results to diagnose strengths and weaknesses and identify where improvements can be made. The academy does not, however, compare its performance with that of other schools nationally and so does not provide parents, students and governors with a clear enough picture of how good it is. The academy has now accumulated a significant amount of data relating to the achievement of students. It has started using this well to determine strategies for further raising the achievement of students, including a focus on male students, students with special educational needs and those for whom English is as an additional language. The academy development plan is clearly focused on mapping the priorities to raise the overall standards. Its clear mission statement underpins the planning and developments.
64. Monitoring and evaluation of the academy's performance are good. This area of work is effectively led by a vice principal and senior managers are clearly focused on the students' achievement and on delivering high quality teaching. The curriculum area managers' annual reviews with the senior management team show that they are expected to analyse and evaluate their provision and outcomes and to identify what needs to be done to maintain high standards or to bring improvement. The academy has introduced very effective practices for monitoring the work of curriculum areas, including lesson observations, to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in subjects and courses, although some senior managers and curriculum area managers do not monitor the work on a sufficiently regular basis.
65. The special educational needs coordinator is experienced and well qualified. Improvement planning, linked to the whole-academy improvement plan, guides the work of the language and learning support department well. There are, however, some shortcomings in the provision for special needs: the new Code of Practice is not yet implemented in full; the register of special educational needs is incomplete; and the academy's policy does not meet the statutory requirements in full. The academy uses funding for special educational needs appropriately to support students with special educational needs.
66. Provision to support those students who are learning English as an additional language is well organised. Teachers are timetabled carefully to provide effective support to targeted students. The training provided for subject and course teachers to help them understand how they can adapt work and support students whose main language is not English, has proved effective. Planning for the further development of the provision for students with English as an additional language has some weaknesses. Targets for future development are included within the English & Media curriculum area, but are not very specific. They need to be more clearly defined with measurable success criteria and a clear indication of who is going to monitor and evaluate what has been achieved. It would be more appropriate to have a separate development plan for this area of work, particularly because of the importance of this provision within the academy.
67. All teaching posts are filled with appropriately qualified teachers, many of whom have developed successfully into new roles and responsibilities as the academy has grown in size. Special educational needs support teachers are deployed effectively in order to provide the required support for the growing number of students with a statement of special educational needs. The academy has sufficient support staff. They contribute well to its good running; for example the learning resources staff have a good overview of the range of resources available and ensure a calm and peaceful atmosphere.
68. There is a good programme of induction of both newly qualified teachers and more experienced staff who are new to the academy. This is followed up with valuable training sessions during the year. Arrangements for appraisal are good. Staff appreciate the many opportunities for further training courses that are run within the academy as well as through those arranged by the examination boards. Three members of staff are also currently being supported to study for a Master's degree.



69. Resources for learning are good overall. The learning centre is very well resourced with a good selection of textbooks in the range of subjects taught. There are 20 computers available for students to book for research work on the Internet, or for word processing. At present the room containing 12 of these computers is used as a classroom for lessons each morning and this limits the availability of this resource. The learning centre also keeps newspapers (in English and Arabic) and subject journals. Dictionaries and encyclopaedias are available in the quiet workroom. There is a fiction section and books are also available on audio and videotape. The learning centre is well managed and resources are reviewed in light of the number of students on the various courses and the demands each will make. Records are kept of loans and of the booking of computers.
70. In curriculum areas, textbooks and other related resources for learning are satisfactory. Text books and equipment are generally well chosen to support learning - for example, in geography and French, where audio and visual aids are used to good effect to help students develop their language skills. Resources for supporting students who are learning English as an additional language are in good supply and are chosen well to match the level of the students' needs. In the language and learning departmental rooms, books cover a suitably wide range and there are sufficient materials and computers for students' use. Teachers have produced a range of glossaries, word-matching charts and other curriculum support materials for classroom use.
71. Although the accommodation is kept in very good condition and presents a good image to visitors, it is small for the number of students on roll and its facilities restrict the curriculum that can be offered. Nevertheless, the academy makes best use of the available space and classrooms are fully timetabled through the day. The restricted space means that facilities for the students' private study and independent learning are poor and as a consequence, their skills in learning on their own are not as developed as well as might be expected. Though somewhat cramped, the language and learning support base provides a pleasant learning environment, including ICT and specific curricular resources, to support the learning of students with special educational needs.
72. Lack of space also limits the physical recreation offered on site and most students wishing to partake in such activities must do so offsite. There are also no spaces in which students can gather socially. Despite this, the students are cheerful, have very good attitudes to their work and they behave very well.
73. The accommodation for science is unsatisfactory at present. The staff work hard to overcome the difficulties of having only two laboratories. The current building programme will address the problem by providing the extra laboratory needed, but will not provide extra preparatory space which is currently insufficient to allow efficient working. The building programme will also provide extra classroom space, but will not address the need for social areas for the students and spaces for independent learning.
74. Day-to-day organisation is good and enhanced by the effective administration of clerical and site staff. Communication is effective, both within the academy, through bulletins and with parents and students through newsletters. Very good use is made of technology to support administration for example, the use of computer screens to welcome visitors and to show what events are taking place. It is also well used in data analysis to illustrate trends of improvement.
75. The financial administration is very good. The finance administrator monitors spending very effectively and minor recommendations of the last audit report have been implemented. Regular reports are provided to governors so that they can monitor the budget. The development plan is very well linked to financial resources and demands and spending is effectively monitored. The income per student, although high when compared to school sixth forms, reflects the distinctive character of the academy. The amount of money held in contingency is appropriate.
76. The academy seeks to achieve best value, especially in relation to tenders for resources and building work and through the review of teaching and learning as linked to performance management and examination results. It consults well with its governors, staff and students and other institutions, reflecting its collegiate ethos. Resources, both human and physical, are very

well deployed and used efficiently. Specific grants for special educational needs and for other initiatives are spent appropriately. The academy recognises that it can improve further and the analysis of its own performance enables it to clearly target for improvement.

77. Current development plans for the academy and for curriculum areas cover just one year and although they contain appropriate details and structure they do not provide a long-term overview. Now that the academy has been recognised as a school, planning needs to become more strategic to ensure that it has a longer-term development plan to achieve its present and future priorities. The plan also needs to reflect budget cycles.
78. Taking account of the achievement of students, the quality of teaching and its overall positive learning ethos, the academy is cost effective and gives good value for money.

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

In order to further the quality of education the academy offers its students, the principal and staff together with the governing body should:

- (i) continue to take steps to improve the overall attendance and punctuality of students (paras 10, 20, 45, 46, 114, 158);
- (ii) increase the range of teaching styles and the facilities for the students' private study to develop students' independence in learning (paras 19, 24, 71, 73, 90, 116, 139, 143, 151, 166, 177); and
- (iii) take a view beyond one year and develop a longer-term strategic plan, that also reflects relevant budget cycles, for the academy's future development (77, 107).

The following additional issues should be considered for inclusion in the governors' action plan:

- implement in full the Code of Practice for special educational needs (paras 33, 51, 65);
- consider how the academy can work towards fulfilling the requirements for religious education and collective worship (para 38); and
- ensure examination results are published in the required format, so that direct comparisons can be made with other providers of 16-19 education (paras 61 and 63).

## PART C: ACADEMY DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	112
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	69

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	4	38	41	27	1	0	0
Percentage	4	34	37	24	1	0	0

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

### Information about the academy's students

Number of students on the academy's roll	761
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	287

Number of students with statements of special educational needs	41
Number of students on the academy's special educational needs register	72

#### English as an additional language

	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	350

#### Student mobility in the last academy year

	No of students
Students who joined the academy other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Students who left the academy other than at the usual time of leaving	N/a

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
Academy data	82.4
National comparative data	N/a

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
Academy data	N/a
National comparative data	N/a

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



## Attainment in 2001

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
Academy	Number of candidates	82 [62 ]	114 [131]	196 [193]
	Average point score per candidate	16 [13.4]	11.48 [13.6]	12.9 [13.5]
National	Average point score per candidate	16.3	16.3	16.3

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
Academy	Number of candidates	52 [34]	74[86]	126[120]	30[28]	40[45]	71[73]
	Average point score per candidate	14.8[15.3]	15.7[13.7]	15.3[15.2]	8.6[4.1]	10.6[15.4]	9.6[5.2]
National	Average point score per candidate	N/a	N/A	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year 2000.

### **Ethnic background of students**

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

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

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
159	0	0
3	0	0
64	0	0
12	0	0
5	0	0
6	0	0
13	0	0
29	0	0
26	0	0
30	0	0
25	0	0
76	0	0
156	0	0
21	0	0
7	0	0
129	0	0
0	0	0

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	58.7
Number of students per qualified teacher	13

#### **Education support staff**

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	438

#### **Deployment of teachers**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77
---	----

<b>Average teaching group size</b>	16
------------------------------------	----

FTE means full-time equivalent.

### **Financial information**

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

	£
Total income	2,985,673
Total expenditure	2,957,362
Expenditure per student	4,212
Balance brought forward from previous year	84,127
Balance carried forward to next year	112,438

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

Number of teachers who left the academy during the last two years	13.5
Number of teachers appointed to the academy during the last two years	21.9
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*



## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

760

Number of questionnaires returned

27

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	26	0	0	4
My child is making good progress in school.	44	33	4	4	15
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	37	7	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	52	7	0	11
The teaching is good.	44	48	4	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	37	4	4	11
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	11	4	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	11	0	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	63	30	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	59	33	4	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	41	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	30	0	4	15

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

In the inspection fifteen subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. The academy's provision for key skills was also inspected in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

### *GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	32	94	88	47	44	3	2.9
Biology	29	100	84	45	35	3.4	2.6
Business Studies	40	83	87	15	28	2.0	2.5
Chemistry	36	92	87	44	42	3.1	2.6
Computer Sci.	19	89	80.5	26	21	2.1	N/A
Critical Thinking	15	80	N/A	13	N/A	1.7	N/A
Dance	4	100	96	75	33	4	N/A
Drama	15	93	96	7	33	2.3	3.0
Economics	17	100	88	23	42	2.4	2.7
English Lit.	42	93	95	21	37	2.7	2.9
English Lang.	11	91	95	27	N/A	2.2	2.8
French	16	75	91	44	47	2.9	2.7
Geography	11	54	91	9	39	1.3	2.7
German	3	100	92	33	45	3	N/A
Gov. & Politics	13	53.8	90	10	41	1.3	N/A
General Studies	17	88	82	6	27	2	2.1
History	17	100	94	41	42	3.2	2.9
I.T.	21	67	85	14	25	1.4	N/A
Italian	5	100	93	60	66	4	N/A
Maths	9	67	71	0	32	1.4	2.1
Media Studies	35	97	94	40	38	2.9	N/A
Physics	29	100	86	41	41	3.1	2.6
Philosophy	8	100	N/A	25	N/A	2.8	N/A
Psychology	42	90	83	29	28	2.6	N/A
Sociology	55	91	87	29	22	2.7	2.6

Spanish	8	100	91	62	49	3.9	2.6
---------	---	-----	----	----	----	-----	-----

**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
Arabic	4	100	N/A	0	N/A	4	N/A
Art	15	87	97	33	48	5.3	6.4
Biology	28	100	88	43	38	5.6	5.0
Business Studies	26	100	90	11	31	4.5	5.4
Chemistry	23	100	91	43	48	6.3	5.6
Computer Sci.	11	64	85	9	23	3.1	N/A
Drama	17	100	92	6	32	5.4	6.6
Economics	15	100	90	27	42	4.9	5.3
English Lit.	23	100	94	28	36	5.6	5.7
English Lang.	7	86	94	29	36	5.1	5.2
French	14	86	92	14	45	4.3	5.3
Geography	7	100	93	0	42	4.5	5.6
Gov. & Politics	5	100	92	20	43	4	N/A
History	13	69	89	0	40	2.6	5.3
I.T.	12	67	92	25	31	4.3	4.5
Italian	5	100	97	40	65	5.2	N/A
Maths	19	95	89	47	48	6	5.4
Media Studies	33	94	95	42	30	6.4	N/A
Physics	17	100	89	35	45	6	5.4
Philosophy	3	67	N/A	33	N/A	4.7	N/A
Psychology	39	90	84	20	30	4.5	N/A
Sociology	25	93	84	32	32	5.2	5.3
Spanish	6	100	97	83	52	8.7	5.4

**Intermediate, Foundation & Advanced vocational qualifications**

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Foundation Art & Design	5	25	68	25	23	0	3
Foundation Business	21	100	60	60	18	0	2
Foundation Health & Social Care	19	84	72	47.4	23	0	1
Intermediate Art & Design	13	54	59	0	17	0	1
Intermediate Business	20	87	62	50	17	0	1
Intermediate Health & Social Care	17	79	64	36	17	7	1
Intermediate Information Technology	19	61	55	0	15	0	1
Intermediate Leisure & Tourism	21	80	65	40	18	0	1
Advanced Art & Design	12	63	72	18	32	36	21
Advanced Business	18	78	61	61	28	0	17
Advanced Health & Social Care	9	100	54	33	27	67	18
Advanced Information Technology	15	93	54	57	24	0	10
Advanced Leisure & Tourism	13	77	60	31	26	23	14
Advanced Performing Arts	7	71	58	71	25	0	25

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision is good.

##### Strengths

- An impressive proportion of students attain high A-level grades.
- Students' achievement is above average because teaching and learning are good.
- The arrangements for tracking students' progress are very good.

##### Areas for development

- Improving GCSE results.
- The use of information and communication technology.
- Display of students' work.
- In the longer term, teaching rooms that are in one area.

79. When they start their sixth form course students' standards are below average. Some students embark on AS-level and A-level mathematics having previously taken a GCSE intermediate course. These students struggle to attain an AS-level pass grade by the end of the first year. Provisional data for 2002 shows half of all AS-level mathematics entrants failed to gain a grade in the A to E range. More able students fare better. One sixth of entrants attained a grade A or B. A much smaller group of students entered the AS-level examination in 2001 and the pass rate was near the national average. A-level results are just above the national average. In both 2001 and 2002, nearly half of all candidates attained a grade A or B. Equally impressively, nearly all entrants attained a pass grade A-E. Overall, students achieve well and better than expected when account is taken of the GCSE grade they attained on entry to the academy two years earlier.
80. A very large cohort of students embark on a GCSE mathematics retake course. The academy is able to offer one-year GCSE intermediate or foundation courses alongside a two-year foundation GCSE course for those students with very low previous GCSE grades. Results have fluctuated over the years, largely dependent on the quality of the intake. In 2001 results were above average but provisional data for 2002 shows below average results. Students' performance in the key skills application of number qualification is disappointing, although results in 2002 are better than in 2001.
81. The students currently studying for A-level are attaining levels slightly above average for the course, while the standards of work seen on GCSE and key skills courses are just below average. In these courses, however, the range of attainment is wide. Some students, for example, are improving their algebraic skills significantly while others are insecure in manipulating numbers. Male and female students do equally well. A-level students have a sound knowledge and understanding of a wide range of topics in pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. The work of the small group taking A-level further mathematics is of a high standard in algebra and geometry. Some students on the AS-level use of mathematics course show weaknesses in basic algebra that prevent them from completing work on other topics - for example in determining the equation of a line of best fit on a scatter-gram.
82. Teaching is good and students learn well as a result. Teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject and plan lessons very effectively so that students acquire skills, knowledge and understanding steadily. The management of students is very perceptive and class profile sheets provide very full data about the previous performance and special needs of individuals. Sometimes students are encouraged to come to the front of the class to show their solution to a problem to the rest of the class; this is effective in improving their confidence and

expertise. Teaching methods are satisfactory overall. In an excellent GCSE lesson on algebra the teachers' enthusiasm, rapid pace and very good use of personal whiteboards enabled students to be fully involved and to make very good progress. In some other cases, lessons lack a short plenary session to summarise, monitor and evaluate the work completed.

83. Leadership and management are good and staff are strongly committed to raising students' standards of attainment. Performance is monitored and action taken when necessary, for example, in introducing an AS-level Use of Mathematics course to match students' needs more effectively. The tracking of students' progress through both one-year and two-year courses is very good. Teachers give freely of their time, providing lunchtime drop-in sessions; these are appreciated by students. Although teachers' marking of students' work is generally good there is no agreed approach based on best practice. Accommodation is barely satisfactory, although the new buildings under construction will improve the overall accommodation for mathematics. Mathematics classrooms are in various buildings, display of students' work is minimal and there is too little access to information and communication technology.

## SCIENCES

The academy provides science courses to cater for a large range of students' differing levels of prior attainment. In addition to GCSE, AS and A-level courses in biology, chemistry and physics, students can follow a vocational course and a course in science for understanding.

The focus of this inspection was on chemistry and physics, but biology was also sampled. In A-level biology, examination results were above average in 2001 and students did better than expected considering their GCSE results. Work seen during this inspection is of a similar standard. Two biology lessons were observed. One lesson was excellent and the other very good. Both lessons were taken at a brisk pace presenting the students with challenging work throughout. Excellent teaching involving detailed and well-structured explanations and a video and role-play enabled students to have a secure understanding of photosynthesis. Biology also assists in the personal development of the students.

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good overall and is the main reason why students make very good progress.
- Results are significantly better than expected based on their GCSE results.
- Students have a very good attitude to learning, fostered by the effective teaching.
- Teachers care for their students, bringing about mutual respect and a shared commitment for all to succeed.
- The science department is well led.

### Areas for improvement

- Further improvement in teaching would be assisted by a formal monitoring of its quality.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped as a teaching and learning aid and to encourage more independent learning.

### Physics

84. The A-level examination results in 2001 were better than the national average and show very good achievement considering the students' results at GCSE level. Male and female students did equally well. Students with special educational needs and students for whom English is an additional language also make good progress. There were no unclassified grades in 2001. Results in 2002 are not as high; however, achievement in relation to GCSE results was maintained at the previous level.

85. The standard of work seen is as expected from the examination results in 2001. The achievement of students in the second year has been maintained. For example, whilst year one students define the forces in simple situations such as a moving train, second year students analyse an oscillating system, sketching graphs of displacement and time before predicting velocity and acceleration relationships. Two students solved the problem by drawing on their mathematical concepts. Students in year one have made much progress in the relatively short time since starting the course. They show a sound understanding of inclined forces, are able to distinguish between mass and weight and predict successfully the importance of gravity on weight. Students with special educational needs make progress similar to that of other students. GCSE students become more aware of the properties of current flow in a simple circuit; however, a minority do not understand that the current is the same in all parts of a series circuit. There was no evidence of the use of ICT techniques.
86. Teaching is good overall and as a result students learn well. Lesson objectives are clearly defined but not always shared with the students. Lessons are well planned and structured to involve the students fully all the time. For example, the teacher during a year one lesson encouraged the students to present their ideas to the remainder of the group and skilfully used the discussion that followed to promote effective understanding of the relationship between forces in dynamic settings such as a submarine and a space shuttle.
87. Students respond well and they are eager to learn. There is a mutual respect between teachers and students with a shared commitment to succeed. Physics makes a valuable contribution to the students' maturation. Students are given some opportunity to show initiative and to learn independently, but this area needs further development including greater use of ICT. Lack of ICT resources limits the use of computers in teaching and in practical work such as data logging. The provision of basic resources is good and there is satisfactory technical assistance.

## **Chemistry**

88. The A-level examination results in 2001 were better than the national average and show very good achievement considering the students' results at GCSE level. Male and female students did equally well. Students with special educational needs including students for whom English is an additional language make good progress. There were no unclassified grades in 2001. Results in 2002 show further improvement, continuing the trend over the last three years.
89. The standard of work seen reflects recent examination results. The achievement of year two students has been maintained. They demonstrate a thorough understanding of the chemistry involved in the reactions. First year students learn effective practical techniques in using a pipette and burette before undertaking a titration neutralising an acid with an alkali. Half the students in a GCSE group showed only a limited knowledge of acids and alkalis. These examples show clearly the rate of progress achieved. Students with special educational needs take a full part in the activities and achieve as well as the other students.
90. Teaching is very good overall and as a result students learn very well. Lessons are delivered at a brisk pace and are well planned and structured to involve the students fully all the time. There is a clear relationship between the quality of teaching, learning and students' attitudes. For example, students in their second year carry out practical activities carefully and produce a range of dyes. They show a thorough understanding of the chemical reactions involved. The worksheets used provide assistance for all, including students with special educational needs. Students are encouraged to present ideas to the class. This they do, occasionally lacking in confidence but without hesitation. Their efforts are received with respect by the remainder of the group and used skilfully by the teacher to further understanding. Independent learning has begun to be encouraged but more needs to be done to make the students more independent. Greater use of ICT would help but the lack of easily available computers limits opportunities in lesson time and prevents computer assisted practical work.
91. The science department is well led and managed. Clear educational vision and sound management make a significant contribution to the achievements in science. There is a realistic



science development plan and there are very good teaching and learning policies in place. The attainment of students is assessed regularly but assessment does not provide a coherent detailed track of a student's achievement or identify relatively weak curricular areas. Although the quality of teaching in all science subjects is very good and the science staff work well as a team, sharing ideas and providing support where necessary, a formal system of monitoring teaching and the effectiveness of learning would assist in raising standards further. The provision of basic resources is good and there is satisfactory technical assistance. Accommodation in the two laboratories is unsatisfactory. Too many lessons are taught in classrooms involving either room changes or dislocation of the desired order of teaching the science scheme of work. This in turn impacts on the effectiveness of learning. The additional laboratory will alleviate this problem but there will still be insufficient preparation area.

## **BUSINESS**

Overall, the quality of provision in business education is good.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- The positive attitude of students to business education.
- The quality of teachers' marking and feedback.
- The promotion of key skills and use of ICT.
- The wide range of courses to meet students' needs.

### Areas for improvement

- Increased access to ICT.
  - Greater emphasis on improving students' evaluation skills.
  - Continuing to develop and apply the strategies to improve the standards of potentially higher-attaining students.
92. In comparison with national averages, results at advanced level in 2001 were below average for grades A and B, but above average for grades A to E, with a 100 per cent pass rate. The latter represents an improvement since 1998, whereas the proportion of A and B grades has fluctuated. In 2002 there was a slight improvement in the number of A and B grades, but a fall in the overall pass rate to 90 per cent.
93. At AS level, results in 2001 were well below average for grades A and B and below average for grades A to E. Despite an improvement in the number of A and B grades in 2002, standards were still below average. The proportion of A to E grades declined when a quarter of the students failed to obtain a grading.
94. In GNVQ there have been no distinction grades awarded, but overall pass rates and student retention rates have mostly been good. In the final GNVQ advanced results in 2001 standards were above average in the number of merit grades awarded, but the pass rate was depressed, as just under a quarter of the students did not complete the course. Any comparisons with the new AVCE course results of 2002 are unreliable, as it is radically different. There were few higher grades in either double- or single-award, but the pass rates were well above 90 per cent. Retention rates of students from year one to year two of the single award were very low. Half the students did not continue, as they found difficulty in managing two sets of coursework, if they were studying in two vocational areas. Retention rates for the double award course are unreliable, as some students leave with the three-unit award at the end of year one.
95. In the intermediate course, results in 2001 were well above average, but a larger number of entries in 2002 and a lower proportion of merit grades, depressed the standards, despite a good retention rate.

96. Foundation level pass rates have remained high and well above national averages in 2001 and 2002. The proportion of merit grades was well above the national average in 2001. This fell to below average in 2002.
97. Low attainment on entry certainly influences students' results and many students on advanced vocational courses have progressed from the lower levels. The adoption of entirely new syllabuses also means that the teaching team often has to modify the way the course is delivered in order to achieve the maximum impact. Overall the pass rates achieved by the academy's students represent good progress; this is borne out by the value-added data in the examination analysis.
98. Inspection evidence shows that almost all students on the one-year vocational business courses are fulfilling the courses' criteria and achieving well. Higher- and middle-attaining students at foundation level are showing good understanding of the subject and the course requirements, their presentation is good and their writing coherent. Only the occasional omission of detail detracts from the overall quality of their work. Lower-attaining students have more difficulty understanding the requirements of the tasks and their writing suffers from omission of crucial detail and mistakes of grammar and spelling. At intermediate level, higher-attaining students are completing merit grade tasks and are showing evidence of good presentation, language skills and independent research. Middle- and lower-attaining students are less confident with the "report" format, both in the accuracy of their English and in the skill of illustrating points with relevant detail.
99. On the two-year AVCE course standards are variable, but reflect the wide range of attainment amongst single- and double-award students in both years. Their major written assignments vary from those with detailed, well-argued content, full explanations, illustrations and analyses, to more superficial content, lacking essential explanations, with some crucial omissions and unsound analyses. Year two students show a high level of independence: their primary and secondary research is good overall, but some lower attainers do not handle it well in their arguments. All students are fulfilling the criteria for the units, but they need to develop more precise evaluation skills, especially when given the opportunity to redraft their work.
100. Students at AS and A2-level are fulfilling the requirements of the course and standards are in line with expectations. They show good understanding and an ability to express themselves clearly and precisely in class. Their attainment level is strongly influenced by the degree of difficulty they experience in presenting arguments and justifying opinions and conclusions in their written work. This is much more noticeable in AS-level students, especially amongst middle and lower attainers.
101. The opportunities for independent learning and the promotion of key skills in business education are good. The department provides discrete lessons in numeracy and communication for foundation level students and the detailed scheme of work clearly identifies key skills opportunities in all the courses, including appropriate ICT work. In a foundation level lesson students were using Internet search engines to find websites to research information on three leisure parks, for a comparison of prices, rides and value for money. Intermediate level students, working in groups, were analysing a questionnaire and presenting the results in graph form, with the extension task of presenting the same graph in the form of percentages rather than numbers. There is good evidence of teachers giving students a large degree of responsibility for completing their tasks and there are frequent opportunities for group and team work. Year two students, especially, show evidence of sound independent research.
102. Teaching is good overall. All lessons observed were good or better. All the members of a large teaching team show a detailed and profound knowledge of the subject and deliver a variety of aspects across the subject curriculum. Students are aware of the objectives of the lessons, of the ultimate aim of each task and of the criteria they need to meet to achieve success. There are opportunities within the assignments for extension tasks to achieve the higher grades and students of all attainment levels are encouraged to try them. Planning in lessons is good. Varied activities serve to extend and consolidate knowledge, with special emphasis on retaining key vocabulary and concepts. The best lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, time is used efficiently and students are fully involved in class exchanges or in individual and group work. Learning is enhanced by recall of prior knowledge and relating the theory to familiar and relevant contexts. In an A2 lesson, the example of adopting Muhammad Ali as a role model for the promotion of the

Nation of Islam helped understanding of marketing theory applied to non-profit-making organisations.

103. Marking and feedback are very detailed and constructive, especially on major assessments. Teachers explain exactly why criteria are not fulfilled and give detailed advice on what is needed to rectify omissions, or to extend the work to obtain higher grades. Students with special educational needs and those with English as a second language are well supported and make good progress.
104. There is a very good rapport between teachers and students and between the students themselves. They clearly enjoy the subject, contribute positively to class exchanges and work well together.
105. The curriculum is broad and relevant and there are a wide range of courses to suit students' qualifications and needs. A programme of visits and work experience serves to enhance the courses, two companies support units based on a case study of their organisation and the gifted and talented students benefit from the link with an independent girls' school. The department uses ICT effectively in order to enhance students' skills and learning at every opportunity, but facilities are restricted and equipment is ageing.
106. The department closely monitors students' attainment and progress through the academy-based systems and is able to set effective targets. Many discussions, for instance, take place as to the optimum time for students to sit the module tests and of the best order to deliver the separate units. Student performance in major assessments has informed the necessary changes to the delivery of the curriculum. The department has implemented strategies to support students, with revision and coursework completion workshops, as well as module test resits, in a bid to enhance achievement, particularly that of potentially higher-attaining students.
107. Leadership of the curriculum area is good. There have been many recent staff changes and the team is fairly new. Most planning is year by year, but the curriculum area manager, now in her second year, is looking further ahead on course provision and its implications, especially on accommodation and greater access to ICT, which will both require improvement. Management of the area is also good. With a wide variety of courses, catering for different student needs, most members of the team have a co-ordinating role. This is a committed team working well together in constantly reviewing provision and delivery of the curriculum. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching occur regularly under the academy's performance management scheme and staff have recently begun to observe other colleagues, on an informal basis, in their own and in other curriculum areas, to see and share good practice.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The academy offers ICT courses at GCSE, A-level, Intermediate and Advanced Vocational levels and key skills ICT. This range of courses allows good opportunities for most students to gain a qualification in ICT at one of a number of levels. Students' attainment varies across these subjects with vocational courses being above the national average and A-level courses below the national average.

The quality of provision for ICT is good.

### **Strengths**

- Attainment in intermediate GNVQ is above the national pass rate for this subject, and attainment in advanced GNVQ is significantly above the national pass rate.
- The quality of teaching of ICT courses is good.
- The provision of ICT resources contributes to standards in this subject.
- Leadership in this subject is good and is giving rise to significant improvements in provision and standards attained in ICT.

### **Areas for improvement**

- The development of industry links as a resource for vocational ICT courses.
- Further staff development in the use of ICT across subjects.

108. From 2001 to 2002 the results for A-level computing rose significantly from below the national average for computing subjects to close to the national average. GNVQ Intermediate results are above the national pass rate for this subject, having improved significantly between 2001 and 2002. GNVQ Advanced results for 2001 were significantly above the national pass rate, with greater than average numbers attaining at merit and distinction levels. Key skills results were higher than the national average pass rate at Level 3 but below the national average at Levels 1 and 2.
109. The standard of work of current students is good overall. Coursework provides a range of opportunities in which to learn and students display a good level of technical understanding. A-level project work is well-presented and well-documented over all project stages. Key skills work emphasises research skills, particularly the use of the Internet and the integration of information in different forms. Work in the vocational A-level reveals a good technical knowledge and a good understanding of coursework requirements. Work in the Intermediate GNVQ ICT course is generally of a lower standard, reflecting the abilities of the lower-attaining students who study this course. Students have well-developed ICT skills and are able to work independently using a range of applications. Students' work is mostly good in relation to their prior attainment. The further development of industry links will be necessary to provide a resource for project work on the vocational A-level course.
110. The teaching of ICT is good overall. Teaching was good or very good in 6 out of 9 lessons seen and unsatisfactory in one lesson. Teachers have an up-to-date technical knowledge of the subject and place good emphasis on teaching the underlying ICT knowledge of more advanced applications, like databases. Teachers' knowledge of how to teach this subject to students with varying prior experience of the subject is also good. A lesson on programming procedures included an effective exposition of passing parameters and the scope of variables. Good teacher knowledge promotes good levels of understanding. Teachers are aware of students' prior attainment and they use informal and formal assessment well to monitor their progress. Marking is frequent and conforms to coursework requirements. Effective planning and lesson management are generally good features of lessons and teaching is improved through the effective use of a data projector and modern ICT resources. Questioning is used well to draw out student's understanding. In the single lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, there was a lack of pace and the main method used - copying from a whiteboard - was not effective in helping students understand the work.
111. Students have very positive attitudes to their work and towards their teachers and the quality of learning in lessons is good as a result. They are attentive, ready to contribute and demonstrate independent learning when using a computer. Students who had individual learning plans used ICT well to support their learning. There were no differences in the progress made by boys and girls. In a key skills ICT lesson, students worked with interest when using modern multi-media computers. They were able to gather source material from the Internet, combining this with charts from a spreadsheet application, to assemble a report. In an A-level computing lesson the quality of resources, including an up-to-date programming environment and database application, provided good scope for students to develop technical knowledge and a practical understanding.
112. Leadership in this subject is good and has led to significant improvements in provision and standards attained in ICT. A vice-principal has a strategic overview of ICT, supported by an ICT committee, whilst the management of the subject is the responsibility of a curriculum area manager. This team approach has been effective in coordinating improvements in the subject. Weaknesses identified by the examination board in the planning and assessment of vocational courses have been remedied through the implementation of a systematic development plan for ICT. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department are satisfactory. There have been some developments in ICT provision in departments promoted through the allocation of subject responsibilities for ICT. However, the national NOF-funded ICT training programme for teachers has not made a significant impact on the work of the academy. The academy is aware that further staff

development in the use of ICT in subjects is needed to complement recent investments in ICT resources.

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

### **Travel and Tourism**

The overall provision is satisfactory.

This is a popular vocational area and students achieve well. Good use is made of the London area as a resource for studying tourism.

#### Strengths

- The management of this vocational area is good.
- Students are achieving well.
- Good use is made of visits in the London area.
- Care for students, for example, in providing careers and higher education guidance is good.
- The learning resource centre supports travel and tourism students very well.

#### Areas for improvement

- Teachers have good subject knowledge but they do not have relevant professional experience. Both teachers and students would benefit from placements in the industry.
- There is insufficient use of modern information and communication technology in the classroom and there is not enough focus on independent learning.
- There is no teaching base where students' work can be displayed.
- There is not a consistent focus on helping students to improve their literacy skills.
- Tasks and resources are not always matched to the needs of individual students

113. Travel and tourism attracts students of a wide range of attainment, many of whom are learning English as an additional language. Students achieve well in relation to their results at GCSE or in other tests. In 2001, students were entered for GNVQ Leisure and Tourism at advanced level. Standards were close to the national average in relation to pass and merit levels but below average at distinction level. In 2002 students took AVCE Travel and Tourism and standards were similar to those in the previous year. Standards among the present second year students are below those seen in other centres because many students have literacy or other difficulties. Standards in year one are close to the national average.

114. Students have good attitudes to their work and the majority are planning to study aspects of travel and tourism at a higher level and ultimately to work in the industry. They have clearly been given good support and advice about possible career options. However, although the majority of students clearly work hard a minority in their second year find it difficult to get to morning lessons on time and this affects their progress. Most students achieve well because of their positive attitudes, the sound teaching in lessons and the quality of resources available in the learning resource centre. In both year groups they respond well to questioning and they recall knowledge gained from previous lessons or recent visits. Some are using the appropriate vocabulary with confidence but others find this difficult. Key vocabulary, which would benefit all students, especially those with weakness in literacy, is not displayed at present. The vocational area does not have a base room and this prevents the display of subject specific information and students' work.

115. Year one students show a clear understanding of some aspects of employment and made good use of a recent visit to Heathrow. Although some students find difficulty in expressing their ideas they are all able to identify the most important qualities for those who want employment, for example in air traffic control. By the second year they are confident in using web sites to research specific issues and most use computers to improve the presentation of their work. Individual higher attaining students can explain the main features of marketing and customer service. However, others are not able to explain in detail what it means to provide good service and they clearly have difficulty with the vocabulary in the materials used; this is affecting their learning.

116. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The lessons observed showed that teachers have secure subject knowledge although this is not supported by real experience in the vocational area. A group-based approach provided a good learning opportunity for students in year one because they were able to investigate different areas of employment and share their new knowledge. However, in other lessons students were not actively involved and this adversely affected their learning. A valuable feature of the learning is the number of visits that introduce them to the concept of London as a tourist attraction and to Heathrow as an example of the types of employment in the industry. In some lessons, tasks and resources are not matched to the needs of students and insufficient attention is paid to the need to promote literacy skills. For example, key vocabulary is not displayed and photocopies are difficult to read. The department has access to sophisticated computer based audio-visual equipment but this is not yet being used to model the high quality of presentations in the travel and tourism industry. Trips and visits are now being well used but teachers and students would benefit from placements.
117. Marking is rigorous and ensures that students are clear about their strengths and about how they can improve. Assessment data to track the progress of individuals is readily available and is used well for this purpose but not for matching tasks and resources to individual student needs. Students with learning difficulties and English as an additional language would benefit from more direct support in class.
118. Management is good. Travel and tourism is taught within the business studies area and teachers and resources are managed well. The new courses have been effectively introduced. This is a popular subject and students judge provision to be good. Students are clearly very appreciative of the quality of provision in the learning resource centre and understand the potential for employment within the industry.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Overall, the quality of provision is good.

### Strengths

- Standards are good; students make very good progress.
- The teaching is good and ensures that students know how to improve.
- There is a good range of relevant learning opportunities.
- Very good leadership and management ensure continuous improvement.

### Areas for development

- The targets set for students are insufficiently well focused to be effective.
  - The teaching strategies used in some lessons are not well matched to the needs of students.
119. All courses, Foundation, Intermediate and AVCE, recruit well and relatively few students drop out. Half of the students on the AVCE course have progressed from the Intermediate course. Although there are relatively few distinctions at Foundation and Intermediate levels, the number of merits is high particularly on the Intermediate course. Standards in all courses are improving; the results in 2002 were better than in 2001. The standards of students' work seen during the inspection were generally above average, although attainment in the Intermediate course is only in line with that expected for this course. Given their low entry grades, students' performance represents very good progress and achievement. The girls' results are better than the boys'; this reflects the fact that many more girls follow these courses and the overall attainment of the boys at the start of the course is lower than that of the girls. Nevertheless, both boys and girls progress well.
120. The majority of Intermediate students have below average attainment at GCSE. From this base, their achievement is good. Their attainment levels are about average and the portfolios of evidence that they produce are thorough and well presented. A comparison of their coursework with their GCSE grades shows that they are achieving well.

121. The teaching on all courses is good because it engages and supports students well and enables them to become confident and successful learners. Teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of the course and the best teachers use imaginative methods to help students to understand potentially difficult topics, for example, the implications of legislation. Teachers have excellent relationships with the students and quickly build a productive learning environment. As a result, students have very good role models in terms of their own personal skills. The strategies that are used by many teachers also develop the students' personal and social skills. For example, students learn to explain themselves clearly, effectively and confidently when acting out the implications of failure to protect an individual's personal information. Students are encouraged to make good use of ICT. They are given good access to appropriate information sources and a good range of visits and visitors.
122. Sensitive handling of students' perceptions of how to study are very effectively extended and developed on the foundation course. For example, the benefits for students of using a range of sources of information was debated in a way that allowed them to understand how to change their ways of working. Students' understanding of physical, social, emotional and intellectual factors that impinge on health and social care are well developed on the intermediate course. Students on the advanced course are developing their critical awareness well through examining material from different sources and through class discussions.
123. In a small number of lessons where the teaching is no better than satisfactory, the teachers were less experienced. Their lessons relied too heavily on students' ability to process complex concepts that had been explained verbally. Those students who have weaker language skills were, therefore, at a disadvantage. Although target setting is well established, success is not always measurable and students are not always clear about how they will meet their targets, for example, improvement in attendance. Students develop good skills of independence. Careful and regular evaluation and review of students' work are strong features of the work of the team. Students know how to improve their work because teachers provide high levels of support and detailed feedback. The students are, therefore, clear about their strengths and weaknesses. As a result, higher attaining students, those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress.
124. Leadership and management are very good. Teachers work closely as a team and share their knowledge of individual students very effectively. Students are extremely grateful for the high quality of understanding of their needs and the support that teachers provide for them. There is a commitment to continuous improvement at all levels.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA** **(including the contribution of Drama to other courses)**

### **ART**

The focus of the inspection was on art vocational courses but AS and A-level work was also sampled. AS and A-level results were above average and students did better than expected considering their GCSE results. Results in vocational courses were good and students did better than expected in view of their prior attainment.

Five lessons were observed. Teaching ranged from satisfactory to excellent. In the best lessons clarity of objectives and exposition were matched by detailed and helpful individual feedback and a well-structured series of practical activities. This enabled students to acquire a good understanding of the use and pictorial qualities of a range of drawing media.

Overall the quality of provision in art is good.

#### Strengths

- Results in vocational and AS and A-level courses showed a marked improvement in 2002 and were above average.

- Students have a sound understanding of the range and uses of visual media. They systematically explore the visual qualities of drawing media and techniques and are achieving well.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers have a very good level of subject knowledge. Lessons are well-organised and structured sequences of activities lead students to a greater knowledge and appreciation of media qualities and purpose.
- Students have a very positive and mature approach to learning. They respond well to challenging work.
- The subject is well led and courses are designed to match the needs of students.

#### Areas for improvement

- Some of the tasks in lessons are not sufficiently structured for lower achieving students.
- Visual resources for some teaching are limited in scope and do not support the lower attaining students.
- Intermediate GNVQ students use limited techniques when working independently.
- ICT is underdeveloped in several art areas.
- Within vocational courses the three-dimensional work is less well developed and does not match the level of work in two dimensions.

125. The AS and A-level examination results in 2002 show a striking improvement over the previous year. There has been a steady year-on-year improvement in results overall. All students passed at AS-level, with a very high proportion in the upper grades but insufficient numbers at the very highest. Almost all students passed at A-level, also with a high proportion gaining higher grades. Particularly high levels of improvement occurred in students' grades on vocational courses. On the foundation course the percentage of students passing increased significantly. The students' performance in the Intermediate GNVQ course also improved, especially in the number attaining a merit. Students did particularly well at AVCE level, where all achieved a pass in this double award course.
126. The standards of work of current students are above average. AVCE vocational students are achieving well in relation to their previous attainment levels. In the lessons seen their achievements came as the result of a well-structured teaching programme that is tailored to meet the needs of the students. Systematic learning, supported by good teaching and well-structured practical work, provides a firm basis of success for all students. AVCE students carry out detailed and extensive experimentation with techniques in painting and drawing.
127. Intermediate GNVQ students demonstrate a sound knowledge of two-dimensional media and techniques. However, when working independently their work can be unimaginative and technically limited. Some lower achieving Intermediate GNVQ students are not skilled in some basic areas, such as the use of single point perspective.
128. Foundation GNVQ students systematically study the use of drawing media and successfully experiment with the visual qualities of a range of materials. The quality of students' work is generally satisfactory or better.
129. The paintings of A-level students show mature handling of the painting medium and an awareness of brushwork. Drawing work varies in quality but in general students are confident in the way they employ their drawing media and most achieve good results. There is much concentration on drawing, painting and two-dimensional media in the A-level course.
130. AS students' work is good. They use line, shape and textural marks confidently and thoughtfully to abstract designs from their observational drawings. Students annotate their work competently. They study the work of artists and art historical movements and make good use of that in the development of their own work.
131. Teaching is very good. In some lessons it is excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Lessons have clear learning objectives that enable students to monitor their own progress. There is a clear structure to the lessons. Teachers provide good quality technical



instruction and practical demonstrations. Lessons are planned carefully and good quality visual resources are prepared by teachers. However, in a GNVQ Intermediate graphics lesson there were insufficient learning resource materials for extended tasks or to support the learning of lower attaining students. Some of the tasks in lessons are also not sufficiently structured for lower achieving students. Teachers maintain a good focus on language acquisition. They are keen to ensure that the students use terminology specific to technical matters or to art history relevant to the lesson. Teachers carry out regular and effective assessment of students' work covering, for example, quality of outcome, techniques used and acquisition of knowledge and language. Within lessons teachers provide students with highly specific and effective feedback on their work.

132. Students have a very positive and mature approach to learning. Foundation GNVQ students respond well to challenging work and produce an extensive range of outcomes. Students behave well. They show great enthusiasm for their work and are very keen to display what they have learnt. Intermediate GNVQ students apply themselves well to the tasks set. AS and A-level students are busy and productive in lessons. Generally, students are attentive and make positive contributions in lessons.
133. The quality of learning opportunities is good and the range is satisfactory. A good range of practical two-dimensional disciplines is incorporated into the courses. AVCE work shows detailed and extensive experimentation with painting techniques. Intermediate GNVQ students study media and techniques for oil and powder pastel work. A2 students successfully study tonal work and the charcoal drawing techniques. There is a good programme of gallery visits for all courses. Students also have the opportunity to work with visiting artists and designers.
134. AS and A-level students follow a specialist programme of painting and drawing. Printmaking is also a successful part of this two dimensional focus. AVCE, Intermediate and foundation students follow a sufficiently broad programme that includes other areas such as three-dimensional work and study of the work of artists and designers. The level of three-dimensional work is somewhat limited and does not match the range and quality of two-dimensional studies. GCSE photography work from the previous year shows students demonstrating a good understanding of tonal contrast and abstract qualities. Satisfactory written work is completed on all courses. Students make notes using relevant language, formats and key terminology. Students have good access to art resources and materials and they are encouraged to work independently in the art classrooms even when other classes are running.
135. ICT work is underdeveloped in a number of art areas. AS and A-level students have limited access to art-related ICT and access for vocational students is not extensive.
136. Assessment and monitoring procedures are thorough and effective. Individual records of students are updated regularly and assessment information is used to guide individualised target setting. Students receive detailed feedback on the quality of their practical outcomes, their use of techniques and their acquisition of knowledge and key language. Courses start with a diagnostic period to enable the teacher to obtain a clear picture of incoming students' strengths and weaknesses. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of special educational needs students in lessons. Assessment materials for vocational students clearly identify performance levels required for success at pass, merit and distinction levels. Student self-evaluation versions of these assessment materials are also in use to raise achievement. Good quality assessment and monitoring enable students with special needs to make good progress in lessons.
137. The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The courses are tailored to meet the needs of the students, many of whom have had limited experience of the subject. Rigorous and systematic teaching ensures that most students achieve at least the lower levels of examination pass grades. There is close monitoring of the subject's performance and effective action has been taken, where necessary, such as adjusting the units of work that students study. Where appropriate, changes are made to the course to accommodate the learning needs of students, particularly when recent trends in examination courses or new specifications place additional demands on students.

## DRAMA

Overall, the quality of provision in drama is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- Good aspects of the overall satisfactory teaching of the subject.
- The imaginative interpretation of the syllabuses used by the department.
- The contribution the subject makes to students' moral, social and cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Increasing opportunities for students to consider the ideas and opinions of accepted theatre practitioners to improve the quality of their practical work.
- Raising standards in students' written work.

138. Although a number of students have studied drama prior to their A-level courses a significant number of students have not. A significant number of students entering the course also have below average literacy skills. Although standards of attainment in final examinations are well below average students are making satisfactory progress in relation to their prior learning. This was reflected in the 2001 examinations with only six per cent of the 17 students entered for the examination gaining an A or B grade but all students gained an A - E grade. Standards declined in the most recent examination in 2002 with no students gaining an A or B grade, though the 9 students entered for the examination gained an A – E grade. Of those students studying drama as part of AVCE full awards Performing Arts course in 2002, 57 per cent gained an A-C grade and 86 per cent gained an A-E grade.
139. Standards of work seen during the inspection were below average and generally reflect the examination results. A number of students enter the AS drama and theatre course with limited drama skills and techniques and they have yet to develop the essential features of self-discipline and concentration, qualities necessary to the subject. This was observed as students worked on a very good stimulus as they considered the plight of refugees and people seeking political asylum. Whilst a number students focused well on the creation of believable individuals, a significant number found it hard to sustain concentration, stay in role and create character through the appropriate use of movement, gesture and voice.
140. Good work was observed in an AS lesson when students displayed an effective understanding of the role and function of masks in Greek theatre and used them in a short extract from *The Trojan Women*. Through good guidance from the teacher, the students put together a good piece of mime work. However, a number of students lack confidence in their own devising skills and are sometimes happier to be directed by the teacher, rather than take over control of their own learning and to work in an independent manner.
141. Students in the final year of their A-level course display a satisfactory understanding of Shakespeare's theatre and are able to place *Macbeth* within its historic, social and dramatic context. They are less secure in their knowledge of Shakespeare's language and its ability to reveal the psychological nature and inner turmoil of characters. Although students had briefly considered the theories and practices of Constantin Stanislavski, they made little contribution to their rehearsal techniques as they explored some demanding scenes from *Macbeth*. A number of students have problems in relating to the people they are playing and how they can be explored and presented through the character and the use of voice to convey the full range of emotions displayed by the people they are playing. Students work with interest and commitment but the overall quality of acting is below that expected of students at this stage in their studies.
142. A scrutiny of students' written work indicated that many students are not secure in their ability to put together well-constructed essays, with appropriate style, structure and syntax. A number of

students still have problems with their basic English skills. The faculty is very aware of this issue and is providing specific lessons that focus on the development of writing and essay skills.

143. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, with good teaching being observed in individual lessons. Lessons are well planned and organised, although there are occasions where teachers could be more challenging and demanding in response to students' concentration, self-discipline and the effort they put into their work. Teachers provide students with a stimulating range of drama activities. They give students good support as they take part in their practical activities without interfering with the ownership of their work. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and convey it to students in a meaningful manner. Good working relationships exist between teachers and their students. This makes a positive contribution to learning.
144. Leadership and management in the subject are satisfactory. The syllabuses used by the faculty are interpreted in an effective manner, with the schemes of work for each unit of work providing students with a good range of challenging and imaginative activities. A satisfactory range of assessment procedures are used to promote students' skills, knowledge and understanding and to set targets for improvement.

## MEDIA STUDIES

Overall, the quality of provision in Media Studies is good.

### Strengths

- The good teaching in the subject.
- The imaginative interpretation of the Media Studies Syllabus
- The good use of technical resources to promote learning.
- The positive attitudes displayed by students.

### Areas for improvement

- Raise standards of attainment in students' written work.
145. The majority of students start the A-level course with a limited knowledge of the world of media. They achieve well in relationship to their prior learning, make good progress and achieve standards in line with the national average. In 2001, 42 per cent of students attained A or B grades in comparison to the national average of 40 per cent. All but one of the 33 students entered for the examination gained an A – E grade. Standards were maintained in the most recent examinations in 2002 with 40 per cent of students achieving A and B grades. This was just above the national average. All but one student gained an A – E grade. Of the students who entered the AVCE single award Media Studies course in 2002, 40 per cent achieved an A to C grade and 80 per cent gained an A – E grade.
146. Although it was only possible to observe lessons related to genre work in film and television, teachers' planning and a scrutiny of students' written work reveal that students consider and explore all required areas of the subject syllabus.
147. The standards of work seen during the inspection were satisfactory and at the level expected at this stage of the course. Students in an AS lesson displayed a good knowledge of the role and function of the editing process linked to moving images and film work. They knew how editing contributes to the speed and action in film work and were able to use this knowledge in the planning of an editing sequence for a piece of their own work. The success of this lesson owed much to the teacher's good use of resource materials and the positive attitudes that students displayed towards their work.
148. Students in an A-level class demonstrated a good understanding of the horror/thriller genre and were able to identify the common elements they share. Students were able to use this knowledge as they considered the similarities and differences between scenes from the films *Psycho* and *Halloween*. Students worked well together in pairs. They listened to and valued each other's opinion before arriving at a consensus of opinion for their answers. Students can be seen to be developing good textual critical and analytical skills.
149. Students in their A-level year display an effective understanding of the 'soap' genre. They recognise their importance to individual television channels as a means of raising revenue and increasing viewing figures. They also have a sound understanding of 'soaps' as popular drama and are able to make some pertinent points on the technical construction of this form of television drama.
150. Attainment in the course is very much influenced by the quality of students' written work. A number of more able students are able to put together some high quality work - for example, producing the first six pages of a glossy magazine for a teenage audience. Students engage in personal research, produce questionnaires and other research documentation and use this information to produce good quality magazines with a specific audience in mind. Some have good numeracy skills as they analyse statistical information and display it in the form of bar and pie charts. A number demonstrate and use good desktop publishing skills.

151. Less able students tend to rely too much on the good range of photocopied materials and worksheets provided by teachers and simply print out a range of printed materials from the Internet. This results in work that lacks a personal response or slant.
152. The quality of teaching in the limited number of lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to very good; teaching is good overall. Lessons are well planned and organised and managed effectively, with teachers using technical resources, for example, interactive whiteboards and video equipment, in an effective manner to promote and extend students' learning. Teachers have high expectations of students and provide them with a challenging range of activities. Regular opportunities are provided for students to partake in research activities and to become independent learners. The good working relationship between teachers and students is a significant factor in the good learning that takes place in lessons.
153. The subject is well led and managed by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic co-ordinator. There are good schemes of work for each of the units, with students being given the opportunity to evaluate their own learning and set individual targets for improvement. There are adequate experienced members of staff to teach the subject, with resources and accommodation for the subject being good. They will continue to improve as a result of the current building programme.
154. Students are given the opportunity to respond to a number of contemporary issues as they explore various elements of the media industry. This makes a positive contribution to their social, moral, cultural and personal development.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

The provision for geography is good.

#### Strengths

- The teacher's knowledge of the subject and of the examination system.
- Tracking of students' progress using data from GCSE and AS examinations and regular marking.
- Students' attitude to their work and to each other.
- Progress made by students.

#### Areas for improvement

- Continue the drive to improve attainment.
- Make use of available data for comparison of results to set targets.

155. Results at AS in 2002 were well above those attained in 2001, with 65 per cent of students achieving grades A to C and 85 per cent achieving grades A to E. Work seen in lessons and samples of students' completed work confirm this improvement continues and standards were generally above average. Students were seen preparing and presenting information on regeneration of different areas in East London. They had collected data during a field study visit to support and test hypotheses. Their presentations of information and conclusions to others in the class were done in a mature fashion. These presentations, the questions asked by other students and the responses showed good understanding of geographical processes and how they interact to create the patterns observed. Through this work students are aware of the requirements of case studies and the information they need to collect when compiling them in future.
156. Results at A2 in 2002 were below the national expectation in terms of attainment at grades A or B, but above expectation in terms of grades A to E. Results have fluctuated over the last few years, but evidence from lessons and scrutiny of students' work shows that attainment is improving, as it did at AS level and is now above average. The numbers of students, and the retention of students from year one to year two, is increasing. Four students completed the A-level course in 2002, of only seven who began the course in 2000. There are currently eight students in the second year

A2 course, from thirteen who completed the AS course. There are currently twenty students in the first year of the course. Students with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, make equally good progress in the subject. Second year students show good understanding of the subject and apply this well to a new topic being introduced so they can determine the social, economic and environmental characteristics of countries at different stages of development. They work well under the direction of their teacher and are prepared to research exemplar material to support their studies. Attendance and punctuality have been in excess of 97 per cent in both year groups this academic year.

157. The quality of teaching is good overall. Some is very good. The teacher has good subject knowledge and good knowledge of the examination system. Students' work is marked regularly and students are given valuable, detailed feedback, both verbally and in writing, to help them improve their work. Their performance in the subject is monitored, based on previous examination results and work marked recently. Feedback is given regularly with three reviews and two reports per year.
158. Students have very good attitudes in lessons and relationships between teacher and students, and between students and students are also very good. These factors combine to create good learning and ensure students make good progress. Teaching incorporates a variety of learning styles, but at times, students rely too heavily on the teacher for information and not enough use is made of research to extend more capable students. Literacy and numeracy are developed in lessons, with students' speaking and listening skills being well developed when they are asked to make presentations and take questions subsequently. Fieldwork is an important part of the course and also helps develop numeracy skills in presentation of data. While students use ICT to present their field and course work opportunities to develop mathematical modelling with ICT are missed.
159. The subject is well managed and the work is well organised. The scheme of work shows good planning and sequencing of topics to ensure students are equipped with the background knowledge and relevant enquiry methods before their field studies and course work. Textbooks and other resources are well chosen to support learning. The learning centre provides good resources to support learning and it is well used. Target setting is well informed by prior attainment and effective marking. One teacher teaches all units of the course and has a good overview of students' progress. The teacher takes part in peer observations and senior managers monitor examination results prior to the subject review.
160. Results have improved recently and inspection evidence shows the improvement continuing. To improve standards further national data should be used to compare results and set targets for improvement.

## History

Overall, the quality of provision in history is good.

### Strengths

- Students make good progress and achieve results in line with national standards.
- Students are developing good levels of historical knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Teaching is good and at times very good; positive features are high levels of subject expertise, effective planning and teachers' good understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive and they show good levels of commitment to their work.

### Areas for development

- Some students need to improve their extended writing through better planning and more consistent use of appropriate academic language.
- Students need to develop further their ability to undertake sustained independent research.
- Marking needs to show students more clearly how they can improve their work.

161. Standards in history are broadly in line with national expectations for A and AS-level courses. In recent years, pass rates have been better than the national figure but the proportion of students gaining A or B grades has been a little below the national level. However, in 2001, A-level results were low with only 70 per cent of students gaining a pass grade and the best result being a grade C pass. In 2002, results were much improved. All students passed the examination and more than one third gained an A or B grade.
162. For the last two years, first year students have been entered for the new AS level examination. In 2001, results were in line with national results. All the students entered gained at least a grade E and more than four per cent gained an A or B grade. The results in 2002 were a little lower but still represented a sound level of attainment. Students are making good progress. Most achieve a higher A-level grade than would have been predicted from their GCSE grades.
163. The standards of work of students are average in the A-level course. This again represents good progress given their average GCSE grade. In lessons, students showed a good understanding of the topics studied. For example, second year students used sources effectively to explore the background to the liberal reforms of 1905 to 1911 as part of their study of the history of medicine. First year students were in the early stages of their AS course but they already showed good understanding of the events and outcomes of the 1905 revolution in Russia.
164. Students' files are well organised and there is evidence of appropriate note making skills. Students are expected to read widely around the topics being taught. They recognise the importance of this and welcome the support of teachers in identifying appropriate material, including relevant web sites. The quality of their extended writing is less good. The language is too informal and essays do not always contain sufficiently well-structured arguments.
165. The teaching of history is never less than good and at times it is very good. Both teachers are specialists in their subject. Lessons are planned very thoroughly and the intended learning outcomes are consistently shared with students. The teachers set very high expectations; they know their students well and have established very positive relationships. Over the two years of the course, the teachers have planned how students' historical skills will be developed based on a realistic assessment of their strengths and weaknesses at the start of the course.
166. On the whole, students are more comfortable with structured, relatively short-term tasks. Extended course work has been less successful and the department has decided to change its choice of modules to reduce this element. Nevertheless, students – particularly the more able – do need to develop the skills of independent research and extended project work to a higher level. Students receive feedback on their work through written marking and one to one discussion. Some of the marking does not identify how work can be improved sufficiently clearly.
167. Students have very positive attitudes towards their work. They are very interested in the subject and they work very well with one another in both small groups and the whole class. Levels of concentration in lessons observed were very good, even in a two-hour session, which was sustained without a break. The AS class is very large and this restricts opportunities for students to participate in lessons and to engage in debate and discussion.
168. The department is well organised and led as part of the wider humanities curriculum area. The two teachers work very well together and there is a strong focus on the development of teaching and learning and on the monitoring of students' progress. The department carefully analyses examination outcomes each year and identifies appropriate areas for development as part of its commitment to raising standards. The choice of A-level modules, while in many respects appropriate, does limit the department's contribution to students' understanding of wider cultural diversity. The subject is well resourced.

## SOCIOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in sociology is good.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good and results in very effective learning.
- Students are very enthusiastic and are consequently making very good progress.
- The achievement of students in relation to their prior attainment is very good.
- The very good contribution of the subject to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Areas for improvement

- Increasing the proportion of A and B grade passes at A-level.
- Subject monitoring and evaluation over time in order to inform curricular planning and improve the quality of target setting for students.

169. Sociology is a popular subject in the AS and A-level courses and the one-year GCSE courses offered by the academy. In 2001, the overall pass rate at A-level was in line with national percentages but the proportion of students achieving A and B grade passes was below average. This represents very good achievement since the start of the course because not all students had studied the subject prior to joining the academy. Provisional results for 2002 show a modest increase in the proportion of students achieving A and B grades. Comparisons between females and males are not meaningful because of the small number of males taking the examination. Analysis of results shows there are no significant differences in terms of the ethnicity of students. In 2001, approximately six out of ten students achieved A to C grade passes in the AS course. Provisional results in 2002 show that this declined to five out of ten students. The proportion of students achieving A\* to C grade passes in the one year GCSE course averaged 76 per cent between 1998 and 2001. In 2002, provisional results show this proportion declined to 50 per cent. Staff recruitment problems and staff illness account for this decline as well as the decline in the proportion of students achieving A to C grade passes at AS-level. This had a negative effect on student retention rates in these particular courses.

170. Standards of work seen among the current second year students are above average. This represents very good achievement since they started. Students have a good grasp of both positivist and interpretivist theoretical perspectives of society. When discussing and planning their proposed coursework topics, students state which theoretical perspective they will use and understand any shortcomings this may involve. Their communication skills are good and they have the opportunity to apply number through the analysis of crime statistics. All competently use ICT to help them in their research and in the presentation of their work. First year students have made a good start to the AS course and are coming to grips with the various sociological perspectives as applied to the study of the family. It is not possible to comment on standards of work in the one-year GCSE course because there were no samples of work and no lessons were observed.

171. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good and this results in very effective learning. Well-planned, paced and structured lessons, with a variety of activities, challenge the full range of ability well. Learning objectives are clearly stated so that students know what is expected of them. The teachers' enthusiasm, interest and very good knowledge and understanding of the subject ensure students make good progress and develop their interest. As a result of this, students are very positive about the provision and keen to do well. Good quality schemes of work guide teachers' planning to ensure the demands of the syllabus are fully met. Teachers effectively refer to appropriate contemporary and established sociological research as well as to different theoretical perspectives. Questioning is used effectively to challenge students and engage them in discussions that draw on their own experiences as well as on the sociological perspectives they have learned. On occasion, at the end of a lesson, there is not always sufficient time for the



teacher to explore the students' perceptions of what they have learned. This would help consolidate their knowledge and understanding further.

172. Students receive good quality support and guidance and effective assessment procedures are in place. The quality of marking is very good and teachers provide some excellent comments on essays that show students what they must do in order to achieve higher grades. As yet, there is insufficient quality data collected over time to help the department to refine target setting for students.
173. Sociology is part of the humanities curriculum area and until recently was ably managed by one of the joint curriculum area managers. However, since September an experienced teacher has been appointed to be in charge of the subject. The department is being well led and there is a clear focus on improving the quality of provision further by increasing the proportion of students achieving A and B grade passes at A-level.

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The focus of the inspection was on English and the role of the department in developing the literacy skills of students. Communication and literacy, from foundation to Level 3, were also sampled. Seven lessons were observed. In all, the teaching was at least satisfactory and in several it was good or very good. In those, the teachers had very good command of their subject and the planning was detailed and allowed for pace and there was a well-structured sequence of activities. This led to students gaining a very secure understanding of literary and linguistic frameworks.

The provision in AS and A-level English caters for some 100 students. AS and A2 courses are offered in English language and literature (from 2001) and in English literature. GCSE English is offered as a resit course, mainly for students on GNVQ or AVCE courses who wish to improve their grades.

### **English**

Overall, the quality of provision is good and there are some very good aspects.

#### Strengths

- Recent results in AS and A-level are above or at the national average in A-E grades.
- GCSE English results had an improved achievement rate in 2002.
- In literacy and communication as a key skill, students are given assignments that are fully integrated into their vocational specialism.
- Teaching is never less than satisfactory and there are instances where it is very good. All teachers know their subject well.
- Students work very well at A2-Level, participate fully and learn well.
- The subject is led and managed well.
- There are good opportunities for subject- specific enrichment.

#### Areas for improvement

- A minority of teachers need to ensure that the pace of lessons is improved, particularly to meet the needs of potential high achievers.
- All students, particularly at AS-level, need to be more fully involved in class discussions.
- Staff need to review teaching approaches to improve male students' achievement at AS and A-level.
- Teachers need to encourage further independent learning.

174. Standards and achievement are above or at the national average in AS and A-level in A-E grades on both courses this year. The results in 2002 were significantly better than in 2001 in both language and literature examinations. In relation to their GCSE results, students did a little better than expected. At AS-level, results declined; fewer students gained grades A to C in literature than in 2001. AS language and literature has replaced the language examination, but the

- proportion of students achieving A to C grades has hardly changed. At both AS and A-level male students did not achieve as well as females. In AS language and literature in 2002, 13 per cent of entrants achieved an A grade, all female. Students' performance in the GCSE examination in 2002 was much the same as in 2001, with about half of the students achieving a grade in the A\* to C band.
175. The work seen during the inspection showed that the standard of written work across all groups is at least satisfactory and often good. From the 2001 GCSE group there was some very good coursework on a range of topics including the Benetton advertising campaign, animal imagery in the poetry of Achebe and an analysis of the ball scene in 'Romeo and Juliet'. Students' written work in the key skills communication Level 1 course, on diet, including graphics, was good.
  176. Students' attainment in A2 English is very good in debate, analysis and explanation. In the lessons seen, they were doing well as a direct result of effective teaching, which demanded much of them. In one lesson, students confidently employed linguistic concepts to analyse maxims and their role in talk in the writing of Pinter and Shakespeare.
  177. First year students are only a little way into their course. Some of them are successfully moving on from their GCSE work into new areas. They are able to respond during group discussion about genre, purpose and audience and to evaluate the distinctive features of spoken language in different situations. However, not all students are fully involved in group discussions. Some remain passive and there is scope for developing strategies to encourage everyone to participate.
  178. Attitudes to English and literacy are very positive, with students speaking warmly of their enjoyment of the subject. Students have good working relationships with their teachers and each other. In the majority of groups they share their ideas with generosity and courtesy.
  179. The teaching of English and literacy is good. Teachers know their subject very well and they have a good awareness of students' learning needs at this stage. Planning for all classes observed was good but the pace of classes varied. Where the pace was challenging there were significant contributions made by students but, where the pace was slower and particularly in group work, students sometimes drifted off task. At its best, lessons were taught at a brisk pace with varied activities and support teachers catered for the variety of learning needs within class groups. In one class the teacher gave students examples of literary criticism, such as 'The Enemy Within' by Bonnie Greer, as supporting material to encourage further discussion of Iago's manipulative skills in 'Othello'.
  180. A scrutiny of work across all levels shows that teachers give detailed and constructive feedback to students. Drafting and re-drafting are both marked and teachers use different markers to indicate this.
  181. There are good opportunities for subject specific enrichment activities, with students going to master classes organised by the borough on topics such as black English vernacular. The courses are also enriched by visits to the theatre, to the Oxford English faculty and the Globe amongst others. In addition, there is a student newspaper and a creative writing competition. Teachers have used opportunities for display to good effect. Examples include key words in 'The Handmaid's Tale', a definition of a dramatic monologue and examples of students' work.
  182. The learning resource centre has a wide, if not extensive, range of texts and supporting tapes. Modern writers such as Toni Morrison, Jack Kerouac and Ben Okri are represented, as are classics by Dickens, Conrad and James amongst others. Black male writers are also represented with texts such as 'Pieces of a Man'. Thoughtful guidance is given to encourage wider reading with displays on 'A masterpiece you might have missed'. Teachers support students' learning by putting lesson notes on the computer for their use.
  183. Leadership and management are both good, with regular weekly team meetings to discuss students' progress, achievement and best practice and to share resources. The team has this year developed a common scheme of work that clearly identifies a number of aspects including learning outcomes and opportunities for skills development.

## Modern Foreign Languages

The focus of the inspection was French, but two Spanish lessons were also sampled. A-level results have been consistently very good in recent years, whilst GCSE results in Spanish were satisfactory again in 2002, having recovered from a low point in 2001. Teaching and learning were good in the AS-level lesson and satisfactory in the GCSE lesson. In addition one German GCSE lesson was inspected. The teaching and learning were both very good. The department also offers Italian and Portuguese and Arabic. Students who speak other languages are encouraged to develop their skills by taking GCSE or A-level.

### French

Overall the quality of provision in French is very good.

#### Strengths

- Attainment of the second year students is good especially in speaking and listening.
- French is consistently used in lessons both by teachers and students.
- Imaginative teaching with fast pace, making use of new technology.
- Very good relations with students.

#### Areas for improvement

- Creating a longer-term departmental development plan which runs for more than a year.
184. Standards at AS and A-level are now good, showing a steady improvement over the last three years. Results in 2001 showed a wide spread of grades but only two A grades and no B grades.
185. In 2002 top A-B grades had increased to four with an even better picture at AS level where seven students attained A-B grades out of a large group of 25 entries, but with four students failing. French results have now risen to be in line with national averages. On the other hand, GCSE results showed a slight decline in the proportion of students gaining A to C grades. A and AS level retention rates are good, but only six out of 14 GCSE students completed the course.
186. In lessons, standards at both A and AS level are good with listening and speaking being a particular strength. Students understand French spoken at native speaker speed and are able to communicate with fluency, accuracy and with good pronunciation. There is also evidence of fluent reading and very competent writing with few errors. A minority are bilingual and most have attained a grade A or A\* at GCSE. Students are achieving well. Some students who started with a grade C are achieving impressively high standards and making excellent progress. Students of all ethnic backgrounds are able to learn successfully together. The progress of boys is as good as the progress of girls.
187. Teaching is a major strength. The two teachers of French are both native speakers who communicate clearly, accurately and rapidly. They are both inspirational, have enormous enthusiasm for teaching and for the well-being and progress of their students, with whom they have a very good rapport. Their lessons are characterised by fast pace and high expectations that students will use the French language for all communication. In the GCSE class there were excellent examples of rapid quick-fire language with both humour and high levels of student involvement. In A-level classes there was very good coverage of the themes of a set book, which enabled students to revise content and to use their language skills to discuss some of the issues involved. Students' work is well marked, with many encouraging and challenging comments. Day-to-day assessment is good. For example, students in the GCSE class used mini-whiteboards to write down short examples of grammar points. These were then monitored by the teacher to assess students' grammatical understanding. Records are well maintained and reporting to

parents is good, with an imaginative range of comments available for use by all staff in the department.

188. Students' learning mirrors the success of the teaching. Learning is rapid, both in terms of revision and also new grammar or ideas. Most students are extremely well motivated, particularly some in their second year. They make use of French for most communication, concentrate well and contribute well to lessons. They are able to make good use of their time working on their own, especially in the second year, using individual tape recorders so that they can work at their own pace. Attitudes are very positive, although a small number of students have difficulty with punctuality for the first lesson of the day. Most students are pleased with their courses and know that they are achieving well and attaining good standards.
189. The A and AS-level courses offer appropriate challenge to students. In the second year the course offers good opportunities for the study of contemporary France through the set book, enabling students to discuss moral issues such as immigrants and their acceptance (or otherwise). Co-operative working provides good opportunities for students' social development. There is evidence of good use of information technology by teacher and students through the interactive whiteboard. The department is developing good links with contributory schools, and with a college in France. A recent trip to Brussels enabled students to develop their language skills as well as extend their knowledge of French speaking countries and culture.
190. The head of department provides very good leadership. She has developed the department very well over the eight years of the academy's life, bringing it from small beginnings to its present position as a leading player. The information about courses is of a high standard, as is the guidance that students are offered, leading last year to eight going to university to study French. There is a good annual development plan but priorities are not costed. French staff are well qualified. Accommodation is attractive with good wall displays. Overall, resources are very good with very good audio and visual provision, but the number of computers for students to work on is low. The interactive whiteboard is a major asset. Library provision is very good, with a large supply of self-study material, dictionaries, books, video and audiotapes.

## KEY SKILLS

Overall the quality of provision in key skills is good. The approach to key skills has been innovative and flexible and has enabled students on many courses to make good progress in their studies.

### Strengths

- Teachers' specialist knowledge and enthusiasm for key skills.
- Contribution to foundation level learning.
- Students' involvement in their own learning.
- Very good relationships and attitudes.
- Senior management commitment and leadership.

### Areas for improvement

- Raise standards in the external tests.
- Greater consistency in monitoring students' progress.
- Monitor key skills teaching across the three skills areas.

191. The academy offers key skill opportunities of application of number, ICT and communication to all students through a variety of different routes. This curriculum opportunity compares very favourably with the level of provision being made nationally. Foundation level courses integrate all three key skills and students on Intermediate level courses study the three key skills in a variety of ways depending on their prior achievement. This can include GCSE English and maths over one or two years. Students following other courses, for example GCSE courses, are able to gain the necessary skills. ICT offers a freestanding course for all students who have not already obtained a level 1 or 2 qualification. The Level 3 qualification is offered through a range of AS level courses,

including use of mathematics, critical thinking, general studies, science for public understanding and film studies. All students are expected to take one of these courses or the academy's language, society and media course. The ICT curriculum is more limited at this level, with Level 3 offered only through a single award vocational A-level.

192. Portfolios are completed primarily at Level 1 and 2, with a smaller number at Level 3. The success rate for all students achieving a qualification ranges from 60 to 90 per cent with the highest success in communication. The standard of work seen is good and represents very good achievement given the entry level of the students. The completion rate for the portfolio is higher than the external test rates of 20 to 70 per cent. Almost 400 students achieved further key skills qualifications in 2002. Overall statistics are difficult to report as each of the three curriculum areas reports their student achievement in different ways. The overall monitoring of students' progress needs to be addressed so that each student's development is identifiable in a consistent form across the three skills. The lower test successes need further attention and there is recognition in all areas that greater preparation and support are needed to improve future test performance. There is already evidence of improvement in the ICT level one and two class. Students are taking a preliminary test after half term in preparation for the January unit test. This test practice needs to be extended throughout the key skills area. Some students for whom English is an additional language are finding the test language difficult and additional strategies may need to be considered, although where specialist support is offered in class, progress is good.
193. The portfolios are externally moderated and good quality standards have been identified. The individual areas have established their own internal moderation practices and there is evidence of some sharing of good practice. Students enjoy researching for their portfolios and develop a wide range of skills that can be used in other lessons; these include research methods, drafting and revision and presentation skills. Where the key skills are integrated into a vocational course the content of the portfolio is subject related. For example, an ICT portfolio covered war poetry thus bringing together two skills areas and students following the health and social care course used case study material in their numeracy portfolio. Level 1 numeracy students have considerable teacher support to develop their portfolios and all teachers work at the same time to support the portfolio work.
194. Teaching is good overall with two-thirds of that seen being good or better. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Some very good practice is seen in each of the curriculum areas. Specialist teachers, who demonstrate very good knowledge and are enthusiastic about their subject, teach key skills. Their expertise is shared with the students and aids effective learning. Students following the foundation level health and social care course achieve well because they are systematically tested in their numeracy skills and careful lesson planning reinforces their learning.
195. Students relate very well to each other and to teachers and they work cooperatively together. Shared learning objectives and a variety of well thought out activities, with active student participation, are the features of the very good teaching observed in both communications and ICT. In an AS-level general studies lesson the pace of learning was fast and students felt that they were being intellectually challenged. Very good team work was observed in a GCSE English class, where the teacher and support teachers worked together to provide strong support for students with learning difficulties and for those whose main language is not English.
196. Key skills is an important part of the academy's curriculum and underpins the good progress that the students make. The leadership of key skills is very good. The principal, who has a very clear view of its contribution to the students learning, has led the strategy very effectively. The strategy is responsive to students needs and has changed and developed over the last three years. The management of key skills is good although there is no overall co-ordinator for the day-to-day management of the areas and each has developed slightly differently. The monitoring and assessment procedures need to be brought together and the very good teaching skills observed now need to be disseminated throughout the academy.